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An Everlasting Antiquity: Aspects of Peter Brown's The World of Late Antiquity

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Received: 12 December 2013 Accepted: 4 January 2014 Published: 15 January 2014

Abstract

Peter Brown?s influential book The World of Late Antiquity has had a formidable impact on ancient historiography. Before it, historians who studied the period leading to the deposition of Romolus Agustulusâ??"the last Roman emperorâ??"in 476 AD considered themselves ?classicists? or ?ancient historians?, while those who studied the subsequent period called themselves medievalists; therefore before Brown?s book the collapse of the Roman Empire remained the watershed date that brought upon the Middle Ages. It is not the task of this essay to trace the history of this conception, but to examine the assertions, merits, and faults of Peter Brown?s book. Brown magnified, or more precisely, outright invented a new epoch: ?[a number of elements] converged to produce that very distinctive period in European civilizationâ??"the Late Antique world? . Naturally, both the term nor the concept are not his: Late Antiquity had been commonly used to denote the last two centuries of the Roman empire, and the conspicuous socio-economic changes that it facedâ??"from the debasement of the currency in the late 2nd century to the increasingly ?mercenarization? of the Roman army and its progressive admittance of barbarian soldiers. Another prominent aspect of the Late Antique periodâ??"a complex aspect I shall examineâ??"was the profound transformation of the arts around Diocletian?s time: from the ever-famous porphyry statue of the Tetrarchs, art displayed a new sensibility and indeed new preoccupations. ?Late Antiquity? was thus by no means a new concept. But what was new was Brown?s notion of a protracted Late Antique epoch, which though well-founded, he unduly stretched from 150 to 750 ADâ??"dates I believe to be overextended in both directionsâ??"and which this paper shall examine.

Index terms—

I. Introduction eter Brown's influential book The World of Late Antiquity has had a formidable impact on ancient historiography. Before it, historians who studied the period leading to the deposition of Romolus Agustulus-the last Roman emperor-in 476 AD considered themselves 'classicists' or 'ancient historians', while those who studied the subsequent period called themselves medievalists; therefore before Brown's book the collapse of the Roman Empire remained the watershed date that brought upon the Middle Ages. It is not the task of this essay to trace the history of this conception, but to examine the assertions, merits, and faults of Peter Brown's book. Brown magnified, or more precisely, outright invented a new epoch: "[a number of elements] converged to produce that very distinctive period in European civilization-the Late Antique world" 1 Brown's book is essentially revisionist: it was likely written in reaction to the cataclysmic vision of a barbarian wave sweeping the empire away in the 5 th century and leaving behind the 'Dark Ages'. Edward Gibbon was partially responsible for this long-standing view, although he mainly saw in Christianity the true, degenerative force behind the empire's demise. But later historians such as Henri Pirenne had changed this

Author: e-mail: history@codyfranchetti.com . Naturally, both the term nor the concept are not his: Late Antiquity had been commonly used to denote the last two centuries of the Roman empire, and the conspicuous socio-economic changes that it faced-from the debasement of the currency in the late 2 nd century to the

increasingly ”mercenarization” of the Roman army and its progressive admittance of barbarian soldiers. Another prominent aspect of the Late Antique period-a complex aspect I shall examine-was the profound transformation of the arts around Diocletian’s time: from the ever-famous porphyry statue of the Tetrarchs, art displayed a new sensibility and indeed new preoccupations. ’Late Antiquity’ was thus by no means a new concept. But what was new was Brown’s notion of a protracted Late Antique epoch, which though well-founded, he unduly stretched from 150 to 750 AD-dates I believe to be overextended in both directions-and which this paper shall examine.

1 Peter Brown, The World of Late Antiquity: AD 150-750. (New York: Norton, 1989), p.9 conceit showing that German invasions were not as destructive as previously supposed, for their intent was far less ruinous: the first, and more obvious, was to gain access to the Mediterranean; the second, conferred a new, almost appealing character to these incursions, since the invading Germanic tribes were actually seeking to Romanize themselves. That in their alacrity for doing so they irretrievably upset the empire is another matter, but Pirenne’s work dispelled the myth of a simple brutality of the barbarian 2 . Pirenne wrote in the early twentieth century and all but effaced the Romantic vision 3

