

REDATING AUSONIUS' *MOSELLE**

Traditional dating of Ausonius' most famous and perhaps most important poem rests on several passages in the poem itself: 1. The opening of *Moselle* (1–22) recounts Ausonius' movements as he was journeying from Bingen to Trier. It is usually assumed that this journey had been undertaken in conjunction with a military campaign in which Ausonius and his pupil, Gratian, participated or which, more precisely, they observed around the year 368.¹ 2. Verses 409–11 refer to an office which has been often interpreted as a consulate, and to an eminent personality identified by most as Sextus Petronius Probus who became consul in 371.² 3. Verses 420–25 refer to a Roman military victory of a father and his son, usually taken to have been that of Solicinium in 368 in which the presence of Valentinian and Gratian is attested by Ammianus.³ 4. Towards the end of the poem (450) Ausonius mentions the emperor and his sons. Since Valentinian's second son was only born on July 2, 371, this line would have been written in that year or, at the earliest, in late 370. By scholarly consensus, then, Ausonius composed *Moselle* in 370/371.⁴ Yet, these references are not as decisive as the case so far made suggests, and in what follows I propose to re-examine them with a view to identifying afresh *Moselle*'s date or dates of composition and publication.

*To avoid cross references to the different numbering systems adopted by the editors of the complete works of Ausonius, I normally give the full title of the work in question. Unless otherwise noted, the quotations are all from Peiper's edition.

¹L. A. A. Jouai, *De Magistraat Ausonius* (Nijmegen 1938) 64f., as well as editions of *Moselle*: C.–M. Ternes, *Ausonius, Moselle* (Paris 1972) 27ff.; and Peiper (Teubner, Leipzig 1886) LXXXVI, based on a reference in *Griphus* to composing the poem *in expeditione* (*Praef.* 20), and on *Bissula* and the "Danubian" epigrams (28, 31), all of which imply personal attendance in the campaigns resulting in a journey back to Trier.

²Jouai (note 1 above) 135–36 (also considering Maximinus, the *praefectus annonae*); C. Hosius, *Die Moselgedichte des Ausonius und des Venantius Fortunatus* (Marburg 1926, repr. Hildesheim 1967) 79; Peiper (note 1 above) LXXXVII; A. Pastorino, *Ausonio, Opere* (Torino 1971) 532, n. 75.

³Pastorino (note 2 above) 532, n. 76; Jouai (note 1 above) 116–17; Ternes (note 1 above) 93.

⁴C. Schenkl, *MGH AA* 5.2 (1883) XV; Peiper (note 1 above) LXXXVII; Evelyn White, *LCL* (1919) XVII; Hosius (note 2 above) 22–23; Jouai (note 1 above) 116–22; Pastorino (note 2 above) 88.

To determine *Moselle's* date of composition it is necessary to turn first to the paragraph in which Ausonius alludes to news of recent victories over the enemy beyond the Neckar, Lupodunum and the sources of the Danube (418ff.):

Caeruleos nunc, Rhene, sinus hyaloque virentem
pande peplum spatiumque novi metare fluenti
fraternis cumulandus aquis. nec praemia in undis
sola, sed augustae veniens quod moenibus urbis
spectavit iunctos natique patrisque triumphos,
hostibus exactis Nicrum super et Lupodunum
et fontem Latiis ignotum annalibus Histri.
hinc alias aliasque feret.

This news appears to have been further connected with Ausonius' own journey from Bingen to Trier (*Mos. 1ff.*). The victories mentioned in *Moselle* were, as it seems, those which Ausonius commemorated in two short poems on the sources of the Danube (*Epigs. 28, 31*).⁵ While in *Moselle* the vanquished foe is not named, the epigrams clearly refer to the Suevi. Ausonius further expects the initial victories to be followed by others, this time over the Franks, the Chamaves, and the Germans in general (434–35). Problems arise when Ausonius' information is compared with that supplied by Ammianus.

In the detailed account which Ammianus devoted to Roman campaigns along the Rhine and the Danube during Valentinian's early years, there is no mention of Lupodunum.⁶ Moreover, the chief source of trouble was not the Suevi but the Alamanni. It has been usually assumed that Ausonius refers to the victory of Valentinian over the Alamanni at Solicinium in 368,⁷ the only specific battle which Ammianus records and where the presence of both Valentinian and Gratian is attested by him. But the discrepancy between the geography of the battle in Ausonius and Ammianus and Ausonius' complete ignorance of the true identity of Rome's chief enemy seems surprising. Such a discrepancy suggests that the victories to which Ausonius refers in verse 422

⁵ *Comp. Mos. 435: tunc verus habere limes*, and *Epig. 28.8: nec Rhenum Gallis limitis esse loco*.

