

M.^a PILAR GONZÁLEZ-CONDE PUENTE, *Las provincias de Hispania en los años de Adriano*,
Libros Pórtico, Zaragoza, 2019, 416 p., ISBN 978-84-7956-185-7

Hispania is a privileged province of the Roman Empire with respect to the abundance of epigraphic, archaeological, artistic, and numismatic material, as well as the consistent literary information, which allow elaborating excellent monograph works, such as the one authored by M.^a Pilar González-Conde Puente, reviewed in these pages. It is a dense work, based on the exquisite knowledge of the sources (among which the juridical and epigraphic ones occupy a special position), on the dextrous handling of the instruments and on the critical dialogue with the extensive secondary bibliography. The volume is structured in sections that follow logically one another, allowing a heedful observation of the historical evolution of the Hispanic provinces, viz. Hispania Citerior, Lusitania and Baetica, during the Principate of Hadrian (117-138), but with natural reverberations towards the Flavian and Antonine eras, in general: the place of the provinces within the wider Roman world, the provincial and local society, the imperial performers of Hispanic origin (Trajan, Hadrian), senators and knights of peninsular ancestry (the *Aelii* and the *Ulprii* from Italica, the *Annii* from Ucubi, the *Roscii* from Merida, the *Messii Rustici*, L. Licinius Sura et alii, respectively the *Rufinii* from Saguntum, the *Numisii* from Tarraco, the *Aemilii* from Aeso and others), local elites (the *Acilii* from Singilia Barba and so forth), provincial administrative organism and authorities (*concilia provinciarum*; *legati Augusti pro praetores*; *legati Augusti iuridici*; *procuratores*; provincial *flamines*), the so-called “itinerant administration” inaugurated by Hadrian, local communities, among which the *Colonia Aelia Augusta Italica*, and their institutions, civic engineering works, economic life (production and trade in Baetic oil, mining exploitations), lines of communication, army (*legio VII Gemina*, *auxilia*, *milites* raised in the Hispaniae, etc.) elements of juridical law (*hospitium*, *ius Latii*, etc.), religious phenomena (Roman divinities, *Hercules Gaditanus*, cults of mysteries, the imperial cult, etc.). Seen from this perspective, the history of Iberia under Trajan’s successor seems almost unsettlingly clear, apparently striving to confirm an overstatement by a late orator, Latinus Pacatus Drepanius, who said in 389 said about Hispania that it was *terris omnibus terra felicior* (*Pan.* XII [2], 4, 2). If a specialist, even the most exigent one, is left with this conviction, this is certainly due to the author, who in this meticulous analytical enterprise, taken from a diachronic perspective, does not overlook any aspect, whether of a general or local concern, does not omit any piece of useful information, does not avoid any subject, be it controversial, liable to divergent interpretations or previously tackled by reputed scholars (G. Alföldy, A. Birley *et alii*), it champions the multidisciplinary, paleographical and contextualised study of the sources, is attentive to all nuances, including

to denominations (she duly rejects the presentist terminology—“Spain”, “Spaniards”—, preferring the ancient names — Hispania, Hispaniards). Anyone who steadily and attentively goes through the sections of the monograph will confirm what has been said above: *Introducción* (p. 11–14); *La península ibérica en los planes imperiales* (p. 15–50); *La vida provincial* (p. 51–94); *La vida local* (p. 95–152); *Sociedad y promoción social de los hispanos* (p. 153–225); *La vida de las comunidades hispanas: legislación y transformaciones económicas* (p. 227–278); *El ejército de Hispania: la legio VII Gemina* (p. 279–320); *Los testimonios religiosos* (p. 323–328); *Conclusiones* (p. 329–333). The abbreviations (p. 335–336), an ample list of the cited literature (p. 337–394), a valuable and exhaustive onomastic index (p. 395–400), a toponymic index (p. 401–407), an index of literary sources (p. 408–409) and, respectively, of epigraphic sources (p. 410–415), complete this splendid volume — a genuine contribution to the study of the Roman history of the Iberian peninsula.

