

## BOOK REVIEW

Daniël den Hengst, *Emperors and Historiography: Collected Essays on the Literature of the Roman Empire*. Introduced and edited by D. W. P. Burgersdijk and J. A. van Waarden. Mnemosyne Supplements, vol. 319. Leiden: Brill, 2010. Pp. viii + 362. ISSN 0169-8958. ISBN 978-90-04-17438-2. €121.00.

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This anthology of articles on Latin historical prose from Cicero to Ammianus Marcellinus follows the retirement of Prof Daniël den Hengst from the chair of Latin at the University of Amsterdam. The editors, a former student and a one-time fellow student of den Hengst, have gathered together in one volume (‘as a tribute to his person and his scholarship’, p. 4) twenty-eight previously published papers spanning almost three decades (1981–2009). The contents reflect the polyglot nature of den Hengst’s publications: many of the pieces were in English from the start, while seven appear here newly translated into English from their original Dutch; four (of those on the *HA*) were written in German, and one (the most recent item) is in French, drawn from a *Festschrift* for the seventieth birthday of F. Paschoud.

The editors have chosen their title to echo Sir Ronald Syme’s *Emperors and Biography*, a work which was influential in the direction of den Hengst’s interests towards Latin historical writing of the late imperial period. The inspiration might equally have been Syme’s *Ammianus and the Historia Augusta*, for it is the Augustan History and the history of Ammianus Marcellinus, and their interconnections, which dominate den Hengst’s published output. He will be most familiar to readers of *Histos* as one of the quartet of scholars in the Netherlands long engaged in producing a series of invaluable commentaries on the successive books of Ammianus. Hence Parts II and III of this volume, i.e. all but seven of the collected pieces, are devoted respectively to the *HA* and to Ammianus; and Part I, while ostensibly focused on Cicero and the historical literature of the early empire, includes two papers which have better claim to belong with the later material (*see below*).

Part I, the most miscellaneous section, begins fittingly with den Hengst’s 1997 inaugural lecture for the Amsterdam chair, entitled ‘Cicero and History’, an examination of Cicero’s various reflections on historiography

which weaves a judicious middle path between the proponents of rhetorical invention (Woodman) and of factual truth (Momigliano). The second chapter dating from 1981 (the earliest of the book's contents) proceeds from some general remarks on Cicero's letters to a close reading of the exchange of correspondence with the Caesarian loyalist C. Matius in the aftermath of the dictator's assassination, and Cicero's exploration of tensions between personal friendship and political allegiance: it is a piece (printed without footnotes) which presumes a reader's familiarity with the texts discussed. Ch. 3 (1986) provides a technically informative summary of three Latin treatments (*Rhet. ad Her.* 3.28–40; Cic. *De Orat.* 2.350–60; Quint. *Inst.* 11.12) of the memorising techniques required of the classical rhetor. This is followed (ch. 4) by a close analysis of Livy's preface (1995), taking issue with some earlier interpretations of the text, including (most recently at the time) John Moles' treatment in *PCPS* 1993; and (Ch. 5, 1999) by a survey of Roman leaders' engagement with the legacy of Alexander in the late Republic and imperial period, as represented in the literary record—a very selective trawl of a huge subject, with the emperor Julian suffering especially abbreviated treatment (contrast Rowland Smith's extensive study in the current volume of *Histos*). The last two pieces in Part I form preludes to the main material on the *HA* and Ammianus. In Ch. 6 (1984) general remarks on the classic distinctions between biography and history (Plut. *Alex.* 1) and on Suetonius lead into the supposed blurring of generic boundaries in late antiquity, a notion here disputed by den Hengst, who follows Syme (and Straub before him) in seeing certain passages of the *HA* as the biographer's polemical reaction to the history of Ammianus—and adds a further intriguing example of his own to Syme's dossier of the *HA*'s apparent familiarity with the historian (*V. Aurel.* 10–15 ~ Amm. Marc. 31.7). Ch. 7 is a recent piece (2005) briefly examining traces of Plutarch's work in Ammianus, especially in the 'ideologically charged' context of the *genius* digression in 21.14, which den Hengst sees as a significant reflection of the historian's religious and philosophical views.

The pieces assembled in Part II originate mostly from the published proceedings (ranging from 1987 to 2007) of various *HA* colloquia in Bonn, Paris, Geneva, Macerata, Perugia and Bamberg. As a professor of Latin, den Hengst is drawn principally to the literary inventiveness of the *HA* at its height: his preoccupation is much more with fiction than with facts, and with the predominantly 'bogus' lives of the collection rather than the substantially historical material to be found in the primary series of imperial biographies. So for example, the *Vita Taciti* is the subject of one short contribution (Ch. 12, 1994), a prime exhibit 'of what Syme has called the mature manner of the author', reflected in its paucity of factual information and numerous (invented) documents, speeches, acclamations and letters. A more extended piece (Ch. 8, 1987) on the author's technique in composing such