⁶ *Amm. 27.10.1ff.*; A. Demandt, "Die Feldzüge des alteren Theodosius," *Hermes* 100 (1972) 110.

⁷ Hosius (note 2 above) 80; Evelyn White (note 4 above) 258; and note 3.

(*iunctos natiq̄ue patrisq̄ue triumphos*) may have preceded the more decisive engagement of Solicinium. Ammianus' silence may be then attributed to the indecisive nature of the early phases of the campaign. This possibility also demonstrates that the case is not as clear-cut as has been formerly assumed. In view of Ausonius' pious wish to witness similar victories in the future,⁸ a date fairly early in the reign of Valentinian, when Roman campaigns against the Alamanni were launched for the first time beyond the limes, appears feasible. The year 368, or perhaps a slightly earlier date, should then be envisaged at least for this part of *Moselle*.

Another clue which has been enlisted in dating *Moselle* is the only other reference to the imperial house in the entire 484 verses of the poem. Towards its end Ausonius tells his readers that, upon retirement, he expects to be amply rewarded by the emperor and his sons (449–50: *Burdigalam cum me in patriam nidumq̄ue senectae / Augustus, pater et nati, mea maxima cura . . . mittent*). Early commentators on the text have already noted the problems which verse 450 poses. If, as has been usually assumed, the *nati* of verse 450 are Gratian and Valentinian II, why does Ausonius refer to a single Augustus when both Valentinian I and Gratian bore that title, the latter since August 367? Ausonius has proved, in fact, rather careful to refer to rulers by their precise title. Thus in *Epig.* 28.3, Valentinian I and Gratian are designated as *Augustos . . . natumq̄ue patremq̄ue*, while in another poem written during Valentinian's reign (364–75), Valentinian I, Valens and Gratian are called respectively *Augustus genitor, geminum sator Augustorum* (*Vers. Pasch.* 25).⁹ *Protrepticus* 90, composed at some date after 380, is likewise careful to ascribe Ausonius' appointment as a quaestor to *Augustis, patri natoq̄ue*, Valentinian I and Gratian. *Moselle* 450 further refers, as it seems, to both Gratian and Valentinian II as Ausonius' charges, a claim that by all accounts would have been rather farfetched as early as 371, when the latter was born. So far as we know, Valentinian II had never been tutored by Ausonius, and even had Ausonius cherished hopes of such a task, it would not have become feasible until at least 377.

⁸ *Mos.* 426: *hinc alias aliasq̄ue feret* (*scil.* the Rhine). *Amm.* 27.10.6.

⁹ J.-L. Charlet, "Théologie, politique et rhétorique: la célébration poétique de Pâques à la cour de Valentinien et d'Honorius, d'après Ausone (*Versus Paschales*) et Claudien (*De Salvatore*)," in *La poesia tardoantica* (Messina 1984) 259–87, esp. 261, n. 11 on the imperial triad of the poem.

Various solutions have been proposed in order to make sense of this baffling verse. One editor emended *nati* to *natus*, thus excluding Valentinian II from the poem altogether.¹⁰ Another emended *Augustus* to *Augusti*, thus making Valentinian II an Augustus before he was actually elevated to this rank.¹¹ The majority of modern editors prefer to leave *Augustus* in the singular and *nati* in the plural and to date the poem accordingly to the year 371, the date of Valentinian II's birth. The difficulties suggested above, unfortunately, have not been thus surmounted. I would suggest that this part, at least, of *Moselle* may have been composed later than the rest of the poem and added (or revised) when it was officially published.

A close examination of the context within which verse 450 was conceived reveals an optimistic vision of a distant future in which the poet is not only back at Bordeaux, writing another poem in praise of the Moselle, but has returned there honored with a consulate (451–52: *fas-cibus Ausoniis decoratum et honore curuli / mittent emeritae post munera disciplinae*).¹² Yet any reference to Ausonius' own consulate at any point until very late in the reign of Valentinian I, when he was appointed quaestor,¹³ and certainly as long as he was a mere tutor or a *comes* at court, would appear to be an extreme form of wishful thinking based on unrealistic hopes. It would further confirm the possibility of a time gap between the original date of *Moselle*'s composition and its publication or official circulation in a revised form.

