Roman History

This being my first attempt at writing the Roman History subject review, some kind of comment on the nature of the field as illustrated by this issue's crop of books seems appropriate. Firstly, the paucity of books focusing on the period of the Roman Republic is striking, especially if Cicero is taken out of the equation; the Imperial period clearly dominates, though the study of Late Antiquity (in which I must declare an interest) is still clearly on the rise. In terms of subject matter, traditional political history is obviously still largely out of fashion, religion is on a roll and the 'cultural turn' continues its rise (again I declare an interest), but the economy is making a late comeback (thanks to the formidable industry of the Oxford Roman Economy Project). This issue's collection offers a healthy mix of genres: biographies, student textbooks/sourcebooks, edited volumes, 'companions', and substantial monographs, including both revised PhDs and the reflections of more seasoned scholars, books for specialists and novices alike. I shall be interested to see how the balance of both subject matter and methodology appear in future issues.

I shall begin with a book that, unlike most of the others under review, is explicitly aimed at a general audience.[1] An acknowledged expert, Susan Mattern has already published a specialist work on Galen (*Galen and the Rhetoric of Healing*, 2008), and it is interesting to see how she revisits the celebrated physician with new readers in mind. Galen is a formidable figure, his extant works running to twenty-two volumes (and approximately 150 titles) in the most modern edition, and Mattern's aim is to re-embody this textual canon in the life and practice of a remarkable man. This biography is a very good read indeed, and by having Galen placed so very much in his world the reader learns much not just about ancient medicine but also about the culture of the Antonine Empire. Galen's was quite a career, going from patching up gladiators in Pergamum to attending to that notable valetudinarian Marcus Aurelius. He was clearly a public figure of some charisma, engaging in lively feuds with his rivals, and always keen to demonstrate his prowess (and confound these rivals) in public displays and contests of mass dissection and vivisection (not for the squeamish, it is clear). Mattern successfully gives a flavour of the vibrant public life of imperial Rome, particularly the alien (to us) world of medicine as public spectacle. Although we get a clear picture of Galen as a great egotist, we also get a picture of Galen the dedicated physician, treating rich and poor, slave and free alike, although not, Mattern stresses, out of any particular bleeding-heart tendencies. The case histories of patients embedded in Galen's own writings provide fascinating insights into the cultural, social, and intellectual history of the Roman Empire, as well as of ancient medicine, and we are to be grateful for the expertise of Mattern in making this material so accessible. Of course, the generations who came after Galen were deeply indebted to his medical writings, and fittingly the biography ends with consideration of his legacy in western Europe, Byzantium, and the Islamic world.

The other biography of the crop, also aimed at a wide audience, deals with a figure even more famously engaged with Greekness in a Roman Empire: the emperor Hadrian.[2] While James Morwood engagingly begins his account by stating 'This is

[1] *The Prince of Medicine. Galen in the Roman Empire*. By Susan P. Mattern. Oxford, Oxford University Press: 2013. Pp. xx + 334. Hardback £20, ISBN: 978-0-19-960545-3.

[2] *Hadrian*. By James Morwood. Ancients in Action. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Pp. 130. 26 figures. Paperback £14.99, ISBN: 978-1-8496-6886-6.

the shilling life', this is in fact something of a gem of its kind. Beautifully written, and based on up-to-date scholarship as well as a rich range of sources, it is also enlivened with a decent sprinkling of relevant illustrations. Despite the limited space available Morwood manages to bring the empire as well as the emperor to life, going beyond (mere) biography. This is a lively 'Life' indeed, whose author has great fun with the ancient literary sources, particularly the poetry, and whose skill ensures that this fun is contagious. The generous space given to quotation from those ancient sources (including Hadrian's own verse) is particularly to be welcomed. This a book that one would be very pleased to recommend to students and general readers alike.

Staying in the second century AD, we come to a subject that would have been utterly familiar to both the physician and the emperor: dreams.[3] The subject of dreams in the ancient world is scarcely neglected, but what this new book (based on the author's PhD thesis) aims to do is to bring the allied concepts of 'cultural memory' and 'cultural imagination' to bear on the topic. The volume takes in a wide range of dreams and dreamers, moving beyond the parameters of the Roman Empire when necessary, from Ancient Egypt and the Near East to Freud and his followers. The particular focus of the book, however, is on the second century AD, a period rich in dream accounts and famously representing an 'Age of Anxiety' according to E.R. Dodds. But Harrisson finds continuity rather than change in this period (despite the increase in dream-related source material) and not altogether surprisingly rejects the notion of the 'Age of Anxiety' (Galen and Hadrian would probably approve). This book provides a clear and persuasive account, accessible through its use of translations and frequent reference to modern examples, with useful appendices cataloguing ancient dreams.

