

value that motivated Ausonius's composition of parts of his corpus, which have been rejected as spurious or dismissed as uninspired. Yaceczko also considers the two virtues of the liberally educated man, namely *verecundia* and *παρρησία* (*parrēsía*), arguing that *παρρησία* is evident in the poems written in the voice of a *grammaticus* within the established boundaries of the teacher-student relationship. These same virtues, Yaceczko argues, were the key to a successful public career; in the fourth (79–118) and fifth chapters (119–151), he contends that Ausonius's poetry composed in the context of the imperial court demonstrates his mastery thereof. The former chapter examines in depth the *Mosella*, interpreting it at a triumphal procession in verse, as well as a subtle and sensitive commentary on the challenges of life in the imperial circle; the latter compares the *Cupido Cruciatu*s first with the *Georgics* as source and then with the *Concubitus Mavortis et Veneris* as reception. Although important for establishing Ausonius's relationship to Reposianus, this chapter touches only briefly on the way in which Ausonius skillfully composed a poem that would have been acceptable both to pagans and Christians and so contributes least to the monograph's argument. The sixth chapter (153–206) examines in depth the cultural milieu in which Henri Marrou lived and thought and the ways in which it shaped his analysis of the fourth century; the famous rift between Ausonius and Paulinus is reimagined along these lines as a conflict not between lukewarm religious affiliation and authentic zeal but between sincere adherence to two different cultures, two different paradigms of Christian commitment. The conclusion (207–219) attempts to capture Ausonius's temperament and defend his reputation, which would have been higher had he lived in an different age and had only his most superlative creations been preserved. Ausonius's neglect, as it seems, suggests more to us that he was one untimely born than any deficit of talent or authenticity.

The work has been edited fairly well, but there are a handful of errors. See missing quotation marks in fn. 14 (9); "friends and high places" for "friends *in* high places" (68); the omission of book in a reference to the Aeneid's Trojan Games: *Aeneid* 582–603 instead of *Aeneid* 5.582–603 (96); a period where there ought to be a colon (132); the typo "naturally" (157); a missing "not" in the phrase ". . . 'civilization' in the sense used by ethnologists who attempt [*not*] to make or imply value judgments about the people they describe. . ." (161); "seep" for "seem" and the typo "becuase" (165).

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***The Slow Fall of Babel: Languages and Identities in Late Antique Christianity.* By Yuliya Minets. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2022. xvi + 418 pp. \$120.00 cloth; \$36.99 paper.**

Yuliya Minets brilliantly examines how Christian elites experienced and conceptualized linguistic differences in the luxuriantly polyglot world of Late Antiquity. She illuminates the gradual rise to prominence of languages other than Latin and Greek, such as Coptic, Armenian, Gothic, and Syriac, as carriers of intellectual and theological investigation

within a Christian frame. Her purpose is to explain how “Christian intellectuals ‘used’ language to forge their religious identities” (11). The consequences of the gradual change in attitude about the world’s languages, for which the biblical story of the Tower of Babel in the book’s title is a metaphor, had far-reaching effects upon the development of many far-flung Christian speech-communities and so upon the shaping of the late antique world and what followed. Minets illuminates familiar material in unexpected and exciting new ways. All students of Late Antiquity will benefit from reading this deeply learned study.

The book’s six complex, richly documented chapters and conclusion successfully integrate different scholarly fields. Chapter 1, “Meeting the Alloglottic Other: The Socio-Linguistic Landscape of the Ancient Mediterranean and the Spread of Christianity,” juxtaposes the varied linguistic environment of the late antique world with the bilingual linguistic map of power, in which Latin was dominant as the language of law and Roman identity and Greek served as the *lingua franca* in the East. Minets provides an excellent survey of the linguistic landscape, a “multi-colored patchwork of spoken dialects” (19) across which Christianity spread, eventually reaching Ireland, China, and Ethiopia from its Mediterranean and Near Eastern core. Some of these cultures had ancient literary traditions, while others were illiterate. Some were Christian, some not. Minets explains how making them orthodox was a linguistic challenge recognized by Christian writers.

