This series provides sophisticated and authoritative overviews of periods of ancient history, genres of classical literature, and the most important themes in ancient culture. Each volume comprises approximately 25 and 40 concise essays written by individual scholars within their area of specialization. The essays are written in a clear, provocative, and lively manner, designed for an international audience of scholars, students, and general readers.

**Ancient History**

**Published**

- A Companion to the Roman Army
  *Edited by Paul Erdkamp*

- A Companion to the Roman Republic
  *Edited by Nathan Rosenstein and Robert Morstein-Marx*

- A Companion to the Roman Empire
  *Edited by David S. Potter*

- A Companion to the Classical Greek World
  *Edited by Konrad H. Kinzl*

- A Companion to the Ancient Near East
  *Edited by Daniel C. Snell*

- A Companion to the Hellenistic World
  *Edited by Andrew Erskine*

- A Companion to Late Antiquity
  *Edited by Philip Rousseau*

- A Companion to Ancient History
  *Edited by Andrew Erskine*

- A Companion to Archaic Greece
  *Edited by Kurt A. Raaflaub and Hans van Wees*

- A Companion to Julius Caesar
  *Edited by Miriam Griffin*

- A Companion to Byzantium
  *Edited by Liz James*

- A Companion to Ancient Egypt
  *Edited by Alan R. Lloyd*

- A Companion to Ancient Macedonia
  *Edited by Joseph Rosman and Ian Worthington*

- A Companion to the Punic Wars
  *Edited by Dexter Hoyos*

- A Companion to Augustine
  *Edited by Mark Vessey*

- A Companion to Marcus Aurelius
  *Edited by Marcel van Ackeren*

- A Companion to Ancient Greek Government
  *Edited by Hans Beck*

- A Companion to the Neronian Age
  *Edited by Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter*

- A Companion to Greek Democracy and the Roman Republic
  *Edited by Dean Hammer*

- A Companion to Livy
  *Edited by Bernard Mineo*

- A Companion to Ancient Thrace
  *Edited by Julia Valeva, Emil Nankov, and Denver Graninger*

- A Companion to Roman Italy
  *Edited by Alison E. Cooley*

- A Companion to the Etruscans
  *Edited by Sinclair Bell and Alexandra A. Carpino*

- A Companion to the Flavian Age of Imperial Rome
  *Edited by Andrew Zissos*

- A Companion to Science, Technology, and Medicine in Ancient Greece and Rome
  *Edited by Georgia L. Irby*

- A Companion to the City of Rome
  *Edited by Claire Holleran and Amanda Claridge*

- A Companion to Greeks Across the Ancient World
  *Edited by Franco De Angelis*

- A Companion to Late Antique Literature
  *Edited by Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts*
## Contents

Notes on Contributors ix

**PART ONE  Late Antique Literature by Language and Tradition** 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 Greek</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Scott Fitzgerald Johnson</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Latin</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ian Wood</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Syriac</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>John W. Watt</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Coptic</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>David Brakke</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Armenian</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Robin Darling Young</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Georgian</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Stephen H. Rapp, Jr.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Middle Persian (Pahlavi)</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Touraj Daryae</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 Languages of Arabia</td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Kevin T. van Bladel</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PART TWO  Literary Forms 141

9 Classicizing History and Historical Epitomes 143
   Michael Kulikowski

10 Ecclesiastical History 161
   Peter Van Nuffelen

11 Chronicles 177
   R.W. Burgess

12 Epideictic Oratory 193
   Alex Petkas

13 Panegyric 209
   Roger Rees

14 Epic Poetry 221
   Mary Whitby and Michael Roberts

15 Epigrams, Occasional Poetry, and Poetic Games 241
   Bret Mulligan

16 Christian Poetry 259
   Laura Miguélez-Cavero and Scott McGill

17 Prosimetra 281
   Joel C. Relihan

18 Philosophical Commentary 297
   Han Baltussen

19 Biblical Commentary 313
   Marie-Pierre Bussières

20 Christian Theological Literature 327
   Josef Lössl

21 Sermons 343
   Jaclyn Maxwell

22 Travel and Pilgrimage Literature 359
   Jan Willem Drijvers

23 Biography, Autobiography, and Hagiography 373
   Sarah Insley and Jeanne-Nicole Mellon Saint-Laurent

24 Epistolography 389
   Cristiana Sogno and Edward J. Watts
Contents

25 Pseudepigraphy
   Javier Martínez

26 Legal Texts
   Charles N. Aull

27 Handbooks, Epitomes, and Florilegia
   Marietta Horster and Christiane Reitz

28 Grammar
   Alessandro Garcea

29 School Texts
   Lillian I. Larsen

30 Literature of Knowledge
   Marco Formisano

31 Inscriptions
   Raymond Van Dam

32 Translation
   Daniel King

33 Antiquarian Literature
   Christopher Kelly

PART THREE  Reception

34 Late Antique Literature in Byzantium
   Anthony Kaldellis

35 The Arabic Reception of Late Antique Literature
   Kevin T. van Bladel

36 Late Antique Literature in the Western Middle Ages
   Joseph Pucci

37 Early Modern Receptions of Late Ancient Literature
   Diane Shane Fruchtman

38 Edward Gibbon and Late Antique Literature
   Gavin Kelly

39 Nineteenth- and Twentieth-Century Visions of
   Late Antique Literature
   James Uden

Index

vi
Notes on Contributors

Charles N. Aull holds a PhD in History from Indiana University. His research focuses on political and legal history.

