

***Ausonius Grammaticus: The Christening of Philology in the Late Roman West.* By Lionel Yaceczko. Gorgias Studies in Early Christianity and Patristics 78. Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2021. xii + 241 pp. \$114.95 hardcover; \$114.95 e-book.**

This monograph, a development of the author's dissertation, explores in depth the question of Ausonius as an author, integrating professional, political, and personal perspectives into a holistic view of a man whose public life and poetic persona were mutually informative. In short, Yaceczko argues that Ausonius was a profoundly conservative man at the end of an era; proficient in the canon and *mores* of the traditional Roman world, he became the philologist *par excellence* of his generation. To those who interpret Ausonius as a reactionary, resistant to the Christian transformation of education that was to come, Yaceczko responds that Ausonius was a man of his generation; to analyze Ausonius by the standards of the next is to fail to understand him. On the other hand, in response to those who dismiss Ausonius's works as mere trifles, Yaceczko argues that the Gallic scholar's poetry contains a depth that is simultaneously powerful and prudent in an unstable world.

Yaceczko's arguments are deeply rooted in Ausonius's own writings. Each chapter (excepting the introduction and conclusion) is guided by a close reading of a single or a few poems, as well as a unifying concept. The chapters are arranged chronologically such that one progresses through Ausonius's intellectual biography as well as his literary output. Yaceczko furthermore grounds his argument throughout on a historically sensitive portrayal of the professional ideals of the fourth-century *grammaticus*. He thus avoids the pitfall of taking Ausonius's surface meaning as an uncomplicated reflection of his environment. Conversant in contemporary scholarship, this monograph is far more interested in Ausonius's resonance with his peers than with posterity. While Yaceczko's methodology has much to recommend it, his style is characterized by an allusiveness, an oblique erudition, and at times an austerity of transition that, while fittingly Ausonian, is also a barrier to a broad readership. Although the questions addressed would be of interest to upper division undergraduates, only a late-antique scholar could follow the subtle and referential argument. Furthermore, Yaceczko makes the decision to take Henri-Irénée Marrou not only as a scholarly voice but also as figure whose personal formation provides a key to interpreting Ausonius; while Yaceczko finds Marrou "uniquely illuminating" (3), I found the abundance of *foci* to render the argument excessively diffuse. Of less importance, the choice to present the Douay-Rheims as the English translation of Greek quotations from the Gospel of Luke is odd, as the former is a translation of the Latin Vulgate.

The first chapter (1–16) provides an introduction to the landscape of Ausonian scholarship as well as an overview of the poet's life. The second chapter (17–53) explores in depth the career of a *grammaticus* (this title entailed an expectation of teaching and certified one to write an *ars grammatica* and *commentarii*); Yaceczko is also interested in how Christian innovators (such as Jerome and Augustine) repurposed the pedagogical methods of a *grammaticus* for Scriptural and doctrinal concerns, in contrast with Ausonius's traditional mindset. The emphasis on the possibility of female *grammaticae* as a standard element of the Gallic system, while intriguing, is lengthier than an aside and yet does not contribute significantly to the work's argument. The third chapter (55–78) argues that the didactic ideal of $\varphi\lambda\omicron\pi\omicron\nu\acute{\iota}\alpha$ (*philoponia*) was a

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 a 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