



**Review: [Untitled]**

Reviewed Work(s):

*Greek Biography and Panegyric in Late Antiquity* by T. Hägg; P. Rousseau  
Scott Johnson

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and the possibility of regaining other lost territories. This approach challenges older views of an irreversible downward spiral in Roman affairs after Justinian's death, culminating in the disasters caused by the spread of Islam in the seventh century. Other chapters reinforce the picture of stability in the last decades of the sixth century. The decision to end the volume about A.D. 600 (esp. xix; 111) makes good sense from this perspective.

A second strength of the volume is the economic reassessment offered by Ward-Perkins in chs 12, 'Land, Labour and Settlement', and 13, 'Specialized Production and Exchange'. He carefully situates the evidence within scholarly debate, emphasizing that life in the countryside was not excessively conservative, and that the economic world of the sixth century changed rapidly. He stresses that each region of the Roman and post-Roman world had its own economic history and that no single factor can explain the often dramatic changes in prosperity, trade, and production.

Certain subjects are noticeably absent to the great detriment of the volume, however. There is no extended treatment of women or gender issues, a surprising omission and hard to justify considering the importance of these subjects and their prominence in the narratives of other historical periods. (Ch. 14 on family life adopts primarily a legal perspective; ch. 25 discusses women in a monastic context.) Similarly, there is no space devoted to Jews, for whom this period was as transformative as for polytheists or Christians. (Synagogue architecture is briefly discussed in ch. 31.) While individual chapters address visual arts (ch. 30) and building and architecture (ch. 31), literature is ignored, although sources are discussed throughout. If the volume had been longer, and the *CAH* format had been further altered, chapters on cosmology, historiography, the creation of social memory, and the organization and transmission of knowledge would also have made useful additions.

When the *CAH* series was envisaged many decades ago, Late Antiquity did not exist as a discrete field. The appearance of *CAH* 13, *The Late Empire A.D. 337–425*, ed. Averil Cameron and Peter Garnsey (1998) and *CAH* 14, thus represents a milestone in the development of Roman studies. These volumes provide a firm foundation for further research, and so they invite us to wonder where work in late antique studies might be headed. One direction is certain. Now that the landscape is charted so successfully there will be a rush of settlers carving out their plots. Many monographs will appear, and soon there will be as many studies of Chrysostom and Procopius as there are of Demosthenes and Tacitus. With luck, these will be joined by fine critical editions of late antique texts in Syriac, Coptic, Armenian, and Hebrew, as well as Greek and Latin. While the sense of adventure may be somewhat diminished as homesteads multiply, the gains for scholarship will be enormous. The only risk is an inward-looking, Festung Late Antiquity perspective.

A second direction (and doubtless there are many others) would be to maintain the sense of exploration. This can best be done by looking beyond the borders so well delineated by this volume. To find these new frontiers we should not presume that all readers will have begun their journey in classical Rome or that their destination is the Middle Ages. The wealth of historical materials subsumed under the rubric of Late Antiquity deserves to be more widely known and will be of enormous interest to scholars who study other times and places. In American universities, there is currently great interest in global history which is becoming a discipline in its own right. Such issues as the decline of the nation state and the control and flow of capital in world economies; the complexities of ethnography, identity, and allegiance in a post-colonial world; and the resurgence of imperial ideologies (to name only a few) invite comparison with late antique circumstances. In the same spirit of discovery, scholars of Late Antiquity must remain alert to new methodologies and analytical approaches developing in other disciplines. The possibilities are richer than the *CAH* format permits.

*CAH* 14, then, is a reliable, amply documented, and self-aware volume that offers clear guidance through a landscape of remarkable variety and interest. In many ways — and as far as it goes — it is definitive, yet the contributors present materials that often transcend the limits of this rather old-fashioned book. The volume is far more than a rock solid base for further research by scholars already in the field. It invites thoughtful reassessment of the era it so vividly describes so that students of other eras might benefit from its lessons.

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T. HÄGG and P. ROUSSEAU, *GREEK BIOGRAPHY AND PANEGRIC IN LATE ANTIQUITY* (The Transformation of the Classical Heritage 31). Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000. Pp. xii + 288. ISBN 0-520-22388-8. £30.00/US\$50.00.

