

Virgilius Seduliōrum: The Influence of Caelius Sedulius and Sedulius Scottus in adapting Virgil for a Christian Europe

It is almost universally accepted the Virgil was and remains a major influence in Western literature; what is less well established is how some of his techniques were borrowed and interpreted to suit later traditions and cultures. Commentary and disputative techniques and content help bridge the gap C(aelius)Sedulius has to close in combining the style of the pagan Virgil and the Christian content of his *Carmina Paschale* which dates to the fifth century CE. This text and its techniques go on to influence several styles of Latin and vernacular poetry into the European Middle Ages and beyond. There is an argument to be made that the *Carmina Paschale* set the standards for the later Biblical epics, including those by Dante and Milton. While the poetic techniques that show these epics as part of a tradition are well studied, the interpretive and argumentative strategies have received considerably less attention. The key elements in Sedulius' poetry are exegesis in the form of direct speech, and the synthesis of pagan and Christian auctores, techniques both closely related to medieval disputation. These techniques remain critical components of the epic poem in the Christian era, and Sedulius' techniques foreshadow the general treatment and understanding of Virgil throughout most of western Europe for the next 1500 years.

These elements are even more visible in the lyric poetry of Sedulius Scottus 4 centuries later, which exemplifies the influence of both the earlier C. Sedulius and Virgil. Scottus' lyric debate between the Rose and the Lily ("De Rosae Liliique Certamine") and his lyric conversation with the Muse ("Sacra Camena, refer") together with his commentaries on Priscian and Donatus show similar interconnections between the Christian and Classical content through

disputation and exploration of auctoritas. While these techniques may not have originated with either Sedulius, it was Caelius who initiated and preserved them in the epic form, and Scottus who followed in his predecessor's footsteps while adapting the techniques to more secular and lyric forms. What these two poets did in Latin would go on to influence a new generation and styles of epic and lyric poetry that would become popular in the medieval and later vernaculars and reach a wider audience.

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