But a radical book that reattached itself to the Gibbonian image of a catastrophic and utter collapse appeared in the 1940’s by André Piganiol called Piganiol treated the Christianized Roman Empire of the 4 th century as a whole unto itself, from Constantine’s injunction for the council of Nicaea of 325 to the death of Theodosius I in 395, the last emperor to effectively rule both the eastern and western halves of the Empire. Piganiol described this period with admirable vigor and lucidity; he believed quite correctly that under the Christian aegis the western portion of the empire experienced a revival-Brown himself treats this revival in a short chapter-and was in the process of a complex transformation, ”une conception nouvelle de la vérité et de la beauté; [?] une conception du travail collectif et solidaire, au service de l’intérêt social” that the fall of Rome was brought upon by a coarse horde of savage invaders, who ended civilized society for the better part of a millennium. Probably the figure that best fit this view was Theoderic the Great, who despite his Ostrogothic heritage learned and assimilated Roman rule thus developing a zeal to uphold Roman tradition so that when in 488 he founded the Kingdom of Italy with its capital in Ravenna he sought to reinstate the glory of Ancient Rome. . But just as this propitious reshaping was taking place, the notorious passage-one which must have certainly rustled Brown: ”La civilization romaine n’est pas morte de sa belle mort. Ella a été assassinée.” **??** Let us now look at Brown’s account of the period before and after the fall of Rome and view it against the previous historiography. I shall look at two fundamental aspects in examining the virtues and faults of Brown’s book: culture and art. After 476, Brown presents us the picture of an epoch full of ”the resilience of the old world” 6 where indeed Germans and Romans clashed, but in which they also learned to coexist and assimilate into each other, thus opposing Piganiol’s bleak perception. And certainly, Brown is right in many regards: tribes such as the Ostrogoths-the very same ones who deposed Romolus Augustulus ending ’de facto’ the Roman empire-were particularly admiring of Roman culture, ”Theoderic [?] was in the habit of saying: ’An able Goth wants to be like a Roman; only a poor Roman would want to be like a Goth’”.

7 As late as 526, Roman equestrian and gladiatorial games were reinstated by Theoderic in his new capital, Ravenna; he constructed for himself a mausoleum in the Roman fashion, with a gigantic monolithic dome, which, in its engineering dare, was a clear indication of his veneration for imperial Rome, as was his employment of Roman quarries in Mount Porphyrus in Egypt, for the last time in the West 8 Naturally, Brown’s focus is on the eastern empire, for no historian could fail to heed the rapid decline of the Western Empire. He rightfully observes classical culture surviving in the East to the point that ”men lived in their classical Greek past so naturally that medieval Byzantium never experienced a Renaissance” . 9 . But I should like the reader to consider the idea that the Byzantine empire never really experienced the Middle Ages either; and that during that period, which in reality refers to the West, the East, as Brown himself says, ”constantly re-created itself” 10 . Brown’s references to the Byzantines are potent and convincing: after all, his classical Greek training is second to none and allows him a privileged view of the Hellenizing eastern empire. Therefore, as far as the Eastern Empire is concerned, I concur with Brown’s idea of a protracted antiquity, and would even extend Brown’s conception and venture to say that the Byzantine Empire was a ’World of Late Antiquity’ that lasted a millennium.

But Brown is less convincing when he overextends the survival of classical culture in the West supported the classical tradition throughout the sixth century disappeared rapidly in the seventh.”

11 Brown’s assertion runs at least two hundred years late. The same can be said about his contention that it wasn’t until the Eastern Emperor Heraclius (610-641) that ”we can sense the definitive emergence of a medieval world [?since] the medieval idea of a ’Christian society’ began in this period.” **??**2In his classic and all-too-forgotten masterwork, ”The victory of Christianity [by 400] marks the end of ancient society: by the single fact that the family no longer had its domestic religion, its constitution and its laws were transformed; so, too, from the single fact that the state no longer had its official religion, the rules for the government of men were forever changed. Our study must end at this limit, which separates ancient from modern polities.”

The question begs to be asked: in what does Brown see the divide between an ancient, Christian society and a medieval one? The crucial answer is not furnished by Brown. In fact, many scholars who study the Western Empire have posited the roots of the medieval world the moment Christianity took hold of the empire.

1 13

Coulanges of course was still working under the preconception of a clear rupture between antiquity and the medieval world-even 'modern', in his view. His analysis of the change of mentality that Christianity in helping understand the essence of Ancient culture and underscores a major shift, which Brown disregards. With paganism, Coulanges argues, religion, law, and government were aspects of the same thing: while previously "every man had made a god for himself", with the advent of Christianity "the divine Being was placed outside and above physical nature".