Han Baltussen is the Walter W. Hughes Professor of Classics at the University of Adelaide and a Fellow of the Australian Academy of Humanities. He has held fellowships at the Center for Hellenic Studies, Washington DC and the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton. He has published books on Theophrastus (2000), Simplicius (2008), the Peripatetics (2016), and co-edited volumes on ancient commentaries (2004), consolations (2012), and self-censorship (2013). He is currently preparing a study of consolation strategies in antiquity and a new translation of Eunapius’s Lives of Philosophers and Sophists.

David Brakke is Joe R. Engle Chair in the History of Christianity and Professor of History at the Ohio State University. He has published books and essays on early Egyptian Christianity, monasticism, and Gnosticism, including Demons and the Making of the Monk: Spiritual Combat in Early Christianity (2006). He and Andrew Crislip translated a selection of Shenoute’s works in Selected Discourses of Shenoute the Great: Community, Theology, and Social Conflict in Late Antique Egypt (2015).

R.W. Burgess has been a professor of Classics at the University of Ottawa since 1989 and is a fellow of the Royal Society of Canada. He has written five books, almost 50 articles and chapters, and almost 70 encyclopedia entries on chronicles, numismatics, consuls, late Roman and Byzantine historiography, and late Roman history.

Marie-Pierre Bussières, Associate Professor in Classics at the University of Ottawa (Canada), specializes in late antique Latin literature. She has published an edition and translation.
of two fourth-century Latin polemics against the pagans and astrology by the anonymous author known as Ambrosiaster and is currently working on an edition and translation of the Questions and Answers on the Old and New Testament by the same author.

Touraj Daryaee is the Maseeh Chair in Persian Studies and the Director of the Dr. Samuel M. Jordan Center for Persian Studies and Culture at the University of California, Irvine. He is a historian of ancient Iran and works on Pahlavi texts and the history of Zoroastrianism.

Jan Willem Drijvers is Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at the University of Groningen. He has published widely on a variety of topics concerning late antiquity. He is author of Helena Augusta (1992) and Cyril of Jerusalem: Bishop and City (2004), and co-author of the Philological and Historical Commentary on the Res Gestae of Ammianus Marcellinus XXII–XXXI (1995–2017). See also http://www.rug.nl/staff/j.w.drijvers

Marco Formisano is Professor of Latin Literature at Ghent University, Belgium. He has published extensively on ancient technical and scientific writing: Técnica e scrittura (Rome 2001); Vegezio, Arte della guerra romana (Milan 2003); War in Words: Transformations of War from Antiquity to Clausewitz, co-edited with H. Böhme (Berlin 2012); Vitruvius. Text, Architecture, Reception, co-edited with S. Cuomo (Arethusa, 49.2, 2016); and Knowledge, Text and Practice in Ancient Technical Writing, co-edited with P. Van der Eijk (Cambridge 2017). He is the editor of a series devoted to late antique literature entitled The Library of the Other Antiquity (Winter).

Diane Shane Fruchtman is Assistant Professor of Religion at Rutgers University and specializes in Western Christian Thought from Augustine to the Reformation. She is currently working on a monograph, Surviving Martyrdom: Martyrdom without Death in the Late Ancient West and Beyond, which uncovers the historical diversity of understandings of martyrdom by focusing on the phenomenon of “living martyrs” in Christian history. She received her PhD in History of Christianity from the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University in 2014.

Alessandro Garcea is Full Professor of Latin Language and Literature at the University of Paris-Sorbonne and member of the Institut Universitaire de France. His main works include Gellio et la dialettica (Turin 2000), Cicerone in esilio: L’epistolario e le passioni (Hildesheim 2005); Caesar’s De analogia (Oxford 2012). He coordinates the CGL – Corpus Grammaticorum Latinorum and FLG – Fragmentary Latin Grammarians web projects.
Marietta Horster is Chair in Ancient History, University of Mainz. She shares an interest with Christiane Reitz (see below) in technical writing and the processes of the transformation of knowledge and condensation of texts. Her main working fields are Greek cult, the Roman imperial family, and Roman imperial and late antique administrative and organizational developments.

Christopher Kelly is Professor of Classics and Ancient History in the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of Corpus Christi College. His books include Ruling the Later Roman Empire (2004), The End of Empire: Attila the Hun and the Fall of Rome (2009), and Theodosius II: Rethinking the Roman Empire in Late Antiquity (2013). He is editor of the Journal of Roman Studies.

