Each section is clarified by figures and chronological tables and summed up in a conclusion. Historians and their pupils will refer to this book, with its new focus, whenever they cross the Haemus. Besides the illustrative plates, the student has an Index Locorum, and a general index for such topics as 'Romanization' (a final stroke of humour sees him on his way).

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Art and Archaeology

It is maintained in some academic circles that 'art history' – and, by extension, 'art' as a formal practice – did not begin before the time of the Renaissance. This intellectual posture may be convenient for university 'History of Art' departments (e.g. Cambridge) where the art of Greece and Rome is generally excluded from the syllabus, but its lack of empirical foundation is easily exposed (most recently by Jeremy Tanner's 2006 monograph *The Invention of Art History in Ancient Greece*). True, we possess scant access to the writings of Xenocrates and others who were both artists and authors in the third century BC; and, despite the 'material success' of individuals such as Praxiteles and Lysippos, it may be (as Tanner maintains) that the artists of classical antiquity never achieved the 'autonomy' of a Michelangelo or Rubens. Yet the practice of 'appreciating' art *qua* art was demonstrably developed in Rome from the late Republic onwards: and this practice, even if it was not always done from truly 'aesthetic' motives, has left a substantial literature. In *Roman Eyes*,[1] Jas Elsner effectively communicates his enthusiasm for Pausanias, Callistratus, the Philostrati, and other sources of 'discourse' about images in the Greco-Roman world. Most belong to the period known as the 'Second Sophistic': among them Lucian, saluted here as 'a truly wonderful and versatile writer' (59) – who may have considered a career as a sculptor, but realized that then, as in our own time, it was somewhat easier (and often more lucrative) to prattle about art than actually to *make* it. So Lucian *et al.* constitute Elsner's primary resource for establishing a measure of historical 'subjectivity' in our understanding of Roman art. In other words, what did Romans think of the images that surrounded them? How far can we reconstruct 'the viewer's share' of (say) a Pompeian wall-painting? The immediate objection, that these writers were predominantly Greek-educated individuals of non-Roman origin, may be easily discounted: the *sophos theates* or 'experienced eye' naturally resorted to Greek as the verbal medium of expression (and discerned, we presume, that 'Roman art' was customarily Greek handiwork). Elsner runs into more serious difficulties when attempting to locate 'the female gaze'. In his discussion of the Projecta casket, a relief-decorated box found among a hoard of late antique silverware from a house on the Esquiline, he has to argue that 'items of the toilette' are restricted to female usage – while at the same time describing the female in question as 'like the casket itself', 'a luxury ornament for her husband's possession and pleasure' (215). However, the interpretative momentum gathered in these essays (mostly published previously) impresses by its engagement with both ancient art and the ancient discourse about art. Some readers may find that the 'eloquent sophistication of high culture' (59) of second-century AD Rome has found its match in the author's own academic ambience

[1] *Roman Eyes. Visuality and Subjectivity in Art and Text.* By Jas Elsner. Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2007. Pp. xvii + 350. 16 colour plates, 88 halftones. Hardback £32.50, ISBN: 978-0-691-09677-3.

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(e.g. a footnote that begins: 'Again one thinks of Lacan . . .' [82, n. 57]). But the definition (by Shadi Bartsch) of the author's sensibility as 'particularly attuned to the way in which viewing, desire, social constructions, and generic discourses interplay and interact' remains an accurate advertisement for the book. Interaction of the same or similar factors is evident in John R. Clarke's latest monograph, *Looking at Laughter.*[2] By his own admission, Clarke wrote this book by chance: that is, in the course of collecting material for previous studies (notably *Looking at Lovemaking*, 1998), he came across numerous examples of images whose intentions could be construed as primarily, partly, or just inadvertently comic. Hence the odd title: for even if we are not presented with scenes explicitly depicting laughter 'in action', or directly connected to burlesque traditions of the ancient theatre, we can imagine the sounds of amusement occasioned, for example, by a painting that shows Pygmies enacting the Judgment of Solomon. Or can we? Clarke assembles a fascinating compendium of potentially 'laughable' images; but if laughter is (in the memorable analysis of Thomas Hobbes) essentially the 'sudden glory' of feeling fortunate by contrast to the situation of someone else, then we may be obliged to keep a more or less straight face. Take, for instance, the minor genre of Roman mosaic known as the *asarotos oikos* or 'unswept house' – where the artist has littered the floor with a permanent and exquisitely detailed detritus of scraps, bones, shells, and so on. Agreed, this has a 'playful' aspect, with the inclusion of mice creeping out to nibble the banqueters' waste. But surely its primary message was to attest a host's generosity (and hardly to reprimand his servants for negligence). Clarke seems on safe ground when allowing the 'apotropaic' function of various deformities and exaggerations; however, when surveying the considerable quantity of images that qualify for 'sexual humor', we may again feel that there is not so much to laugh at here. One person's 'sexual folly' is, after all, another's route to ecstasy: a great deal depends here upon Clarke's claim that 'Roman visual humor depends on reversals and the unexpected' (229), and then using literary evidence (e.g. Catullus, Martial) to imply that *fellatio*, *cunnilingus*, *mulier equitans*, and the like were abnormal erotic capers. (The decoration of the Suburban Baths at Pompeii thereby becomes more a checklist of sexual taboos than a pornographic medley). There must be little doubt as to the darkest humour discussed by Clarke: this lay with the so-called 'fatal charades', those ingenious spectacles of arena punishment in which condemned criminals were assigned unenviable mythical roles: Prometheus bound; Hercules and the Shirt of Fire; Orpheus strumming to wild bears (sent by Eurydice? – as Martial quipped). The wider context in which these deadly games took place is established by Katherine Welch's *The Roman Amphitheatre*.[3] Welch gives us, indeed, a rather particular explanation of how the mythical role-plays came about: Nero, she points out, had sponsored the public performance of Greek tragedies in Rome, and an amphitheatre in the Campus Martius where *neminem occidit, ne noxiorum quidem* ('he killed no one, not even criminals'; Suet. *Nero* 12.1). So when the Flavians came to erect the 'Colosseum' in grounds once annexed for the philhellene emperor's *Domus Aurea*, they

