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Philip Rousseau (editor), *A Companion to Late Antiquity*. Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. Pp. xxiv & 709. £95. ISBN: 978-1-4051-1980-1 (Hbk.)

Reviewed by Neil Allies

This work was published around the same time as another volume on Late Antiquity that was co-edited by the same author.¹ In acknowledgement of that work, the editor expresses in his introduction his desire for this work to be different to others. He has certainly succeeded. The approach was to ask contributors, all leading specialists in their field, to write about their current research, rather than predefined topics, and as such the result reflects faithfully up-to-date advances and academic fashions of scholarship. The thirty-nine papers, all in English, represent a substantial contribution to Late Antique scholarship and, most importantly, a useful and encouraging panorama of current academia. Due to the large number of papers, they cannot all be reviewed individually here. A table of contents has been supplied below.

The work is divided into five thematic sections. Part I: The View from the Future, consists of five chapters covering historiographical and methodological approaches. Part II: Land and People, consists of nine papers covering social aspects such as gender and identity, as well as archaeology and urbanism. Part III: Image and Word, is made up of nine papers covering literary and linguistic aspects. Part IV: Empire, Kingdom and Beyond, consists of eight papers detailing primarily the relationship between Rome and her neighbouring 'Others', and the transition to successor states. Part V: The Sacred, is made up of seven papers looking at issues of Christian history and interaction with non-Christian populations.

¹ Rousseau, P. and Papoutsakis, M. (eds.) 2009. *Transformations of Late Antiquity. Essays for Peter Brown*. Farnham: Ashgate

Amongst the varied contributions, there are the inevitable chapters on periodization and historiography. These remain lively and essential areas of Late Antique scholarship, reflected neatly by the fact that the first volume of the *Journal of Late Antiquity*, launched in spring 2008, contained various papers about what actually constituted its namesake. The volume under review here does not disappoint students looking for essays on more traditional problems, and there are contributions on Rome and its frontiers, successor kingdoms, Christians and non-Christians and the development of the early Church.

There are two aspects of the work that make it particularly stand out. First, its scope is chronologically and geographically comprehensive, covering both the Eastern and Western Empires, and successor kingdoms up to the eighth century. This is a neat reflection of current historiography, and one that demonstrates just how far Late Antique studies have advanced in the last twenty or thirty years. Second, many of the topics associated traditionally with the *Völkerwanderung* period do not appear; there are no contributions on the army, economics or trade, neither are there any papers focussed specifically on prosopography. Instead, it is refreshing to note that they have been replaced with other important and innovative topics that are rarely treated outside specialist works, or are not yet sufficiently mainstream to be included in other handbooks. Some of those papers in Parts II and III merit particular mention because they represent areas not only of important future research, but also ones with which the student will need to be increasingly comfortable as the scope of Late Antique studies becomes broader and more sophisticated. They include papers on language use and sociolinguistics, literacy and written culture, power structures and gender and the family. The inclusion of the early Muslim world and the rise of Islam is noteworthy, a sign that the boundaries of Late Antique studies are becoming ever more comprehensive.

Overall, the editing is extremely good and any issues that do arise do not detract from the contributions. These include the mixture of American and British English spellings, sometimes within the same chapter, and variants such as 'late antiquity' and 'Late Antiquity'. However, these would probably not be noticed by anyone other

than the most pedantic reader. Each chapter is followed by a bibliographical note, some of which are more comprehensive than others, but the enormous bibliography at the end of the work is comprehensive and up-to-date. The bibliography seems purposefully Anglophone, although there are some offerings, primarily in German and French, as appropriate. Similarly, ancient sources have normally been translated. As with any work of multiple authors, individual styles will always shine through, although the stylistic differences between the authors are sometimes striking. B. Leyerle (p. 112), for example, translates the Greek *anachōresis* as “cutting loose and taking off”, a colloquialism that would likely be discouraged from the essays of the undergraduates who constitute a primary audience of the work. A further issue of multiple authorship, especially in a work made up of groundbreaking articles, is that authors display varying degrees of acquaintance with some fields, who are then contradicted in a subsequent paper about that same topic. For example, D. Trout (p. 175) uses the phrase “Vulgar (or demotic) Latin”, a term that was rejected by philologists many years ago and which sits oddly next to P. Burton’s far more up-to-date discussion of linguistic periodization and nomenclature a few chapters on. Similarly, R. Cribiore (p. 236) laments the ‘broken monopoly’ of a rhetorical education by the fourth-century, whilst K. Pollman (p. 260) refers to the essential position of a rhetorical education to Late Antique interpreters of texts.

This is an excellent volume, and one that is most likely to appeal to beginning students of the Late Antique world, particularly an undergraduate audience. The contributions provide clear and concise introductions to each respective topic and will give a reader a good grounding in the basics. Perhaps its biggest success is that the book provides a unique overview of the current fashions and progresses in scholarship, and in this sense it is an excellent introduction to the topic as it is currently studied.

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