This suggestion gains corroboration from two further references, each entailing a different time factor. While verses 422–26 emphasize how recent was the news of imperial victories beyond the Rhine (368), verse 439 describes Ausonius as an "old guest" of Belgica, a reference which would have been strange had it been written only a year or two after his arrival in Trier.¹⁴ Another euphemistic if not an anachronistic

¹⁰Venetian edition of 1507 (V.4).

¹¹H. de la Ville de Mirmont, *D. M. Ausonii Mosella. La Moselle d'Ausone* (Bordeaux 1889).

¹²A. Chastagnol, "La carrière sénatoriale du Bas Empire," *Tituli* 4 (1982) (*Epigraphia e ordine senatorio*) 185 on the possibility of *adlectio inter consulares* or even a suffect consulship, both untenable in view of the wording of this verse.

¹³On the date of quaestorship (April 375), T. Honore, "The Making of the Theodosian Code," *ZSS* 103 (1986) 203–10; 219.

¹⁴Vs. 439: *Belgarum hospitii non per nova foedera notus*. (Admittedly, this phrase would also fit a date in 370/371).

reference is contained in verses 456–57 (*addam praesidiis dubiarum condita rerum, / sed modo securis non castra, sed horrea Belgis*). Such a vision hardly tallies with the chronology of Valentinian's activities along the north–eastern frontiers. Although it is difficult to precisely date the series of fortifications which sprang up in the later part of the fourth century along the Rhine and the Danube, none of the fortified camps was likely to have been converted into a granary at any point during the reign of Valentinian. In fact, *Moselle* seems on the whole a poetic record of the writer's first impressions of his new surroundings, on his first journey from Germany back to Trier.

Such a process of revision, prior to publication, of a poem composed at an earlier date seems to have been a fairly regular feature of Ausonius' working methods. The problems involved in establishing the textual tradition of Ausonius' works are notorious and made even more difficult by the possibility of the author's own changes and editions during his lifetime.¹⁵ Some hints of different stages of publication of the same work are indicated in the existence of more than one dedication and in the sending of different versions to the named addressees. This appears to have been the case in regard to the *Technopaegnon*, an earlier and shorter version of which Ausonius dedicated to Paulinus, while a later, expanded version was sent to Pacatus. The possibility of a third and longest version may be envisaged when the collection of the pieces under the title of the *Technopaegnon* was published with a general preface to the reader.

There are, in addition, several direct references to revisions before publication. A letter to the emperor Theodosius refers to constant revisions by the author himself,¹⁶ and a letter to Pacatus implies that Ausonius expected a few chosen readers to suggest, if not to carry out, revisions and emendations.¹⁷ *Griphus*, which Ausonius dedicated to

¹⁵M. J. Byrne, *Prolegomena to an Edition of the Works of D. M. Ausonius* (New York 1916); S. Prete, "Problems of the Text of Ausonius," *L'Ant. class.* 28 (1959) 243–54.

¹⁶Vs. 17–20: . . . *quis nolit Caesaris esse liber, / ne ferat indignum vatem centumque lituras, / mutandus semper deteriore nota?* Perhaps more than a mere *captatio benevolentiae*.

¹⁷*Ludus*, Ausonius Drepanio 3–4: *aequanimus fiam te iudice, sive legenda, / sive tegenda putes carmina, quae dedimus. Comp.* the letter to the same Pacatus at the head of the *Eclogues: ignoscenda teget, probata tradet: / post hunc iudicium timete nullum* (vs. 17–18), which Evelyn White regards, somewhat unjustly, as "a polite farce" (note 4 above) XXXV.

Symmachus, is prefaced by a lengthy letter in which the poet indicates a considerable gap between the time of the poem's composition and that of its publication with the new dedication to Symmachus. After its composition but before its official publication, *Griphus* circulated without the author's permission and as a result was mangled, presumably at the hands of various copyists.¹⁸ Ausonius may have hoped to correct the situation through circulation of an official copy sent by himself to a close friend. It is interesting to note that *Griphus* has been transmitted by several manuscripts, each with variant readings.

If a time gap between an earlier version of *Moselle* which the poet recited at court perhaps not long after his arrival, and a later revised version which circulated in Italy appears feasible, it is still necessary to examine the other clues which have been used to support the dating of the poem. By far the most elusive one lies in lines 407–14, above all in the obscure allusion of 409–11 to an eminent personality who has been taken as a consul in conjunction with an emperor, together with the assumption that a man who “bears a title all but the highest” must perforce be a consul.¹⁹ The modern choice of a suitable candidate promptly fell on Sex. Petronius Probus, four times prefect and a consul in 371 with Gratian.²⁰ But such an identification appears to depend on a misinterpretation of the relevant verses. Moreover, the context of the whole passage, in which further references are made to other office bearers, needs to be considered.

