

From Ancient *Hispania* to the Heaven of the Sun: The Influence of Orosius on the Works of Dante

“*Ne l'altra piccioletta luce ride quello avvocato de' tempi cristiani del cui latino Augustin si provide*” (Within that other little light is smiling that pleader of Christian times whose text was used by Augustine. *Dante, Par.* 10, 118-120). This reference to Paulus Orosius in Dante's *Paradiso* (Brugnoli 1998) is an important instance of the reception of Orosius' *Historiae Adversus Paganos* and an example of this author's fortune in the Middle Ages.

At the time of Dante, the *Historiae Adversus Paganos* was considered an authoritative historiographical work on ancient history and geography and was used by medieval scholars. The hundreds of manuscripts and the numerous translations, such as King Alfred's translation into Old English/Anglo Saxon, the so-called Old English Orosius (late 9<sup>th</sup>/early 10<sup>th</sup> century), and Bono Giamboni's into vernacular Italian (13<sup>th</sup> century), attest to the popularity of this work in the Middle Ages (Arnaud-Lindet 1990; Bately 1980; Fear 2010; Van Nuffelen 2012; Faini 2012). Orosius' theories, such as the idea of the intervention of divine providence in human matters and the concept of a universal culture focused on Christianity (Christendom), were also very influential in the Middle Ages (Deen Schildgen 2012).

Investigating Orosius' legacy and influence in Medieval texts is a vast undertaking. In this paper, I will focus mostly on the reception of Orosius' *Historiae* in Dante. In addition to the reference in *Paradiso* 10 the Florentine poet mentioned Orosius several times in his other works and there are several passages in which Orosius' work is not explicitly mentioned but is clearly the main source. I will investigate how Dante engaged with Orosius examining how Dante interpreted, adapted, transformed, and transmitted Orosius' *Historiae*. How did Dante's political

and ideological views influence the reinterpretation of Orosius' text and theories? How did earlier reception and translations (in particular Giamboni's) shape Dante's view of Orosius?

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