

Studia graeco-arabica

7

2017

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Subscription orders

Information on subscription rates for the print edition of Volume 7 (2017), claims and customers service: redazione@pacineditore.it

Web site: <http://learningroads.cfs.unipi.it>

Service Provider: Università di Pisa, ICT - Servizi di Rete Ateneo

ISSN 2239-012X (Online)

Registration at the law court of Pisa, 18/12, November 23, 2012.

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Cover

Mašhad, Kitābhāna-i Āsitān-i Quds-i Raḡawī 300, f. 1v
Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, *grec* 1853, f. 186v

H. Seng - G. Sfameni Gasparro (Hg.), *Theologische Orakel in der Spätantike*, Universitätsverlag Winter, Heidelberg 2016 (Bibliotheca Chaldaica / Band 5), 386 pp.

Late Antiquity is famously fond of ‘inspired’ texts: theological poetry, like the Orphic hymns, or poems by ‘Homer’ and other authors, then considered of divine origin. To this literature belongs also the *Oracles* (χρησμοί). At variance with the classical age, late ancient oracles are classified as theological because they do not provide solutions to individual problems or critical situations in cities, but give answers on the divine nature. The relevance of the oracles in late ancient spirituality is attested by the flourishing of a new literary genre: the collections of theological oracles, sometimes arranged in accordance with the scheme elaborated by the philosophical schools, where the allegorical exegesis takes an increasingly important place.

The most important collections are the *Chaldean Oracles*, Porphyry’s *Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*, the *Oracula Sibyllina* and the *Theosophy* of Tübingen. The latter was composed in 502/503 A.D., but depends on earlier collections, especially Porphyry’s. A conference held in Frankfurt am Main in July 2012 under the direction of Helmut Seng and Giulia Sfameni Gasparro was devoted to these texts, and the thirteen papers are now collected in the volume under examination.

After a brief preface of the editors, the volume begins with L.G. Soares Santoprete’s paper “Tracing the Connections between ‘Mainstream’ Platonism (Middle- and Neo-Platonism) and ‘Marginal’ Platonism (Gnosticism, Hermeticism and the *Chaldean Oracles*) with Digital Tools: the Database, the Bibliographical Directory, and the Research Blog The Platonism of Late Antiquity” (pp. 9-45). An overview of the current status of research on Platonism in Late Antiquity is followed by a survey of the relationship between Middle- and Neo-Platonism on one side, and Gnosticism, Hermeticism and the *Chaldean Oracles* on the other. Then some editorial projects are listed, with a focus on *Les Platonismes de l’Antiquité tardive*, directed by the author herself and A. Van den Kerchove. The currents mentioned above are admittedly a ‘marginal’ kind of philosophy, but their theological ideas influence and are influenced by the ‘mainstream authors’ of Platonism. According to the author, the difference lies essentially in the ways of expression, namely rational analysis versus myths and personifications (p. 12). To my mind, this is quite a questionable assumption to make. A full discussion of this point goes beyond the limits of a review, but it should at least be said that Platonism and Gnosticism disagree over the nature of the cosmos, seen as fundamentally bad by Gnostics, as intrinsically good and divine by Platonists: this is stated in as many letters by Plotinus in his treatise II 9[33]. Plotinus’ attitude against the Gnostics obviously does not escape the scholars engaged in the project *Les Platonismes de l’Antiquité tardive*, to which the rest of this paper is devoted.¹ Plotinus, the Gnostics and the *Chaldean Oracles*; Numenius and Plotinus; the *Chaldean Oracles* in themselves; Porphyry, Gnosticism, and Judeo-Christian thought; Hermeticism, Gnosticism and Christianity, and finally the role of the anonymous commentary on Plato’s *Parmenides* are the topics dealt with in this project. A note of caution, however, should be put at least on this last item: the well-known