Chapter 2, “Languages and Identities in Greco-Roman and Jewish Antiquity,” explores how “the synthesis of Greek, Roman, and Jewish linguistic perspectives became a baseline context and a formative factor in the development of Christian ideas on foreign languages and their speakers” (98). Minets shrewdly describes ancient Jews and Greeks at two ends of a spectrum. From the Second Temple period, the linguistic universe of Jews was necessarily multilingual because they lived as minorities in large, polyglot empires. The monolingual Hellenistic Greeks, on the other hand, had never been subordinate to foreign cultural influence. The Roman Empire was effectively bilingual, letting Greek coexist with Latin in the East as a language of rule and prestige culture. In none of these cultures, however, did language entirely determine identity. Against this background, Christians were eager to develop theories of language origin and diversity for their own purposes.

Chapter 3, “The Tower of Babel and Beyond: The Primordial Linguistic Situation, the Original Language, and the Start of Linguistic Diversification,” discusses how Christian intellectuals used biblical stories, particularly that of the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:1–9), to create a theologically meaningful account of the multiplicity of human languages. Minets discusses the status of Hebrew among Christians, the problem of primordial unilingualism, and debate about the language of God. She provides particularly valuable discussion of the history of Hebrew in Christian discourse. Minets notes that in Late Antiquity, Christian intellectuals had not yet begun to think of the confusion of tongues as a misfortune.

Chapter 4, “Speaking in Tongues in Christian Late Antiquity,” explores how Christians saw the apostolic gift of tongues as a counterpart to the Babel story that made universal communication possible and helped situate Christianity within a polyglot world. Christians debated the miracle of Pentecost (Acts 2:1–13), when the word of God could be heard by all listeners in their own languages. Among the consequences were a greater awareness of language in forming group identity and a divergence between western and eastern Christianity about language boundaries and Christian unity.

Chapter 5, “Foreign Languages and the Discourse of Otherness,” addresses the book’s basic question of understanding what being Christian meant when different communities of the faith spoke languages foreign to each other. Focusing on Greek, Latin, and Syriac writers, she notes how all languages were thought capable of carrying the divine message. This gradually changed in the fourth century, and in the fifth, theological controversies began to treat languages as markers of confessional identity. In Greek, Latin, and Syriac Christianity, different ideologies of language emerged that linked growing doctrinal disparities to notions of heresy. The ties between language and credal affiliation were not absolute, however.

Chapter 6, “The Language of Saints and Demons,” turns to Christian hagiography and the connection between holiness and language use in the Christian imagination. In Late Antiquity, demons spoke foreign languages and holy persons performed miraculous linguistic feats.

In her final chapter, “Conclusion: “What’s in the Language?,” Minets summarizes and highlights major points of her previous discussion of linguistic awareness among a relative handful of Christian intellectuals. She offers a particularly valuable discussion of the languages of heretics, wisely noting that although orthodox and heterodox churchmen alike sometimes associated heresies with certain linguistic groups, these associations were largely rhetorical and not accurate indicators of actual practice. Minets also puts forward the useful concept of constantly readjusting communities of linguistic sensitivities, referring to “those who share similar language-related socio-cultural stereotypes and subscribe to approximately the same views and ideas about linguistic history and linguistic diversity” (326).

In this major study, Yuliya Minets makes linguistic theory, patristics, imperial history, Christian theology, and the history of a broad range of languages and literatures equally accessible as part of the same late antique story. It is an impressive first book, innovative and well written, that is sure to stimulate much positive discussion and further research. The author deserves high praise, and the book deserves a wide audience.

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***Death of the Desert: Monastic Memory and the Loss of Egypt’s Golden Age.* By Christine Luckritz Marquis. Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2022. 212 pp. \$65.00 hardcover.**

Scholars who have studied the *Apophthegmata Patrum* or *Sayings of the Desert Fathers* will be familiar with the notion of monks withdrawing into the desert to achieve spiritual perfection and the trials that accompanied such a life. Specifically, they would be well aware of these monks’ vulnerability to demons. Luckritz Marquis challenges this model for understanding the earliest monks with the argument that the monks of Scetis, Nitria, and Kellia feared not just violence from demons but also from ecclesiastical authorities. Starting with Theophilus’s attack upon the monks of Nitria in 401 CE,