

Johnson, Scott Fitzgerald, ed. *Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism*. Aldershot, Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2006. Pp. xii, 215. \$99.95. ISBN 0-7546-5683-7.

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This collection of essays derives from a conference held at Keble College, Oxford on June 5, 2004. The conference was designed to come to a consensus on the characteristic features of the literature of Late Antiquity and, conversely, to determine what the diverse types of literature produced in this period can tell us about Late Antiquity. The participants focused on all types of literature and did not restrict themselves to literature that could be classified as "high literature." The vitality of the literature in Late Antiquity required the editor and authors to produce a volume of essays that would attempt to organize the conference papers and the texts they covered along three principles: dynamism, didacticism, and classicism. The authors are well aware that the ten essays do not and are not meant to cover all types, categories, and genres. Rather, the supposition of this examination is that the papers present "evidence of literary hybridity, of compilation (or at least consolidation), of engagement with languages and literatures beyond Greek itself, of intense reception and adaptation of older literature (classical, Jewish, and early Christian), and especially of experimentation with form" (8). The papers by Jones, Whitby, and Fitzgerald were commissioned specifically for this volume. I shall focus on some of the essays that fulfill the objective of the conference and volume. My selection in no way is meant to be interpreted that some of the essays are better than others, but what is most intriguing about this book is the central theme of the entire work rather than the particular contributions.

Averil Cameron poses the fundamental questions for a collection of this type: What is meant by literature? What counts as literature? She cautions that one should not approach late antique literature with preconceived notions or already existent agenda. A broad approach is needed, one that includes all kinds such as high-level histories, "unpretentious saint's Life," homilies, theological treatises, and "even conciliar acts" (14). Additionally, consideration should be paid to those works that are written in

languages (Syriac, Coptic, Georgian, Arabic) other than Greek and Latin. Moreover, if any valid inquiry into this period and its literatures is attempted, there needs to be a disassociation between the rise Christianity and the "deep-seated suspicion" that it led to a "decline in 'classical' rationalism" (17). Adam H. Becker gives the reader an interesting and persuasive discussion of the "movement of texts and ideas out from the Greek center" that fueled creativity and intellectual drive in other parts of the world. This initial impetus would then return to the center abundantly regenerated and reconfigured. Becker examines Theodore of Mopsuestia's sway on Christian intellectual culture in Constantinople, Alexandria, and the Latin West "via the transmission of his thought through the school of Nisbis" (29), which was located in the Sasanian Empire. He is careful and correct in noting that there needs to be a distinction between direct Theodorean influence and what he terms "'Theodorism' of the sixth century" (39) when describing any relationships. This regenerative mechanism Becker nicely names "the open translinguistic Christian literary *oikoumene*" (44).

Aaron P. Johnson suggests that Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica*, in addition to being a magisterial defense against early Christianity's "most dangerous intellectual foes" (67) that is full of excessive citations and documentation, is an attempt to forge a Christian identity for his time. This work, Johnson writes, could be used by Christians not only to defend themselves against whatever charges were leveled, but also both to turn those charges against their accusers with "a force unparalleled elsewhere in ancient literature" (71) and to affirm the faith of new converts to Christianity. A genre that is similar in its didactic intent, Yannis Papadoyannakis argues, is the little-studied *erotapokriseis*, which instructs through question and answer. This literary category, which was one of the most widely used instruments for the dissemination of knowledge in antiquity, has some of its most important texts neither properly edited nor translated into modern languages. This essay does not give an overview of the genre, but rather advocates some possible future lines of enquiry based on Papadoyannakis' review of the genre's format, setting, potential catechetical nature, relation to the dialogue form, and organization of knowledge. The author has planted new and interesting seeds that should produce motivating research. Of special interest is Ruth Webb's contribution on Chorikios of Gaza because his rhetorical corpus does not easily fall "into the category of literature as commonly understood" (108). Therefore, Webb appraises Chorikios in

the broadest feasible terms while at the same time highlighting his place in the declamatory tradition. In the latter area it is clear that Chorikios employs the "stories and characters of classical literature and mythology" as a "vital source of material for rhetorical manipulation" (110). The rhetorician also developed a fictional world for his speeches and mimes that he peopled with characters that reflect Averil Cameron's idea that late antique literature expressed an awakened interest in the individual. Chorikios' literature, however it may be defined, engaged society and culture.

Adrian Hollis does a fine job in his evaluation of the history of the epyllion from the third century BC to c. AD 500. This is one of those essays that serves the discipline well: it is complete and accurate yet it is not bogged down with redundant or exhaustively speculative detail. Hollis investigates the epyllion work of Callimachus, Eratosthenes, Theocritus, Catullus, Ovid, Pancrates, pseudo-Oppian, Nonnus, Marianus of Eleutheropolis, Colluthus, Musaeus, Blossus Aemilius Dracontius, and others. Mary Whitby also supplies an excellent essay to this collection with her in-depth study of the St Polyuktos Epigram that is preserved in the *Greek Anthology* as *AP* 1.10. She performs a thorough job in examining its themes, intention, meter, style, and authorship. Whitby places the epigram in historical, literary, and architectural contexts. Scott Fitzgerald Johnson concludes the collection with an essay on the connection between the *Life and Miracles of Thekla* and novelistic writing and thereby places the similarity of techniques and common structural elements employed in both genres into a literary-historical context. He demonstrates convincingly that there was an interchange or reciprocal amalgamation of practices in composing the narratives. The novel, he writes, offered an appealing genre to "pagan, Jewish, and Christian writers alike" (194).

It is often difficult to give a comprehensive review of a collection of essays, since books of this type tend to be uneven in their contributions. Or, individual articles may be too specific in their arguments and thereby not fully address the proposed main theme or objective of the collection. However, I can state that this book accomplishes what it set out to do. It gives the reader a new way to investigate and consider late antique authors, texts, and literary trends. It helps the reader better understand what was happening in Late Antiquity and goes a long way in counteracting the pejorative view often attributed to the authors and events of Late Antiquity.

This is a collection worth having and should serve well those interested in this period.

List and contents of contributors:

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson: Introduction.

Part 1 Dynamism:

Averil Cameron: New Themes and Styles in Greek Literature, A Title Revisited

Adam H. Becker: The Dynamic Reception of Theodore of Mopsuestia in the Sixth Century: Greek, Syriac, and Latin

Christopher P. Jones: Apollonius of Tyana in Late Antiquity

Part 2 Didacticism:

Aaron P. Johnson: Eusebius' *Praeparatio Evangelica* as Literary Experiment

Yannis Papadoyannakis: Instruction by Question and Answer: The Case of Late Antique and Byzantine *Erotopokriseis*

Ruth Webb: Rhetorical and Theatrical Fictions in the Works of Chorikios of Gaza

Part 3 Classicism:

Elizabeth Jeffreys: Writers and Audiences in the Early Sixth Century

Adrian Hollis: The Hellenistic Epyllion and Its Descendants

Mary Whitby: The St Polyeuktos Epigram (*AP* 1.10): A Literary Perspective

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson: Late Antique Narrative Fiction: Apocryphal Acts and the Greek Novel in the Fifth-century *Life and Miracles of Thekla*

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