the most enchanting is the last: the 1537 view of Istanbul in the University Library there. A clear, themed, account of the Empire (Ch. 4: 'Islam and Iconoclasm'; Ch. 8: 'The last Flowering') accompanies the photographs, with list of further reading and index. It is worth asking for the fourth edition that readers should be told how big objects are and that 'Mitytene' (fig. 83) should be corrected; only classical pedantry hopes for Istanbul's Aya Sofya to appear as Constantinople's *Hagia* Sophia.

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Art and Archaeology

Socrates had reached the age of 'three score years and ten' when he was condemned to death. Socrates was – and still is – venerated partly on account of his fortitude in the face of that punishment. But perhaps his nobility in accepting death is tempered when we recall that the philosopher had already gone several decades beyond the average life expectancy of a citizen in Classical Athens. With certain other well-known individuals (Sophocles and Euripides among them), Socrates defied a normal male expiry date of around 45 years. This is an historical reality overlooked by those who dream of Periclean Athens as a Golden Age. It is less easily overlooked by students of Classical art, however – because so much of the imagery that survives once served to visualize or commemorate the inevitable event of death. Psychologists today might interpret this art as a mode of 'terror-management': by imagining the end, or what might happen beyond the end, we mortals attempt to inoculate ourselves to that ultimate horror – the junction of stark certainty (end of life) with the unknown (the 'afterlife'). One humble, local yet highly significant category of such imagery is the so-called 'Athenian white-ground lekythos', whose period of production, c. 470–400 BC, is almost exactly coincident with the lifespan of Socrates. A major new monograph on these vases by J. H. Oakley, *Picturing Death in Classical Athens*,[1] offers new insights on how these images serve to console men and women haunted by a prospect of death much closer to them than it is to us. Oakley's thematic approach makes it clear that some of the iconography of these oil-flasks, as we might anticipate, relates directly to the 'drama of deposition' that was the funerary rite in Athens. Albeit limited first by Solonic decree, then democratic legislation, the Athenian funeral was nevertheless by our standards an ostentatious affair, whose most emotional phase came with the *prothesis* or 'laying out' of the deceased. Depicting this event had been a prominent feature of Athenian 'Geometric' vases in the eighth century BC; its appearance on the lekythoi is more understated, evoking perhaps a less public occasion. There are plenty of scenes of attendance at the grave – women adorning the shaft of a tombstone with ribbons and wreaths, or bringing tribute (including oil in the lekythoi, if deceptively generous: some of the flasks had inner containers limiting the quantity). Certain symbolic visualizations of 'the world to come' are also encountered: these vases, for instance, offer primary witness to the Classical character of Charon, the unsmiling ferryman of Hades. But, as Oakley shows, a considerable number of the lekythoi, especially in the early period of their production, do not feature direct

[17] *Byzantium*. By Rowena Loverance. Ed. 3, The British Museum Press, London, 2004. Pp. 96, with 103 illustrations, 63 in colour. Paperback.

[1] *Picturing Death in Classical Athens*. The Evidence of the White Lekythoi. By John H. Oakley. Cambridge UP, 2004. Pp. xxvi + 268, with 175 figs. and 8 colour plates.

allusions to death. Painters prefer instead to evoke scenes of homely routine – women going about daily household tasks, such as folding up the laundry, or minding a toddler. The vases themselves remain funerary in purpose: but here their decoration signals death not by a drawing-down of blinds, rather opening windows upon the bereaved Athenian *oikos* going about its business as usual. The rate of infant mortality in the Classical world was high. We deduce that from the firsthand evidence of cemeteries, where archaeologists may find the bodies of infants and children totalling up to half of all burials at a given site. Stillborn babies, or those who died in the immediately postnatal state, were probably not even accorded formal burial. Certain ritual and legal procedures suggest that the initial week after birth was the testing time for a baby and its parents, when disease or weakness was most likely to claim a victim: at Athens, for instance, it was customary not to name a child before the 'tenth day' (*dekate*) had passed. With these factors in mind, we can understand why childhood itself became a subject of Greek art: and in a richly-documented survey of this art, *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*, compiled by John Oakley and Jenifer Neils,[2] we learn that in the Greek view, children were indeed allowed to be children – not just miniature adults. The Greek vocabulary for various stages of infancy and youth is in itself testament to this recognition; so too are the ritual calendars of certain city-states, marking gradual development from innocence to experience. And here are the accompanying artefacts: the ensembles of rattles and toys from graves, the little jugs produced in Athens for the Choes festival (when children aged three or four years old were given their first taste of wine), the scenes of music lessons – and so on. This book will long outlive the exhibition for which it served as catalogue. Including expert essays from Mark Golden, Alan Shapiro and others, it does not collect a scholarly consensus, nor deliver a generalized overview of what it was like to be 'an ancient Greek child' – we have only to think of Sparta to remember how different each *polis* might be in its treatment of the young. Yet this gathering of archaeological and iconographical evidence makes it hard to resist the conclusion that the so-called 'Romantic', seventeenth-century view of childhood as an age of delightful innocence, symbolic of hope for the world, has its roots in the Classical past. Neils and Oakley recur among the contributors to a collection of essays in honour of Brian Sparkes, *Greek Art in View*.[3] Veteran readers of this journal will recall that Brian cheerfully discharged, for many years, the duty of sorting the annual output of art and archaeology publications into some critical order. Here we have a salutation to him in the traditional form of an intellectual whip-round, with eleven fellow-scholars contributing papers on Athenian vase-painting, Greek sculpture, and indeed (from Karim Arafat) on sculptures as they appear in vase-painting. The *festschrift* opens with an essay by the honorand himself, an inquiry into the nature of ancient portraiture that both displays his humane interest in Classical art and conveys something of his urbane and easy manner of communicating that interest to others. 'So few people look like themselves' is the title, which takes us through the phenomenon of what psychologists (again) would call 'superportraits' – or the dependence of a successful 'likeness' not upon *mimesis* but rather distortion or even caricature. Officially 'caricature' is not recognized as an artistic device until the sixteenth century, but (again) it seems that the

