

and Alexander Severus. The Clodius Albinus seems particularly lost, separated from the Septimius Severus and Pescennius Niger which remain in the first group, but T. shows that citations of Herodian and of the invented biographer Cordus, which are features of the Albinus, are found in lives of the second group, and only in those lives. The non-sequential order of publication seems to me to favour interpretations of the work as composed privately, for a small group, rather than, for example, Dessau's argument that the book was composed for the public book market.

Chapter 6 offers evidence for the history of the *Hist. Aug.* in the early Middle Ages. This is overall a useful and convincing synthesis. Like many scholars, T. places too much weight on the only use of the *Hist. Aug.* in Late Antiquity, two passages in Jordanes ultimately attributed to the Roman history of Q. Aurelius Memmius Symmachus, perhaps the great-grandson of the fourth-century Q. Aurelius Symmachus. T. concludes from this bare fact that the *Hist. Aug.* 'relied upon the cultural networks of the late Roman aristocracy for its dissemination and preservation' and 'passed through successive generations of the Symmachi-Nicomachi'. But the claim that the circles of the earlier Symmachus are the 'milieu' in which the *Hist. Aug.* was created is not one derived from the text.

T.'s conclusion is titled 'Toward an Interpretation', and I wish he had gone even further towards one. T. claims that the author's antiquarian research 'legitimated the prerogatives of the Senate' and 'celebrated and reinforced the cultural identity of privileged groups', but what percentage of the thirty-book work could really be said to do that? In a section on 'hermeneutics' T., placing the *Hist. Aug.* in the context of the proliferation of untrustworthy contemporary panegyric and hagiography, argues that 'we should acknowledge that our author may have operated within conventions of truth and verisimilitude entirely unfamiliar to us'. This would make sense if the fictionalised parts of the *Hist. Aug.* could be interpreted allegorically or ideologically, but in fact much of the author's inventiveness represents a type of joke or game formed from allusions to authors such as Cicero and Ammianus. This form of purposeful allusion cannot have been understood by the author as a kind of higher truth.

Fresh approaches to the *Hist. Aug.* are very welcome, and T. has the beginnings of a number of intriguing arguments. One hopes that he is busy right now deepening and expanding these arguments for future publication.

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THE *LIFE* OF MARCUS AURELIUS

ADAMS (G. W.) *Marcus Aurelius in the Historia Augusta and Beyond*. Pp. x + 333, figs. Lanham, Md. and Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2013. Cased, £49.95, US\$80. ISBN: 978-0-7391-7638-2.
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Commentaries of the individual *vitae* of the *Historia Augusta* (*HA*) do not come along very often. Even with two major presses working on a series of texts and commentaries, significant gaps remain, the *vita Marci Antonini* (*MA*) being one of the more notable.¹ Therefore,

¹So far, the Budé edition has produced the following volumes: J.-P. Callu, A. Gaden and O. Desbordes (edd.), *Histoire Auguste* 1.1, *Introduction générale, vies d'Hadrien*,

when a work with the title *Marcus Aurelius in the Historia Augusta and Beyond* comes along, it will inevitably grab the attention of numerous historians and students of imperial literature alike. An insightful, critical and thought-provoking commentary and discussion of the *MA* would be a boon to many a scholar. It is all the more disappointing, then, that A.'s work does not live up to expectations.

While A. considers the historiographical representation of Marcus Aurelius in the major third- and fourth-century historians, he focuses primarily on the *MA*. Along with a general introduction and conclusion, the book contains five chapters. Chapter 1 attempts to place the *HA* in its wider literary context and especially the Graeco-Roman biographical tradition, while also considering possible sources and its historical validity. Chapters 2 and 3 make up the bulk and focal point of the work. Together they provide a section-by-section literary and historical commentary of the life: Chapter 2 covers 1.1–14.8; 20.1–29.10, Chapter 3 15.1–19.12. Chapter 4 then considers the representation of Marcus Aurelius in those portions of the *HA* where he is not the main protagonist. Chapter 5 looks at the portrayal of Marcus Aurelius in the other, major historiographical sources of the third and fourth century, namely Cassius Dio, Herodian, Aurelius Victor, the *Epitomator* and Eutropius. There follows a concluding chapter that summarises the major points made along the way. An appendix contains a text, mainly following Hohl (1955), and translation, A.'s own.

In the main, A. argues that the biographer presents a consistent and almost entirely positive portrayal of Marcus Aurelius throughout both the *MA* and the *HA*. Any explicitly or implicitly negative comments from the biographer are simply meant to humanise the great philosopher, but they are not really meant to muddy the water of an otherwise clearly positive portrayal: 'the portrait of Marcus Aurelius is highly idealistic, except for the rare occasion where he is criticized. This is clearly the intentions [sic] of the *HA* biographer – Marcus provided an excellent example for the succeeding generations and so he should be followed' (p. 205). This less-than-sophisticated reading is indicative of the general tenor of the commentary as well: for A., there is little or no room for ambiguity in the *HA*, or at least in the *MA*. For example, on 10.3–5 and Marcus Aurelius' habit of appointing and promoting his personal friends and acquaintances, A. remarks, 'The biographer is showing these policies as a representation of his goodwill to the Senate and as an effort to increase its prestige, whereas a similar instance cast in a more negative light could show this as being interfering and controlling on the part of a *princeps*' (p. 87). There seems to me to be no good reason not to consider and explore in more detail the possible ambiguity in the depiction of Marcus Aurelius that A. simply brushes aside. Similarly, it is often the case that the discussions in the commentary do little more than reiterate the words