14 This created a scission of immense cultural consequence: "it is the first time that God and the state are so clearly distinguished." This aspect had important ramifications, which Brown might have kept in mind when referring to any period after the inception of Christianity 'Antique', because according to Coulanges the pagan unity between adoration and domesticity was eminently classical: when Christ tells us that his porphyry, the Roman imperial stone par excellence from excessively. He states that, "the milieux that had The Ancient City, Fustel de Coulanges explains that, brought into the ancient city is still of key importance in kingdom is not of this world, 'this' world is no longer the ancient world.

A persuasive argument for the cultural and literary demise of Antiquity around the year 400 is book, Marrou claims that 400 AD is the most favorable moment to capture the evolution that bears the birth of a medieval Christian culture. Marrou finds the figure of St. Augustine the paradigm of this evolution. According to Marrou, Augustine is a sort of hinge-figure, the inheritor of Ancient culture and the progenitor of the medieval heritage. Marrou claims that in probing the evolution of ancient culture, one must not just look at the 'spirit of the age', but rather one must look to the intellectual life that such a spirit produces primarily through its technique.

16 Therefore he concentrates a great deal of his book analyzing Augustine's technical equipment; he finds that Augustine's intellectual preparation is symptomatic of cardinal importance in revealing the cultural shift that Augustine embodies. Augustine undoubtedly inherited the cardinal disciplines of Classical Latin (grammar, rhetoric, eloquence) but not a deep understanding of Greek. Unlike St. Jerome, St. Augustine possessed a knowledge of ancient Greek that was, at best, perfunctory 17 , since Augustine's intellectual formation was entirely Latin. This fact alone placed Augustine in a culture of 'décadence', because according to Marrou, "l'oublie du grec en Occident, et la rupture de l'unité méditerranéenne entre Orient grec et Occident latinfait fondamental qui va a dominer l'histoire de l'Europe médiévale-s'est accompli ou preparée à la fin de l'antiquité." 18 According to Marrou this linguistic transformation is a cardinal sign of the end of the ancient world. Though in Augustine other disciplines which constituted classical training (music and geometry) were lacking, Augustine was a superior grammarian and rhetorician; in his writings, we hear the echo of the procedures that were cemented by the tradition of ancient rhetoric and which had everlasting value-invention, disposition, elocution, memory. But with these procedures of rhetoric there was a marked loss of all that was not essential to Christian doctrine; the loss of classical knowledge is so conspicuous as to be profoundly significant. St.

Augustine's lacunae have a medieval tinge and are thus of great historical interest: "il en vint à concevoir, et dans une large mesure á posséder, une culture d'un type tout à fait different, entièrement subordonnée aux exigences de la foi religieuse, une culture chrétienne, antique par ses matériaux, toute médiévale déjà d'inspiration." 20 So against the old, unshakable truths that classical culture in its entirety possessed, Augustine pits cessé de définir son ideal par ce même terme de contemplation de la verité, une connessaince de Dieu [?] connaissance qui est sans doute vision, contact, amour, participation, mais avant tout certitude. C'est ça toute la doctrine augustinienne de la sagesse: nécessité de la foi; effort pour s'élever á l'intelligence de ses vérités; contemplation; triple aspect de la vie contemplative: prière, étude, morale?"

2 21

It is in such terms that Marrou posits his argument for Augustine as the figure that closes the Classical world: the decay of ancient culture in which he sees "l'incubation, qui ouvre la voie, de façon paradoxale, à la future médiévale" A world whose source of truth is faith is no longer the classical world, since in Antiquity, as Coulanges brilliantly observed, people lived in a world that was populated by many Gods and as such it was the source of their truth, and truth derived from faith as a practice for truth was This precept, the marrow of future Christian doctrine, was to animate medieval culture for a millennium.