[2] *Coming of Age in Ancient Greece*. Images of Childhood from the Classical Past. Edited by Jenifer Neils and John H. Oakley. Yale UP, New Haven, 2003. Pp. xvii + 333, illustrated throughout.

[3] *Greek Art in View*. Studies in Honour of Brian Sparkes. Edited by Simon Keay and Stephanie Moser. Oxbow Books, 2004. Pp. xvii + 172, illustrated throughout.

aesthetic principle of representing facial features by exaggeration was anticipated by the Greeks.

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Religion

Reference

This year stands out for three works of reference, all of which can be recommended in their very different ways. The most wide-ranging and ambitious is *Religions of the Ancient World – A Guide*, edited by Sarah Johnston (Ohio State), which is the History of Religions complement to Bowersock-Brown-Grabar's outstanding *Late Antiquity – A Guide to the Post-Classical World* (1999), also published by Harvard UP.[1] The earlier work combined eleven thematic chapters with 500 pages of alphabetically-arranged lemmata. This volume, having a wider historical and geographical spread, attempts to square the circle between history and structure by offering eleven short high-level thematic chapters, such as 'Ritual', 'Myth', 'Cosmology', 'Law and ethics', 'Magic', followed by eleven brief historical surveys of the religions of the ancient Near East and the Mediterranean: Egypt, Mesopotamia, Syria/Canaan, Israel, Anatolia (Hittites), Iran, Minoan Crete/Mycenaean, Greece, Etruria, Rome, and Early Christianity, which altogether take up about 240 pages. The remaining 300 pages, double columns in 10 pt type-face, treat twenty lower-level themes, such as Religious organization, Sacrifice, Deities, Rites of passage, Illness, Death, Sacred texts, Iconography, Esoterism and mysticism, systematically over the eleven chosen cultures. The aim is thus to revive an older, more catholic, conception of ancient history that one associates with Eduard Meyer; its presiding spirit (though he had nothing directly to do with the planning) is surely Walter Burkert. As one would expect from the members of the editorial committee, both sets of themes are intelligently chosen; among the 140 contributors are many well-known names. The most successful section seems to me the two-thirds of the book devoted to lower-level themes (Key Topics). These offered their authors a relatively precise focus, and many of the essays here are brilliant compressions of complex issues, which do indeed invite the reader to engage in 'culture-hopping' and cross-cultural comparison. They are also full of excellent aperçus, such as John Baines' remark that it is far easier now to be familiar with a wide range of Egyptian religious imagery than it ever was in antiquity; or Norman Gottwald's point that it was the colonial circumstances in which the Hebrew Bible was edited into its final form that enabled religion to dominate there over politics. For the average reader of this Journal, almost all the entries covering Greek, Etruscan and Roman religion, and early Christianity, can be recommended as first-rate *mises au point*. On the other hand, with the exception of stimulating essays by Jan Assmann (Monotheism and polytheism) and Mary Beard (Writing), the high-level thematic pieces failed to engage me much; the generality of the topics discouraged crisp writing – the contrast with the thematic essays in the *Late Antiquity* volume is striking. The pieces in the historical section, furthermore, are too short to work up much steam, especially in complex cases such as Egypt, Mesopotamia, Iran, Israel, Greece,

[1] *Religions of the Ancient World*. A Guide. Edited by Sarah Johnston. Belknap Press, Harvard UP, 2004. Pp. xvii + 697, with 21 colour plates, 92 b/w figures in text, 2 maps. Hardback £32.95. (The author of this section contributed a short item to this collective work, but disregards it here.)