Dreaming was deeply embedded in ancient culture, making significant appearances in literature and history but also, of course, in religion. The study of Roman religion has been enlivened for some years by a range of theoretical and methodological approaches. Anna Collar, an archaeologist, uses network theory (in particular PPA or 'Proximal Point Analysis') in order to look at the spread of new religious ideas in the first three centuries of the Roman Empire, although epigraphic data lie at the heart of her study.[4] Her three case studies look firstly at the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, then at the Western Jewish Diaspora, then at the 'God-fearers'' cult of 'Theos Hypsistos'. In each case, Collar takes her starting point 'from the pattern of the evidence itself: from its *network*' (79, emphasis in original). In the case of the cult of Jupiter Dolichenus, well known to scholars, this produces a rather convincing new interpretation: that the cult was spread by Roman army officials rather than Syrian traders and army recruits. Readers might well like to agree that networks do indeed provide a useful interpretive framework for approaching the often difficult and fragmented evidence for ancient religion, although not all will be as sanguine as Collar that in the end

[3] *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire. Cultural Memory and Imagination*. By Juliette Harrisson. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Pp. ix + 309. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-1-4411-7633-2.

[4] *Religious Networks in the Roman Empire. The Spread of New Ideas*. By Anna Collar. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 322. 4 figures, 21 maps. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-107-04344-2.

these networks are rather better at explaining '*how change might have happened*' than actually establishing '*why* things change' (291, emphasis in original).

A theoretical approach to ancient religion also guides Jack Lennon's book, again based on the author's PhD thesis.[5] Lennon draws on a rich seam of anthropological literature (in which the work of Mary Douglas remains seminal) to examine the issue of purity and pollution in Roman religious ritual in the late Republican and early Imperial periods. While Greek religious pollution (*miasma*) is well known to classical scholarship, there has hitherto been no corresponding study of Roman pollution, which lacked any equivalently clear terminology or, indeed, definition. This does not mean, however, that pollution was not an important matter in Roman religion and culture. Having examined the terminology, Lennon turns to major areas of pollution – sex (and female bodies in particular), blood, and death – before considering pollution as a rhetorical trope. It is clear that Parker's study of *miasma* cannot simply be 'mapped' onto Roman religion and, indeed, that there is more work to be done on this subject. In the meantime, Lennon's interesting case studies, and his argument that ideas of purity and pollution helped to construct Roman religious identity, provide a welcome contribution to scholarship.

Rather more traditional classical scholarship is provided by a detailed discussion of the divinization of Julius Caesar and Augustus.[6] Michael Koortbojian argues that problems in the development of the institution of divinization illuminate the difficulties inherent in the establishment of the imperial system itself, and this detailed work aims to elucidate both. The peculiar combination of conservatism and innovation that characterized Roman religion permitted the construction of imperial divinity, but this was a complex process, the complicated means and modes of which are carefully and often illuminatingly demonstrated here. Unlike most other historians of the subject, Koortbojian, as a Roman archaeologist, is expert in the analysis of Roman visual culture, and the detailed focus on monuments, epigraphy, and coins makes this richly illustrated volume stand out. The argument proceeds by a series of individual, interrelated studies. Each chapter pursues a problem by close examination of the iconographic and textual evidence: changes in portraiture, issues of terminology, and so on. Rather disappointingly, there is a no conclusion to tie together these studies, which tend to be rather closely argued, and we might welcome a clearer statement about where Koortbojian stands in relation to his predecessors in the field.

Consistently disapproving comment on the novel and dubious honours offered to Caesar came, unsurprisingly, from Cicero. He probably would not have been best pleased by his co-option as a proto-Christian in Late Antiquity, but this was to be his fate, as shown by the new Cambridge companion to Cicero, a substantial volume edited by an eminent Ciceronian.[7] The focus of the volume is avowedly on the 'textual'

[5] *Pollution and Religion in Ancient Rome*. By Jack L. Lennon. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 229. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-107-03790-8.

