

JAN R. STENGER, *EDUCATION IN LATE ANTIQUITY: CHALLENGES, DYNAMISM, AND REINTERPRETATION, 300–550 CE*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. viii + 325. ISBN 9780198869788. £75.00.

Jan Stenger examines how late antique authors theorised education and debated its role in the lifelong formation (*Bildung*) of an individual and within Roman society more broadly. At the heart of the study is S.'s objection to the idea — so pervasive in modern scholarship — that education remained static and unchanged into the late antique period; he instead argues for a dynamism and innovation in late antique pedagogical theories and ideologies. S. does not give an account of the effects of these late antique debates, or how they were put into practice, but rather focuses on the evolution of the educational discourse itself. S. conceives of education not primarily as the instruction given at the schools of grammar, rhetoric or philosophy, but as the lifelong quest for self-perfection. S. takes a holistic approach, considering evidence from both Christian and pagan authors from across the Mediterranean, and the discussion of this remarkably wide array of evidence is grounded in different theoretical frameworks, from the cultural-historical approach of Bourdieu to gender studies, nineteenth-century Germany educational philosophy and pedagogical theories from the 1970s.

Discussing catechetical instruction, Julian's educational interventions and Sidonius Apollinaris' educational attitudes, ch. 1 considers how late antique authors developed educational ideologies when positioning their communities and constructing identities amid the transformations of late antique society. Ch. 2 delves deeper into the relationships between education and religion. S. explores how Christian thinkers responded to and adapted traditional aspects of *paideia*, resulting in a totalising religious reconceptualisation of education and its role in upbringing and formation. The third chapter looks at male authors' presentation of the lives of exemplary women, including Hypatia, Macrina, Melania the Younger and Marcella. The authors who wrote to and about these women showcased how they learned outside the traditional classrooms, and what they gained in such alternative educational frameworks. In this way, these literary representations helped to reorient notions of *paideia*, pointing to the uselessness of classical schools in the path of self-perfection.

In ch. 4, S. considers texts that engage with the idea of education as a way of life. S. argues that Libanius, Themistius, Himerius, Synesius and Macrobius promote the idea that 'education, if correctly pursued, could be a totalizing force in life, affecting the person's entire existence, rather than being a circumscribed compartment of one's being' (141). At times, S. over-emphasises the novelty of these authors' conceptualisation of education as a formative process and lifelong endeavour. There is not quite as sharp a break with past practice as is sometimes presented: an important part of classical education was the formation and socialisation of the Roman youth, and scholars have long studied how the lessons of grammarians and rhetors shaped Romans' self-perception and their broader behaviours (e.g. Maud Gleason's (1995) *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome*). Similarly, S. presents his late antique thinkers as being in opposition to a prevailing contemporary idea that education was merely about the acquisition of skills and confined to the walls of the classroom (e.g. 186, 189, 288). Straightforward acquisition of skills may be a reasonable description of training in shorthand (although see A. C. Dionisotti, *Expositio Notarum* (2022)) or perhaps elementary schools, but grammatical and rhetorical education went far beyond rote learning — literary education pervaded every aspect of elite Roman self-identity, morality and socio-political culture. Likewise, self-knowledge and self-formation had been central to philosophical schooling across the eastern empire throughout classical antiquity. In S.'s discussion of the practice of the philosophical life and the performance of *paideia*, one would have expected engagement with Kendra Eshelmann's *The Social World of Intellectuals in the Roman Empire* (2012) and Lieve Van Hoof's 'Performing Paideia: Greek Culture as an Instrument for Social Promotion in the Fourth Century A.D.' (*CQ* 63 (2013), 387–406).