speeches and documents unpacks their method of construction, either drawn from material already elsewhere in his narrative or by means of adapting other writers: den Hengst offers examples from Herodian and Ammianus (31.7, the passage already discussed in Ch. 7). Despite much delving into the biographer's literary borrowings and allusions, den Hengst is judiciously cautious on the subject of intertextuality, demanding for verbal similarities (Ch. 9 'The author's literary culture', 1991) the same stringent criteria which Barnes had imposed for identifying the sources of the *HA*: in otherwise laudatory reviews of recent Budé editions by F. Paschoud and others (reproduced here as Chs. 16–18, 1998–2005), he is critical of the tendency to 'assume intertextual relations' without 'solid arguments'; Ch. 13 (2004) is den Hengst's own careful demonstration of the (surprisingly limited) reminiscences of Virgil which occur in the *HA*, revealing a marked concentration on the great prophetic speech at the end of *Aeneid* VI. On the other principal preoccupation of *HA* studies, the question of authorship, it is possible to detect den Hengst's ground slowly shifting with the times: the earlier material assembled here generally takes it as read that the lives were the product of a single author, as in the substantial examination (Ch. 11) of the 'Selbstkommentare' passages in the *HA*, first published in 1995; by 2002 (Ch. 14, 'The discussion of authorship') he has come to acknowledge that recent computer studies in Oxford had reopened the case for multiple authorship, having already in a review published in 1998 (Ch. 17) tentatively differed with Paschoud on the topic, doubting that a 'single author wrote the *HA* from beginning to end.'

François Paschoud also has a place in Part III of this volume, which includes (Ch. 26, 2009) a contribution from den Hengst published as a tribute to the former's seventieth birthday: it provides a fascinating insight into a key moment in the textual history of Ammianus—the 1533 edition of Gelenius, crucial because it derived in part from the subsequently lost *Hersfeldensis* ms. This solitary piece of manuscript studies sits among articles mostly devoted to the learned digressions which are so notable a feature of Ammianus' history: as with the material on the *HA* in Part II, it is his author's literary erudition in these passages rather than the historical narrative unfolding around them which commands den Hengst's attention. Hence Ch. 21 (1992) provides a convenient overview of Ammianus' principal digressions, briefly examining common aspects of their structure, sources, language and position in the narrative. The impressively knowledgeable treatment (Ch. 28, 1999) of Ammianus' at first sight very technical description of various siege engines (23.4) reveals it to be a *tour de force* of book learning rather than the author's actual experience as a military man. Yet, as with the *HA*, den Hengst insists on caution in establishing a case for literary dependence: he is dismissive of claims to read echoes of Juvenal in the second

of Ammianus' Roman digressions, finding a stronger argument in favour of Lucian (Ch. 25, 2007), while acknowledging the extent of the historian's debt to Virgil in a brief but skilful demonstration (Ch. 24, 2005) of some intricate verbal parallels. Den Hengst glimpses an 'ideological function' in Ammianus' multiple Virgilian reminiscences, in defence of an age-old Roman tradition now threatened by the new ascendancy of Christianity. That Ammianus was wedded to an ideal of *Roma aeterna* goes without saying—as is clear from den Hengst's treatment (ch. 23, 2000) of the famous passage on the ages of Rome (14.6.3–6), where he rightly dissents from Barnes' negatively pessimistic reading—but it is debateable whether the prevalence of Virgil and notions of Roman eternity (not solely the preserve of pagan writers) denote a specifically anti-Christian emphasis; den Hengst is on stronger ground in this respect in his discussion of the Egyptian digression (Ch. 22, 'Hidden Polemics', 1996), where it is surely more credible to find an undercurrent of pagan ideology (as in the *genius* digression, above). Two of the pieces in Part III are devoted to Ammianus' portrayal of the emperor Julian, the central character of what survives of the history. The first (Ch. 19, 1992) is a brief survey of the seeming mismatch between Julian's essential Greekness and the expectations of the historian's Roman audience, leading to specific examples from his narrative of Ammianus' deliberately 'Romanized' version of the emperor—in fact a huge topic, arguably fundamental to the purpose of the history, of which very much more could be said. Ch. 27 (2005) is slightly adapted from a lecture focusing on the lengthy obituary given to Julian in the history (25.4), and in particular on the key terminology (*levitas*, *curiositas*, *superstitio*, *popularitas*) applied to his *vitia*: den Hengst tantalisingly introduces the impression of an author trying to come to terms with his hero's ultimate failure, again a theme running through the history which is much larger than the few obituary paragraphs of Julian under consideration here.

Overall, across the diversity of pieces collected here, readers will find succinct and lucid summaries of necessary background combined with close attention to the Latin text and the literary influences which bear upon it, informed throughout by den Hengst's enviably wide knowledge of classical authors. The articles, it should be noted, have not been updated from their original publication, save for a few bibliographical additions (although not all of the references added to footnotes have found their way to a full entry in the bibliography: e.g. p. 139, n. 10 'Nisbet 2003', p. 175, n. 62 'Fündling 2006'). An error has slipped through in the attribution at the end of Ch. 19, 'The Romanization of Julian', which should read 'This article was originally published in *Lampas* 25 (1992) 71–81'. English readers inclined to pedantry (among whom this reviewer, alas, is one) will notice occasional flaws in the translations: e.g., p. 26 'practise' for 'practice'; pp. 22, 30 'criterium' for 'cri-

terion'; pp. 50, 61 the mysterious abbreviation 'resp.' (?); pp. 69, 77 equally mysterious 'c.q.' (?); p. 264 'negociated' (*sic*); and, *passim*, potentially misleading punctuation—or the absence of it—around relative clauses, which can render sentences almost unintelligible (a particularly telling instance of a missing comma towards the bottom of p. 82!). The *OED*, sadly, does not recognize 'poliorcetician' (p. 330).

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