3 22

The last commentator of the end of Antiquity, who focuses on a wide cultural stratum, and whom I should like to mention, is Santo Mazzarino. Mazzarino was a historian of vast literary resources and wrote extensively on the late Roman Empire. His most succinct yet complete book on the subject of the end of the classical world opens with a broad description, , and, the new beacon of faith as the only provider for truth and salvation. It is for these reasons that Marrou's title for his book, 'St. Augustine and the End of Antique Culture' is tenaciously encapsulating. **??**0 Marrou, p.275 [he came to conceive, and in large measure to obtain, a knowledge that was quite different, entirely subordinated to the needs of religious faith-a Christian knowledge, which was ancient in its components but already wholly medieval in inspiration.] 21 Marrou, p.364 [St. Augustine has not in effect ceased to define his ideal by the same term of sapientia; and wisdom for him rests still on the contemplation of truth-the knowledge of God [?] a knowledge that is doubtlessly vision, contact, love, and participation; but

above all certitude. It is this is the whole doctrine of Augustinian knowledge: the necessity of faith, an effort to reach an understanding of its truths, contemplation, the triple aspect of the contemplative life-prayer, study, morals?] 22 Marrou, p.663 [the incubation, which opens the path, in a paradoxical way, to the medieval future] An Everlasting Antiquity: Aspects of Peter Brown's the World of Late Antiquity offered in Henri-Irénée Marrou's St. Augustin et la Fin de his originality; and techne, according to Marrou, is of faith as the source of truth: "Saint Augustin en effet n'a sapientia; et la sagesse pour lui est toujour restée une inconceivable. In his De Trinitate, Augustine says that man must believe in order to obtain eternal beatitude.

la Culture Antique. In this deeply fascinating and rich which echoes Marrou's conclusions, though on a broader scale."Troubles and convulsions begin to emerge from the collapsing framework of the great empire: the appearance of new peoples on the great stage of the classical world; the transition from a centralized and bureaucratic administration with a corresponding monetary economy to an economy which foreshadows feudalism in the West and seeks in the East to reconcile military service with peasant labour; the long decay of an agricultural system which attempted to strike a balance between the labour of with the triumph of the Christian city of God, as conceived in the ideology of St. Augustine. This is in short the death of the ancient world [?]"

4 23

It is fascinating to follow Mazzarino's chronicle of the 'idea' of decadence in ancient Rome. As early as Rome's decay and offers 'internal'-unsolvable class struggles-and 'external'-barbarization of the Greco-Bactrian state by the Iranian nomads-explanations for the inevitable demise of Rome 24 . Even Cicero, whose preoccupations for the Roman republic hounded him throughout his life, thought he was living in a period of decadence, "Cicero saw the idea of decadence of Rome in two forms: the decay of manners and the lack of really great men (virorum penuria)." 25 Really great men?

Caesar, Octavian/Agustus? These are symptomatic manifestations of an eminently Western nostalgia for the past as an ever better age than the present 26

Mazzarino detects the first historically significant evidence that the old world was stiffening in 250, in a letter of Cyprian to Demetrianus in which he tried to show the latter that the source of the decline was not the emerging Christian faith: "You ought to know that this world has already grown old. It no longer has the powers which once supported it; the vigour and strength by which it was once sustained." . Even the Iliad, which as far as the West is concerned can be considered its very first utterance, has a scene in Book 1 with the older Achaean men, sitting around a fire at night and complaining that their Agamemnon, Ajax, etc.! 27 23 Santo Mazzarino, The End of the Ancient World. **??**New York: Alfed Knopf, 1966) The timing of this crisis corresponds perfectly with Brown's account of the serious problems the Roman Empire faced in the mid 3 rd century (the shattering, humiliating defeats inflicted to Rome by the Sassanid Empire in 252, 257, and 260). To appreciate the attachment that people had to that 'old world', which Brown implicitly discounts in his book, we ought to keep in mind that Cyprian, a Christian, should not have had particular sympathy for the still violently pagan Roman world. Nevertheless, Mazzarino, too, like Marrou, posits the emergence of the cultural bases for the end of antiquity around Alaric's sack of Rome: "Orientius, a man of the world who had turned religious under the weight of the tragedy, wrote his said, 'has become one funeral pyre.'

This was not just decadence: it was the the origins of evil to be simply the first grievous sins: lust, envy, avarice, anger, lying. At the end of the Commonitorium come the four final experiences: death, hell, heaven, the last judgment. One might say that with this little poem, stretching out to the life beyond, the Middle Ages begin-nine centuries later the same motif of sin and the four last things will supply the medieval synthesis which is also the greatest poetical work of Christianity, the Divine Comedy."