In these lines (409–11) Ausonius cannot refer to a consul but to an office more closely linked with the city of Rome. A consul surely had

¹⁸*Griphus*, Ausonius Symmacho: *igitur iste nugator libellus iam diu secreta quidem, sed vulgi lectione laceratus perveniet tandem in manus tuas.*

¹⁹

399 memorabo
407 aut Italum populos aquilonigenasque Britannos
praefectarum titulo tenuere secundo; quique
caput rerum Romam, populumque patresque,
410 tantum non primo rexit sub nomine, quamvis
par fuerit primis: festinet solvere tandem
errorem Fortuna suum libataque supplens
praemia iam veri fastigia reddat honoris
nobilibus repetenda nepotibus.

The translation in text of Evelyn White (note 4 above).

²⁰Above note 2.

the highest authority not only in Rome but, nominally at least, over the entire empire. Elsewhere when Ausonius does refer to a consulship, his or that of Probus, he is much more specific.²¹ Moreover, along the lines of the "consul" interpretation the phrase "*primum nomen*" of verse 410 (*tantum non primo rexit sub nomine*) might be taken to refer to a distinction between a *consul prior* (presumably Gratian) and a *consul posterior* (presumably Probus), a distinction which appears difficult to support. While in several respects an appointment as a *consul prior* may have carried weight, as Ausonius emphasized in his speech of thanks to Gratian for his own consulship, in other respects the very fact that one was a *consul ordinarius* was all that mattered. No inscription, perhaps understandably, differentiates between a *consul prior* and *posterior*, and a law of Gratian assigns the highest rank in the order of imperial dignities to a consul—patrician regardless of his consular status.²² After all, in an age in which emperors and members of their families monopolized this post, the very distinction of being elected a consul must have counted a great deal.

An additional point may be raised. Any interpretation of *Moselle* 409–11 as a reference to a consul seems to entail a further assumption, equally untenable. Verses 411–14 call on the goddess Fortuna to rectify her "error" by conferring on the unnamed personality the *fastigia honoris* (*festinet solvere tandem / errorem Fortuna suum libataque supplens / praemia iam veri fastigia reddat*). In light of the "consul" view, these verses must mean a second consulship, this time presumably as a *consul prior*. Yet, when Ausonius once ventures to predict a second consulship, he is extremely careful to leave this honor in the hands of the emperor.²³ In fact, second consulships were so rare an event in the

²¹*Ep.* 12 (Peiper) to Probus, vs. 20–26; *Ordo*, 20, 39–40.

²²Ausonius, *Grat. actio* 10; 12 (surely the only advantage which Ausonius could claim over his colleague in the consulship, Q. Clodius Hermogenianus Olybrius, son of the famous Proba and father-in-law of the consul of 371). A. Cameron et alii, *Consuls of the Later Roman Empire* (Atlanta 1988) 22 claim that seniority was an imperial decision of the senior emperor. This was surely the case in late 378 when Gratian was not only the senior emperor but, *de facto*, the sole one as well. *CTh* 6.6.1 (382) grants seniority of rank on the sole merit of the consulship *per se*. *ILS* 1265, one of the inscriptions in Probus' honor, refers to him as *consul ordinarius*.

²³*Ep.* 12 to Probus, vs. 69–72. Strangely enough, the prophecy of vs. 96–99 of a grant of consulship to Probus' son became a reality, not, however, through Gratian but through Honorius. It would have been much more plausible to predict a consulship for a consul's son than a second consulship.

fourth century that Ausonius' pious wish must have appeared then, as now, nothing more than a form of exaggerated flattery. It was a matter of common knowledge that repeated consulships were reserved for the imperial family and highly favored generals. Civilians, particularly during Valentinian's reign, had barely a chance to become consul once, let alone twice.

Moselle 409 indicates that we are dealing with an office whose sphere of jurisdiction was strictly Rome (*quique caput rerum Romam, populumque patresque / . . . rexit*). The most important office connected with Rome was that of the *Praefectus Urbis Romae*, and if this is the office which Ausonius here designates, then the one which Fortuna is supposed to confer at some future date must be the consulate, the highest honor in the imperial hierarchy of rank. Yet, while prefects of the city of Rome could in theory reach the consulate, not a single one was nominated for this honor during the reign of Valentinian. If a different sequence of offices was here meant, then we should consider an office which would lead not necessarily to the consulate but rather to that of the chief "Roman" office. Under Valentinian, two offices seemed to gain in power in the city of Rome, the vicariate of the city and the prefecture of the grain supply. Both officials were involved in judicial procedures, often at the expense of each other, and either could have reasonably expected to be promoted to the urban or to any other of the high ranking prefectures.²⁴ The subject, therefore, of verses 409ff. could have been either *Vicarius Urbis Romae* or a *Praefectus Annonae*.