[6] *The Divinization of Caesar and Augustus. Precedents, Consequences, Implications*. By Michael Koortbojian. New York, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xxi + 341. 159 figures. Hardback £65, ISBN: 978-0-521-19215-6.

[7] *The Cambridge Companion to Cicero*. Edited by Catherine Steel. Cambridge Companions to Literature. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 422. 1 map. Hardback £55, ISBN: 978-0-521-50993-0; paperback £21.99, ISBN: 978-0-521-72980-2.

Cicero, rather than the political actor, but a more substantial historical introduction might have been useful for readers. While the first two sections take in Cicero the intellectual and Cicero the politician, it is interesting to see equal weight given to receptions of Cicero, from imperial Rome to the present day, an area of scholarship that turns out to have been thus far neglected. By far the longest chapter is a magisterial account of the late antique reception of Cicero, written by the late Sabine MacCormack; it is tempting to say that this essay alone justifies the purchase of the volume. However, the book is populated by notable experts in the field – Ruth Morello on letters, Malcolm Schofield on philosophy, Emma Dench on Roman identity, to name but a few – and it will no doubt be purchased by many individuals, as well as libraries.

While the study of Roman oratory is understandably dominated by the figure of Cicero, a new collection of nineteen essays aims to knock him from his perch, and give a more balanced view of oratory, orators, and their audience in Republican political culture.[8] Oratory is here taken seriously, as 'a dynamic force' and 'a genuine means of communication' (2). The audience (both 'popular' and otherwise) come in for consideration, as do a range of orators (Roman and foreign), as well as the rhetorical aspect of oratory. While successful oratory, according to Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp's chapter, established harmonious links between speaker and audience, it was not always successful: there were always, as Jakob Wisse points out, 'bad orators' (163). Of particular interest to this reviewer was the contribution of Robert Morstein-Marx, who reconsiders his earlier writing regarding the 'communicative power' of the elite (29), wondering if this was in fact perhaps just an illusion of the elite imagination, a Ciceronian fantasy. Morstein-Marx's analysis of more than thirty legal cases where the popular vote triumphed over 'significant senatorial resistance' (39) makes the Republic looks less oligarchic than it often appears (a lively ongoing debate, of course). However, even the 'significant degree of ideological autonomy' (40) possessed by the Roman plebs in the face of the 'cultural hegemony' (45) of the elite never led to truly radical re-imaginings of the political order. For Morstein-Marx, conflict and consensus were in fact complementary, and kept the Republic alive. This is a very high-quality edited volume, with contributions from many of the leading scholars in the field who are willing to reflect upon, and indeed rethink, their previous scholarship, while the papers are clearly in dialogue with each other. In this way, the book offers a model for other editors and publishers to follow.

The importance of oratory in Roman culture did not, of course, end with the Roman Republic, and the centrality of rhetorical training in elite education continued well into Late Antiquity. The *Major Declamations* of 'Quintilian' (in fact the product of a group of anonymous authors, from the first to the third century AD) were a set of imaginary courtroom speeches to be used as part of this education. The work retained importance far beyond the classical period, but Neil Bernstein's book is the first major study of the collection.[9] While many Classicists will have come across some of the lively scenarios contained in the *controversiae* (maybe 'The Enchanted Tomb', *DM* 10, or 'The

[8] *Community and Communication. Oratory and Politics in Republican Rome*. Edited by Catherine Steel and Henriette van der Blom. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 401. Hardback £84, ISBN: 978-0-19-964189-5.

[9] *Ethics, Identity, and Community in Later Roman Declamation*. By Neil W. Bernstein. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. x + 229. Hardback £50, ISBN: 978-0-19-996411-6.

Corpse Eaters', *DM* 12), the collection has not been given serious attention for what it can tell us about the cultural and literary history of Rome. Bernstein is determined that we should treat Roman declamation seriously, arguing that these underrated texts 'self-consciously disrupt Roman master narratives of identity and community, virtue, paternal authority, and political hierarchy' (13). His treatment is thematic, proceeding through close, often dense readings, focusing on discussion of 'authority', 'verification', 'reciprocity', and 'visuality', before moving on to early modern reception of the *Declamations*, and the current study and practice of rhetoric. This is definitely a book for readers with literary, perhaps more than historical, interests, as well as those interested in both the reception of oratory and current practice.

