Potter, like other authors in the new 'Women in Antiquity' series, takes the opportunity to look at a broader range of types of source, not least in order to use the 'life' in question to bring the surrounding historical context into sharp relief. We get lively pictures of the circus factions and the tumultuous Nika Riots, of the terrible plague (maybe half the population of Constantinople died overall), and of the religious controversies of the period. Not all the best anecdotes relate to Theodora: there is the case of a troublesome sperm whale nicknamed Porphyrius, who wreaked havoc in the Bosphorus in the 540s. Equally rebarbative, perhaps, is the Christian celebrity Mare 'the Solitary', described by Potter as 'a deeply subsocial individual' (171), who dared to tell Theodora to go to hell. (One small caveat: the convoluted religious controversies of the period and the warring individuals involved in them are dealt with in fair detail but are rather hard to follow for the non-specialist.) The picture of Theodora as a social reformer is not new to Potter but the case is well made, and the picture of the age of Justinian and Theodora is very well painted indeed. The reader is likely to agree with the author that Theodora, who grew up among theatrical performers, stole the heart of Justinian, and turned the tide on the Nika Riots, was indeed 'the most extraordinary' woman of her age (202). The subjective, constructed 'memories' of Theodora that succeeded after her death ranged from a saintly tradition in what became the Syrian Orthodox Church to the story told by a monk at Fleury that she was an Amazon who had been sold as a prostitute. The real Theodora, Potter rightly says, defies stereotype, but such 'memories' are what historians deal in daily.

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Art and Archaeology

It is an obvious strategy of revisionism, in Classical archaeology: to see what J. J. Winckelmann said about this or that object, or sort of object, and then to measure 'how far we have come', in terms of interpretative enlightenment since the late eighteenth century. With the great Nilotic mosaic of Palestrina, that strategy looks at first sight promising enough. Winckelmann's theory was that it must represent a heroic narrative – specifically, the curious variant of Helen's abduction in which Paris carries off merely an *eidolon*, while the real Helen is secreted by the gods to Egypt and eventually retrieved from there by Menelaus (for details of the story, see Euripides' *Helen*). Winckelmann proposed Menelaus to be the foreground figure in greenish armour holding up a drinking-horn, Helen the lady attendant with a ladle – but there was little else to support his reading, and so alternative theories have multiplied (naturally enough – since the date of the mosaic is not absolutely established). In this case, however, it seems we are still short of a satisfactory resolution. By including discussion of the mosaic in her survey of *Egypt in Italy*,[1] Molly Swetnam-Burland admits that it could as easily post- as pre-date Rome's annexation of the Ptolemaic kingdom; and yet she does not want it to be generically categorized as a sample of *nilotica*. 'Representations of Egypt were rarely if ever to be considered in isolation' (154). This could be the motto of her study, which explores how objects and ideas from and about Egypt became 'recontextualized' by the Romans. We may not have a definitive account for the Palestrina mosaic, but overall the results of this approach are worth reading. Analysis of the process whereby the first two obelisks were brought from Egypt to Rome, for example, demands that we do not content ourselves with seeing these transplanted megaliths as simply the trophies of *Aegypto capta*, nor just signs of Rome's attempt to rival Alexandria, but part of a claim by Augustus to pharaonic/cosmic powers. The author does not confine herself to archaeology: a substantial section of the book is devoted to an analysis of Juvenal's Satire 15.

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[1] *Egypt in Italy. Visions of Egypt in Roman Imperial Culture*. By Molly Swetnam-Burland. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xii + 249. 8 colour plates. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-107-04048-9.

A series of urban and historical 'recontextualizations' could be charted for the obelisk we know as 'Cleopatra's Needle', on London's Victoria Embankment. But, in terms of relative chronology, London is a very junior city. The Thames upstream from Waterloo flowed through open countryside in the time of Cleopatra, Augustus, *et al.*; were there even any signs, two thousand years ago, of future capital status? This is a question that has perplexed the archaeologists of Roman Britain for some decades. 'Londinium' as such is a Roman foundation: whether the Latin name derives from a pre-existing Celtic place-name, and whether there was much of a pre-existing settlement at the site, are, however, unresolved issues. So we should welcome the contribution made by Lacey Wallace in *The Origin of Roman London*.[2] When Boudicca and her followers descended *c.*AD 60, they appear to have done a thorough job of destructive rampage, so evidence for the nature of activity in proto-London is sparse: sufficient, nonetheless, for Wallace to assemble her picture of 'an immigrant community familiar with Roman town construction who brought with them skilled labourers and strong trade contacts with Gaul, Germany, and Spain' (155) – and whose presence by a crossing of the Thames (then a broader, more shallow-flowing river, with substantial eyots off the Southwark bank) at least suited, if not served, Roman military logistics. A gazetteer of sites totals over a hundred – including just enough structural remains to indicate orthogonal planning in a main area of habitation (around Cornhill). Intending readers ought not, however, become too excited about the prospect of numerous site plans (diligently presented). No amount of digital magic can redeem the often minimal relics of ground beams and postholes here.

By contrast, the computer-generated reconstructions offered by Gilbert Gorski and James Packer in *The Roman Forum*[3] invite the description 'lavish'. Acknowledging an earlier (pre-eminently French) architectural discipline of elevations done in watercolour, the authors voice their hope that modern technology will match anything done by hand. My feeling is that the results lack aesthetic charm (and that our keyboard-artist has overindulged in dramatic skies) – but this is a minor complaint, offset by the huge benefit of visualizing monuments as once they were. The most earnest visitor to the Forum as an archaeological experience can feel bewildered by its complexity of ruins, and the most informative guide will struggle to conjure the original effect of this or that edifice. The album created by Gorski and Packer is too cumbersome to serve as a field guide, but it makes an essential resource for students and teachers, supplying as it does not only a handsomely clear topographical account but also engaging summaries of historical context: so that (for example) Augustus' Parthian Arch comes complete with what needs to be known about Crassus, the standards, and so on. Relatively little is said about the archaic formation of the Forum. Is this because too much of it remains contested territory, in current scholarship?