¹ This project “aims to demonstrate that the various conflicts that animated Platonic circles in Late Antiquity afford fertile ground for study of the complexity of the dynamic between integration and marginality in the history of Platonism. (...) This triple project will allow us to clarify how other doctrines from the philosophical tradition have been appropriated in debates within ‘mainstream’ Platonism in order to refute ‘marginal’ views, as well as how some ‘marginal’ ideas have been incorporated within Platonism in order to refute their ‘marginal’ positions. (...) Finally, it will highlight how these two different forms of assimilation and ideas have given rise to considerable innovation within Late Antiquity thought, and in turn thereby marked all subsequent Western thought” (p. 37).

fragments of this commentary, studied first by Pierre Hadot and ascribed by him to Porphyry,² have been the subject of prolonged scholarly controversy, and one can well side, as the author does, with those who see in it a point of contact between Platonism and the *Chaldean Oracles*. However, also the overwhelming presence in this commentary of philosophical topics and even expressions typically Plotinian³ should be taken into consideration in order to reach a balanced account.

In their paper “Sources et principes: universalité et particularité dans les *Oracles Chaldaïques*” (pp. 47-88), A. Lecerf et L. Saudelli claim that Iamblichus’ interpretation of the *Chaldean Oracles* has influenced the metaphysical procession elaborated by Damascius in his *De Principiis*. The idea that a god can generate itself at different levels will in turn influence Proclus; Iamblichus and other Neoplatonists after him try to connect the traditional gods of paganism to metaphysical items like the procession, the Demiurge, the intelligible model, and so on.⁴ This is in itself a well-established point: one has just to recall E.R. Dodds’ claim “That Homer’s Olympians, the most vividly conceived anthropomorphic beings in all literature, should have ended their career on the dusty shelves of this museum of metaphysical abstractions is one of the time’s strangest ironies”.⁵ Iamblichus and later Neoplatonists have to set the hierarchical relations among gods and the divine ‘chains’ (σειραί) issued from each of them. In doing so, they take inspiration from the *Iliad* and Plato’s *Phaedrus*.⁶ In Book III of the *De Principiis*, Damascius has recourse to the idea of a ‘wrapping’ of the inferior gods in the superior ones, with the superior gods seen as universal sources, and the inferior ones as particular sources. Now, this theological system is reminiscent of the *Chaldean Oracles*. Following its terminology, Iamblichus distinguishes between source (πηγή) and principle (ἀρχή): a ‘source’ includes various ‘principles’, thus producing a hierarchical procession: “C’est bien dans les *Oracles* que les néoplatoniciens trouvent une extraordinaire population divine arrangée sur des plans horizontaux et verticaux [...] De ce point de vue, les *Oracles* témoignaient d’un très fort dynamisme, déjà noté par H. Lewy, et qui n’avait pas grand-chose de commun avec la leçon plotinienne” (pp. 80-1).

The *Chaldean Oracles* inspires not only some Neoplatonists, but probably also the Gnostics, as J.D. Turner claims in his “The *Chaldean Oracles*: A Pretext for the Sethian Apocalypse *Allogenes*?” (pp. 89-114), examining the Gnostic procession from and reintegration back into the origin. According to Turner, this scheme features in the *Chaldean Oracles*, in the commentary on the *Parmenides* mentioned above, and in the Sethian *Allogenes*, with some ties also with the so-called *Megale Apophasis*. First Turner compares the ontology of the *Chaldean Oracles* to that of the *Allogenes*, one of the treatises of the the Nag Hammadi collection that was studied also by Platonists, as witnessed by Porphyry’s *Life of Plotinus*, 16. The *Chaldean Oracles* poses three principles: two Intellects and Hecate, a principle that mediates between them. The first Intellect is the Supreme

² P. Hadot, *Porphyre et Victorinus*, I-II, Études Augustiniennes, Paris 1968.

³ M. Zambon, “Review of G. Bechtle, *The Anonymous Commentary on Platos’ Parmenides*, Verlag Paul Haupt, Wien 1999”, *Elenchos* 20 (1999), pp. 194-202.