Briefly, still on the topic of the continuing importance of oratory, I shall note a welcome addition to the Clarendon Ancient History series: a helpful edition of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives* of Demosthenes and Cicero, where the introduction and notes elucidate Plutarch and his subjects alike.[10]

Plutarch's *Lives* did not, of course, include any female subjects, and female biography from antiquity must be carefully reconstructed from often problematic sources. Those involved in teaching undergraduates will welcome a fresh sourcebook focusing on ancient women.[11] It could be said, however, that a volume comprising Greece as well as Rome would have been even more welcome (the same author has, in fact, published a separate, companion volume on Greek women). MacLachlan has provided new, generally attractive translations, of all her sources. Her collection proceeds chronologically, from the mythical beginnings of Rome to Late Antiquity (the inclusion of which is to be particularly welcomed). A wide range of sources is included, with inscriptions as well as literary sources, but there is no visual material, which is regrettable. Unfortunately, the layout is not as clear or attractive as one would wish, and a longer introduction would have been more useful for the students who will use the volume.

From a sourcebook to a general introduction: beginning '*Another* book on Roman women?' (7), it is aimed at students and the general reader, and promises an original and refreshing take on the subject.[12] It is thematically arranged, with chapters on the *familia*, marriage, public life, art and education, the 'dark arts', religion, medicine and health, and sex and sexuality. The use of a wide range of sources, all thoroughly referenced in the endnotes, provides a sound foundation, and the attractive and often original selection of illustrations will appeal to readers. While generally up-to-date, some dated elements remain, such as the discussion of Isis as an 'oriental' cult with particular appeal to women, and the straightforward association of Catullus' Lesbia with the historical Clodia. It is therefore perhaps unlikely to go to the top of any student reading list.

[10] *Plutarch. Demosthenes and Cicero*. Translated with introduction and commentary by Andrew Lintott. Clarendon Ancient History. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 227. Hardback £58, ISBN: 978-0-19-969971-1; paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-969972-8.

[11] *Women in Ancient Rome. A Sourcebook*. By Bonnie MacLachlan. Bloomsbury Sources in Ancient History. London, Bloomsbury, 2013. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-4411-7749-0; paperback £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-4411-6421-6.

[12] *Women in Ancient Rome*. By Paul Chrystal. Stroud, Amberley Publishing, 2013. Pp. 224. 36 figures. Hardback £20, ISBN: 978-1-4456-0870-9.

One might likewise ask if we need another new introductory textbook on Roman history. This is a hard thing to get right, and, in any case, different institutions (and different students) have very different needs. *Themes in Roman Society and Culture*, however, distinguishes itself from most such books in that it takes a thematic approach to Roman society and culture.[13] (Students looking for chronology or narrative will hence have to content themselves with the rather breathless 'Summary of Roman History' collapsed into twenty pages in Chapter 2.) Nevertheless, there is a real effort to make this book user-friendly, with a clear layout, and plenty of cross-referencing and signposting, a comprehensive glossary, and an appendix of resources for students, as well as helpful timelines throughout. Each chapter ends with 'questions for review and discussion', presumably for classroom use, as well as usefully annotated suggestions for further reading. Particularly welcome, and unusual, in a volume at introductory level is the historiographical introduction, which puts what follows in the context of the development of the study of Roman social history. An epilogue looking at the reception of Roman society in contemporary popular culture adds to the up-to-date feel, and chapters on the economy and technology are useful too. Throughout, the text is peppered with extracts from primary sources, which often go beyond the usual suspects, as do the illustrations. While many UK universities do not usually use textbooks in the precise way in which the volume's editors envisage, there is undoubtedly much that their students will find useful here, though it is a pity that the price could not have been kept lower.

While student textbooks these days are unlikely to shout about their coverage of the ancient economy, its study might be staging a bibliographical comeback. The Oxford Roman Economy Project is something of a behemoth; Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson's edited volume is the third in an ever-expanding series.[14] It aims to look closely at the rural economy in all its complexity, with its ten chapters largely focused on particular geographic areas. Lively debates continue to rage about the nature of the Roman economy, and how best to study it, and this volume has its own position to stake: the editors state 'we eschew an explicitly theoretical or model-based approach on the scale of the whole empire in this volume' and note their fondness for 'hard archaeological evidence' (10). One aim is to demonstrate that there was more to the rural economy than agriculture, while demonstrating how the agricultural economy responded to industrial, commercial, and urban development. A number of different methodologies are represented, including survey and GIS (geographic information systems) as well as fieldwork, while the source material is also wide-ranging. The editors' contention that the best way to study the ancient economy is through a series of case studies is, at least to a certain extent, demonstrated by this useful volume.

