

NOTES

1. *The Athenian Nation*. By Edward E. Cohen. Princeton U.P., 2000. Pp. xx + 250. £25.00.
2. *The Greek World after Alexander 323–30 BC*. Routledge History of the Ancient World. By Graham Shipley. Routledge, London and New York, 2000. Pp. xxxi + 568, with 61 figures. Paper £19.99.
3. *The Athenian Trireme*. The History and Reconstruction of an Ancient Greek Warship. By J. S. Morrison, J. F. Coates and N. B. Rankov. Cambridge U.P., 2nd edition, 2000. Pp. xxviii + 319, with 85 illustrations and 15 maps. Hardback £40.00, paperback 14.95.
4. *From Melos to My Lai*. War and Survival. By Lawrence A. Tritle. Routledge, London and New York, 2000. Pp. xv + 220, with 18 plates. Hardback £40.00, paperback £13.99.

Roman History

Publishers are scrolling their lists for potential paperbacks, straight reprints, reissues with additional material or corrigenda, and real revised editions. Buyers need to consider whether (for example) to replace existing copies or not, or to fill a gap on their shelves with something essentially quite old. Given this mix, I shall be chronological, and my first is a valuable novelty. Christer Bruun, noting relative neglect of the Middle Republic, has edited contributions to his conference at the Finnish Institute as *The Roman Middle Republic: Politics, Religion, and Historiography c. 400–133 B.C.* (not all in English).¹ Rightly he boasts that scholars responsible for recent advance were participants. It is invidious to mention four of fourteen papers, but readers will wish to know of M. Torelli, whose exploration of the chapel inscribed *G. Genucio Clousino prai* is a *tour de force*, P. Coarelli, T. J. Cornell, and T. P. Wiseman, whose paper on Liber, like K. Sandberg's provocative study of legislative activity, carries the banner of popular politics. They exemplify the stress laid on the contribution of material evidence to historiography (generous and clear illustrations). Inevitably coverage is sporadic; readers will regret only a long-term plan permitting areas of study to be separated, but there are limits to what can be expected even of the Institute. In fact we also have second-century historians (G. Forsythe), spirited defence of Livy on the Hannibalic War (R. T. Ridley), and Polybius for once winning a rebuke (J. E. Vaahtera), neither quite dispelling preconceptions, Bruun's unpicking of Camillus stories, J. von Ungern-Sternberg on reworking the Gallic sack, K.-J. Hölkeskamp's on *fides* at the core of Roman political activity, and J. C. Saint-Hilaire on citizen rights and the trials of the Scipios. Unexpectedly M. Humm's ingenious interlocking of calendar and tribal reform proved most diverting to this reader. This volume is essential for college libraries to possess, and scholars to know. We jump now to two volumes by A. R. Birley making welcome reappearances: ^{B*}*Marcus Aurelius: a Biography*² in reprint and ^{B*}*Hadrian: the Restless Emperor*³ in paperback with nearly a page of additional notes. Both are core reading for the second century, making sense of disparate and patchy material and, one hopes, popularizing that hinge century among students. *Marcus* survived an unfriendly notice⁴ deploring excess of campaigning and not enough on intellectual and religious aspects of the reign, notably the 'Second Sophistic', to emerge as the classic account. *Hadrian*, appearing so recently, demands attention. Its twenty-one chapters, briefer at first, are chronologically based, as one would expect in a declared biography with no intention of offering *Times* as well as *Life*

(xiv; the 'Second Sophistic' occurs twice in the index, once for a bibliographical note; law not at all). However, they also make the book easy to consult on particular themes. It is well illustrated, especially from coins (enlarged), the maps clear. Concentration on the foreground brings out Hadrian's political isolation, the drive for hellenism and its tragic consequences in Judaea. It is compensated for, and the book enriched, by the author's sensitivity (akin to his subject's) to connections running through time and space: to Gades and Spain generally, for example (12; 21–6); to an earlier Hadrianus (206). Birley is convincing on Hadrian's succession plans, but metaphorical language (3) leaves it unclear if the heir was intended to stand aside for Marcus, or just to die.

Birley heralds M. T. Boatwright's ^{B**}*Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire*⁵ as a colossal undertaking. It carries a scholar already known for her contribution to the architectural and social history of Hadrian's reign outwards from Rome. I use the word 'scholar' advisedly: the author's care makes this a book for confident reference. There is an overriding problem of interpretation, noted at once (11): how much can we attribute to Hadrian himself? His activities, religious, and incorporating the past, 209 (his day was not unique in treating religion as integral to politics, 143) bring her down on Hadrian's side, but what he did was in part a response to what had been done before – or omitted – and to local initiatives and petitions. Nor should one attribute too much to the long-term success of cities in areas he favoured (Asia, central Italy, North Africa) to Hadrian (207, but cf. 204). From a discussion of cities and Roman power Boatwright goes on to the sources, then to two chapters on changes of status affecting city life, governance, and economy. Benefactions with extra-mural effects are followed by physical changes to cities' fabric. The work is not 'colossal' because three prime cases, Athens, Smyrna, and Italica, are examined, and the level of physical detail is necessarily limited. Finally come city foundations, new and renewed. Proper caution and the author's thoroughness occasionally give the text a list-like quality. The endpaper maps (vulnerable to librarians) and eighteen illustrations provide graphic help, but are not uniformly clear. This informative work will re-emerge, and the illustrations may be enhanced and blemished accident and governmental terms (27, 25) cleared up.