⁴ This requirement is quite unusual to Plotinus, who links the metaphysical reality to the traditional gods of paganism only in V 1[10], 7.30-37 where, as Lecerf and Saudelli note, the Hesiodic triad Uranus, Kronos and Zeus is considered as a poetic representation of the three hypostases. It can be added that the same is done at V 5[32], 6.27-28, apropos Apollo; it is clear, however, that such analogies are anything but systematic: in the *Enneads* there is no endeavour to combine traditional religion and metaphysics.

⁵ E.R. Dodds, *Commentary*, in Proclus. *The Elements of Theology. A Revised Text with Translation, Introduction and Commentary* by E.R. Dodds, Clarendon Press, Oxford 1963², p. 260.

⁶ The authors refer to *Iliad* 8, 17-27 and *Phaedrus* 246 E.

Deity, a transcendent Monad⁷ not directly involved with creation. This principle produces the second Intellect,⁸ endowed with a demiurgical function.⁹ Between them stands Hecate, endowed with three functions: to be the emanative power of the Father,¹⁰ to separate and join the two Intellects,¹¹ and to give rise to the soul and multiplicity.¹² A metaphysical hierarchy similar to that of the *Chaldean Oracles* features in the *Allogenes*, with a supreme unknowable One,¹³ the Triple Powered One, and the Barbelo Aeon, a divine Intellect containing the archetypes of all things.¹⁴ The Chaldaean Hecate resembles the Sethian Triple Powered One; in turn, Hecate is similar to the Aeon Barbelo: both cause intelligible multiplicity. Then, Turner moves to a comparison with the commentary on the *Parmenides*. According to the *Allogenes*, the final ascent to the supreme One is an ascending series of contemplative acts, whose final step is the union with it, a sort of unknowable knowledge.¹⁵ Also the first fragment of the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary outlines the final contemplative act as a non-comprehending comprehension and ineffable pre-thinking.¹⁶ Turner claims that this theory originates in the *Chaldean Oracles*, because here too the knowledge of the supreme deity is described as not-knowledge and is linked to the initiate's passivity and quietude, labelled the 'flower of intellect'. Furthermore, the *Chaldean Oracles*, the *Allogenes*, and the commentary on the *Parmenides* present, all of them, some mediating principles: respectively, Hecate, the supreme Father-Power, Intellect, and the demiurgical Intellect, arranged in a triadic structure. A comparison with the *Megale Apophasis* follows: this writing was composed during the 2nd century by someone who claimed allegiance to Simon Magus.¹⁷ That the Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean doctrines form the background of all these Platonizing religious currents is a well established tenet; but if the aim of the paper was to highlight the cross-pollination between philosophy and the religious currents of that time, it seems to me that it ends by showing rather the influence of philosophy on such currents.

More attention to the cross-pollination is paid by P.F. Beatrice who, in his study "So spoke the gods. Oracles and philosophy in the so-called Anonymous commentary on the *Parmenides*" (pp. 115-44), advances a new hypothesis about this text, that involves Porphyry's exegesis of the *Chaldean Oracles*. A new edition of the fragments of Porphyry's *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* is necessary, according to Beatrice. The first remark concerns Augustine's reference to the *De Regressu animae*. In

⁷ Turner refers to *OC* 11 and 18 (*OC = Oracles Chaldaïques avec un choix de commentaires anciens*. Texte établi et traduit par É. des Places, Paris 1971).

⁸ Turner refers to *OC* 3 and 12.

⁹ Turner refers to *OC* 8 and 37.

¹⁰ Turner refers to *OC* 35, and notes that this aspect of Hecate resembles Plotinus' intelligible matter of VI 7[38], 17.

¹¹ Turner refers to *OC* 6 and 50.

¹² Turner refers to *OC* 29, 42, 44, 35 and 4.

¹³ Turner refers to *Allogenes*, XI 61 Funk.

¹⁴ Turner refers to *Allogenes*, XI 45 Funk.

¹⁵ Turner refers to *Allogene*, XI 63-64 Funk.