Sarah Insley is the Dean of Branford College at Yale University. A specialist in postclassical Greek philology and literature, her research focuses on monastic literature, hagiography, and liturgical texts in late antiquity and Byzantium. She is currently completing a translation of the Letters of Gregory of Nazianzus for the Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library.

Gavin Kelly studied Classics at Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and at Gibbon’s old Oxford College, Magdalen, before holding Research Fellowships at Peterhouse, Cambridge, and the University of Manchester. He has taught since 2005 in the department of Classics at the University of Edinburgh, where he is Professor of Latin Literature and Roman History. He is the author of Ammianus Marcellinus: The Allusive Historian, two edited books, and articles on authors including Ammianus, Claudian, Sidonius, and Symmachus.

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson is Associate Professor of Classics and Letters at the University of Oklahoma. He has published widely on late antique literature and culture, including the recent monograph Literary Territories: Cartographical Thinking in Late Antiquity (Oxford, 2016).

Daniel King is Associate Research Fellow (formerly Lecturer) at Cardiff University, specializing in Syriac Studies. Major publications include The Syriac Versions of the Writings of Cyril of Alexandria (Peeters, 2008) and an edition of The Earliest Syriac version of Aristotle’s Categories (Brill, 2010); he also regularly translates works out of Syriac, Greek, and Latin. In addition, he is an advisor and consultant for the translation

Anthony Kaldellis is Professor of Classics at the Ohio State University. He has published widely on many aspects of Byzantine history, culture, and literature and has also translated many Byzantine authors, especially the historians. For more, see http://kaldellispublications.weebly.com.
of the Bible into modern Bantu languages in East Africa for the Summer Institute of Linguistics.

**Michael Kulikowski** is Professor of History and Classics at Penn State and Head of the Department of History. He is the author of several monographs, most recently *The Triumph of Empire: The Roman World from Hadrian to Constantine* (2016), and editor-in-chief of the Landmark Ammianus Marcellinus project.

**Lillian I. Larsen** holds a PhD in Religious Studies from Columbia University in New York City. She currently serves as Associate Professor and Chair of Religious Studies at the University of Redlands, in Southern California. Her research – long focused on rewriting the history of monastic education – is represented in a series of articles addressing monastic pedagogy. These publications likewise represent a conceptual core of the recently concluded “Monastic and Classical Paideia Project” at Lund University in Sweden. She is currently completing work on a forthcoming compendium, *Monastic Education in Late Antiquity: The Transformation of Classical Paideia*, co-edited with Samuel Rubenson and published by Cambridge. Her revisionary monograph, which rereads narrative, regulatory, and material refractions of monastic pedagogy “against the grain,” is under contract and near completion. Work on a complementary catalog of monastic school texts is likewise underway.

**Josef Lössl** is Professor of Religious Studies and Theology at Cardiff University. He is Director of the Cardiff Centre for Late Antique Religion and Culture and Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal for Late Antique Religion and Culture* and Vigiliae Christianae: A Review of Early Christian Life and Language. His *Companion to Religion in Late Antiquity*, co-edited with Nicholas Baker-Brian, is in press.

**Javier Martínez** is Professor of Greek Philology at the University of Oviedo. He has translated works of Plato and Aristophanes into Spanish, with commentary, and published articles on Greek literary tradition and philosophy. He has edited several volumes on the subject of fakes, forgers, and forgeries in classical literature: *Falsificaciones y falsarios de la Literatura Clásica* (2011), *Mundus vult decipi* (2012), *Fakes and Forgers of Classical Literature – Ergo decipiatur!* (2014), and *Splendide Mendax: Rethinking Fakes and Forgeries in Classical, Late Antique, and Early Christian Literature* (2016).

**Jaclyn Maxwell** is Associate Professor in the departments of History and Classics/World Religions at Ohio University. Her publications include *Christianization and Communication in Late Antiquity: John Chrysostom and his Congregation in Antioch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), “Social Interactions in a Rural Monastery: Scholars, Peasants, Monks and More in the *Life of Hypatius*,” in


Laura Miguélez-Cavero (Junior Research Fellow, Balliol College, University of Oxford; Co-Investigator of the Project “Greek Epic of the Roman Empire: A Cultural History,” Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge) specializes in late antique Greek poetry and has worked mainly on Egyptian authors. She is the author of Poems in Context: Greek Poetry in the Egyptian Thebaid, 200–600 AD (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008) and Triphiodorus: The Sack of Troy (Berlin: De Gruyter 2013).

Bret Mulligan, Associate Professor and Chair of Classics at Haverford College, has published on Martial, Statius, Claudian, epigram, and, most recently, Nepos’s Life of Hannibal. He is currently working on a translation of Ennodius’s poetry, a commentary on Martial, book 10, and the image of disease in Latin poetry.