Aelius, Antonin (1992); R. Turcan (ed.), *Histoire Auguste* 3.1, *Vies de Macrin, Diaduménien, Héliogabale* (1993); F. Paschoud (ed.), *Histoire Auguste* 5.1, *Vies d'Aurélien et de Tacite* (1996); *ibid.* (ed.), *Histoire Auguste* 5.2, *Vies de Probus, Firmus, Saturnin, Proculus et Bonose, Carus Numérien et Carin* (2001); *ibid.* (ed.), *Histoire Auguste* 4.3, *Vies des Trente Tyrans et de Claude* (2011); S. Ratti and O. Desbordes (edd.), *Histoire Auguste* 4.2, *Vies des deux Valériens et des deux Galliens* (2002). The Antiquitas IV.3 series has produced the following: A. Lippold, *Kommentar zur Vita Maximini duo der Historia Augusta* (1991); H. Brandt, *Kommentar zur Vita Maximi et Balbini der Historia Augusta* (1996); S. Walentowski, *Kommentar zur Vita Antoninus Pius der Historia Augusta* (1998); J. Fündling, *Kommentar zur Vita Hadriani der Historia Augusta* (2 vol.) (2006); S. Zinsli, *Kommentar zur Vita Heliogabali der Historia Augusta* (2013).

of the *HA* biographer. A prime but far from only example is A.'s comments (pp. 85–6) on sections 9.7–9, which are tantamount to a rephrasing of both the Latin and A.'s own translation (pp. 272–3). It seems very likely that both these problems stem from a lack of real engagement with the secondary literature. One of the more glaring omissions is a recent investigation of the *MA* that challenges the idea (and A.'s main argument) that the *HA* depicts the emperor unambiguously. D. Pausch 'Der Philosoph auf dem Kaiserthron, der Leser auf dem Holzweg? Marc Aurel in der *Historia Augusta*', *M-J* 4 (2007), 107–55, is cited neither in the notes nor in the bibliography. Similarly, C. Krause, 'Herrschaft und Geschlechterhierarchie. Zur Funktionalisierung der Zenobiagestalt und anderer Usurpatoren in den viten der *Historia Augusta*', *Philologus* 151.2 (2007), 311–34, which argues that the wildly different depictions of Zenobia in the various *vitae* results from her use as a foil to other characters, is also nowhere discussed or cited. While there are other omissions, it should also be noted that A. Scheithauer, *Kaiserbild und literarisches Program* (1987), while in the bibliography, is not cited as much as would be expected nor are its arguments engaged with in a manner at all satisfactory for a work considering the depiction of Marcus Aurelius. Even more troubling is A.'s treatment of sections 15.1–19.12. It was noted long ago that this section contains phrasing very similar to, if not taken directly from, Eutropius (see, e.g., J. Schwendemann, *Der historische Wert der Vita Marci bei den Scriptoribus Historiae Augustae* [1923], p. 201, '[chapter 17] stammt nur aus Eutrop.' and T.D. Barnes, *The Sources of the Historia Augusta* [1978], p. 47). Instead of dealing with these sections as a quotation or adaptation, though, A. excises them as if not an original part of the text. While removing these sections greatly helps A.'s argument that the biography presents a consistently positive depiction of Marcus Aurelius (as A. himself points out, 'one of the most apparent aspects when considering the *Vita Marci Antonini* is the continuity in the thematic progression *once the interpolation is removed*' [my emphasis], p. 37), it is an approach that cannot and should not be taken seriously (a much better and acceptable approach is that of A.R. Birley, 'Cassius Dio and the *Historia Augusta*' in M. van Ackeren [ed], *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius* [2012], p. 21, who views the sections as being 'adapted from Eutropius' [my emphasis]).

It must also be noted that the book is replete with both typos (e.g. 'wider interpretations that within the *MA* tradition' [p. 3]; 'Though the examination of death notices in the *Historia Augusta* it also further establishes' [p. 10]; 'While Schwendemann's study has been useful in the development of this study, but the foci' [p. 11]; 'As Lessing has discusses' [p. 93]) and awkward phrasing (e.g. 'In this section of the study, there have been three points of significance considered' [p. 27]; '... this was intended to refer to the great respect Marcus possessed for those philosophical mentors and their elevated social standing from his own perspective' [p. 65]; 'this is also shown in the biography of Avidius Cassius by the biographer' [p. 116]; 'it is obvious that the text of the *Historia Augusta* is "clunky" – the transitions in theme are not typically smooth, instead being quite abrupt shifts in characterization' [p. 205]). It seems, then, that we are still waiting for a serious and scholarly commentary on the *MA*.

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