

of chronological changes that would have been easier to grasp with the help of visual presentations often remain obscure. Judicious editorial intervention could have made a great difference here. It is also unfortunate that the book gives pride of place to literary material that is *a priori* unlikely to cast much light on environmental conditions and is moreover barely related to the study's explicit focus on a few frontier provinces which rarely feature in this type of source material. At the same time, the scientific data would have deserved more attention: they alone make real progress possible. As climate change captures the public imagination (and attracts research funding), ancient historians stand to benefit from the growing body of scientific findings in this field. While anything like a synthetic account for the whole Classical period is still a long way off, further regional studies that follow H.'s lead in assembling all the pertinent scientific and archaeological evidence will be keenly awaited.

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J. DRINKWATER, *THE ALAMANNI AND ROME 213–496. CARACALLA TO CLOVIS*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 408, 27 illus, maps. ISBN 978-0-19-929568-5. £65.00.

This is much the best book on Romano-barbarian relations published in the past decade. Where much recent Anglophone scholarship has adopted as its own the late Roman caricature of slaving barbarian hordes beating on the doors of empire, or proclaimed the end of civilization when the terra sigillata runs out, Drinkwater is sober and rigorous. There are no migrations — neither of the massive tribes favoured by the Victorians and recent Oxonian writers, nor of the putative 'ethnic discourses' which the Viennese and their Anglo-American cheerleaders use to cloak migration-narratives beneath modish theory. On the contrary, D. knows quite well what the sources show us, and is unafraid to defy the pressure of historiography and say so: Rome faced constant, low-intensity military annoyances from well-established barbarian neighbours, wearily familiar neighbours who could be crushed without much difficulty save when internal Roman conflicts provided the opportunity for briefly damaging external raids. As neighbours, in fact, barbarians were quite useful, as manpower reserves and ready objects of quick propaganda victory. The cultural imbalance between the Roman state and its neighbours meant that Rome was a far greater threat to the barbarians than they were to Rome, and that the quality and scale of barbarian life near the frontier was entirely a matter of Roman sufferance. Insofar as there was a 'Germanic threat', it was an 'imperial artefact' (360).

D. draws these conclusions through the scrupulous exegesis of our textual evidence and a generally cautious use of the archaeology, combining an unsensational empiricism with a post-modern awareness that Roman texts, like all other texts, construct reality as much as they reflect it, and must be read as such before they can be mined as sources. On the other hand, he is quite willing to state his preference for one possible solution out of several equally plausible ones. In the case of the Augsburg altar of Simplicinius Genialis, discovered in 1993 and the centre of a small scholarly industry, D. canvasses the myriad interpretations on offer, admits that the source base remains too small for certainty, but settles for a scenario in which, following rebellion by Postumus in A.D. 260, Genialis played for time and his own advantage, only settling on Postumus and putting up the hastily-executed altar in A.D. 261 — to find himself rebuffed by Postumus and suppressed by Gallienus soon after (54–7). In his discussion of the *Semnones sive Iouthungi* he ignores far-fetched reconstructions of tribal movements in darkest central Europe, and equally rejects the asterisk-philology that makes the Alamannic name a proud reference to the Germanic deity Mannus.

The whole discussion of the third century demonstrates similar good sense, but the heart of the book is an exploration of Roman relations with the Alamanni under the Constantinian and Valentinianic dynasties, in part because the narrative of Ammianus here allows for much more nuanced analysis, in part because the patterns of activity and diplomacy revealed in his text have clear implications for periods its extant portions do not cover. D. argues convincingly that the so-called *Teilstämme* — Brisigavi, Lentienses, Raetovarii, and Bucinobantes — of the fourth-century Alamanni are every bit as much a result of Roman administrative convenience as was the whole concept of an Alamannia — 'a geographical expression, not a geopolitical entity' (124). Again, he sees that the concentration of Alamannic officers and their entourages in the middle of the fourth century is comparable not merely to other 'Germanic' groups like Franks or Goths, but rather to all regional groups within the Empire, so that the eclipse of Alamannic officers under