Alex Petkas is a lecturer at the University of California, San Diego. He is completing his PhD dissertation in Classics at Princeton University, writing on the philosophical letter collection of Synesius of Cyrene. His research interests include the history of Greek rhetoric and criticism, epistolography, and the cultural reception of philosophy in antiquity. He is co-editor of a forthcoming volume on Hypatia of Alexandria and has also presented papers on imperial panegyric, animals in Greek literature, and late antique invective.

Joseph Pucci is Professor of Classics, of Medieval Studies, and of Comparative Literature, Brown University. He is the author of Medieval Latin, 2nd ed. (1997); The Full-Knowing Reader (1998); Venantius Fortunatus: Poems to Friends (2010); Augustine’s Virgilian Retreat: Reading the Auctores at Cassiciacum (2014); Classics Renewed: Reception and Innovation in the Latin Poetry of Late Antiquity (ed. with Scott McGill, 2016); General Editor of the Routledge Series in Late Latin Poetry; and co-editor of Brill’s Late Antique Literature series.

Stephen H. Rapp, Jr. received his PhD at the University of Michigan in 1997 and has taught at Georgia State University, the Russian State
Humanities University (RGGU), and Sam Houston State University. His research explores the overlap and negotiation of the Iranian and Romano-Byzantine worlds through the prism of late antique Caucasia, one of Eurasia’s most vibrant cultural crossroads. His latest monograph, *The Sasanian World through Georgian Eyes: Caucasia and the Iranian Commonwealth in Late Antique Georgian Literature*, was published by Ashgate in 2014.

**Roger Rees** is Reader in Latin at St. Andrews University, UK. His research focuses on panegyric. He is part of a collaborative team working on the *Panegyrici Latini* collection (see, for example, *Arethusa* 46.2, 2013, co-edited with Bruce Gibson). His commentary on the speech to Theodosius by Pacatus Drepanius is in press with Cambridge University Press.

**Christiane Reitz** is Chair in Classical Philology (Latin), University of Rostock. She shares an interest with Marietta Horster (see above) in technical writing and the processes of the transformation of knowledge and condensation of texts. Her main working fields are ancient epic and classical reception.

**Joel C. Relihan** is in his 25th year at Wheaton College in Norton, Massachusetts, where he is Professor of Classics. He is currently preparing an annotated translation of Pseudo-Lucian, *The Ass*, and laying the groundwork for a wide-ranging literary study, *Panopticon: A History of Menippean Satire*.

**Michael Roberts** is the Robert Rich Professor of Latin at Wesleyan University. He has published a number of books and articles on the literature, especially the poetry, of late antiquity, including *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY, 1989) and *The Humblest Sparrow: The Poetry of Venantius Fortunatus* (Ann Arbor, 2009).

**Jeanne-Nicole Mellon Saint-Laurent** is Assistant Professor of Theology at Marquette University. She is the author of *Missionary Narratives and the Formation of the Syriac Churches*, published by University of California Press. She is also the editor of a two-volume digital catalog of Syriac saints and their lives, *The Gateway to the Syriac Saints*, produced by Syriaca.org.

**Cristiana Sogno** is Associate Professor of Classics at Fordham University. She has worked on the correspondence of Symmachus and has recently co-edited a volume on late antique letter collections together with Bradley Storin and Edward Watts.

**James Uden** is an Associate Professor of Classical Studies at Boston University. He is the author of *The Invisible Satirist: Juvenal and Second-Century Rome* (Oxford, 2015), and numerous articles and book chapters on late antique literature.

**Kevin T. van Bladel** is Professor of Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations at
Yale University. He has published books and articles on the Classical Near East including *The Arabic Hermes* (2009) and *From Sasanian Mandaeans to Sāians of the Marshes* (2017).

Raymond Van Dam is Professor emeritus of History and Near Eastern Studies at the University of Michigan. His books include *Rome and Constantinople: Rewriting Roman History during Late Antiquity* (2010) and *Remembering Constantine at the Milvian Bridge* (2011).

Peter Van Nuffelen is Professor of Ancient History at Ghent University. He publishes on Roman religion and philosophy, early Christianity, and late antiquity. Recent publications include *Orosius and the Rhetoric of History* (Oxford University Press, 2012) and *Penser la tolérance durant l’Antiquité tardive* (Editions du Cerf, 2018).

Edward J. Watts is Alkiviadis Vassiliadis Chair in Byzantine Greek History and Professor and the University of California, San Diego. In addition to a co-edited volume on letter collections, he has recently published two monographs that make extensive use of letter collections: *The Final Pagan Generation* (UC Press, 2015) and *Hypatia: The Life and Legacy of an Ancient Philosopher*, (Oxford, 2017).

John W. Watt is Honorary Research Fellow in the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University. His research has focused on Syriac rhetoric and philosophy, and in these areas he has edited major treatises of Antony of Tagrit (Louvain: Peeters, 1986) and Bar Hebraeus (Leiden: Brill, 2005). Several of his articles are collected in his *Rhetoric and Philosophy from Greek into Syriac* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010).

