

Roman History

We shall pass from heights of intellectual sophistication to deepest barbarian terrors. Matthew Fox's *Cicero's Philosophy of History*¹ offers a dense, absorbing, literary read that gives access to work outside English-speaking tradition. His thesis is plain enough, and so his mission. Cicero was an Academic, a questioner who avoided presenting concrete resolutions to philosophical questions. Doctrine is the antithesis of real philosophy. Dialogue removes certainty (so with Plato), and facile identifications of personages as 'mouthpieces' of Cicero are ill-founded and have created a false impression of the man and diminished his contribution to philosophy; nor are the works read as literature. The last chapters (on reception, vital for Fox's *praemunitio*; and conclusion) have lessons for current educators. Fox brings on John Toland's reading of Cicero, and its purpose, against the categorical condemnations of nineteenth-century scholarship and contemporary re-jigging in the face of educational aims. Above all, he pleads for *reading*. Comments on historians who share Cicero's pervasive irony, on *memoria* and its true audience (in the future), and on rhetoric, especially in relation to history, are not to be missed. To do justice to the core case-study chapters that deal with *De re publica*, *De oratore*, *De legibus*, *Brutus* (Rome's history is one of rhetorical ineptitude), and *De divinatione*, would require re-reading (and longer reviewing), which this book will have. Confessedly provocative, it will be influential.

Cicero was reaching manhood when the Social War broke out, and lived through the profound changes in Italy that Edward Bispham examines in *From Asculum to Actium*,² comparing them with those that overtook Scotland in the late eighteenth century. An introduction discusses meanings (*municeps/municipium*), methodology (broad-brush or miniaturist), and techniques, and announces a programme: 'Municipalization was a vehicle for bringing the new citizens of Italy into a Roman thought-world' (000). But the second century needs consideration first: in Chapter 1 the framework, in Chapters 2 and 3 Roman settlement and Roman-Italian relations (using pre-Social War sources; the inscriptions are central). Chapter 4 goes to the enfranchisements of the Social War, with discussion of the enabling laws, Chapter 5 to the effect on local political life as shown by the charter. What Bispham regards as the core of the book, Chapters 6-9, are devoted to the magistracy, titlature (quattuorvirate and duovirate), and what that meant, for it was 'more than an epiphenomenal development' (51). Threads are drawn together in Chapter 10, but appendices are inevitable – on double communities, on patrons and honorary magistrates, an annotated list of *municipia*, on the puzzling Urbs Salvia and Fulginiae – and an Addendum provides epigraphic texts. It is a plain fact that this book, for concepts and materials, is a prime resource for students of late republican Italy and its communities.

We are still in the world of high culture with Denis Feeney's *Caesar's Calendar*,³ but there is a shock to confront: the changing horizons of the ancients – and seeing one's own shaken (I write not in 2008 but in '2008'). Romans too had a

¹ *Cicero's Philosophy of History*. By Matthew Fox. New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 344. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-19-921192-0.

² *From Asculum to Actium. The Municipalization of Italy from the Social War to Augustus*. By Edward Bispham. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford and New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xviii + 566. 4 figures. Hardback £90, ISBN: 978-0-19-923184-3. (This review is factual: long ago it fell to me to supervise the thesis from which the book has developed.)

³ *Caesar's Calendar. Ancient Time and the Beginnings of History*. By Denis Feeney. Sather Classical Lectures 65. Berkeley, CA, Los Angeles, CA, and London, University of California Press, 2007. Pp. xiv + 372. 14 illustrations. Hardback £17.95, ISBN: 978-0-520-25119-9.

