

awaits the field of early Christian studies is going to depend on whether there are scholars to be found, like Meeks, who are no longer content to preach to the choir.

Saint Louis University (USA)
douglas.boin@slu.edu

DOUGLAS BOIN

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CHRIS DOYLE, *HONORIUS. THE FIGHT FOR THE ROMAN WEST AD 395–423*. London: Routledge, 2019. Pp. xx + 205; illus., maps. ISBN 9781138190887. £120.00.

Late Antiquity is filled with emperors whose reigns were brief (months to a few years). Few last ten years, fewer still twenty or more. Officially, Honorius reigned for twenty-eight years, yet his reputation is poor, and his relative longevity is usually attributed to those around him. In this short book, part of Routledge's 'Roman Imperial Biographies' series, Chris Doyle provides a short and easy-to-read overview of the life and times of this notorious late Roman emperor. The book is comprised of nine chapters, which proceed chronologically, and it includes a number of illustrations and useful charts. D.'s purpose is to resurrect the much-maligned emperor; his portrait of Honorius is sympathetic and the man he describes is complex, though not everyone will be convinced by D.'s arguments.

The first chapter surveys the sources and looks at Honorius' later reputation from the early modern era to the recent past. Procopius is identified as the source of much of the later critiques, and Photius too comes up for criticism for his take on Eunapius, to give just two examples. But D. also discusses the legal, the numismatic and all kinds of other evidence. The second chapter turns to the background: the legal rights of the people in late Roman society, the conflict between Christians and pagans and the seemingly interminable wars with barbarians. D. also describes the rise of the Theodosian dynasty, of which Honorius was a part. In ch. 3, we finally meet Honorius himself, and we read about the role of Stilicho and Honorius' mother Flaccilla. Most of the focus, however, is on Theodosius I. Honorius' education and upbringing are the subject of chapter four, though D. also touches on the machinations of Argobastes and Arcadius. Ch. 5 discusses the conflict with Gildo in North Africa. Ch. 6 turns to Honorius and marriage. Among other things, D. notes how marriage worked differently depending on one's social class, the distinct lack of images of Maria and Thermantia, and the growing disconnect between Honorius and Stilicho. Ch. 7 focuses on the troubles Rome had on the Rhine, in Gaul, and in Britain, and the growing need for more troops. D. also discusses the end of Stilicho and Honorius' struggles to keep the soldiers under control, which was particularly marked at Ticinum. Honorius' famed pet chickens, who are connected to the siege of Rome, also make an appearance. Ch. 8, which opens with an interesting anecdote on Ronald Reagan's reference to Honorius in a speech, starts with the emperor's alleged cancelling of the games, which D. discounts because of the lack of legal evidence. D. notes Honorius' favouritism towards Catholicism and, from 409, his increasing intolerance concerning everyone else. In ch. 8, D. expands upon his discussion of Honorius' relationship with the church and also investigates his building programme. Ch. 9, the final chapter, returns to the importance of family to Honorius, his attempts at reconciliation between East and West and his complicated relationship with Galla Placidia.

D. devotes considerable space to propaganda, which is perhaps unsurprising, given the considerable focus on coinage. Indeed, D.'s engagement with the numismatic evidence is commendable, and the abundance of images makes it easier to follow the various arguments. There are also some thought-provoking discussions, such as D.'s comments on John Lydus' claims that Theodosius had legally banned his sons from participating personally in war because he did not trust their abilities. To top it all off, D. writes well, which helps his case, and makes the volume more appealing to a reader approaching the material with little background. Some descriptions are particularly evocative, such as his account of the death of Eudoxia and the spectacular finds from Maria's tomb.