Mary Whitby is Faculty Lector in Greek and Latin language and a lecturer at Merton College, Oxford. Her research interests focus on the poetry of late antiquity, which she has explored in a number of articles.


Robin Darling Young has translated and studied works in classical Armenian, including Armenian translations of late ancient Greek works. She is Associate Professor of Church History at the Catholic University of America.
PART ONE

LATE ANTIQUE
LITERATURE BY LANGUAGE
AND TRADITION
Introduction

Scott McGill and Edward J. Watts

This volume presents a set of essays highlighting the richness and creativity of late antique literature. Our description of that literature will surprise far fewer readers today than it would have throughout most of the twentieth century. A consensus existed then, especially in the Anglophone world, that late antique texts were generally derivative, uninteresting, and reflective of decline across the Mediterranean. Indeed, with a few exceptions (notably Augustine), late antique literature was largely dismissed if acknowledged at all.

The declinist approach that reigned in the twentieth century and relegated late antiquity to the dusk before the Dark Ages has not yet disappeared. But it has widely given way to responses that shed the old prejudices – however inscribed they remain in school curricula – and recognize the quality, interest, and value of late antique literature.

Late antiquity was an extremely productive time in literary history. A great amount of Greek and Latin texts in prose and verse survives from the mid-third to the early seventh century, the period upon which this book centers. Alongside that work, moreover, stand large corpora written in Coptic, Syriac, Armenian, Georgian, Pahlavi, Arabic, and a host of other regional languages. Taken together, the surviving literature from these centuries exceeds the sum total of surviving texts from the Mediterranean during the preceding millennium.

Late antique literature was also profoundly innovative. It was marked by modes of productive reception in which authors updated and transformed what came before them and by the emergence of new subject matter, new genres, new settings for literary production, new textual functions, and new
reading practices (see Herzog 1989, p. 33). As a result, late antiquity has much to tell us about the dynamics of literary history: how the cultural past creates, and is created by, what succeeds it, and how traditions are endlessly in movement as they flow through the manifold channels of reception. What is more, late antique literature is an indispensable witness to a period of seismic cultural changes. The corpus of texts, with its huge size and variety, sheds much light on the late antique world across vast swaths of territory and across linguistic, religious, and class lines.

The chapters comprising this volume give an overview of the literature of late antiquity, while also providing a selective account of its reception history. The book centers on Greek and Latin texts; these were, of course, predominant in the literary culture of the late Roman Empire, which is the primary focus of this *Companion*. But the volume also expands to include literature in other languages. This reflects the multicultural and polyglot world of late antiquity, in which the literature of Greek- and Latin-speaking Romans was situated among and interacted with the texts of different kingdoms and peoples. The period was a time when a broad range of Greek and Latin texts crossed political, linguistic, and cultural borderlands into the emerging and vibrant vernacular literatures of the Mediterranean, the Caucasus Mountains, the Iranian Plateau, and the Arabian Peninsula. To get a more developed sense of the literature of the period, it is therefore crucial to break free of the Greek/Latin binary and to encompass a broader range of languages and traditions (Humphries 2017). The creative energy of late antiquity can only be appreciated when the extent of its reverberations are recognized.

Late antique literature demands, too, that we be flexible with the binary classical/Christian. Late antiquity represented one of the great transitional eras in literary history. Its authors, especially but not exclusively those working in Greek and Latin, were trained to appreciate classical forms and rhetoric, and many developed great familiarity with the works of classical authors. This training deeply influenced both their conception of literature and the sorts of projects they undertook. While established classical genres and literary models often framed the work that late antique authors undertook, these men and women were not at all stuck in or constricted by the past. Instead, late antique authors recast the classical inheritance to create texts that reflected contemporary tastes and needs and that fit with new cultural and historical developments. Foremost among those developments was the rise of Christianity into a culturally and politically dominant force. The literature that accompanies the emergence of Christianity as a privileged religion in the Roman world represents a significant late antique innovation. Christian authors remade established genres and specific textual models from the classical past, but they also departed from that past by responding to a
separate authoritative tradition comprising the Scriptures and other Christian writings while producing texts in styles and for settings and uses with no precedent in classical culture. Christian literature thus lies both within and outside of the classical tradition; organizations of knowledge and of cultural history in which the classics stand on one side and Christianity on the other are entirely inadequate to deal with that body of material (Elsner and Hernández Lobato 2017, pp. 3–6).

The chronological limits of the late antique world cannot be precisely defined. We have chosen to center the volume on the period between the middle of the third century and the roughly first third of the seventh century. The boundaries we have set require both some explanation and some flexibility. The mid-third century represents a significant point of demarcation between the literature of the high Roman Empire and the literature that begins to emerge in the fourth century. While it is true that some authors like Plotinus, Cyprian, and Bardaisan stand astride this divide, most of the major developments we want to consider in Greek and Latin as well as in the various vernacular literatures take distinctive turns in the later third and early fourth centuries. To give just three examples, these years saw the flowering of Syriac poetry, the emergence of several new forms of Christian literature, and an expansion in the texts treated and approaches utilized by exegetical commentators.

