

DAVID ROHRBACHER: *The Historians of Late Antiquity*. Routledge, London – New York 2002. ISBN 0-415-20458-5 (hb), 0-415-20459-3 (pb). VIII, 324 pp. GBP 60 (hb), 18.99 (pb).

The volume under review here surveys the lives and writings of a selection of Roman historians of the fourth and fifth centuries AD. Included are Latin writers as well as Greek, pagans as well as Christians. Considering the fact that most monographic overviews of Roman historiography accord very little attention to writers later than Ammianus Marcellinus, often cutting off in the late fourth century with the so-called division of the Roman Empire, Rohrbacher's book undoubtedly constitutes an important addition to the standard literature in the field. Hopefully it will also contribute towards shaping a new awareness of Roman history and culture beyond AD 395, a purely conventional terminus of modern scholarship frequently assigned far too much weight.

It should be made clear at the very outset of this review that R. has produced a carefully researched and very accessible work of scholarship although, in my opinion, he takes an overly restricted approach to his subject. In "treating only what seems still to be the core of the late antiquity" (p. 1), he has made a large number of very regrettable exclusions. It is quite true, as the author himself points out (*ibid.*), that the very concept of *Late Antiquity* is not always a very precise one with regard to its extension both chronologically and geographically, but at least in the Anglo-Saxon world, it has come to denote a reasonably well-defined period in a specific area. Since the publication of Peter Brown's seminal and highly influential study *The World of Late Antiquity. From Marcus Aurelius to Muhammad* (London 1971; cf. G. W. Bowersock et al. [eds.], *Late Antiquity. A Guide to the Post-Classical World*, Cambridge, Mass. – London 1999, ix) the late antique period is usually considered a distinct era in the Mediterranean World, extending from about AD 200/250 to at least the seventh century in the Late Roman (or Byzantine) Empire and in the western areas formerly constituting Roman provinces. As for the book under review here, a consequence of its narrow chronological scope is that many important and interesting historians nowadays generally associated with Late Antiquity – most notably Cassiodorus, Marcellinus Comes and Procopius – are left out of consideration. Whereas the author's disregard of the year AD 395 is commendable, he still assigns too much weight to the year AD 476 as the end of the Roman Empire. Whatever its political implications, which are still a matter for debate, the year does not by any means represent a significant cultural break in important areas in the West, including Italy.

It should also be pointed out that, also in dealing with the fourth and fifth centuries, i.e., the core of his period, the author makes several curious omissions. First, however, let us turn to the organization of the book. In addition to a substantial introduction (pp. 1–13), duly contextualizing the historiography of the period dealt with, the book consists of nineteen chapters. The first twelve focus on individual historians, each of whom is assigned to one of the following categories (see p. 11 ff.): a) classicizing historians, b) authors of *breviarum*, c) ecclesiastical historians and d) apologetic historians; no true historical biographers or writers of chronicles are included. Dealt with in separate chapters (1–12, pp. 14–149) are Ammianus Marcellinus (category a), Aurelius Victor (b), Eutropius (b), Festus (b), Eunapius (a), Olympiodorus (a), Priscus (a), Rufinus (c), Socrates (c), Sozomen (c), Theodoret (c) and Orosius (d). As several of these authors are little known to anyone outside the specialist community, whereas many well-known exponents of late antique historiography are

conspicuously left out, the selection seems a little bit odd. Important omissions include Lactantius, Hydatius, Philostorgius, Gelasius of Caesarea, the *scriptores (scriptor?) Historiae Augustae* and, most strikingly, Eusebius and Jerome. The exclusion of Augustine is also regrettable. His apologetic and theological work *De civitate Dei* is, of course, a very atypical work of Roman historiography, but reflecting as it does extensively on Roman as well as human history it also stands out as the earliest substantial treatise of historical theory in western literature; no general overview of western historiography would ignore it.

The format of the chapters presenting individual writers is an exposition of the known biographical data of the historian in question followed by a consideration of the nature of his work. At the end of each chapter, there is a reference to text and translation; it is important to point out here that this is a short bibliographical appendix and not a full inventory of modern critical editions, containing as it does merely one citation of an edition of the Greek or Latin text in question and citing other than English translations only if such does not exist.

After the presentation of his selected writers, R. turns to a series of thematic discussions of the historiography of the fourth and fifth centuries. Chapter 13 (pp. 150–162) is devoted to a general consideration of historiography, dealing with late antique historians' uses of speeches and documents, and the ways in which they assert their credentials and abilities as historians. Chapters 14–19 contain discussions of a series of major themes in the works of the historians R. covers: government (pp. 163–178), the Roman past (pp. 179–187), religion (pp. 188–206), barbarians (pp. 207–236), and the emperors Julian the Apostate (pp. 237–273) and Theodosius I the Great (pp. 274–288). A striking omission in this section of the book is a consideration of Constantine I the Great, apparently reflecting the exclusion of Eusebius noted above.

At the end of the book, which contains no maps or illustrations, there is a bibliography (pp. 289–306) providing an extensive inventory of relevant research (however, with a heavy emphasis on Anglophone literature) as well as a well-organized analytical index (pp. 307–324), which decisively enhances the book's value as a work of reference on Roman historiography in Late Antiquity, or rather, in the fourth and fifth centuries.

Kaj Sandberg

JEAN-PIERRE CALLU: *Culture profane et critique des sources de l'antiquité tardive. Trente et une études de 1974 à 2003*. Collection de l'École française de Rome 361. École française de Rome 2006. ISSN 0223-5099, ISBN 2-7283-0738-5. 768 p. EUR 108.

Voici un volume bienvenu. Y sont rassemblées 31 études selon un ordre thématique, partagées dans les groupes suivants: après l'article "Ecrire l'histoire à la fin de l'Empire", paru en 2001, suivent cinq études sous la rubrique "Symmaque", puis 13 études sur "Histoire Auguste", six études sur "Mythistoria", cinq études sous la rubrique "Domaine grec". Le volume se termine par un appendice de deux études (une sur Orose, l'autre intitulée "Être romain après l'Empire (475-512)", qui représentent de longs comptes rendus de deux publications collectives italiennes.

Jean-Pierre Callu est un excellent historien de la culture de l'antiquité tardive. C'est pourquoi on salue avec grande satisfaction la publication de ses études les plus importantes.