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BRUNO LUISELLI, *Romanobarbarica. Scritti scelti*,
a cura di ANTONELLA BRUZZONE e MARIA LUISA FELE, SISMEL –
Edizione del Galluzzo, Firenze, 2017, 666 p. (*mediEVI*), ISBN 978-88-8450-730-3

The two students of Bruno Luiselli, one of the great Italian professors and specialists of late antiquity and early middle ages of the last half of a century, have collected in this massive volume 27 of the numerous contributions “su tematiche romanobarbariche” (p. XVIII–XIX) published by their magister between 1978 and 2014 in various specialised journals and collected editions (*Contributi raccolti nel volume e loro originaria sede editoriale*, p. XV–XVII). Compared to their initial form, they underwent “alcuni ritocchi operati dall’Autore”, both in terms of content and interpretation, as well as bibliographically and editorially (*Nota delle curatrici*, p. XIII). The title under which the papers are gathered is the same as that of the well-known journal edited by Luiselli since 1976 until recently — *Romanobarbarica*; between the covers, they are grouped into four large sections: I. *I rapporti di culture* (p. 3–195); II. *Mondo romanoceltico* (p. 199–353); III. *Mondo romanogermanico* (p. 357–469); IV. *Autori* (p. 473–599). Alongside Luiselli’s high professional standing—foremost his perfect knowledge of the authors and writings of late antiquity and the early middle ages—they testify to his

innovative direction put forward in the investigation of the relations between the Roman world and the so-called “barbarian” one, namely the *cultural relations* (also see Bruno Luiselli, *Prefazione*, p. IX) between the Romans on the one hand, and the Gauls, Franks, Ostrogoths, Visigoths, Anglo-Saxons, Lombards, etc. on the other, which manifested on multiple levels – linguistic, literary, religious, theological, scientific, artistic, historiographical, paedetic, juridical. Deciphering their articulations, the historical context they favoured, the concrete forms of manifestation, the personalities involved in promoting them allow, as demonstrated by the texts gathered by this volume, a more nuanced understanding of certain extremely important historical processes and phenomena that were the basis of the development of Western European culture – *romanisation, Latinisation, alphabetisation, Christianisation, “inculturazione”, acculturation, assimilation, Roman-Germanic coexistence, economic continuity and transformation, social, institutional and politico-religious, bilingualism, confessional and historiographical “nationalism”*. Accordingly, a collection of erudite studies, thoroughly researched, rich in ideas, fertile for further scrutiny; one who owns it can be called privileged.

Special mention should be made of the *Indice dei nomi e delle cose notevoli* produced by the two curators of the volume. Extremely analytical (65 pages with entries!) (p. 601–666) (I do not share the view that Romanisation is an “acculturazione in senso romano” /p. 601, 653/, the latter being an asymmetrical process less complex than the former), it represents an instrument of work by itself, providing, in particular to the specialist, a profligate access to the matter at hand; it again demonstrate the meticulousness and thoughtfulness with which we have been accustomed by Antonella Bruzzone and Maria Luisa Fele from their own contributions.

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PAUL N. PEARSON, *Maximinus Thrax: From Common Soldier to Emperor of Rome*,
Pen & Sword Military, South Yorkshire, 2017, 296 p., ISBN 978-1-5107-0863-1

Since its founding, namely in 1990, and until present day, the British Publishing House Pen & Sword has focused on publishing and distribution of certain titles from the field of military history, but not exclusively, as a series of works pertaining to other fields of humanities were issued: naval and maritime history, local history, genealogy, history of aviation, social history, records of discoveries, archaeology etc. In the last few years, even studies dedicated to Roman

emperors came to be, such as: *The Roman Emperor Aurelian. Restorer of the World* (South Yorkshire, 2015) elaborated by John F. White; *Emperor Alexander Severus. Rome's Age of Insurrection, AD 222-235* (South Yorkshire, 2017) conceived by John S. McHugh; *Augustus at War. The Struggle for the Pax Augusta* (South Yorkshire, 2018) signed by Lindsay Powell; *Lucius Verus and the Roman Defence of the East* (Yorkshire, 2018) compiled by M. C. Bishop; *The Reign of Emperor Gallienus. The Apogee of Roman Cavalry* (South Yorkshire, 2019) written by Ikka Syvanne. In the same field of interest lies the work of Paul N. Pearson, *Maximinus Thrax. From Common Soldier to Emperor of Rome*, upon which we will focus in the following.