It is also clear that many of these literary developments reach a natural end point in the first decades of the seventh century. This is the case with Greek poetry, for instance, whose last late antique representative is George of Pisidia, and is essentially true of Latin poetry, despite the history of Visigothic verse. There are also distinct and dramatic breaks in the Greek medical, philosophical, and astrological commentary traditions. Likewise, after Theophylact Simocatta and Isidore of Seville in the first third of the seventh century, there will be no major authors of Greek or Latin historiography active for more than a century. Admittedly, the date has less meaning in some areas, including Syriac and Coptic literature, and little significance at all in Persia. Still, the dramatic decrease in surviving Greek and Latin literature written after ca. 630 means that most of the essays in this volume do not understand late antiquity to extend beyond the first half of the seventh century.

While our chronological boundaries are relatively well demarcated, our definition of literature is a capacious one. The modern restriction of the word to creative works, particularly poetry, drama, and prose fiction, is alien to antiquity (Goldhill 1999; Vessey 2012, 2015), and we follow convention in the field of classical studies in applying the term to an array of texts that today would be classified differently. “Literature” is in our formulation a broad rubric, and it covers a wide range of textual means, both written and
oral, through which individuals in late antiquity represented, organized, and understood the world around them. We recognize that the line between the literary and the nonliterary/subliterary is sometimes uncertain. We acknowledge, too, some restrictions in our approach: For the most part in this book, the category “literature” comprises only texts to which authors and textual communities assign value that separates them from the purely functional and the disposable. This includes school exercises, which, even when they were throwaway student efforts, belonged to literate culture and were designed to train the young to attain some level of rhetorical skill. Those exercises can also be placed within the bounds of literature for the same reason that texts like technical treatises and laws can be: They defy attempts to classify them as nonliterary because they possess features, notably linguistic self-consciousness, representational strategies, rhetorical characteristics, and intertextual ties to authoritative textual models, associated with the literary. Intertextuality is, in general, another important marker of literature in our formulation. Literary works operate within or against (at times multiple) discursive systems with different histories; they belong to and participate in diachronic fields of marked textuality, including when they update and remake that inheritance. Paraliterary and metaliterary compositions – e.g. commentaries, epitomes, and handbooks, all of which are characteristic of late antiquity – are not separate from the literary, moreover, but are extensions of it.

A broad examination of the textual resources that were transmitted and transmissible in late antiquity provides an expansive view of literary production in the period. The essays gathered in the volume examine the forms, histories, characteristics, audiences, and functions of many different kinds of late antique literature. In the process, contributors demonstrate how modern analytic techniques developed primarily for a narrower band of literary forms can be applied productively to a wider group of texts.

The volume is organized into three sections. In Part One, the chapters consider the processes through which the literary outline of the ancient world was expanded as more authors began working in a broader group of languages. The chapters in this section present the diverse linguistic literary histories of the period, and they connect literature to currents in political, religious, and cultural history throughout the later Roman, Sasanian, and Arab worlds. Collectively, the bodies of literature reveal varied and sustained sets of literary projects through which authors over vast territories used literature to deal with topics and to articulate worldviews within and, at times, across the cultures of the late antique world.

The second and longest section of the volume considers a wide range of late antique literature. It is organized around the concept of a literary form. The concept includes genres, which are fluid and dynamic in late antiquity:
An important characteristic of late antique literature is the way in which authors pushed against and beyond inherited generic conventions and develop new variations on traditional genres (including by combining them) or new genres altogether. But “form,” as we are using it, is a more elastic term than “genre.” By “form” we mean a body of texts linked, sometimes in a broad sense, by formal properties, subject matter, method, tone, or function (or some combination of these). The texts might lie within or across genres, or they might lie outside of the traditional, recognized generic matrix. The category “form” provides a balance of coherence and flexibility, and it enables the section to cover a very wide amount of material. A clear sense of the variety and vitality of late antique literature emerges from the chapters. Contributors analyze the sets of characteristics that define the different literary forms and the ways that the forms reveal a distinctive late antique culture of literary experimentation and growth.

The final section of the volume considers the reception of late antique literature. It is, of course, impossible to deal exhaustively with the subject. The chapters instead examine particular epochs, as well as major individuals, in the reception history of late antiquity. Contributors consider the transmission of late antique texts, the interpretation of them in the respective ages, and the resonance they enjoyed. The chapters show how the literature of the period now known as late antiquity was made and remade over the course of its long and varied history. There are many late antiquities that emerge during its reception; with the past as our guide, we can expect that there will be many more in generations to come.