5 28

Let us now look at the characteristic changes in art of Late Antiquity. As I stated earlier art plays an important part in defining this period, and Brown focuses on it to a great extent; in fact, despite the book's brevity (203 pages), it is filled with illustrations because Brown sees art as a determining factor of an epoch. Many of Brown's images are in support of the long survival of the old, naturalistic style, which is associated with the Classical world. The art of the period we are treating is so complex a subject that it cannot be treated exhaustively here, or anywhere entirely for that matter. However, I should like to point out a few details that should demonstrate that Brown is stretching the Ancient world beyond its chronological-and in this case its stylistic-limits. Art historian Asher Ovadiah has meticulously examined the period's naturalisticallystyled reliefs in scroll motifs and has concluded that, "The spatial and temporal distributions of the "peopled" scrolls indicates that the decorative tradition of this ornament, originating in the architectural decoration of the Hellenistic period, was to persist in various artistic media (mosaics, reliefs, textiles, etc.) of later periods, in both the East and the West. The depictions in these scrolls are of genre-realistic character rather than symbolic-allegorical conception. It would thus appear that Classical taste in ornamentation continued to remain in vogue even long after the decline and And so, for exegetes such as Marrou and Mazzarino, profound scholars of the ancient world, intimately connected with all its primary sources, a long and protracted 'Late Antique World' after the fall of Rome in the West, such as Brown envisages, was nonexistent. There would seem but one explanation. It is that in the troubled state of the world, and of Rome in particular [?]"

In other words, the naturalistic style continued after Antiquity more by virtue of habit than anything else, divested in fact of its "symbolic-allegorical conception". Thus the survival of an artistic style is not necessarily the sign of the survival of a cultural age.

On the other hand, we must contend with a true, late-antique style found at Rome, of which the Tetrarch's sculpture, which I mentioned earlier, is a paradigmatic example. This is truly a style in its own right-a style that exhibits a tangible decline in execution, and which much has been written about. Of another equally famous example, the reliefs of the Arch of Constantine, Bernard Berenson wrote how he was startled by, "the strange fact that the capital of the world, the seat of wealth and culture, the greatest patroness of the arts if not the most refined, which to the end of the 3 rd century had been producing, apart from public monuments, hundreds of 'pagan' sarcophagi endowed with a certain, wistful, crepuscular charm, should find, when celebrating the victorious soldier, the restorer of 'law and order', the mighty Emperor Constantine, no abler artists than the executants of these reliefs. None are less marginal, less peripheral, less ultra-provincial, and many far more ordinary, more disintegrated, more shapeless than any on the stone and marble coffins done at the same time for Christians who could not, or dared not afford better workmanship.

6 30

For a number of art historians (Wickoff, Riegl, etc.) this style prefigured the Middle Ages; Brown himself agrees that the new style anticipated future developments, when, in reproducing the Tetrarchs' sculpture in his book, he describes it as "medieval in tone" 31 thus weakening his argument for a Late Antique period which according to Brown is neither classical nor medieval. On the other hand, Berenson rejects the notion that the Tetrarchs displays the signs of protomedievalism: "It is more likely that the artisans who worked on the Tetrarchs had as little conscious and planned ideas of preparing the way for Romanesque and Gothic sculpture as they had while talking their plebian Latin of creating a new language for Dante and Petrarch to use". which he says "is the work of craftsmen and patrons who felt themselves shaken free from the restraints of previous generations." **??**4 He is referring to a fresh and new style, which indeed appeared around the 5 th century AD and of which Brown provides a wealth of examples. If we look closely at the provenance of the specimens he furnishes, though, they all originate from Syria, Tunisia, and Asia Minor. The noted art historian Jean Hubert remarked, in fact, that, "one point, however, is worth emphasizing: after the period of the great invasions the finest, most vigorous offshoots developed in those parts of the former Roman Empire which were never occupied by barbarians or which they only passed through. Syria, Armenia, and part of Asia Minor shared this privilege with Byzantium." **??**5 To go back to the Arch of Constantine for a moment-a most emblematic monument-we ought to remember that it is an assemblage made up of parts from earlier times (in particular, those of Hadrian and Marcus Aurelius) and the only original parts are the scroll encircling the Arch depicting Constantine's victorious entry into Rome and two winged victories supporting an ambiguous inscription. These are all from 312, the year of Constantine's Triumph and the arch's erection, following his victory over Maxentius. The notorious ambiguity in the inscription rests in an apparent grammatical 'slip', which states that Constantine 'with the help of the God, has restored law and order', etc. Whether the singular was deliberate has been the source of much speculation. It is very likely that it was carefully calculated so that one 'God' rather than the usual 'the Gods' could appear as a solecism and the suggestion that the former had assisted Constantine could remain without discomfiture for 'the Senate and People of Rome': after all, the S.P.Q.R. (Senatus Populus Que Romanus, who were the dedicators of the arch, had not yet subscribed to that monotheistic religion-which Brown in a stroke of genius labeled "Cockney" B u t isn't the 'Late Antique World' that Brown seeks to convince us of the product of the confluence of Roman delineate a period that is more complex and more rich than anything that could be reduced to a definition like the one above; but the argument for a Late Antique style is most convincing when he refers to that odd admixture of influences, which produced the Tetrarchs, the Arch of Constantine's original frieze, the statue of Valentinian I, etc.