¹⁶ Turner quotes *Anon. in Parmenidem*, II 12-27 Hadot.

¹⁷ Like the *Chaldean Oracles*, this text describes the supreme principle and its emanation as fire, probably inspired by the Stoic metaphor; like the *Allogenes* and the anonymous *Parmenides* commentary (and even Plotinus), it articulates its ontology in three phases. According to Turner, p. 110, "It is quite possible that the authors of *Allogenes* and its sister treatises reconceptualized the triadic metaphysical structure and contemplative technique of the *Oracles* along the lines of an earlier Simonian model of reflexive ontogenesis, but further articulated it in a Platonic direction by means of the Existence - Vitality - Mentality triad and techniques of apophatic predication and aphaeretic contemplation derived from contemporary Middle Platonic and Neopythagorean speculation on Platonic dialogues such as the *Sophist*, *Parmenides* and *Symposium* in a way similar to that found in the anonymous *Commentary*".

Beatrice's opinion, this reference points to a section of the *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*, and this because several fragments referred by Augustine to the *De Regressu animae* are about Chaldean teachings and theurgy: all topics discussed in *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*. Then, Beatrice claims that two theological oracles about Christ attributed to Hecate by Eusebius in the *Praeparatio Evangelica*¹⁸ show that Porphyry uses oracles in his attack on Christianity, and that Eusebius quotes Porphyry on the basis of a work entitled *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*.¹⁹ He then quotes testimonies of Proclus,²⁰ Damascius,²¹ Augustine²² and the *Theosophy*²³ that, independently of each other, attribute to Porphyry some doctrines that are contained also in the commentary on the *Parmenides*. Given that these doctrines are inspired by two *Chaldean Oracles*,²⁴ and that the ancient sources that mention Porphyry in relationship to the *Parmenides* refer only to discussions about the hypotheses of this dialogue,²⁵ without any explicit mention of a commentary, Beatrice claims that "it would appear inevitable to conclude that Porphyry commented on these passages of the *Parmenides* not in a specific Commentary, but rather in some part or section of the *Philosophy according to the Oracles*" (p. 125). He also refers to the passages of the commentary where the superiority of negative theology is stated,²⁶ or the theological oracles are praised as divine revelations. All in all, the *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*, according to Beatrice, originally included not only a collection of oracles but also, from the fourth book onward, a long philosophical section: it is to this section that the fragments of the *De Regressu animae*, Περὶ ἀγαλμάτων, *Ad Gaurum*, *Symmikta Zetemata*, should be ascribed. In addition, also the alleged paraphrase of the *Enneads* transmitted by the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* did originally belong to this collection – a claim that is not supported by research on the Arabist side.²⁷ The philosophical part of the *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* was devoted, according to Beatrice, to a process starting from the purification of the body and the 'spiritual' soul through oracles and theurgy, and ending with the philosophical purification of the intellectual soul.²⁸ What this hypothesis wants to account for is the presence of

¹⁸ Beatrice quotes Eusebius, *Dem. evang.*, III 7, 1-2 Heikel.

¹⁹ Beatrice quotes Eusebius, *Dem. evang.*, III 6, 39 Heikel.

²⁰ Cf. Proclus, *In Parm.* VI 1070, 13-16 and 20-24; 1071, 2-3 Steel (quoted by Beatrice from the edition Cousin, col. 1070, 15-19 and 24-30; 1071, 1-3) and *In Alc.* 84, 14-17 Segonds (quoted by Beatrice from the edition Cousin, col. 84, 12-14).

²¹ Beatrice quotes Damascius, *De Princ.* II 1, 11-13 Westerink - Combès.

²² Beatrice quotes Augustine, *De Civ.*, X 23, 1-19 p. 436. 27-437. 5 Dombart - Kalb = Porph. fr. 284 F 9-19 Smith.

²³ Beatrice quotes *Theosophia* II 13 Beatrice = § 65 Erbse.