This biography of the first soldier-emperor, similar to those of Severus Alexander, Gallienus and Aurelian, brings forth that half a century of crisis, that profoundly shocked the Roman society, which, for certain historians, overlaps with what, in historiography, is considered to be the beginning of Late Antiquity.

Paul N. Pearson is a *Honorary Professor* at the University of Cardiff in Wales, U.K. He is a representative of the scientific guild of geologists and a member of the *School of Earth and Ocean Studies*. Among his fields of interest we count: stratigraphy, paleobiology, micropaleontology, paleoclimatology. In this regard, stand witness several articles (almost 100) published between 1992 and 2018.

The work of Paul N. Pearson has the following structure, comprised of fifteen chapters: Chapter I: *Nurs'd in Blood and War* (p. 1-16); Chapter II: *Cursus Maximini* (p. 17-34); Chapter III: *Regime Change* (p. 35-47); Chapter IV: *Duke of Riverbank* (p. 48-68); Chapter V: *Empire's Edge* (p. 69-84); Chapter VI: *Soldier-Emperor* (p. 85-99); Chapter VII: *Echoes in Eternity* (p. 100-108); Chapter VIII: *Maximinus Augustus* (p. 109-119); Chapter IX: *Provok'd Rebellion* (p. 120-129); Chapter X: *The Noble and the Brave* (p. 130-144); Chapter XI: *Bellum Civile* (p. 145-169); Chapter XII: *A New Start* (p. 170-180); Chapter XIII: *Empire of Fortune* (p. 181-189); Chapter XIV: *The Giant's Legacy* (p. 190-206); Chapter XV: *Postscript: The Ogre in the Met* (p. 207-221). The chapters are preceded by *Acknowledgements* (p. VII), *List of Illustration* (p. IX-XI), *Introduction* (p. XIII-XV), *Prologue* (p. XVII-XXIV) and are followed by *Appendix I. Sources* (p. 221-227), *Appendix II. Chronology of 238* (p. 228-229), the endnotes (p. 230-267), a bibliography (p. 268-285) and the *Index* (p. 286-296).

In the introduction, the author points out that his objective is not to accomplish a research with the target audience as the academic world, but instead, to offer a wide and entertaining perspective upon the first half of the third century (p. XIV). Thus, this title, which has Maximinus Thrax as a protagonist, is a book of popularization.

Regarding the sources used, still in the introductory section we discover that Herodian's work is the main fountain of knowledge from which pieces of information have been extracted. Beside the Greek historian, as shown in the section of *Appendix I*, where a list of all used sources was compiled (p. 221-227), we gather the understanding that Paul N. Pearson

also consulted the writings of Cassius Dio, Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, Ammianus Marcellinus, Zosimos, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, etc. We acknowledge the fact that the author truly possesses the necessary skills to captivate his readers. The gift of writing, with which Fortuna blessed him, makes the writing experience to be light and captivating. The reader empathizes with the actions of the characters of the book, no matter their social origin, which are presented in various contexts: from the most difficult, tension-filled, death involving ones, until those in which the highest peaks of glory are reached.