Perhaps the origins, if not the precise identity, of the person referred to in verses 409–14 can be clarified if one looks at the whole passage in which the reference is embedded. As part of the praise of the river, Ausonius extols the people who lived along its banks: farmers, lawyers, curials, teachers, and three individuals, one serving in Italy, another in Britain and the third, as stated above, in Rome. The first two have been usually taken as the vicars of Britain and Italy respectively, each holding a title inferior to that of the prefects (*Italum populos aquilonigenasque Britannos / praefectarum titulo tenuere secundo*, 407–8). Moreover, it seems to be clearly implied that these personalities had

²⁴Seeck (Symmachus, *MGH AA VI.1*, p. CXXLI, n. 716) already proposed to see in these verses an allusion to a vicar eventually promoted to the rank of the PUR. His choice fell on Bappo, PUR 372, probably a Gaul from Belgica.

some sort of link with Belgica, probably by virtue of living there if not of having been born there. This alone should exclude Probus for good.

We know of only three *vicarii Italiae* between 364 and 375, Faventius, Italicus and Catafronius, if the latter's tenure of office falls around 370, as Mommsen maintained.²⁵ Nothing is known of the first two but the third has been connected with Ausonius' own family through his aunt, Julia Catafronia.²⁶ If the connection is more than a mere resemblance of names, it is significant that a relative of Ausonius reached this sort of political prominence as early as 370, if not before, and that he should be connected with northern Gaul. In this light, the selection of Ausonius as an imperial tutor and his subsequent promotion under Valentinian gain plausibility.

The only *vicarius* of Britain known to us is Civilis, who was sent there *nomine rectorum Britannias pro praefectis* (Amm. 27.8.10) sometime in 368.²⁷ Civilis, to judge by the connotation of his name, was in all likelihood a Gaul and quite possibly from Gallia Belgica. He would have suited the unnamed personality of Ausonius rather well. His mission coincided with a crucial moment in the annals of Roman Britain following barbarian raids and internal troubles. Civilis and Catafronius, then, may be proposed as the two vicars hidden behind the reference of *Moselle* 407–8 to "prefects of second rank" in the years 368/370. The third personality with whom Ausonius associates an office in the city of Rome must remain, for the time being, an unsolved mystery. In the annals of the *praefecti annonae* there is a gap between September 367 when Aurelianus filled the office (*CTh* 13.6.5) and 370 when Maximinus is attested as the prefect.²⁸ Our information regarding the vicars of

²⁵Faventius (July 365, *CTh* 11.1.12); Italicus (February 374, *CTh* 13.1.10). Catafronius' tenure is dated by Mommsen to 370 and by the editors of the *PLRE* to 376/377. Of the laws addressed to him, two (*CTh* 8.5.31; 11.10.2) are dated in the ms. to 370, the third consulship of Valentinian I and Valens; but if the emperor was Valentinian II, then 376 may have validity. It is to be noted that *CTh* 16.2.24 (March 377), equally addressed to Catafronius, does not give his rank at that time. He may have been still a vicar or the bearer of another office.

²⁶The name is rare. I know of only one other Catafronius, a Praef. Aegyptii in 356/357 (*PLRE* I, 186). For the connection with Ausonius, *PLRE* I, 186.

²⁷Amm. 27.8.10; A. R. Birley, *The Fasti of Roman Britain* (Oxford 1981) 333–39 for sending Civilis already in 367. He regards the vicar of *Mos.* 407–8 as a different person.

²⁸Maximinus' tenure as a *Praefectus Annonae* falls between November 366, when he is attested as a governor of Tuscia, and 370 when he became the *Vicarius Urbis Romae*. Since the average tenure was just over a year, it is possible to postulate at least another vicar before him.

Rome is equally sketchy, and between Magnus, last attested in April 367, and Aginatus, first attested in late 368 (*Coll. Avel.* 8), another person could have held the vicariate. The first urban prefect who may have been a Gaul is Bappo, whose prefecture is attested in August 372 (*CTh* 6.4.21), a date which, on the present interpretation, excludes him from consideration.