²⁴ Beatrice quotes *OC* 5 and 7 des Places.

²⁵ Beatrice refers to Proclus, *Theol. Plat.* I 11 p. 51, 4-5 and II 4 p. 31, 22-28 Saffrey - Westerink; *In Parm.* VI 1053, 28-1054, 30 Steel (quoted by Beatrice from the edition Cousin, col. 1053, 36 - 1054, 37) = Porph., fr. 170F Smith; Simplicius, *In Phys.*, p. 230.34 - 231.24 Diels = Porph., fr. 236F Smith; Porph., fr. 171F Smith = Damascius, *In Parm.* II p. 112.18-20 Westerink-Combès; *Theosophia* I 24-26 Beatrice = § 27 Erbse.

²⁶ Beatrice refers to I 3-4 and II 19-21 Hadot.

²⁷ For an overview of the scholarship on this text cf. C. D'Ancona, "The *Theology* Attributed to Aristotle: Sources, Structure, Influence", in Kh. El-Rouayheb - S. Schmidtke (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Islamic Philosophy*, Oxford U.P., Oxford 2017, pp. 8-29; recent scholarship concurs in maintaining that the Arabic *Theology of Aristotle* is based on the *Enneads* themselves rather than on an intermediate text, allegedly concocted by Porphyry.

²⁸ Beatrice, p. 134, claims that "All these elements indicate together that the materials listed so far all come from the Philosophy according to the *Oracles*, and that only the complex and tormented vicissitudes of this great anti-Christian work have produced the more or less extensive fragments we presently know by their artificial titles, surreptitiously introduced in the course of the Byzantine manuscript tradition. Needless to recall, in this context, the similar case of the *Life of Pythagoras*, which is not a separate work, but a long fragment of Book I of the *History of Philosophy*".

similar topics in various writings by Porphyry, but it seems to me that to gather several of his works (and even works not by him) within the 'new' and enlarged *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* is supernumerary: nothing prevents these texts from presenting, all of them, the same idea of the ascent to the intelligible realm through purification.

The relationship among the *Chaldean Oracles*, *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* and the *Theosophy* is discussed by H. Seng in his paper "Theologische Orakel zwischen Metaphysik und Ritual" (pp. 145-70). Seng compares the formal features of the *Chaldean Oracles* and *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*: contrary to what Hans Lewy argued,²⁹ it is not clear who speaks and gives oracles in these texts, because "Kein einziges Chaldaeischen Orakel lässt sich Apollon oder Hekate zuweisen, umgekehrt besteht kein Grund, diejenigen Orakel bei Porphyrios, die von diesem auf Apollon oder auf Hekate zurückgeführt werden, zu den OC zu rechnen" (p. 151). In the *Chaldean Oracles* gods are not forced by theurgy, and oracles that represent a god 'imprisoned' by a theurgist³⁰ are open to doubt. A hymn transmitted by the *Theosophy*³¹ that Lewy considered as a quotation from Porphyry's *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda* derives in reality from the *Chaldean Oracles*.³² However, Seng admits that both works contain a similar divine hierarchy, the same transcendent view of the first god, and a similar cosmology.

The study of I. Tanaseanu - Döbler, "Denn auf der Erde können sie sich nicht aufhalten, sondern nur auf heiliger Erde': Bemerkungen zum Verhältnis der Götter zur Materialität in Porphyrios' *Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*" (pp. 171-204) analyses the material aspects of communication between gods and humans, which feature in this text: according to the author, Porphyry elaborates precise guidelines for worship referring to theurgy, mediums, signs and symbols, animate figurines, sacrifices and oracles.