Annalisa Marzano's fascinating study of the marine economy is another product of the Oxford Roman Economy Project, and it does an excellent job in demonstrating that

[13] *Themes in Roman Society and Culture. An Introduction to Ancient Rome*. Edited by Matt Gibbs, Milorad Nikolic, and Pauline Ripat. Ontario, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxxi + 464. 47 plates, 3 figures, 3 maps, 1 table, 1 cartoon. Paperback £35, ISBN: 978-0-19-544519-0.

[14] *The Roman Agricultural Economy. Organization, Investment, and Production*. Edited by Alan Bowman and Andrew Wilson. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014. Pp. xvii + 333. 103 figures, 25 tables. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-966572-3.

economic history need not be dry.[15] Following the crucial work of Braudel, Horden, and Purcell, scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of the Mediterranean Sea as a tool of 'connectivity'. After all, we are reminded, the Mediterranean covered an area equal to about 40 per cent of the total land area covered by the Roman Empire at its peak, and included 46,000 kilometres of shoreline. This monograph represents the first systematic study of the exploitation of marine resources within the Roman economy, taking in fishing, fish and oyster farming, fish salting, and salt and dye production. Marzano uses a wide range of sources – literary, legal, epigraphic, and archaeological – to good effect indeed. The cultural and social, as well as the strictly economic, importance of the sea is clearly demonstrated. We are reminded, for instance, that access to and consumption of fresh fish acted as a cultural signifier and status marker, and we learn about fishermen's associations, as well as the intensification of aquaculture in the imperial period. The *longue durée* of the history of the sea is not neglected, and we learn that many fishing implements and techniques from antiquity remained in use from then until very recently – and, in some places, are still in use today.

Applying insights from the present to our study of the past (and vice versa) is of course something of the stock in trade for the ancient historian, with relevant personal experience sometimes applying to his or her study. Peter Bell brings a background in conflict resolution in Northern Ireland to his study of late antique social conflict.[16] This is not all he brings: ancient historians have tended to avoid the explicit use of theory of all sorts, and run scared from the social science models beloved of other academics; Bell, however, shows no such fear. What results is a highly stimulating addition to the social history of Late Antiquity. The reign of Justinian I is known for various notorious conflicts, most famously the Nika Riots and ongoing religious and ideological disputes. Bell takes a broad view of social conflict, however, and brings into the discussion rural social conflict: that is, between *coloni*, state landowners, and the state, as well as the better-known conflicts, including those to do with the Church and with Circus factions in the city. Some might object that spreading the nature of 'conflict' so thin rather dilutes its meaning, but Bell's knowledge of his sources, as well as his command of theory, can only impress. It will be interesting to see whether his monograph will herald other more social-scientific approaches to Late Antiquity in the years to come.

Innovative methodology is also brought to bear on a closely related subject: Ari Bryen's study of violence in Roman Egypt.[17] While Roman authors characterized Egyptians as prone to violence and disorder, Bryen has produce a nuanced and often fascinating study. This original work uses the hundreds of petitions preserved in the papyrological record in order to make a real contribution to our understanding of social, legal, and provincial history. (There were once thousands of these petitions:

[15] *Harvesting the Sea. The Exploitation of Marine Resources in the Roman Mediterranean*. By Annalisa Marzano. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xvi + 365. 46 figures. Hardback £80, ISBN: 978-0-19-967562-3.

[16] *Social Conflict in the Age of Justinian. Its Nature, Management, and Mediation*. By Peter Bell. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xvii + 393. 26 figures. Hardback £84, ISBN: 978-0-19-956733-1.

[17] *Violence in Roman Egypt. A Study in Legal Interpretation*. By Ari Z. Bryen. Empire and After. Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2013. Pp. 363. 5 figures. Hardback £49, ISBN: 978-0-8122-4508-4.

according to one papyrus, more than 1,800 were submitted over three days in one *conventus*.) Bryen insists on taking seriously a cast of non-elite petitioners, such as the perpetually complaining Ptolemaios, and Aurelia Allous, attacked with a chisel by a neighbour, enraged when her pigs had escaped onto his land. Bryen argues convincingly that legal petitions enabled individuals to make sense of the social world around them. He examines the operation of law, and provincial rule, from the 'bottom up', rather than just as something imposed from above, and in this way constructs 'a genuinely dialectical model of social interaction in a Roman province' (23). His mastery of his sources (his own translations of 135 petitions form a crucial appendix), as well as his methodological acuity, make this a valuable contribution to scholarship, which will make for productive reading for a wide range of scholars.

