

Few late antique authors provoke more visceral reactions than Quintus Aurelius Symmachus: I have seen grown men yawn at the very mention of his name. Yet there is no denying his usefulness as a window onto the mentalités of the late Roman senatorial aristocracy. It is now thirty years since John Matthews so expertly elucidated that mind-set, as expressed in Symmachus’ vast correspondence, in his Western Aristocracies and Imperial Court, AD 364-425 (Oxford, 1975). For all that, Symmachus remains a difficult author to access, particularly for students intimidated by the austerity of Otto Seeck’s edition (Monumenta Germaniae Historica, Auctores Antiquissimi, vol. 6.1 [Berlin, 1883]). Only his Relationes, his official correspondence from his term as praefectus urbi, have been translated into English (R. H. Barrow, Prefect and Emperor [Oxford, 1973???]). But the situation is improving, with a comprehensive English translation in hand for Translated Texts for Historians. Such efforts reflect renewed interest in Symmachus’ letters: a Budé edition with French translation nears completion, while the Italian edition and translation, in which P.’s volume appears, now encompasses studies of books 2-6 and 9.

Max: 800 words; so far 185.
Things to note: esp. that text is that of Callu’s Budé, except for divergences noted in commentary (check these via index of modern author’s, and perhaps list them?)

National University of Ireland, Maynooth

MARK HUMPHRIES