shock when they took to synchronizing and found how their (literary) history compared with that of the Greeks. This book needs its subtitle: Feeney skilfully explains how the ancients negotiated their way, *via* Athens, Sicily, Rome, and Christianity, to world systems. He brings the chaos into elegant order by advancing chronologically through three pairs of chapters: the first on that synchronization (Greece and Rome, west and east); the second, turning the horizon through ninety degrees, on transitions from myth to history (foundations of the city, ages of gold and iron, with severe damage to a cosy concept); the third on counting and recording (years and anniversaries, the grids of the *Fasti*), where we reach the nitty-gritty of Roman achievement, with illuminating remarks on Augustan reconfiguration. Despite the Index Locorum, this book seems as valuable for overriding ideas as for detailed exposition: Roman culture's deep implication in the temporal and calendrical; and 'what look like dates are never just dates' (142). Tim Parkin and Arthur Pomeroy have undertaken a formidable task with their sourcebook *Roman Social History*.⁴ The authors hold that Roman society is best explained in terms of its power structures; political implications are sketched in the opening remarks. To take the problems first, then the achievement, what is 'Roman', in space and time? Who is the audience, and what help can it be given? Will it need a teacher? Is the book to be read through? What limits of length must be imposed? What translations used? Items come from all over the empire, including Egypt, encompassing the first two centuries of the Principate, reverting to the late Republic and occasionally moving on to the fourth century. The work grew from the authors' own teaching and, despite introductory comment, could be heavy for an unguided reader: 'legate' is not in the index, nor in a glossary. Other help is generous (bibliographical lists, life expectancy, metrology, maps – but the Danubian provinces have fallen between pages). The translations, rightly the authors' own, offer 320 items, some subdivided. If indigestible for a long read, the nine chapters are each highly nourishing for students set specifically to examine the family, poverty, slavery, the economy, and other staples. One of the contemporary disciplines applied in this book is criminology. Romans were as afraid of crime as we are but their unsystematic treatment of it, coupled with developments such as spread of citizenship, growing irrelevance of Rome, and split between *honestiores* and *humiliores*, makes it a complex subject. Jill Harries' *Law and Crime in the Roman World*⁵ helpfully begins with a definition of 'crime' (an offence against the community); it has moved a long way from *crimen*. One main theme is that there is social as well as legal discourse – the subject of Chapter 1; another is that increasing harshness was due to judges and litigants out for vengeance as much as to emperors. Process comes next, the *iudicium populi*, *quaestio*, and *cognitio*, which also gets a chapter to itself. A chapter on 'The Thief in the Night' exposes the significant fact that *iniuria* took time to become a crime, compensation being replaced by revenge. The author's account of such transmogrifications over centuries is lucid, as are her discussions of *repetundae* and *maiestas* (Chapter 5 f.). There is room for discussion: Caesar's law of 59 BC has been elided, and trivialized imperial *maiestas*

⁴ *Roman Social History. A Sourcebook*. By Tim G. Parkin and Arthur J. Pomeroy. Routledge Sourcebooks for the Ancient World. London and New York, NY, Routledge, 2007. Pp. xviii (incorporating 4 maps) + 388. Paperback £20.99, ISBN: 978-0-415-42675-6.

⁵ *Law and Crime in the Roman World*. By Jill Harries. Key Themes in Ancient History, Cambridge University Press, New York and Cambridge, 2007. Pp. x + 148. ISBN 978-0-52182-820-8, £45 (\$98) hardback, ISBN 978-0-52153-532-8, £15 (\$29.99) paperback.

could hardly embrace assassination; nor will all care to attribute the punishment of Christians to 'religious' motives: there were crimes they were 'known' to commit. The Bibliographical Essay is no substitute for notes for the novice student inquirer ('the Delphic Piracy Law' is very Delphic), but that series style detracts little from the value of this thoughtful book, which ends juicily with sex, violence, and murder. We know about crime and law, less about the places in which justice was asserted and the persons involved. Leanne Bablitz's scholarly *Actors and Audience*⁶ aims to remedy that. The author begins by defining her frame of reference: it excludes the Republic (Cicero might be anachronistic for the imperial age); it excludes cases taken outside Rome; Pliny's letters are used to elucidate the courtroom, not for a case study; activity in the senate is out because it shades into the political. Naturally, both public and private cases are in, and parties are all 'litigants'; perhaps less happily, 'judge' serves for panellists as well as magistrates. After an introduction on sources, Bablitz's first chapter deals with the location of legal activities, but the map (*Blue Guide*-type) does not mark some prime sites; the author's descriptions are good, but illustrations would help. Then come a reconstruction of the Roman courtroom (courtroom!) – assembling graphic evidence for the arrangement and density of the Centumviral court – the litigant, the judge (*iudex selectus* gets a run), the audience, the advocate, and the advocate's role. Practical throughout, the author calculates the number of A4 sheets that an advocate might get through (she might allow for "business"), and assesses the impact of the institution on all involved. Thoroughness and candour make this a book one is glad to have at hand.

Roman fear of the East bolstered Roman aggression. Maurice Sartre's *The Middle East under Rome*⁷ surveys that area, from Rome's success to the fall of Palmyra. What area? The title of the book and its genesis are worth explaining. 'The Middle East' looms large to us; Sartre means, more modestly, 'Syria', another plastic concept. The map tells: from Cilicia to Nisibis, down to Dura-Europus and Aila on the Gulf of Aqaba. Larger-scale or supplementary mapping is needed to show the Jebel Druze, for example. It is a vast and diverse area, a worthy challenge to the author's learning and powers of exposition. That is met: start anywhere, you will be drawn in: the birth of Christ, the interrelationship of the languages of the region and their encounter with Greek. This volume is a version of the author's garlanded *D'Alexandre à Zénobie*,⁸ with the 1196 pages reduced by excerpting the 'Roman' sections and adding a new opening chapter. There will have been a change of perspective, but the translation is skilfully done. Illustration is not lavish, but the notes are generous and rewarding (180 pages, beginning with a crisp disposal of 'Hollow' Syria).