Valentinian is comparable to the eclipse of Pannonians under Theodosius I (158). Throughout, he shows that modern scholars have been too willing to accept the imperial historical and panegyric rhetoric that makes into barbarian invaders the regularly recruited forces of usurpers and imperial rivals. Equally, he shows how the extant Latin panegyrics make much out of little, not simply out of the generic need to show emperors victorious, but more specifically to balance the western emperors against their eastern counterparts: Diocletian had defeated a king, so Maximian needed a king to defeat and found a likely Frank; Galerius had won a spectacular foreign victory in Persia, so Constantius duly launched and declared victory in an Alamannic campaign. Likewise Valentinian, naturally cautious but needing western victories to match those of Julian, pursued a defensive strategy along the Rhine which he presented, as he had to, as conquest (299). D. never denies the reality of barbarian frontier violence, but he shows that within the disparity of power relations, the Alamanni and all the Empire's other neighbours were acted upon much more than acting.

There are points which one might dispute, of course. In his final chapter, on the Franks and Alamanni at the end of the fifth century, D. reverts to a dichotomy between Roman and *Germani* — and the basic likeness of different *Germani* — which his earlier discussions profitably ignored. He is suitably sceptical about the ways in which cultural differences visible in the archaeological record might reflect political distinctions, but he shows too much confidence in German archaeological findings contaminated in the process of excavation by the assumption that fibulae and belt-buckles carry ethnicity. This plays into the single most dubious inference in the book — that the Burgundians, as 'Eastgermani', were somehow harder to absorb into the local populations of south-western Germany than were the myriad other different political groups for whom D. uses the term *Elbgermani* (107–16). These are minor complaints when set beside the overwhelming success of this book. As scholarly fashion drifts back towards barbarian invasion as the cause of Rome's fall, D. shows in exemplary detail that the lives of those barbarians, like the lives of Romans, were entirely at the mercy of imperial politics, its ever-shifting minor exigencies and its constant need of a foreign enemy to sustain the logic of its own existence.

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J. DEN BOEFT, J. W. DRIJVERS, D. DEN HENGST and H. C. TEITLER (EDS), *AMMIANUS AFTER JULIAN: THE REIGN OF VALENTINIAN AND VALENS IN BOOKS 26–31 OF THE RES GESTAE*. Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2007. Pp. x + 326, 1 pl. ISBN 978-90-04-16212-9. £99.00/US\$139.00.

After Julian sees the editors of the Philological and Historical commentary series on Ammianus turn their attention to the final surviving hexad of the *Res gestae*. Book 25 concludes with the death of Jovian, Julian's short-lived sole successor, and when the curtain rises on Book 26 Ammianus makes it clear that the stage is set for a new era. The historian redefines his method with a new prologue and the narrative restarts with the selection and elevation of the Pannonians, whose reigns will bring us to the end. In and of itself, this volume is an attempt to herald the next stage. The impetus for the colloquium from which it stems was the publication of the commentary on Book 25 in 2005. This ensuing volume provides a second selection of contemporary Ammianus studies begun by a previous colloquium and collection, *Cognitio Gestorum. The Historiographic Art of Ammianus Marcellinus* (1992), itself precipitated by the completion of the commentary on Book 21 (which ends with Constantius' necrology).

The first section, 'History and Historiography', demonstrates how the *Res gestae* may be made to relate profitably to other texts and the period, thereby showing Ammianus' historiographic artifice in action. Bruno Bleckmann discovers layers of authorship within the narrative through analysis of Late Greek and Byzantine sources. Noel Lenski takes us to the eastern frontier to revise Seck's chronology for events involving Persia, Armenia and the Saracens between A.D. 364 and 378, drawing on church historians, Themistius and the Armenian Epic Histories to fill in Ammianus' impressionistic narrative. Jan Willem Drijvers focuses on Firmus' revolt in Mauretania Caesariensis, where he finds Ammianus' unusually lengthy report geographically inaccurate and compressed and evasive in chronology. He discovers a dense portrait amplified in importance and proposes that the historian constructed this event as a parallel to Tacitus' Tacfarinas revolt and Sallust's Iugurthine war, as well as a forum for some covert criticisms of Count Theodosius. Harmut Leppin draws on church historians to suggest that Ammianus has inverted the novel imperial self-promotion as men with experience of the real world to create an