Furthermore, Paul N. Pearson possesses a rich cinematography knowledge, which he doesn't hesitate in using in order to support the reader, in his process of visualizing the information presented to him/her. In order to further support our considerations, we offer the following examples: in his attempt to outline the imposing stature of the emperor Maximinus Thrax, the author reminds, in the *Prologue*, names of personalities who had achieved success in the world of sports or film, given their unusual height (p. XIX-XX); in the context of describing Severus Alexander's campaign in the Orient, the author mentions a passage through Armenia, which he considers to be a "Tolkienisue passage", thus accomplishing a connection towards the universe created by the Anglo-Saxon writer J.R.R. Tolkien, in order to stimulate the imagination of the reader (p. 59); in a subchapter dedicated to the march of Maximinus's troops towards the city of Aquileia, the Celtic deity Belenus is invoked in close connection to one whom venerated her, Asterix the Gaul, who was implanted in the contemporary collective frame of mind through comic books and movies of last decades (p. 163).

Although, we are compelled to point out certain aspects which, we consider, are bringing a degree of disservice to this paper, but not as much as to consider it worthy of the process of *damnatio*. Firstly, we will focus on the protagonist of the book. As we have previously mentioned, this book has the following name: *Maximinus Thrax. From Common Soldier to Emperor of Rome*. Thus, it is an imperial biography, or it should be one. If we don't take into consideration the introductory and final pages of this work, the fifteen chapters cover a number of 220 pages. After analysing the first four chapters, and the first half of the fifth one, we realised that Maximinus Thrax, presumably the main figure, occupies only a secondary position in the narration, sometimes even as an episodic character. The attention is rather focused on the representatives of the Severan Dynasty and their adventures, which marked the history of the Roman Empire specific to the chronological interlude of 193-235: Septimius Severus (193-211), Caracalla (211-217), Elagabalus (218-222), Severus Alexander (222-235); to the aforementioned we add Macrinus and his son Diadumenianus (217-218). Only after 80 pages, of the total 220, the "Thracian" emperor finally attains the role of protagonist in his own biography. Thus, in chapters V-VII, given the narrative style of Pearson, the reader is living with the impression of direct participation, along with Maximinus himself, to the his quest for obtaining imperial power. A new overshadow of the emperor can be discovered

between pages 122–152, which correspond with chapters IX–XI, where the foreground is awarded to the two Gordians (238), and to the emperors nominated by the Roman Senate, Pupienus and Balbinus (238). Also, between pages 170–189, corresponding to chapters XII–XIII, we face the same obscurity of Maximinus in favour to Gordian III (238–244). In Chapters XIV–XV, the author’s attention is focused upon the legacy of the Thracian emperor and the manner in which he was seen in posterity: in the Roman world (p. 190–195), in Theodoric’s the Great Italy (p. 196–197), in Niccolò Machiavelli’s *The Prince* (p. 197–198), in Gibbon’s work regarding the fall of the Roman Empire (p. 198–199), by the Nazi regime (p. 199–201) and by the Scottish society (201–203).

In attempting to give a verdict regarding Maximinus’s impact on Roman society, the author is placing on balance his personality traits, according to the model of Ancient writers of distinguishing between the *boni* and the *mali* emperors. These were animated by his violent impulses, by the tough and military world in which he’s upbringing took place, or they were placed around a certain morality untouched by madness, decay or depravity (p. 204–205). Placing him in contrast with the emperors that followed Septimius Severus, the writer of the book considers Maximinus to be a competent and visionary leader (p. 205). Simultaneously, the scenario of the emperor not being assassinated is outlined as a possibility, in which case, given his pragmatism, he could have extended the imperial borders beyond the Rhine and the Danube. This scenario may have prevented the later fall of the Western Roman Empire (p. 205–206). Truly, Paul N. Pearson mentions, in his introduction, the fact that ambition is one of exploring the history of the first half of the third century (p. XIII), but his undertaking proved to be a disproportionate one in comparison to his proposed objective.