Certainly the last queen of Egypt instilled fear into the Romans, and Joyce Tyldesley's **Cleopatra*⁹ offers something to the scholar as well

⁶ *Actors and Audience in the Roman Courtroom*. By Leanne Bablitz. Routledge Monographs in Classical Studies. London and New York, NY, Routledge, 2007. Pp. x (including 1 map) + 290. 11 figures. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-0-415-42760-9.

⁷ *The Middle East under Rome*. By Maurice Sartre. Translated by Catherine Porter and Elizabeth Rawlings, with Jeannine Routier-Pucci. Cambridge, MA, and London, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2005 (hardback), 2007 (paperback). Pp. xviii + 665. 44 illustrations. Hardback £25.95, ISBN: 978-0-674-01683-5; paperback £14.95, ISBN: 978-0-674-02565-3.

⁸ *D'Alexandre à Zénobie: Histoire du Levant antique, IV^e siècle av. J.-C. – III^e siècle apr. J.-C.* Paris, Librairie Arthème Fayard, 2001, revised 2003. What was wrong with the word 'Levant'?

⁹ *Cleopatra, Last Queen of Egypt*. By Joyce Tyldesley. London, Profile Books, 2008. Pp. xiv + 290. Stemma; 3 Maps; 26 colour plates, 6 inset illustrations. Hardback £20, ISBN: 978-1-86197-965-0.

as the general reader ('as read on "Book of the Week"', says the sticker). It is an attractive volume, well illustrated. The author's profession as an Egyptologist, which gives the work an interesting slant for classicists, is prominent, and she writes with engaging energy. The price: several slips in classical matters (mangling in a list of dependant monarchs; Octavian as a good Roman husband; imperial genealogy, etc.). Helps for readers include a Who's Who (involving some repetition), notes, bibliography, and a list of cartouches (if a reader does not know Cleopatra's cartouche by the end of this work she or he needs brain-training). After introducing the princess and the queen, Tyldesley provides a tour of Alexandria. A chapter on the new Isis comes between Cleopatra's two great affairs, with Caesar and Antony; then death, children, and legend are sensibly treated. I should have liked still greater stress on the shared political needs of Cleopatra and Antony, but this is a book to keep as well as to enjoy, since teachers, students, and 'general readers' will all find it informative (though the young will be baffled by Whiston's 'criminal conversation').

Next comes volume 2 of *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare*,¹⁰ which passes from late Republic to late Empire. Not just chronologically, however, though there is a chronological table. The enterprise focuses on developments over the last three decades, and its first three chapters (vol. 1) concentrate on evidence and its interpretation; six twin chapters by distinguished contributors take up each of the two parts, early and late, of volume 2: international relations, military forces, war, battle, warfare and the state (the earlier scrutiny is significantly divided between Dominic Rathbone, on finance and supply, and Richard Alston on the military and politics); and war and society. The purpose of this is to facilitate comparisons between the two periods (no doubt the authors read each others' contributions). The illustrations are not lavish, but they bring home the impact of the army and its drama on society (though it is overdramatic to write of the 'collapse' of the Augustan military administration in AD 14); they even generate a wish for a chapter on the 'theatre' of war, down to Respighi's *Pines*. The maps are excellent, and there is a glossary, list of ancient authors, bibliography, and index of passages cited.

To the barbarians. Roger Batty's *Rome and the Nomads*¹¹ puts the latter at the centre, unlike other works on the huge area (rivalling the Mediterranean, as figure 0.1 shows). The author does not let the sources lure him into a Romano-centrist account focusing on (ephemeral) events; he is concerned with long-term trends and structures, and archaeology is prominent (see Bibliography). After an introduction drawing attention to terminology such as 'nomad', 'pastoral', and 'migration', Part I deals with physical conditions, with examples from the fourth century to the nineteenth century, and Part II is devoted to the period before the Roman advance. Separate peoples, including the Celts, receive individual treatment. With Part III we come to Rome's dealings with the nomads, which has five sections to itself, compared with the three each of the earlier parts: 'Immigration' ('invasion' and 'raiding' are repudiated), 'Rome and the Nomads' itself, 'Pastoralism', 'Raiders, Rebels, and Thieves', and 'Urban Development' (exiguous).

¹⁰ *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Warfare. Volume II. Rome from the Late Republic to the Late Empire*. Edited by Philip Sabin, Hans van Wees, and Michael Whitby. Cambridge and New York, NY, Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. xxii (including 6 maps) + 608. 55 figures and 1 map in text. Hardback £120, ISBN: 978-0-521-78274-6.

¹¹ *Rome and the Nomads. The Pontic-Danubian Realm in Antiquity*. By Roger Batty. New York, NY, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. xxiv + 652. 81 figures, 10 tables, 16 colour plates, 16 black and white plates. Hardback £95, ISBN: 978-0-19-814936-1. (This review is factual: I read the work before publication.)

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.