

history makes words. So G.'s problem is one shared by many working in the field of myth, particularly Roman myth, where the failure to find a clear methodological position can be far more inimical to the success of one's textual readings than is the case for Greek mythologists, with their more flexible anthropological traditions. But even if not definitive, this book is enjoyable and worth attention.

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D. SHOTTER: *Nero* (Lancaster Pamphlets). Pp. xvii + 101, 6 figs. London and New York: Routledge, 1996. Paper, £6.99. ISBN: 0-415-1203-1.

Nero is a good subject for one of the Lancaster pamphlets, which are designed to provide concise, up-to-date introductions to historical topics covered by A-level syllabuses or equivalent courses at universities. The Neronian books of Tacitus' *Annals* and the Julio-Claudian emperors are staple fare for A-level classics and ancient history courses.

S. provides a readable narrative covering Nero's family background and rise to power, the politics of his reign, warfare, and provincial administration, Nero's cultural notions, the growth of opposition to him, and finally the civil war. Even three of the Four Emperors receive a brief treatment.

S.'s general conclusion is that Nero brought the collapse of his rule and his dynasty on himself. His inadequate and immature personality and his habits of self-indulgence led him to abandon the Augustan principles he at first followed and to neglect the armies in favour of more artistic activities which themselves contributed to the alienation of the senatorial army commanders who ultimately brought him down.

In treating Nero's 'Hellenizing', S. ultimately concludes that Nero was a megalomaniac with Greek tastes rather than a Hellenistic god-king (p. 57). He is probably right to come down on this side of the debate about Nero's views on emperor worship, but the discussion of Nero's tastes lacks conceptual clarity. 'Hellenizing' is never defined, and Nero is said to have progressed from 'little more than the cultural interests common to young Romans' to an interest in Greek works of art and a Hellenizing of architectural and interior design indicative of 'a desire to isolate himself from unreceptive Roman tastes' (pp. 8–9). Yet the materials and engineering wonders of the Domus Aurea build on distinctive Roman architectural developments, and the Neronian poets (hardly mentioned) are acutely conscious of their Latin forerunners. Nero's enthusiasm for Greek art was not a departure from Roman cultural developments, which had built on Greek culture since the Republic. What was distinctive about Nero was the value he placed on literature and the visual and performing arts, and on the Greek type of contests which encouraged the upper orders to acquire and display such skills and tastes. Nero particularly prided himself on singing and playing the lyre: 'qualis artifex pereo' at Suetonius *Nero* 49.1 is not likely to refer to his accomplishments in Hellenistic poetry (p. 58), but to such performance, as Suetonius *Nero* 20.1, 40.2, 41.1 suggest.

S. believes that Nero did little damage to the Principate as an institution, but that his conduct raised serious questions about 'dynasticism'. His evidence is Galba's speech at *Hist.* 1.15–16, to which he devotes an appendix. But this speech, as Tacitus presents it, can hardly be taken seriously as expressing the, or even a, senatorial viewpoint on this issue. Galba, adopting Piso in the praetorian camp in defiance of any legal adoption procedure and in the presence of bad omens, produces strong arguments in favour of adoption as a piece of special pleading at a time of desperation. Piso Licinianus had done nothing to show that he was the best man (in fact, as Suetonius shows [*Galba* 17], he was a personal favourite long designated in Galba's will). Tacitus' audience would have been reminded of the similar arguments in the *Panegyricus*, where Pliny also makes a virtue of necessity and then lets the cat out of the bag at the end by praying that Trajan be granted a son to succeed him. There is more, not less (p. 70), reason to attribute a serious constitutional position to Verginius Rufus, whose conviction that the right to choose a Princeps belonged to SPQR is well attested both directly and indirectly through the behaviour of his soldiers in the army of upper Germany (*Hist.* 1.53).

The quotations from ancient writers in the text are to be welcomed: nothing so brings the ancient world to life for students as letting it speak. But, curiously, the references are not given in

most cases, so that they cannot be followed up. However, the student is provided with a genealogical table, a chronological chart, a glossary, and maps, as well as material for further study in the form of an appendix on the ancient and modern authorities. Certainly, at this price the book is a bargain.

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K. LOMAS: *Roman Italy, 338 BC–AD 200: a Sourcebook*. Pp. xiii + 274, 9 ills. London: UCL Press, 1996. £40 (Paper, £13.95). ISBN: 1-85728-180-2 (1-85728-181-0 pbk).

L.'s sourcebook begins with a general introduction on the diverse nature of Italy, and the problems of the sources, before moving into a series of essentially chronological chapters. The focus of the first is the wars with the Samnites and with Hannibal; the conclusion of the Second Punic War leads on to an account of the methods of control of the allies and the nature of colonies. The third chapter looks at the breakdown of this relationship between Rome and Italy, with the increasing wealth of Italy as a result of the empire being contrasted with what L. sees as increasingly interventionist Roman behaviour. The chapter concludes with the Gracchi. The effects of their land and citizenship plans leads in Chapter Four to the Social Wars, and to a discussion of élite mobility in the first century B.C. The remaining chapters are more diverse in theme: first the relationship between Italian cities and the emperor, then the Italian economy with a consideration of trade and agriculture. Chapter Seven—the most interesting—looks at cults, sanctuaries, and priesthoods, and then the last two chapters consider the legal and constitutional make-up of the cities, and the social structure, with a number of biographies of individuals all the way along the social scale from municipal senators to slaves. Each chapter is prefaced with an introduction giving additional background information and further references.

A bald survey gives some idea of the enormity of the task which L. set herself; this is an ambitious book, and that it does not wholly succeed is perhaps unsurprising. Most obvious is the relatively superficial treatment of some enormously important themes; the discussion of the Gracchi is unsatisfactorily split over two chapters, and L. only has space to scratch the surface of this intractable problem, but even so, she should perhaps have knocked the red herring of *latifundia* more firmly on the head. There is far more to say on alimentary schemes as well, and, although at 169 L. promises a detailed discussion of the Bacchanalia, it does not appear in that chapter, but only in some texts quoted at 57–60 with reference to Roman domination, and without reference to the evidence for the continuation of the worship of Bacchus in Italy. One might multiply these examples; the annotations and introductions do not quite do enough to explain the texts. There is a lot of narrative history early on, somewhat unavoidably perhaps, but not enough fully to tell the story, for instance, of the presence of Hannibal. It is striking that poetry is scarcely ever used (Virgil's First *Eclogue* and *Georgics* being merely the most obvious absences); this is a shame because many of the poets are after all Italians writing about the Italian countryside. There are a large number of inscriptions in the book, but it is still not a clear introduction to this mass of largely untouched material. We could have done without quite a lot of Cicero's *Pro Plancio* and *Pro Balbo* and had a lot more epigraphic evidence. When we do get to Cicero, the speeches he makes in favour of various Italians, such as the *Pro Cluentio*, are not introduced sufficiently, so one misses the richness of his descriptions of the bizarre behaviour of these local élites. Most importantly of all, and this may well not be the fault of the author, the illustrations are few, poor, and in one case wrongly labelled. There is far too little archaeology in this book and that, together with a weak index, may explain why the diversity of Italy which L. so clearly and rightly emphasizes on the first page does not really come out; none of the regions are clearly delineated, not even southern Italy, where L. has made eminent contributions. Criticisms aside, this will be a valuable tool as an introduction, and for quick reference. We need something much bigger and better, but for that the authors will have to master that monumental treasure trove that is *CIL*, and find a sympathetic publisher; the sooner the better.

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