Violence of a rather more professional sort was the stock in trade of Rome's famous Praetorian Guard. Sandra Bingham has written the first full-length treatment of the Praetorian Guard in English, and it is bound to be welcomed by scholars, students, and enthusiasts of Roman imperial and military history.[18] This is an accessible and attractive work that deals thoroughly and judiciously with the sources and the debates surrounding this ever-intriguing elite unit of soldiers, which existed for over three hundred years. Scrupulously careful and clear, the book argues convincingly that the Praetorian Guard developed into more than just the imperial bodyguard, becoming a multifaceted unit that participated in the care of the state.

As has often been noted, scholarship on Late Antiquity, even more so than that on the early Empire, has tended to prioritize culture, society, and religion over politics, administration, and economics. Imperial biographies are something of an exception, but detailed studies of the nature and function of imperial rule are comparatively lacking, and Meaghan McEvoy's account of the striking phenomenon of the child-emperor in the Late Roman Empire is to be welcomed.[19] She sensibly limits her study to the West, focusing on Gratian, Valentinian II, Honorius, and Valentinian III (aged respectively eight, four, ten, and six). She provides a very useful, often revisionist account, which gives new insights into the nature of late Roman Imperial rule. While previous scholarship has tended to ascribe the child-emperor phenomenon 'to a triumph of the dynastic principle' (7), McEvoy argues that it is indicative of a profound change in the nature of imperial government and, moreover, that the phenomenon itself brought further change to this rule. She demonstrates convincingly that the existence and experience of the boy-emperor had profound consequence in that it led to the transformation of expectations of the emperor, his roles, activities, and responsibilities. Child emperors became 'a systemic element in late Roman government' (329), with the increasing ceremonialization of imperial rule as an important legacy.

Bishops, meanwhile, are perennial heroes of late antique scholarship. *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity* focuses on the relationship of bishops to power in the Latin

[18] *The Praetorian Guard. A History of Rome's Elite Special Forces*. By Sandra Bingham. Waco, TX, Baylor University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 240. 17 figures. Hardback £25, ISBN: 978-1-60258-649-9.

[19] *Child Emperor Rule in the Late Roman West, AD 367–455*. By Meaghan A. McEvoy. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xi + 367. 1 figure. Hardback £75, ISBN: 978-0-19-966481-8.

West, including the interaction of religious and secular authorities.[20] Based on a conference, it offers thirteen new contributions to the field, but would have clearly benefitted from more editorial care and attention. Although it begins with an interesting and helpful historiographical introduction, a somewhat uneven selection of short essays follows, with variable standards of proofreading, and a lack of consistency of editorial conventions. There are some new insights to be found (such as in an interesting chapter by Alberto Quiroga Puertas on rhetoric and the construction of heresy), but the volume as a whole is rather disappointing.

Not all edited volumes based on conferences are created equal. *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*, based on an Oxford seminar series and a workshop, has much to offer.[21] Roman historians, though increasingly familiar with the later Empire, will here be swept wholesale into a very 'long' Late Antiquity indeed, with one chapter taking us as late as 1100. The geographical focus is the Near East, including Syria, Armenia, Egypt, Iran, Iraq, and Arabia. The editor, Philip Wood, attempts to reassure readers by stressing the importance of the Greco-Roman past, variously reconfigured, as a unifying thread through the ten substantial chapters, and this happily turns out to be true. The essays divide quite neatly into two halves, the first of which focus on Christian, the latter on Islamic uses of the past, which is variously remembered, distorted, forgotten, and reconfigured. It is clear that the varied but interrelated cultures and traditions of the late antique Near East are illuminated when studied together. Moreover, this volume clearly demonstrates just how much fertile ground there is for new scholarship in this field, although the number of languages required is daunting, to say the least: alongside Greek are Arabic, Armenian, Coptic, and Syriac, though, happily, all are translated in this book.