We leap the 'crisis' gulf to Simon Corcoran's recent ^{B**}*The Empire of the Tetrarchs*,⁶ now a paperback with 13 pages of additional notes and bibliography. Corcoran combs the material, discussing forms of communication, secretaries, recipients, and what they received. Under the hard pie-crust of its start, notably on the Gregorian and Hermogenian Codes, and closing appendices (Corcoran does not translate less substantial passages or give a glossary), this is a meaty, ultimately juicy work. The 'Prices Edict' chapter is particularly rewarding, and those on the governor's role and the emperor in action have contributions for this ongoing subject. Equally, Corcoran's exploration of the powers of the lesser Tetrarchs offers food for thought on relations between earlier partners, and Appendices on imperial plurals and abstract forms of address are illuminatingly traced to earlier etiquette. Overall, Corcoran stresses the classicism of the Tetrarchs, and, while a valuable work of reference, illuminates *Realia* beyond the gulf.

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1. *The Roman Middle Republic. Politics, Religion, and Historiography c.400–133 B.C.* Papers from a Conference at the Institutum Romanum Finlandiae, Sept. 11–12, 1998. Acta Instituti Romani Finlandiae Vol. 23. Edited by Christer Bruun. Rome, 2000. Pp. ix + 310, with figures. Limp. Price not stated.
2. *Marcus Aurelius, a Biography.* By Anthony R. Birley. Routledge, London and New York, reprinted 2000. Pp. 320, with 38 plates and 3 maps. Paper £15.99.
3. *Hadrian, the Restless Emperor.* By Anthony R. Birley. Routledge, London and New York, paperback 2000. Pp. xviii + 399, with frontispiece, 37 plates, and 8 maps. £14.99.
4. Alan Cameron, *CR* 17 (1967), 347–50.
5. *Hadrian and the Cities of the Roman Empire.* By Mary T. Boatwright. Princeton U.P., 2000. Pp. xviii + 243, with endpapers, 18 illustrations, and 2 tables. £31.00.
6. *The Empire of the Tetrarchs.* Imperial Pronouncements and Government AD 284–324. Oxford Classical Monographs. By Simon Corcoran. Oxford U.P., revised paperback edition 2000. Pp. xvii + 421, with 7 plates and 1 map. £18.99.

Archaeology and Art

The most glorious book among those under consideration here is Richard Brilliant's **My Laocöon*.¹ It is brief, and written in easy, relaxed prose: but every page is telling. And what is told? The message might be Socratically distilled to the firm knowledge that we have no knowledge; or an acceptance of Nietzsche's dictum that 'there are no facts, only interpretations'. As the status-group of Laocöon and his sons was excavated in Rome, learned witnesses were immediately sure of its identity: it must be the piece esteemed by Pliny as 'a work to be preferred to all other works of art'. That was in 1506: and the recognition that the sculpture we now see in the Vatican is what Pliny was talking about remains just about the only true *datum* for 'our' Laocöon. Quite apart from the question of whether it has been reassembled as it once was, the following key aspects of the Laocöon as an *objet d'art* remain obscure: place of production; date of production; identity of artist(s); occasion of commission; original meaning. A statue so apparently 'well-known' since the Renaissance therefore remains suspended in a great limbo of incertitude; it is effectively anyone's guess as to how to rescue Laocöon from that void. Brilliant's droll assessment of the situation includes, as one might expect, a summary of Laocöon-literature down the ages, and a shrugging survey of some (by no means all) of the ingenious and quite incompatible academic attempts to explain the piece; but he also extends the problem, in a manner rare to classical archaeology, so that we are asked to consider the fragility of comprehension built into other 'masterpieces' of western art. (Who, for example, can deliver the most engaging account for that royal group portrait in the Prado known as 'Las Meninas', by Diego Velázquez?) Brilliant has exposed a truth which most archaeologists and art historians would probably not wish to admit: the truth that it is not finding 'the truth' that concerns us so much as coming up with a good story. In this respect, it probably does not matter that Brilliant's meditation has coincided with studies gathered within *Laocoönte: Fama e stile* by Salvatore Settis (Rome, 1999); for Settis there commits himself to a story (Laocöon an early Augustan original) which like any other hinges upon a sequence of conditionals. Brilliant's circumspect views have made me, for one, feel a little happier about devising my own tenuous tale for the Laocöon (see *Apollo*, July 1988, and the second chapter of *Enduring*