7 36

Here, again, the Devil is in the details. Peter Brown, in mentioning the conversion to Christianity, states that, "after the conversion of Constantine in 312, the ease with which Christianity gained control of the -called Christianity. **??**4 Ibid, p.38 **??**5 Jean Hubert, Jean Porcher, W.F. Volbach, Europe of the Invasions.

upper classes of the Roman Empire [?] was due to the men, who found it comparatively easy to abandon conservative beliefs in favour of the new faith of their masters." 37 This is quite incorrect. Augusto Fraschetti, who has written a definitive study on the conversion from Paganism to Christianity, 38 has pointed out a number of details, which directly contradict Brown's summary statement. Firstly, Constantine favored Byzantiumsoon to become Constantinople-because he felt Rome's pagan atmosphere disagreeable and the myriad pagan temples stifling, for Constantine wanted to start his own Christian capital 'ex-novo'. Therefore, Constantine visited Rome only three times during his long reign (for his Triumph in 312, following the battle of the Milvian Bridge; for the decennial celebrations of his reign in 315; and for the twentieth anniversary of the same in 325); and his longest sojourn lasted just shy of six months: "Roma e il suo senato ancora largamente pagano non potevano essere ignorati. Ció nonostante, Roma poteva essere evitata per quanto possible." 39 Nevertheless, I still find the chronology of Brown's 'Late Antique World' too dilated, in both directions. 150 AD much too early for it is still

in the middle of the Antonine dynasty (Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, Antoninus Pius, Marcus Aurelius, Lucius Verus, and Commodus); the names alone of Trajan and Hadrian coincide with the apogee of the Pax Romana, and, with the latter at its peak, I cannot accept to term such a period as 'Late Antiquity' yet. On the other hand, 750 AD is much too late, since, by then Charlemagne was three From the proscription of paganism by emperor Theodosius I in 384 to the restoration of the Temple of Vesta in 436 to St. Augustine's complaint about the bacchanals that were taking place as late as 400 in the church of St. Peter itself to the co-existence of a double calendar (pagan and Christian)-under which Rome operated until the 5 th century-Fraschetti shows unequivocally that the transition from paganism to Christianity in Rome was much longer and complex than Brown relays: because Brown's idea of the period is extensive, it is naturally prey to contradictions or inexactitudes if scrutinized in detail. But that would be missing the point, for we must not overlook Brown's achievement of having compelled historians to question the old ancient/medieval periodization: he has shown how rich and diverse the period after Rome's demise was-fecund for the arts and culturally significant in its own right and possessing its very own heterogeneous identity. And these merits surely stand in the face of criticism.