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[2] *The Origin of Roman London*. By Lacey M. Wallace. Cambridge Classical Studies. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xvi + 192. 76 illustrations. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-1-107-04757-0.

[3] *The Roman Forum. A Reconstruction and Architectural Guide.* By Gilbert J. Gorski and James E. Packer. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2015. Pp. xxii + 437. Colour illustrations throughout. Hardback £150, ISBN: 978-0-521-19244-6.

One problem of the pre-Republican Forum, certainly, is that identifying spaces according to 'residential', 'civic', or 'religious' function can be difficult – perhaps because, as some would argue, no clear distinctions of function were yet formalized. In this respect one has to admire Charlotte Potts for attempting an index of *Religious Architecture in Latium and Etruria* c. *900–500 BC*.[4] The argument about proto-historic usage is often rather simplistic: so an eighth-century BC hut-structure found in the area of the sanctuary of Vesta may be described, by virtue of its location and the presence of two infant burials, as an area of 'cult activity', or a proto-'palatial' *domus regia* (the name of Numa has even been invoked). There are those archaeologists (the name of Andrea Carandini belongs here) who favour the hypothesis of city foundation as a package of centralized sacred and political offices. Separating the sacred from the political, however, remains problematic. Potts prefaces her catalogue of sites with a thoughtful discussion of how 'religious monumentality' becomes apparent in the archaeological record; even so, in terms of social status, where rulers merge into, collude with, or delegate powers to high priests remains mysterious. I wondered if the case might not have been bolstered by recourse to the typically methodical checklist created by Colin Renfrew for 'the archaeology of cult',[5] for a slightly disconcerting aspect of the earlier Iron Age site summaries created by Potts is that she concludes each one with a single adjective for 'religious character'; although this is sometimes 'probable' or 'unlikely', it is more often left as 'possible', or 'unclear'. How difficult it is to achieve clarity here is shown by the modern debate over infant burials near to huts: as Potts points out, a regional tradition in Latium of interring children under eaves – a practice known as *suggrundaria* – can variously be categorized as 'religious' or as a part of the spatial definition of 'elite' status.

The high incidence of infant mortality in the ancient world also forms the background to Olympia Bobou's study of *Children in the Hellenistic World*.[6] If a premature death rate of something like fifty to seventy per cent prevailed, it could be argued either that children became more precious to their parents, or that they became less so. Bobou sets out to show from the visual evidence that, during the late fourth century BC, at least, children gained in social importance. The format of her monograph resembles that of Potts: a careful consideration of theoretical and historical factors, succeeded by a catalogue (of children as represented in marble statuary). The subdivisions of the catalogue are significant. Where precise provenance of pieces can be established, it is most often from a sanctuary, as we would expect (especially considering the role of children in cult activities at places such as Brauron). Cemeteries, too, yield examples of commemoration, presumably by well-to-do families. Other statues demonstrably come from domestic or civic locations. Bobou's argument that sculptors became attentive to representing children physiologically as children, not miniscule adults, is generally persuasive (though I would like to have seen some discussion about the sons of Laocoön), and enables her to estimate the age of any sculpted figure. So what would it mean to have a statue of a semi-naked toddler, apparently free-standing, and stretching out both arms, in a house or street in the residential quarters of Delos? One could summarize Aristotle's view of children under five as 'mindless idiots'. This study proposes that they were also valued for what they could become: 'from the time children can stand up on their own, they are represented in the guise of future citizens and wives' (123). So our little boy from Delos, himation over his shoulder, may not be reaching out for a hug, as we might instinctively suppose, but showing his potential – as the next Demosthenes.

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[4] *Religious Architecture in Latium and Etruria c.900–500 BC*. By Charlotte R. Potts. Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology. Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. xxix + 178. 136 b/w illustrations. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-872207-6.

[5] See A. C. Renfrew *et al.*, *The Archaeology of Cult. The Sanctuary at Phylakopi*, British School at Athens Suppl. 18 (London, 1985).

[6] *Children in the Hellenistic World. Statues and Representation*. By Olympia Bobou. Oxford Monographs on Classical Archaeology. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2015. Pp. xxvi + 184. 55 in-text illustrations and catalogue with 135 figures. Hardback £95, ISBN: 978-0-19-968305-5.

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Reception

Does the discipline of classical reception studies shirk questions of distinctiveness and value? Such is the gauntlet thrown down by Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard, and Rosemary Barrow in their 2014 magnum opus, *The Classical Tradition*.[1] Full consideration of this important work must be reserved for a later issue. It is nonetheless worth rehearsing its opening distinction between 'the classical tradition' and 'reception', since thinking about it has informed our reading of a number of the books reviewed below. For Silk, Gildenhard, and Barrow,

> The classical tradition covers a millennium and a half of cultural achievements...It subsumes the many ways in which, since the end of classical antiquity, the world of ancient Greece and Rome has inspired and influenced, has been constructed and reconstructed, has left innumerable traces (sometimes unregarded), and has, repeatedly, been appealed to, and contested, as a point of reference, and rehearsed and constituted (with or without direct reference) as an archetype. (1)

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[1] *The Classical Tradition. Art, Literature, Thought*. By Michael Silk, Ingo Gildenhard, and Rosemary Barrow. Malden, MA, and Oxford, Wiley-Blackwell, 2014. Pp. 530 + xii. 10 colour plates. Hardback £90.95, ISBN: 978-1-4051-5549-6.