The paper by J. Walter, "Interpretatio pagana des Christentum: Liebeslyrik, Adonis-Kult und christliche Heiligenverehrung in den theologischen Orakeln bei Porphyrios (*De Phil. ex or.*, p. 183f. 180 - 182.185f. Wolff = fr. 343F; 345F; 346F Smith)" (pp. 205-26), analyses three theological oracles contained in *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*, pointing to some polemical topics adopted against Christians during the Diocletian persecution: deployment of expressions and themes of tragedy, love poetry and the cult of Adon (*De Phil. ex or.*, p. 183f. Wolff = fr. 343F Smith), rejection of the divine nature of Christ (*De Phil. ex or.*, p. 180 - 182 Wolff = fr. 345F Smith), and the cognitive and ethical deficiency of this cult (*De Phil. ex or.*, p. 185f. Wolff = fr. 346F Smith). In this manner, it emerges how Pagans saw Christianity.

In her paper "Introduzioni e commenti agli oracoli della *Teosofia di Tubinga*" (pp. 227-56) L.M. Tissi discusses the Christian tradition of theological oracles attested by the *Theosophy*.

²⁹ Seng refers to H. Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy. Mysticism Magic and Platonism in the Later Roman Empire*, Troisième édition par M. Tardieu, avec un supplément *Les Oracles chaldaïques 1891-2011*, Institut d'Études Augustiniennes, Paris 2011.

³⁰ Seng quotes OC 220, 221, 223, f. and 225, all of them considered *dubia* by des Places' edition of the *Chaldean Oracles*.

³¹ Seng quotes the hymns in *Theosophy*, § 27, 228-246 Erbse = I 24, 197-215 Beatrice.

³² On the contrary, in his edition of *Theosophy* Beatrice claims that Porphyry's collection of oracles is the main source of the first book of *Theosophy*, and that the author of this text (Severus of Antioch?) writes in order to respond to Porphyry's attack against Christianity by adopting his same kind of writing (i.e., a collection of oracles) and by naming his work 'theosophy', that is using a word introduced by Porphyry in the philosophical vocabulary: cfr. *Anonymi Monophysitae Theosophia. An Attempt at Reconstruction* by P.F. Beatrice, Brill, Leiden - Boston - Köln 2001 (VChr Suppl. 56), pp. XXVI-XXIX.

Through the analysis of some introductions and comments of book I, the author shows how the editor has used neoplatonic doctrines and Homeric scholia in order to prove that the oracles contain *in nuce* Christian truths. Such use of these texts belongs to the cultural environment of “*κοινωνία*” between Christians and Pagans, where collections of oracles became a literary genre well established, although each of them is a working copy, that can be changed according to the context and the purpose of the editor.

In her paper “Les Sept Sages prophètes du christianisme. Tradition gnomique et littérature théosophique” (pp. 257-79), A. Busine considers three oracles of the *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, attributed to the Seven Sages, seen as representatives of ancient wisdom, who, before philosophers but after Moses, talk about Christ. Adapting themes of the Hellenistic period (especially the topic of the Sages’ banquet), the oracles analysed by the author deal with the life and death of Christ,³³ the nature of God,³⁴ and the conversion of Athena’s temple into a Christian church.³⁵ Such forgeries prove that Christians have included the Seven Sages among those who had foreseen their religion.

Another collection of oracles incorporated in the *Theosophy* are the *Oracula Sybillina*, used by Jews and, then, by Christians. They are expressions of a monotheistic view, as proves M. Monaca in her study “Gli *Oracula Sybillina*: la profezia sibillina e l’unicità di Dio” (pp. 281-303). In the oldest of the surviving oracles, composed in Alexandria during the 2nd century BC, the Sybil describes the Jewish god in accordance with negative theology, Orphism and Platonism; then, part of them are reported also in the *Theosophy*,³⁶ where the Sybil and Apollo (who inspires her oracles) become the messengers of Christianity. Through these transformations, the *Oracula Sybillina* connects philosophical and pagan concepts to religious currents.

The Christian use of pagan oracles is examined also by C. Moreschini in his paper “Le citazioni oracolari nel *De Trinitate* dello Pseudo Didimo di Alessandria” (pp. 305-27). In his *De Trinitate*, the Pseudo-Dydimus confirms, against the Arians, the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians referring to the concepts of unknowability, excellence, unity and simplicity of God attested in oracular poetry, and quoting some oracles in order to single out the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this manner, he proves that Pagans and the Cappadocians have the same idea of God.