We are now at a time of reengagement, which has brought much late antique literature back from the brink of scholarly extinction and has led to considerable reevaluation of late antique texts and literary culture. This volume is an attempt to further those developments. Our strong wish is that the book will help scholars and students to understand late antique literature on its own terms. This, in turn, will enable them not only to know better the world of late antiquity but also to appreciate more deeply ways in which literary creativity can be expressed.

NOTE

1. Circumstances beyond the editors’ control made a chapter on Jewish literature impossible. On that literature, see Fergus Millar, Eyal Ben-Eliyahu, and Yehuda Cohn, eds. (2013), Handbook of Jewish Literature from Late Antiquity, 135–700 CE (Oxford: Oxford University Press).
REFERENCES


CHAPTER ONE

Greek

Scott Fitzgerald Johnson

Greek in late antiquity is not easily categorized. It was a language of empire, a language of philosophy and theology, a marker of identity, a language of routine daily life and commerce, and, above all, a language with symbolic power for both the literate and illiterate in the language. Greek in late antiquity was a heritage language due the literary legacy which characterized it in the period, but it was also, in linguistics terms, a “prestige” language, a status signaled by the innumerable translations made out of Greek into all the early Christian languages, such as Latin, Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Armenian, Georgian, Arabic, and Old Church Slavonic. As such, Greek held an innate value for speakers of other languages, who, over the course of late antiquity, developed their own claim on the language and, in certain cases, their own distinctive brands of Greek literacy and pedagogy. Thus, Greek in late antiquity took on a sociocultural role distinct from the literature written in it. This chapter investigates that sociocultural role and draws attention to the symbolic value of the language as a marker of identity in the period.

This sociocultural role was never divorced from the literature written in Greek both before and during late antiquity. The relationship between the two categories was perpetuated by the premium placed on Greek in the Roman educational system, especially in the eastern Mediterranean (Marrou 1956; Cribiore 1999, 2001; Too 2001; Van Hoof and Van Nuffelen 2015; Kaster 1983, 1988; Watts 2006). In other words, Greek was valued for the intellectual and literary riches to which it offered its readers access, in a similar manner to how it is still taught in university Classics departments today. Education allowed for advancement in society and participation in a much
larger intellectual and social world than merely the local, where the quotidi-an language was often not Greek. The rhetorical training embedded in late Roman education was especially valuable, as in earlier centuries, for gaining public office and engaging literate society (Brown 1992; Quiroga Puertas 2013; Webb 2009).

The many Greek letter collections from the period, moreover, attest to Greek – paralleled, of course, by Latin – as a medium of intellectual communication across the late Roman Mediterranean (Neil and Allen 2015; Gillett 2012). Late antiquity is justly famous as a period of self-reflective correspondence, and many letter collections seem to have been drawn up by the authors themselves or at least by their immediate circles. This was the case for the Christian monastic founder Pachomius (Choat 2015) and the bishop Isidore of Pelusium (Evieux 1997), for example, as much as it was for the pagan orator Libanius (Bradbury 2004). Libanius’s collection reveals not just a skilled letter writer but also how his voluminous correspondence coincided with the real-world movement of Greek students and teachers throughout the eastern Mediterranean. Libanius’s letters thus reflect the evolution of Roman patronage networks within the late antique school system. One letter (Ep. 1098), to the Jewish patriarch Gamaliel in Jerusalem, concerns Gamaliel’s son, who studied Greek rhetoric with Libanius at Antioch after having studied with Libanius’s former pupil Argeios at Caesarea or Berytus (Beirut) (Stemberger 2014, p. 32).

At the same time, levels of Greek literacy varied considerably, and the language was often used as a blunt instrument at the barest functional level (Bagnall 2011). The key difference between the late antique role of Greek and our modern pedagogy of “classical Greek” is that these low-level exchanges in late antiquity were very much still Greek-in-use, even if they are formulaic and unsophisticated by comparison to the literary Greek we teach and prize today. This has certainly always been the case in the history of Greek – it was and remains a living language, after all – but for late antiquity we are privileged to have a marvelous record of these low-level exchanges, a record that does not survive for, say, classical Athens in the fifth century BCE (Horrocks 2010). Mountains of papyri from late Roman and early Byzantine Egypt attest voluminously to quotidian Greek.

The Egyptian papyri similarly attest to the near constant interaction between Greek and Coptic (Bagnall 2011, pp. 75–111). As its own medium of literature and exchange, Coptic developed alongside and in relation to Greek. Sociolinguistics of late antique Egypt is a vibrant field, and none of its researchers today would allow for one of the languages, on a cultural level, to be divorced from the other (Criboire 2007; Papaconstantinou 2007, 2008, 2010; Bagnall 2009; MacCoull 1988, 2013). To put it differently,
“the Greek of Egypt” is not a real category for cultural study; instead, we should think about Greek in terms of what roles it was used for in tandem with the roles Coptic played at the same time (and these roles shifted over the course of late antiquity). This axiom is true for all of the many varied linguistic contexts in which Greek was taught and used (Johnson 2015a), yet it does not preclude the delineation of characteristic features of Greek in a given locale, such as Egypt (Gignac 1976; Fournet 1999).

