

# † François Paschoud

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Classical scholars have lost a much-respected colleague: François Paschoud left us a few weeks before his 85<sup>th</sup> birthday. His family came from the area of Lausanne but he spent his childhood in Bern, where his father worked for the Swiss Railways. He thus became familiar with the Swiss German dialect and developed a lifelong interest in trains. His military service in the Swiss cavalry spurred another passion, for horses. A fine rider, he later shared with his students his knowledge on the topic, such as reminding them that in French a horse's legs are called 'jambes', not 'pattes' (the latter being appropriate for a dog). This focus on detail and lively anecdotes was characteristic of François Paschoud. Having graduated from the University of Lausanne, he soon started writing his doctoral dissertation, for which he spent two years at the Swiss Institute in Rome (1962-1964), then another two years working for the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* in Munich (1965-1967). This launched his international career as a specialist of the historiography of the Late Roman Empire. In his dissertation, published in 1967 under the title *Roma aeterna. Études sur le patriotisme romain dans l'Occident latin à l'époque des grandes invasions*, he surveyed the tensions resulting from the shifts that were taking place at a time when pagans had lost ground to the Christians, when the center of gravity of the Roman Empire was tilting eastwards, and when the borders were under constant pressure from invaders. Two years after the publication of this important study, François Paschoud was appointed to an associate professorship at the University of Geneva, aged 31. He became Full Professor of Latin in 1974 and held this position until his retirement in 2004. A self-avowed workaholic, he divided his time between teaching, research, and the management of international cooperation.

François Paschoud took his job as a teacher seriously: his new students soon found that they had better run fast to follow him along the demanding path of hard work, attention towards detail, and respect for ancient texts as well as for the editions that made them accessible. His historical background did not stop him from covering a wide range of authors with his students: he was at ease with Ovid, Seneca, and Horace (the *Epodes*, predictably); in his well-attended lectures he would sweep through the Roman theatre, survey Latin elegy, or propose a detailed examination of early Roman historiography. His mastery of bibliography was impressive, and he would not tolerate any lapses in the quoting of either ancient sources or modern studies. Over the years, he had gathered a library that made him virtually self-sufficient for the purpose of teaching and research. Those who went through his boot camp in methodology did not forget the lesson. While analyzing an ancient source, however, he never lost sight of the relevance of interpretation. There was also space to relax. Wordy theories were not his cup of tea: he would rather consider *realia*, which he took with a pinch of salt, laughing at the thought – put forward by a student – that, based on ancient metrics, Hercules' shoe size was a hefty 46 (European standard).

His research was devoted to the study of historiography in the Late Roman Empire, where he covered both Greek and Latin writers. His *opus magnum* became a series of texts in the French Budé collection: there were five volumes of Zosimus (and the entry 'Zosimus' in Pauly-Wissowa's *Realencyclopädie*), followed by another four of the *Historia Augusta*. A long string of articles bound the whole together. His competence in the field was acknowledged notably by Cristiana Sogno's chapter "François Paschoud and Late Antique Historiography" in a survey published in 2021, *The new late antiquity: a gallery of intellectual portraits* (edited by Clifford Ando and Marco Formisano).

François Paschoud also invested much energy into maintaining a huge network of scholars united around several key projects. First and foremost, there was the International Federation of Associations of Classical Studies (widely known by its French acronym FIEC), of which he was Secretary General from 1974 till 2004, having succeeded the energetic Juliette Ernst. She also introduced him to *L'Année Philologique*, where he served on the Board of Trustees for several decades. He was a longstanding Member of the Board for the *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* and headed the Fondation Hardt for seven years. His devotion to Classical studies was widely recognized; he became a corresponding member of several prestigious academies; he also earned the French title of Chevalier des palmes académiques.

Had François Paschoud lived in the age of Plutarch or Sallust, those biographers would no doubt have enjoyed depicting such a lively character. A short man, he nonetheless inspired great fear among those he considered lazy. He loved making puns and telling jokes, some of which were arguably not of the best taste (the cruder the better, it seemed). He entertained a wide circle of friends and colleagues, but at times his candid approach of social conventions landed him in trouble. When he disliked someone, he did not mince his words about it; but he was staunchly loyal to those he had decided to support. He once confessed that he had become a Professor of Latin because he would have been unable to do anything else. It is our luck that he embraced what proved to be a very successful career.

Paul Schubert