[2] *Looking at Laughter. Humor, Power, and Transgression in Roman Visual Culture, 100 BC–AD 250*. By John R. Clarke. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 2007. Pp. xi + 322. 24 plates and 119 halftones. Hardback £32.95, ISBN: 978-0-520-23733-9.

[3] *The Roman Amphitheatre. From Its Origins to the Colosseum*. By Katherine E. Welch. New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xxii + 355. 196 figures. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-80944-3.

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made a point of giving the public what it craved: the sight of miscreants paying their dues to society. To give these executions a twist of Greek 'culture' was a droll gloss on Nero's predilections. In this brisk analysis, Welch typically refrains from moralizing about what happened inside the Roman amphitheatre. Her primary concern is to explain how this institutional space, so often taken as iconic of Roman 'civilization' at large, evolved and developed in the late Republic and early Empire. A substantial appendix collects details of known republican amphitheatres – some well-known (Pompeii), others hitherto unpublished (Abella); and there are painstaking efforts to locate the first monumental, stone-cut structure of the type – now disappeared, the Amphitheatre of Statilius Taurus, which was 'an integral part of Augustus' great building program' (110). But for those who do not already know her work, perhaps the major revelation of Welch's study will be the section entitled 'Reception of the Amphitheatre in the Greek World in the Early Imperial Period'. As Nero had (in the eyes of his detractors) corrupted Roman tradition by staging Greek pantomimes and tragedies in the amphitheatre, so the Roman dominance of cities such as Corinth and Athens was symbolized by the adaptation of the classical Greek theatres for the purpose of gladiatorial sports. We know that some Greeks reacted with anger and nausea at this abuse of dramatic space. The more nuanced conclusion must be that a certain taste was fostered – for seeing blood spilt in the orchestra, and eschewing the fiction of screams off-stage.

The Colosseum is merely one of the many Roman antiquities whose history has been illuminated in recent years by Filippo Coarelli – a scholar who has mellowed from *enfant terrible* to senior statesman without losing his zest for archaeological enquiry. For some years now it has been the habit of advanced tourists in Rome to rely upon Coarelli's Laterza-published guides to the city and its *dintorni* for intelligent company. Now these guidebooks have been amalgamated into one volume and made available in English: and the result, *Rome and Environs*, must be trumpeted here.[4] I used the soft-bound edition for a week around rainy Eastertide, and can report the following salutary features: (i) a translation made by two specialists in the field; (ii) information as up-to-date as possible, duly cautious where caution is due, yet keeping us primed with the latest theories (the entry for the Arch of Constantine is a good example of such equilibrium); (iii) clear directions, uncluttered maps and plans (including a handy diagram and glossary of Roman building techniques); and (iv) a robust cover and binding. With the gradual extension of engineering works on Rome's Metropolitan line 'C', it is inevitable that revisions will one day be needed. But here is a book designed for heavy practical use – which it fully deserves.

doi:10.1017/S0017383508000612 NIGEL SPIVEY

[4] *Rome and Environs. An Archaeological Guide*. By Filippo Coarelli. Translated by James J. Clauss and Daniel P. Harmon. Berkeley and Los Angeles, CA, University of California Press, 2008. Pp. x + 555. 159 figures. Hardback £40.95, ISBN: 978-052007960-1; paperback £14.95, ISBN: 978-052007961-8.

Religion

An unusually large number of books has been posted off to me by the editors in the past eighteen months or so, almost all of them interesting and in their various ways rewarding; to my regret, I have had to leave a number aside for future notice.

Of seven books on Greek religion, the most important, and bulkiest, is

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