On the other hand, D. merely touches on some big themes, like unity in the divided empire, without going further. The *Notitia Dignitatum* and the *Peutinger Table*, for example, have both been interpreted as ideological documents seeking to illustrate unity in a divided empire: and while we may disagree with this interpretation, the subject might have deserved more attention. Each

chapter is full of quotations, which sometimes detract from the flow of the narrative. That said, for those less familiar with the material, they do provide useful insight into the sources of Honorius and his world. There is the occasional unexplained person or group, like the Iubaleni (90), who are otherwise unaccounted for in the book, but who feature in Ammianus' *Res Gestae*. There are some gaps in the scholarship, too, such as Downey on the peasants in North Africa, Merrills and Miles on the Vandals, Modéran on the Moors, and Sivan's book on Galla Placidia, among others. Finally, in a book that works hard to resurrect Honorius' reputation and to circumvent the comparative absence of quality source material, not as much of the discussion is focused on Honorius as I might have expected, which perhaps only serves to underscore the problems with the source material.

Throughout, D. tries to boost Honorius' reputation, and on the basis of some details, like his abolishment of child abandonment and his building programme, his arguments are perhaps not so easily dismissed. The longevity of Honorius' reign does support D.'s case, although bigger issues, like the numerous challenges to Honorius' authority, whether they came from generals or competing popes, are likely to leave some unconvinced. That said, D.'s book is easy to read and provides a wide-ranging overview of the Roman world in the early fifth century C.E. using a diverse body of evidence.

University Of Winnipeg
c.whately@uwinnipeg.ca

CONOR WHATELY

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PETER HEATHER, *ROME RESURGENT: WAR AND EMPIRE IN THE AGE OF JUSTINIAN*.

New York: Oxford University Press, 2018. Pp. xiii + 393, illus. ISBN 9780199362745. £22.99.

Peter Heather is known for his big books on 'barbarians' and the later Roman empire, and it is no surprise to find him turning to the subject of Justinian I's reconquest of the west. The book is part of the OUP series *Ancient Warfare and Civilization*, in which 'leading historians offer compelling new narratives of the armed conflicts that shaped and reshaped the classical world'. The central question H. poses is whether the conquests of Justinian were worth it. He pursues this across an Introduction and eleven chapters, supported by maps (though a couple have issues of legibility), illustrations, endnotes and bibliography, as well as a timeline and a glossary.

The Introduction begins with the building of Justiniana Prima in the Balkans, a neat way to introduce Justinian himself. The key issue of whether Justinian's conquests were fatal for the Roman empire is established, and H. asserts that 'this is fundamentally a book about the wars of Justinian: an attempt to provide narrative and analysis of their causes, course, and consequences' (10). Here he acknowledges the Procopius problem — akin to the Thucydides problem. In ch. 1, H. establishes the 'political and institutional backdrop', an approach which, he remarks, is out of favour 'under the influence of the Cultural Turn' (18). He takes time to establish the ideology of the empire, in which military success was key. He also dwells on the issue of succession (which surfaces throughout the book), to which, in H.'s view, insufficient attention is paid (31). Ch. 2 considers the evolving nature of the later Roman army (there is 'a military revolution', 55), and how the army was funded.

With the context established, H. then turns to the narrative. Ch. 3 describes how Justinian came to be emperor, entailing consideration of the reigns of Anastasius and Justin I. Here Theodora, 'a blonde' (89), also surfaces. Ch. 4 tracks the early history of the reign (ecclesiastical affairs, legislation, Persia) culminating in the infamous Nika Riot and the decision to launch the expedition against the Vandals in North Africa. Ch. 5 details the campaign, and argues that it was the transformed nature of the Roman army that was primarily responsible for the success. Ch. 6 narrates the campaign against Ostrogothic Italy up to the capture of Ravenna by Belisarius in 540. Ch. 7 takes us through Justinian's legal, building and ecclesiastical activity in the wake of the dramatic victory. Ch. 8 turns to Persia again, and the renewed conflict under Chosroes. Ch. 9 returns to Africa and Italy, considering the further problems that were encountered, and ends with the victories of Narses. H. then gives us his verdicts on the consequences of Justinian's campaigns: ch. 10, taking in both the northern frontier and Spain, provides a balance sheet, and concludes that the campaigns were indeed worth it. Finally, ch. 11 considers whether the western campaigns