Modern scholarship on ancient biographical literature had effectively ignored late antique and Christian texts until the publication of Patricia Cox Miller's groundbreaking study, *Biography in Late Antiquity* (1983). The two dominant books on classical biography previous to Cox Miller, Friedrich Leo's *Griechisch-römische Biographie nach ihrer litterarischen Form* (1901) and Arnoldo

Momigliano's *The Development of Greek Biography* (1971; expanded edn 1993), both deal with Jerome's *De viris illustribus* but basically finish their accounts in the High Empire. Following Cox Miller's study, however, there has been a heightened awareness among scholars of the wealth of biographical literature in the later period, especially as regards Christian interpretations of earlier Greco-Roman models. The present collection, edited by Thomas Hägg and Philip Rousseau, makes a first-rate contribution to the field and admirably synthesizes the previous scholarship. In this way it evaluates much of what has gone before it and provides a convenient starting point for students and teachers alike. Alongside this volume should be placed two other important post-Millerian collections published too late for its contributors to take them into account: *Portraits*, edited by M. J. Edwards and Simon Swain (1997), and *The Propaganda of Power*, edited by Mary Whitby (1998). The latter concentrates solely on the genre of panegyric in Late Antiquity and in this way serves to fill a gap left by the other two collections — the title of H. and R.'s collection somewhat overestimates its actual reach.

All of the papers make substantial arguments, by either exhuming neglected biographical texts or offering important re-readings of essential works. While it is impossible given the restraints of this review to provide a summary of each paper, it would be a disservice to this rich volume not at least to include its individual paper titles. Thus, following an engaging, twenty-eight page introduction by H. and R., eleven papers proceed as follows, each with their own bibliography and notes: G. Clark, 'Philosophic lives and the philosophic life: Porphyry and Iamblichus'; M. J. Edwards, 'Birth, death, and divinity in Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*'; Averil Cameron, 'Form and meaning: the *Vita Constantini* and the *Vita Antonii*'; P. Rousseau, 'Antony as teacher in the Greek *Life*'; S. Rubenson, 'Philosophy and simplicity: the problem of classical education in early Christian biography'; F. W. Norris, 'Your honor, my reputation: St. Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral oration on St. Basil the Great'; D. Konstan, 'How to praise a friend: St. Gregory of Nazianzus' funeral oration for St. Basil the Great'; J. Børtnes, 'Eros transformed: same-sex love and divine desire. Reflections on the erotic vocabulary in St. Gregory of Nazianzus' speech on St. Basil the Great'; R. J. Panella, 'The rhetoric of praise in the private orations of Themistius'; P. Cox Miller, 'Strategies of representation in collective biography: constructing the subject as holy'; G. W. Bowersock, 'The Syriac life of Rabbula and Syrian Hellenism'.

What one notices immediately is the concentration of texts covered: three papers on Nazianzus' *Funeral Oration*, two on the *Life of Antony*, and two on Porphyry's *Life of Plotinus*. These groupings provide the bulk of the analysis and bring out the texture of the Cappadocians' (in particular) differing techniques of literary appropriation. By contrast, the four unconnected papers treat disparate topics and seem to have less to contribute to this 'conference within a conference'. Nevertheless, Bowersock's painstaking description of the 'realistic landscape' of Hellenism constructed by a Syriac biographer of the fifth or sixth century A.D. is absolutely central to the cultural *mélange* that was Late Antiquity and is somewhat overshadowed by the volume's concentration on the fourth century A.D. Likewise, the genre of collective biography, which has so much to do with the way in which hagiographical texts of all types have come down to us (through the Byzantines' adoption of this technique), is only addressed by Cox Miller and (briefly) by Averil Cameron. The latter's insistence on the inseparability of form and meaning in late antique literature is an analytical statement with far-reaching implications and a highlight of the volume.

As H. and R. no doubt realize, they have only revealed the tip of a very large iceberg. For instance, there is too little discussion of the influence of the Gospels on late antique literature (but see 7 and 66–9). Additionally, the enormous corpus of Apocryphal Acts goes unmentioned, even though the late fourth and early fifth centuries A.D. saw a distinct rise in their popularity, as is evident from the numerous translations, paraphrases, and new Acts written during this period (e.g., the *Acts of Philip*). One would thus have appreciated an acknowledgement of the diversity of literary influence in Late Antiquity, particularly *within* the Christian tradition and not just *upon* it from outside. In this respect, it is surprising that 'Memory', as a locus of Christian (and Biblical) self-fashioning, does not play a more prominent role in the proceedings. However, aside from these few criticisms, the volume attacks with vigour the perennial question of pagan-Christian interaction, and a student of any period could ask for no more trustworthy initiation into the central problems of timeless texts like the *Life of Plotinus* and the *Life of Antony*. This book is, therefore, a brilliant illustration of the value of late antique studies for intellectual and literary history writ large, a value to which Peter Brown's series *The Transformation of the Classical Heritage* consistently attests.