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Letters and Intertextuality: the "Correspondence" of Ausonius and Paulinus

This paper will examine the exchange of epistles and poems between Ausonius and Paulinus as a privileged place for reflection on the intertextual character of Latin literature, and in particular on the relationship between intertextuality and epistolarity. The "correspondence" between Ausonius and Paulinus relating to the end of their friendship comprises three of Ausonius' *Epistles* and two *Carmina* by Paulinus, and makes an extensive use of references and allusions to other Latin texts, to the extent that the writers seem to refer to them more than to the "events" at stake, and appear, at times, more in dialogue with those authors of the past than with their nominal addressee. This paper will briefly illustrate this phenomenon, e.g. in the previously unnoticed relationship with Statius, *Silvae* III, 5 of Ausonius, E. 25 Schenkl (=23-24 Green), but also of Paulinus, C. 11 with Virgil, *Eclogue* 1 and with Lucretius. Those relationships are substantiated with meaning and convey a message that integrates and adjusts the message directly expressed in the poems. Questions arise, though, relating to the "epistolarity" of the correspondence, and to how and to what extent the intertextual preoccupations of the poems can be accommodated to their epistolary nature. The reflection on these issues must include our definition of "letters" and of "epistolarity", and a discussion of the fact that Ausonius' poems are today published as *Epistles* and Paulinus' corresponding poems are published as *Carmina*. On one hand, the fact that the same kind of intertextuality appears to operate in the texts of both authors directs towards eliminating generic distinctions between them and regarding them as a unit, the only way in which the intertextual dialogue can be fully grasped and appreciated in its entirety. On the other hand, if it is true that an important feature of "epistolarity" is the necessity to cast images of writer and addressee, the epistolarity of the poems can be recuperated in the appreciation of the continuous re-interpretation and re-telling that takes place in the texts of the relationship between the two correspondents (as well as of their images and self-images), a re-telling of which an integral part is the intertextuality already outlined.