An early date for the bulk of *Moselle* (verses 1–437) is also understandable in view of events which took place in mid–367. In an unparalleled constitutional move Valentinian, who had fallen ill, raised his young son to the rank of Augustus and heir apparent to the dynasty just established.²⁹ If a similar propensity to prefer his own family to other more suitable candidates met with approval when Valentinian appointed his younger brother a co–emperor, the elevation of a nine–year–old boy posed problems. In fact, when Valentinian was seriously ill, more likely candidates were proposed, including the Gaul Rusticus Julianus, then the *Magister Memoriae*, and Severus, then *Magister Peditum* (*Amm.* 27.6.1–3). It is significant that the first man to express his assent to Valentinian’s choice publicly, Eupraxius, was immediately rewarded with a higher office.³⁰ Again, it is hardly a coincidence that, as soon as Valentinian recovered, he prepared a full–scale expedition which must have inspired hopes of decisive victories over the Alamanni who had been menacing the northern frontiers since 364. The new dynasty needed military credit, and a poem praising the quiet frontiers in times which were far from peaceful was certainly a welcome addition to its public image, particularly when the final outcome of the Roman attack was not yet certain.

Moselle, then, reflects a concrete situation blended with the poet’s own impressions and reflections on his new environment, all this with an underlying nostalgic strain. It created a picture of a sedate and uneventful life which unfolded, somewhat paradoxically, near active and dangerous frontiers. In his unequivocal emphasis on peace and tranquility, Ausonius performed another service for the ruling dynasty, whose members carried on incessant wars precisely to ensure the smooth continuity of internal order. *Moselle* may have been recited at a moment when news of Theodosius’ achievements in Britain reached the

²⁹*Amm.* 27.6 (August 24, 376, date given by the Consul. Const. under that year. *MGH AA IX, CM I, 241*).

³⁰*Amm.* 27.6.14.

court but before Valentinian's own campaign against the Alamanni. With this in mind, the picture of peace based on future victories gained credibility and enhanced the standing of Valentinian at a crucial moment in his career.

Once the enemy was expelled beyond the lines and a series of fortifications built to ensure the safety of Gaul, *Moselle* was apparently stored away, only to surface again in Italy late in the reign of Valentinian when Ausonius rose to prominence at the court as a quaestor. It was then that Symmachus complained of not having received a personal copy of *Moselle* and of Ausonius' apparent failure to dedicate any work to his Italian admirer.³¹ Although it appears that in spite of the two men's personal acquaintance during 369/370, when Symmachus resided at Trier, Symmachus seems unaware of the poem before it reached Italy years later. But such a curious fact merely reflects Ausonius' working methods. In fact, the poem which he finally dedicated to Symmachus was composed just before Symmachus reached the court, and was also apparently unfamiliar to its recipient before he actually received it later in Italy.³² Like *Moselle*, this poem (*Griphus*) was stored away, to be rescued years later when Ausonius gained fame not only as a poet but also as an influential politician at court. The version of *Moselle* which reached Symmachus' hands seems to have been different from the one transmitted by the *Excerpta* manuscript family, the only mss. containing *Moselle*, for he draws attention to two features of the poem which he found particularly striking. One is the famed catalogue of the fish (85–149); the other is an account concerning the sources of the Moselle. Now, in its present form, there is just one very brief reference to these sources (470–71), and this can hardly qualify as an important part of the poem.

To sum up, each of the points which have been traditionally adduced to support a date for *Moselle* presents difficulties which must be

³¹*Ep.* I, 14 (Seeck). Perhaps in this light a more precise date can be proposed for this letter, which Callu (ed. of Symmachus, vol. I) assigns generally to post-370. A later date, say around 375, would also suit better the rest of the correspondence between Ausonius and Symmachus, which seems to belong, for the most part, to the reign of Gratian.

³²*Griphus* was written while Ausonius was "in expeditione" (Ausonius Symmacho at the head of the poem). The occasion must have been the military expedition which Gratian attended, accompanied by his tutor, and before Symmachus arrived in Trier in late 369. Above note 1.

accounted for. On the present interpretation, the poem was initially composed around the year 368, recited then at court, but circulated some years later in a revised and possibly slightly expanded version which reflects Ausonius' own situation towards the end of Valentinian's reign.³³

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³³ *Comp. the stages of composition of Prudentius' Contra Symmachum*, J. Harries, "Prudentius and Theodosius," *Latomus* 43 (1984) 69ff.