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A Roman mother is inconsolable after the death of her only son. But to her great relief it turns out that he has not disappeared from her life completely: each night he visits her, talks to her, kisses and embraces her. When she expresses her happiness and gratitude about this to her husband, however, the latter takes offence at the disruptive presence in his house and hires a sorcerer, who uses magic to close the young man’s grave forever. The mother feels as if her son has died for the second time and charges her husband with mala tractatio or maltreatment. The speech for the prosecution in this fictitious lawsuit is Declamatio Maior 10, and Schneider’s work discloses it in an exemplary manner.

The core of the book consists, of course, of the Latin text, faced by a French translation that fortunately does not try to simplify the highly artistic, often laboured and convoluted original. This work of art is preceded by an introduction containing (almost) everything that is required to tackle this difficult, in many respects outlandish text. The introduction is concise, but nearly all the issues it touches upon return in greater detail in the substantial commentary.

Taking the first three officia oratoris as her starting points, Schneider begins by discussing dispositio. She gives a detailed survey of the declamation’s structure, which allows the reader to get a grasp of the complex argumentatio, but also of the chronology of the story as it pops up in the various narrative passages. These occasion Schneider herself to take a defiant—and convincing—stance against the opinions of earlier scholars, who dismissed the text as a typical product of the decline of eloquence and, moreover, flawed and corrupt. These scholars saw evidence for textual corruption in the repetitive, recurring elements in the declamation, the most striking of which is the double narratio. They assumed that these elements were the result of a messy manuscript tradition, in which separate developments of the same argumentum had in the course of time become conflated into one. Schneider for her part convincingly claims in the wake of Kragelund, Hömke and van Mal- Maeder that the single author of this
single text made deliberate use of the rhetorical device of *epidiegesis*: a
second *narratio*, which allows the declaimer to explore and exhaust the
dramatic possibilities of his theme, to regard the ‘facts’ from different
angles, and to pull out all the stops of his eloquence. And this eloquence is
not a typical product of the oft-lamented decline of rhetoric, she argues: the
author deliberately composed a declamation that was not aimed at
providing a model speech in a realistic case in order to prepare students of
rhetoric for the forum. Rather it was meant as a celebration of Asianism,
and “une sorte de manifeste littéraire dirigé contre Quintilien; la chose se
vérifiera ... dans chacun des choix stylistiques de ce rhéteur inconnu, qui
prend délibérément—et systématiquement—le contrepied de ses
prescriptions” (p. 15).

This style, which is discussed next under the heading of *elocutio*, is first
labelled as rooted in the Silver Latin tradition familiar from e.g. Seneca,
Quintilian, Petronius, Tacitus and Apuleius, but from Schneider’s
discussion it soon becomes clear that the specific characteristics of
declamatory style prevail. On the one hand, the text patently stems from an
oral tradition, which accounts for passages that are serrated, or on the
contrary phrased loosely, or contain a great number of communicative
devices aimed at involving the internal and external audiences. But on the
other hand, as a virtuoso rhetorical showpiece that must convey not only
*logos* but also *ethos* and especially *pathos*, it bears many of the marks of
the *genus grande*. This manifests itself first and foremost in repetition.
Thus we find synonyms “parfois *ad nauseam*” (p. 23) but also
sophisticated figures like *anadiplosis*, *epanadiplosis* and *sympleke*. *Pathos*
is further enhanced by frequent hyperboles, rhetorical questions,
exclamations, asyndeton, polysyndeton, and personifications. In fact, as
Schneider argues convincingly, the declamation is like many of its
companion pieces a hybrid of prose and poetry, ultimately informed by
Gorgianic prose with its extreme care for parallelism and antithesis,
expressed in verbose, rhythmic phrases with abundant *isocola*, *homoeeoteleuta*, and *homoepoptota*. Schneider offers a wealth of examples in
the notes that go with this section of the introduction. Many more can be
found in the commentary proper, and they are always discussed astutely
and with great attention for the traditions from which they stem.

The third section of the introduction, which concerns *inventio*, might have
been more elaborate: it could have provided more of a context to technical
aspects of the declamatory genre and devoted some paragraphs to the
socio-cultural setting, e.g. declamatory family relations and the
declamatory charge of maltreatment. Of course these have become familiar
subjects about which much has been written already, but for a novice to the
genre they provide essential background information. Instead Schneider
confinces herself to a discussion of possible explanations for the apparition
and a discussion of the ancient views and notions that would have
accompanied them. Accordingly, dreams, hallucinations, phantoms and
demons are passed in review. The son, it is concluded, is none of the
above—appearing in a tangible body that bears the characteristics of the
owner as he was in the flower of his youth, he is in fact one of the most
‘real’ apparitions known in Roman literature—but an ambivalent one: he is godlike because of his perfection and the silence and mystery that necessarily accompany his appearances, but since the latter take place in accordance with the five gradus amoris, he is also like a young lover. This ambivalence colours the declamation with both erotic and mystical overtones, to which due attention is paid in the commentary.

The final, and shortest, part of the introduction deals with the Latin text. It gives an account of the Latin text and also of the proposed emendations, which are few and sensible, doing justice to the work of Schneider’s predecessors. The section also discusses date and authorship of the text. The date Schneider proposes with for Major Declamation 10 is both original and ingenious: she proposes that the controversia was composed under the influence of Cod. Theod. III, 16, 1, which was valid between 331 and 363. This amendment of Roman divorce law by Constantine limited the ample possibilities for Roman matronae to divorce their husbands to cases where the husbands had committed murder, sorcery or desecration of a tomb—and the husband in this declamation is of course accused of all three. Schneider even ventures to take one step further and tentatively suggests that the declamation may have been written by Marius Victorinus, holder of the public chair in rhetoric under Constantine, who combined traditional pagan religion with Porphyry’s religious philosophy until his conversion to Christianity—and then had to renounce his faith under Julian. It is a pity that Marius’ name crops up in the commentary only once (n. 370 on the declamatory actio sepulcri violati) and not in order to provide evidence for his presumed authorship; one might suspect that the hypothesis arose after the commentary had been completed.

The commentary itself is rich, providing a text of not even 4000 words with no fewer than 479 endnotes. Quite a few of these concern the peculiar lexical, grammatical and rhetorical properties of the declamation, but most focus on its literary character and cultural context. Thus there are many excellent observations on tropes, figures, and rhythm; these are always analysed alongside the relevant rhetorical precepts and Schneider manages to find many passages about which she argues plausibly that the author deliberately deviated from, or even challenged, Quintilian’s tenets. A wealth of parallels, not just from declamations but from every thinkable genre, emphasize the text’s literary character and draw attention to the essence of declamation: a hybrid of rhetorical and literary properties, a product of the literary salons of the empire. The number of similarities in style as well as motifs and themes with Christian authors such as Lactantius, Arnobius and Jerome is surprising—or perhaps not, given the many religious preoccupations Schneider detects in the speech. Especially interesting, apart from the numerous observations about various religious practices, are the notes on sorcery and the supernatural. It is a great merit of the commentary that it goes beyond a narrow exegesis of the text at hand and sheds light on many aspects of the culture in which it was produced. The notes are always accompanied by a wealth of references to secondary literature, conveniently listed in the extensive bibliography that concludes this hefty volume. It is a welcome addition to the Cassino series.
of commentaries on the *Major Declamations*.

**Notes:**