Pertaining to his method of citation, Paul N. Pearson resorts to the extraction of whole paragraphs from his sources, on multiple occasions. We have identified a number of 34 such extractions, of different ranges, namely at the following pages: 1, 20, 33, 47, 50, 56, 59, 64–65, 67, 81, 83, 84, 116, 119, 119, 126, 143–144, 162–163, 172–173, 174, 190–191, 194–195, 198, 203, 208, 209–210, 212, 214, 219. We consider this to be an exaggeration, given the following reasoning. A page of this book is compiled of a number of 40 rows. Out of the allocated space for the research subject, these paragraphs are comprised of a number of 381 rows or 9,5 pages. If further add the 1–3 rows left before and after the inserted paragraphs in the paper, also including even the cited source, we reach a full number of 461 rows or 11,5 pages. Thus, we consider that the usage of this manner of citation is exaggerated. We are of the opinion that the placement of these paragraph at the end of the book, as extra proof of his research, would have been a more desirable one. Also at the end we consider that the illustrations should have been placed, instead of the middle of the book, fact that makes the reading experience cumbersome. Furthermore, our appreciation is that the explanatory notes should

all be placed in the footer of the page, or by the end of each chapter, and not at the end of the paper, because this complicates the reading process even more. We accept the fact that this format may not have been the author's choice, but instead to have been an editorial policy.

Pearson is using a series of words and phrases, which we consider to be inadequate. For example, *revolution* and *revolutioners* are terms mainly used in the description of attempted actions of the two Gordians against Maximinus Thrax (p. 131, 134, 148, 150). Instead, the more appropriate terms for this historical period would be *rebellion* and *usurpation*, which are coming way closer to their original Latin counterparts — *rebellatio* and *tyrannis, res novae*. In the same sequence we can also frame some comparisons between ancient and contemporary events, which in our humble opinion are also inappropriate. For example, Capelianus's march to Carthage and his conflicts with the armed forces of the two Gordians are made to look as an equivalent of the Anglo-American troops' landing in Algeria and their march to Tunisia in 1942 (p. 136–137). Another example of this sort is the association between the names of Napoleon and Wellington with that of Maximinus Thrax when the actions of the Roman emperor in Northern part of the Italian Peninsula are analysed, taking as a starting point the works of Herodian (p. 159). Similarly, the situation of the slaves from African provinces and their relationship with the local aristocracy is seen as a precursor of the historical realities of the black slaves of North America (p. 121). In comparison with the American slavery, which was mainly based on racial criteria, the one from the Roman Empire was fundamentally different; any individual, from any conquered territory, no matter ethnicity, race, age and gender, could end up as a slave.

Finally, we remind the fact that, at times, the author seems to have a limited understanding of the sources, for he is judging the characters out the context in which they lived. Pearson is outlining their personality and actions according to contemporary era standards. For example, in the passage regarding Elagabalus's personality, the writer brings forth to the spotlight the decayed nature of the emperor, but he does so in a manner way to anchored in the reality of our times. Taking into consideration the present day criteria, Elagabalus is portrayed as a genuine transsexual. The author makes the mentions that in Cassius Dio's works one may find information regarding Elagabalus's desire to pay outstanding sums of money to any surgeon willing or capable to change his genitals (p. 33–34). On further research, there is no explanatory note that makes any reference to the opera of the Bithynian historian, but rather to a contemporary encyclopaedia — Godbout, L., *GLBTQ, An Encyclopedia of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer Culture*, Chicago University Press, 2004. To our knowledge, such statement cannot be found either in the works of Cassius Dio, or in other sources (Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, Pseudo-Aurelius Victor, Herodian, *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*). Nevertheless, all sources indicate the depravity filled behaviour, the lack of the morality and respect, specific to Elagabalus.

REVIEWS

Our intention was not to discredit the efforts made on behalf of the author, but to focus the attention on the fact that one must always carefully formulate certain ideas, even in the case of a book targeted to a wider audience. If not careful, he who embarks on this scientific approach may influence negatively the reader (for lack of consistency and very sound documentation), and even easily fall in the traps of subjectivism and anachronistic thought. The very fact that a member of another scientific guild, other than history, has established a pact with Cronos and, despite all obstacles he may have faced, he managed to put on paper the fruits of his intellectual labour is worthy of much praise. To put it in a nutshell, we are taking into consideration the book *Maximinus Thrax. From Common Soldier to Emperor of Rome* written by Paul N. Pearson as a way to understanding the personality and reign of the “Thracian” emperor and his times.

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