37 Brown, p.27-28 **??**8 Augusto Fraschetti, La Conversione: da Roma Pagana a Roma Cristiana. (Bari: Laterza Editori. 1999) **??**9 Fraschetti, p.63 [Rome and its senate, still mostly pagan, could not be ignored. Nevertheless, Rome should be avoided as much as possible.] years old; the Carolingian dynasty had been in place for 70 years; the Muslim advance, which threatened Christianity on two fronts (the Pyrenees and Cappadocia) as a sinister set of pliers, for 40. By then, of Antiquity there was no trace left in the West. But the East, too, was in a period of decay that was not reversed until the 10 th century. Accepting Marrou's arguments and positing the end of Antiquity in the West around 400 AD, seems to me too conservative, because though undoubtedly Marrou's considerations pertain to a very important aspect of culture, the ideology that was being forged by St. Augustine and St. Ambrose was one concerned with theological struggles and confined to clerical circles; and as such, they were not yet on a scale that could define an age culturally. As a master such as Erich Auerbach has stated: "it was a very long time before the potentialities in Christian thought reinforced by the sensuality of the new peoples, could manifest their vigor". 40 Brown's book speaks for a very long intermittent period, made up of ancient as well as medieval elements, which Brown argues as having an overreaching uniformity and cogency. But as I have tried to show, at some point-much sooner than Brown's contention-the ancient ingredient was no longer. So where are we to situate the dates of Late Antiquity? As we saw above, the brief splendor of Ravenna in the 6th century brought upon by a barbarian tribe such as the Ostrogoths and shortly thereafter by perhaps the greatest Eastern emperor, Justinian 41 , had still, undoubtedly, the accents of Antiquity. But the Longobardic invasion of 569 changed the face of the Italian peninsula. The new invader was mostly pagan, had no interest in either Christianity or Romanizing itself and it clung to its own, highly developed customs and art. By then Ars Barbarica effaced any Classical vestige that remained. In fact, the Longobards were the first Germanic tribe to contribute an autochthonous stylistic feature, which remained with us until today-cloisonné decoration. In addition their 'weave' motifs, also purely Longobardic, heavily influenced the Romanesque decoration, especially columns' capitals 42 Finally, the merits and faults of Peter Brown's 'the World of Late Antiquity', which I have tried to analyze were reiterated succinctly and compellingly in an interview between the Director of Studies of the École Française de Rome, Yann Rivière, and the eminent art historian, Paul Veyne, who was a student of Brown's: Rivière: By using the words 'collapse' and 'decline', it is a far cry from the image historiography (I am thinking in particular of the work by the great historian of Late Antiquity, Peter Brown) painted twenty or thirty years ago of the end of Antiquity and the creation of Barbarian kingdoms in the West. It was perhaps a reaction to an earlier vision of a 'murdered Empire' (A. Piganiol), or of a sick Empire. Has this revision itself not gone too far the other way? Veyne: Yes, but all this is in the past. Peter Brown has a historical imagination that we can all envy: he is veraciously (and I stress this adverb) able to put himself in the position of men in the past. Like anyone, he can make mistakes. Such was the case at this time, but it happened a long time ago, and he has since more than made amends by his silence on the matter. But he is still criticized for this old error, because people are jealous of the deserved fame of this great historian who is considered a guru, and envied for being so for his many readers." Are historians, who master history, Clio's first prey?

In any event, 'World of Late Antiquity' remains a highly important book that can be disputed but cannot not be discounted.

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[1]2 See Henri Pirenne, Mohammed and Charlemagne.(New York: Barnes & Noble, Inc., 1937) 3 See the classic 8 volume work, Italy and her Invaders by Thomas Hodgkin, which appeared throughout the mid 19 th century, and whose prose, redolent of impending doom, indeed is to be ascribed to the Romantic sensibility. But the work contains such detailed accounts of the different barbarian tribes and their customs, still valuable today, that it has not yet been superseded in many respects.4 André Piganiol, L'Empire Chrétien. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de

[2]Ibid, p.466 [Roman civilization did not expire of its own accord. It was assassinated.] 6 Brown, p.44 7 Brown, p.1238 The very last time the quarries of Mons Porphyrus were used was for the construction of Justinian's Hagia Sophia (560) in Constantinople. 9 Brown, p.177 10 Ibid, p.177

[3]Erich Auerbach, Mimesis: the Representation of Reality in Western Literature.(Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1953) 41 Justinian's great church, Hagia Sophia (560 AD), is the last great monument of

Figure 1:

[Note: 11 Ibid, p.176 12 Ibid, p.173-174 13 Fustel de Coulanges, The Ancient City. (Boston: Lee and Sheppard, 1874), p.528 14 Ibid, p.521 15 Ibid, p.525]

Figure 2:

19
16 Henri-Irénée Marrou, St. Augustin et la Fin de la Culture Antique.
(Paris: Éditions Boccard, 1958), p.viii
17 ”

[Note: 19 Marrou, p.56]

Figure 3:

Hall, 1954), p.30-31
31 Brown, p.22
32 Berenson, p.21
33 Brown, p.38

Figure 4: 32

Antiquity and doubtlessly belongs to that period in several aspects-ranging from architectural contrivances (the invention of pendentives to carry the weight of the circular dome to the square base) to the use of the materials employed in its construction.