The central role of theological oracles in the debate between Pagans and Christians is the topic of “Gli ‘oracoli teologici’ fra pagani e cristiani – temi e problemi a confronto” (pp. 329-50) by G. Sfameni Gasparro. The theological oracles begin with Celsus, who builds up with them a sapiential tradition against Christianity. Plutarch also linked oracular revelation (and Apollo, as its source) to philosophical research; but it was Celsus who first referred to the wisdom of the past in order to attack Christians. This approach will be continued by Porphyry and, with a totally different stance, also by Eusebius and the *Theosophy*’s author. However, Porphyry’s anti-Christian project depends on Plotinus’ teaching: the latter uses theological oracles (seen as expression of divine will in II 9 [33], 9), to show how all reality is linked to the supreme principle, an assumption repeatedly stated in the *Enneads*. Also the anti-Christian purpose of the *Vita Plotini* seems to confirm the Plotinian roots of Porphyry’s polemic.

³³ Busine quotes $\omega 11$ contained in *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Iterum recensuit H. Erbse. Stuttgart-Leipzig 1995.

³⁴ Busine quotes χ_5 pronounced by Solon contained in *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*; the same oracle is attested also in another collection of oracles, where it is pronounced by Chilon: cf. χ_7 contained in *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*.

³⁵ Busine quotes π_1 contained in *Theosophorum Graecorum Fragmenta*.

³⁶ Monaca refers to *Theos.* III A 1 and A II Beatrice.

The volume ends with the study by C.O. Tommasi, “La preghiera delle Salamandre: Porfirio, Gabalis, Lévi, Landolfi. Per la fortuna di *Theos*. § 27 Erbse = I 24 Beatrice” (pp. 351-78), that reconstructs the transmission of a theological oracle from the *De Philosophia ex oraculis haurienda*³⁷ until the 20th century. This oracle, which concerns three kinds of beings born from the Father, is known thanks to the *Theosophy*,³⁸ and was reported in the Comte de Gabalis of Nicolas -Pierre-Henry de Montfaucon de Villars,³⁹ who joins the magic formula “begging of the four elements”, an evocation of the essential spirits theorised by Paracelsus. The aim of the transmitters of this oracle is to prove that the ancient Greeks knew monotheism *in nuce*. Then, through the grimoires (like the *Petit Albert* and the *Grimorium Verum*) the oracle is transmitted to the *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie* by Eliphas Lévi,⁴⁰ where it is known as “Oraison des salamandres” and, from there, in the gothic novel *Racconto d’Autunno* by Tommaso Landolfi.⁴¹ C.O. Tommasi highlights one of the possible routes of the theological oracles that come to the present also in the form of magic formulas.

An index of authors’ names closes the volume. This collection of papers provides an exhaustive overview on how Pagans and Christians made use of the theological oracles to legitimise their beliefs.

Giulia Guidara

³⁷ Tommasi quotes and analyses Porphyry, *De Phil. ex or.*, p. 143-147 Wolff = fr. 325F Smith.

³⁸ Tommasi quotes *Theos*. § 27 Erbse = I 24 Beatrice.

³⁹ Tommasi quotes N.-P.-H., Montfaucon de Villars, *Le Comte de Gabalis, ou Entretiens sur les sciences secrètes, avec l’adaptation du Liber de Nymphis de Paracelse par Blaise de Vigenère (1583)*. Édition présentée et annotée par D. Kahn, Honoré Champion, Paris 2010 (Sources classiques, 105), pp. 199-201.

⁴⁰ Tommasi quotes E. Lévi, *Dogme et Rituel de la Haute Magie*, Paris 1886, pp. 75-87.

⁴¹ Tommasi quotes T. Landolfi, *Racconto d’Autunno*, Adelphi, Milano 1995³, pp. 88-92.