Because Greek was the medium of theological exchange, it held a special value for the highest-stakes debates in late antiquity. There was a venerable legacy of Greek among Christians since, as everyone knew in the period, the New Testament was written in Greek and the first churches were all Greek-speaking (Porter and Pitts 2013a, 2013b; Karrer and Vries 2013). The same was largely true for the Old Testament, since the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible made by Jews in the Hellenistic period, was the dominant version of the Old Testament in earliest Christianity (Aitken and Paget 2014; Rajak 2009). All the indigenous early Christian communities translated the Bible into their own languages early in their history; such translations were, indeed, markers of their own Christian identity. But it was never forgotten that these were translations, and knowledge of the original Greek of the Bible, where available, was prized.

There has been a vibrant discussion in recent scholarship over why exactly Greek became the language of theological debate. Was it because Greek was venerated as the language of the Bible? Or was it a practical question, because Greek was the medium of power and law (the Rechtssprache) in the eastern Mediterranean under Rome (Millar 2006b; cf. Johnson 2015a, esp. pp. 8–17)? The technical terminology of Christian doctrine that developed over the course of the seven ecumenical councils, from Nicaea I (325) to Nicaea II (787), and in the numerous theological treatises emerging around and fueling these councils was hard won and could not be relinquished easily. But was institutional inertia the main driving force? I return to this question below, though suffice it to say that the relationship between this Greek technical terminology and Greek as the language of empire is complex.

Of course, theologians were not the first to coin technical terms and formulae in Greek. Philosophy had a long history of working out its logical and argumentative apparatus in Greek. Systematization of philosophy – Neoplatonism, in particular, but also Aristotelianism – was a trend characteristic of late antiquity across many genres and in several centers of intellectual endeavor. (See the “Ancient Commentators on Aristotle” series, ed. Richard Sorabji [http://www.ancientcommentators.org.uk]; Sorabji 2004; Gerson 2010; Falcon 2016.) The overlap of philosophical, legal, and rhetorical schools in the East – in Alexandria (Watts 2006), Gaza (Johnson 2015a,
pp. 31–35; Downey 1958; Bitton-Ashkelony and Kofsky 2004, 2006), Berytus (Hall 2004), Athens (Cameron 1969; Watts 2006), and Constantinople (Wilson 1996, pp. 28–60) – reinforced the above-mentioned value of Greek for social advancement through education while at the same time encouraging the attachment of value to the charisma of specific philosophical teachers and schools at these centers. Porphyry’s important output, not least the editing and publication of Plotinus’s *Enneads*, provided an indispensable educational tool in Greek, which was subsequently translated into Latin, Syriac, Arabic, and other languages (Johnson 2013; Magny 2014; Brock 1988, 1989b). Greek became, over the course of late antiquity, a type of holy language for Greek philosophy because of the canonical works expressed in it, such as Plotinus, Aristotle, and, of course, Plato himself, especially his later “cosmological” dialogues (the *Timaeus* above all) (Baltussen 2008; Tarrant 2007–2013). Translations by scholars like Calcidius (fourth century) into Latin and Jacob of Edessa (seventh century) into Syriac became standard in their own milieux but never existed wholly without reference to Greek (Magee 2016; Romeny 2008). Indeed, the eagerness with which Syriac Christian scholars repeatedly went back to the Greek originals for their Syriac and Arabic translations of philosophical and medical treatises shows the continued notional value of the language, even after the texts were readily available in other (albeit less accurate) translations (Brock 1983, 1991, esp. 2004). In the Latin West this direct access to Greek for philosophical work seems to have been lost after John Scotus Eriugena and even well before him in some quarters (Jeauneau 1987, pp. 85–132; Herren and Brown 1988).

Bringing these two strands together, I would emphasize that Greek was also the medium of disputation between Christians and Neoplatonic philosophers. This was already in evidence at the time of Origen’s *Contra Celsum* (248 CE), but in the sixth century, in the context of the vibrant commentary movement on Plato and Aristotle, many different thinkers engaged one another at a highly technical level in the medium of Greek. The literary debates between Simplicius, John Philoponos, and Cosmas Indicopleustes in Justinianic Alexandria are perhaps a high water mark of this type of engagement (Baltussen 2008; Anastos 1946, 1953; Pearson 1999; MacCoull 2006). It is clear that formal public debates also occurred regularly, sometimes modeled on the literary debates but also providing inspiration for literature that created imagined disputations from whole cloth (Cameron 2014). Connected to this technical literature are the many magical/therurgic (Burnett 1996; Noegel, Walker, and Wheeler 2003; Lewy 1978), numerological (Kalvesmaki 2013), and astrological (Hegedus 2007; Magdalino 2006) treatises produced by both Christians and Neoplatonists