Back on much more familiar ground for the traditional Roman historian, we come to a subject which at first glance seems almost overfamiliar.[22] In fact, though scholarship on freedmen has been notably active in recent years, that on freed*women* has been comparatively lacking. This monograph, based on the author's PhD dissertation, looks at the problematic status of the manumitted female slave, with a particular focus on the concept of gender. This focus on gender is crucial, as Perry argues for the centrality of the freedwoman's sexual status, that is, her new ability to marry. He uses a wide range of sources (literary, inscriptional, and legal) to examine the freedwomen both as represented and as 'real', though the latter category will always be elusive. Not everyone will be persuaded by the heavy emphasis that he lays upon the sexuality of the freedwoman, but it will certainly encourage further debate and research.

Finally we turn to a character who is also familiar but, it seems, endlessly fascinating: the emperor Nero, on this occasion, in the guise of a 'companion'.[23] The age of

[20] *The Role of the Bishop in Late Antiquity. Conflict and Compromise*. Edited by Andrew Fear, José Fernánzes Ubiña, and Mar Marcos. London, Bloomsbury Academic, 2013. Pp. x + 270. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-7809-3217-0.

[21] *History and Identity in the Late Antique Near East*. Edited by Philip Wood. Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity. New York, Oxford University Press, 2013. Pp. xxii + 237. 1 map. Hardback £47.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-991540-8.

[22] *Gender, Manumission, and the Roman Freedwoman*. By Matthew J. Perry. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. ix + 269. Hardback £55. ISBN: 978-1-107-04031-1.

[23] *A Companion to the Neronian Age*. Edited by Emma Buckley and Martin T. Dinter. Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World. Chichester, Wiley-Blackwell, 2013. Pp. xvi + 486. 4 plates, 30 figures, 3 maps. Hardback £125, ISBN 978-1-4443-3272-8.

Nero – comprising history, literature, religion, art, and architecture – is clearly a stimulating subject for 'companion' treatment. An impressive range of contributors (including Elaine Fantham, John Henderson, and Susanna Braund, as well as many younger scholars) ensures that hackneyed views of Nero and Neronian culture are absent, and less-travelled vistas are explored, although it is to be noted that literary themes do somewhat dominate this overview of the 'Neronian Age'. Miriam Griffin considers recent historiographical 'rehabilitations' of Nero in a final chapter, exploring the reasons for what she sees as contemporary scholarly admiration of the traditional villain. This makes for an interesting and thoughtful read, even for avowed revisionists, as Griffin warns us not to go too far in promoting Nero 'from zero to hero' (480).

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Art and Archaeology

Whatever Luca Giuliani writes is usually worth reading. *Image and Myth*, a translation and revision of his *Bild und Mythos* (Munich, 2003), is no exception.[1] This monograph engages with a topic germane to the origins and development of classical archaeology – the relation of art to text. Giuliani begins, rather ponderously, with an exposition of G. E. Lessing's 1766 essay *Laokoon*, 'on the limits of painting and poetry'. Lessing, a dramatist, predictably considered poetry the more effective medium for conveying a story. A picture, in his eyes, encapsulates the vision of a moment – likewise a statue. The Laocoon group, then, is a past perfect moment. A poet can provide the beginning, middle, and end of a story; the artist, only the representation of a fleeting appearance. Giuliani shows that this distinction does not necessarily hold – works of art can be synoptic, disobedient of Aristotelian laws about unity of place and time (and scale). Yet he extracts from Lessing's essay a basic dichotomy between the narrative and the descriptive. This dichotomy dictates the course of a study that is most illuminating when its author is being neither narrative nor descriptive but analytical – explaining, with commendable care for detail, what we see in an ancient work of art. But is the distinction between narrative and descriptive as useful as Giuliani wants it to be? One intellectual predecessor, Carl Robert, is scarcely acknowledged, and a former mentor, Karl Schefold, is openly repudiated; both of these leave-takings are consequent from the effort on Giuliani's part to avoid seeking (and finding) 'Homeric' imagery in early Greek art. The iconography of Geometric vases, he maintains, 'is devoid of narrative intention: it refers to what can be expected to take place in the world' (37). In this period, we should not be asking whether an image is 'compatible' with a story, but rather whether it is incomprehensible *without* a story. If the answer is 'no', then the image is descriptive, not narrative. Thus the well-known *oinochoe* in Munich, clearly showing a shipwreck, and arguably intending to represent a single figure astride an overturned

[1] *Image and Myth. A History of Pictorial Narration in Greek Art*. By Luca Giuliani. Translated by Joseph O'Donnell. Chicago, IL, University of Chicago Press, 2013. Pp. xix + 335. 87 figures. £45.50, ISBN: 978-0-226-29765-1.