Ch. 5 explores how Macrobius, Themistius, Gregory of Nyssa and Boethius saw diverse formative encounters and the imitation of exemplary models as a means to self-perfection. Ch. 6 considers the interplay between education and history. S. shows late antique authors' awareness of the 'lateness' of Late Antiquity, and the fact that they were living in a new era, separated from the classical age in which the texts of the classical canon were written. According to S., these notions were reinforced through discourses on education and how to deal with the texts of the *veteres*. This chapter builds convincingly on previous studies of the distinctiveness of Late Antiquity, the development of a new artistic and literary aesthetic and 'the birth of the late antique mind' (283).

A final quibble — which does not detract from the quality of the book as a whole — is that S.'s discussions of Gaul are not as well developed or nuanced as those dealing with other regions: for example, the arguments about Sidonius and the integration of barbarians (42–53) are sometimes oversimplified and out-dated and do not interact with much recent scholarship on this issue (e.g. that of Veronika Egetenmeyer or Tabea Meurer), and the characterisation of Ausonius as living in a 'fragmented late Empire' (143) is problematic, since Ausonius' Gaul was at the heart of the western empire, with the imperial residence in Trier for much of this period.

S.'s novel approach to education — focusing on contemporary theorising rather than the historical realities of schools — is a welcome contribution to the study of Graeco-Roman education. Moreover, S.'s detailed studies of an impressively wide range of authors, texts and genres make this book a valuable resource for any scholar interested in the intellectual and cultural history of Late Antiquity.

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YULIYA MINETS, *THE SLOW FALL OF BABEL: LANGUAGES AND IDENTITIES IN LATE ANTIQUE CHRISTIANITY*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xvi + 418. ISBN 9781108833462. £90.00.

Despite ancient historians' growing interest in language and attitudes towards languages in recent years, there have been few studies devoted exclusively to Late Antiquity (the work of Fergus Millar being a notable exception). This is a surprising lacuna, particularly since late antique historians generally have had a broader linguistic training than most classicists. Yuliya Minets ably shows how to make use of that linguistic training, and how much there is to say about the role of language in late antique thought and practice.

The Tower of Babel of the title of this book is both one of the subjects of discussion and one of the articulating principles of the work. As the ostensibly monoglot or diglossic worlds of Greek, Roman and Hebrew/Aramaic speakers came into contact with one another, there was an increased recognition of and interest in the diversity of languages. Aristotle's seemingly insatiable curiosity did not extend to languages other than Greek. When Quintilian was writing, an educated Roman was expected to know Greek, but there was no need for further linguistic proficiency. Christian authors writing in Latin might have downplayed the importance of Hebrew (Rufinus even argued, against Jerome, that the Latin Old Testament should be translated from the Septuagint), but they could not ignore its existence. Some members of Christian congregations translated sermons for their neighbours, holy men were sought out by those who did not speak their language, and scholars and theologians read and translated texts between Latin, Greek, Hebrew and Syriac.

*The Slow Fall of Babel* is mainly concerned with the question of how this increased awareness of linguistic otherness changed views of language and language diversity, and how it was interpreted through a Judaeo-Christian world view. The major achievement of the work is to have tracked the views of early Christian writers in Greek, Latin and Syriac on language, showing how earlier Classical and Biblical views were adapted and reinterpreted. This book will not be the first place to turn to for those wanting to find out about language contact and linguistic change during the period; there is no discussion of, for example, code-switching in Coptic letters or Visigothic interference in the Latin of Spain. That is not to say, however, that M. ignores the issue of what is happening to the language in the street, and there is a great deal here that is of interest on wider questions of bilingualism, language use and language change in the first millennium after Christ.

After an introduction detailing research questions, terminology and the geographical and temporal scope of the work, M. devotes the first two chapters to setting the scene. The first, devoted to the 'socio-linguistic landscape of the ancient Mediterranean', gives an overview of the language situation at the dawn of the Christian era and the range of languages with which early Christian missionaries came into contact. The second, on languages and identities, traces Greek, Roman and Jewish ideas on language, with particular attention to how far language was used to constitute notions of communities and identities and how far speakers were aware of other languages. Both