

tapped into the ambivalence towards Claudius and his bombastic triumph in contemporary elite commentary. Indeed, that triumph's relative paucity of captives seems to have been one element that sparked such scorn. Early Roman literature testifies to parallel imaginative attempts to put oneself in the position of such a captive; imagining the Jewish God as triumphator was deeply subversive. Paul thus tested the boundaries of acceptable public discourse. Paul's view on Rome here, Heilig asserts, is thus not encoded at all, just less visible to us because of our failure to properly appreciate the historical and local geographical context of Paul's comment – overlooked unease, rather than hidden criticism. That in turn prompts an extended reflection on the limits of traditional New Testament hermeneutics.

This is a provocative book. The subject-matter is probably better suited to an article than a monograph – indeed much of it has been published before – and its framing around a major question but focus on a particular passage feels curiously uneven. It amounts, in sum, to a methodological rant shored up by a single example. In tone it recalls the raw early albums of great bands – moments of brilliant insight juxtaposed with an occasionally naïve writing style and scattergun broadsides against entire genres or disciplines. And intellectually it would be significantly enriched by engagement with the explosion in work on Greek authors under the empire of the last twenty years, which has eschewed simplistic categorization in favour of recognition of multi-layered multi-valency.<sup>15</sup> But it is fundamentally correct in its call for attention to the specific local contexts of early Christian documents. In turn, we might add, those documents read as such provide us with fresh material for judging provincial reaction to Rome's appearance on the local stage. Right or wrong, then, it certainly demonstrates the Janus-faced rewards from bringing what remain substantially different disciplines closer together.

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### *Art and archaeology*

We start this review in the sanctuaries of archaic and classical Greece. The book *Between Deity and Dedicator* is the PhD thesis of Sanne Hoffmann.<sup>1</sup> Hoffmann's aim is to examine terracotta votive figurines through their entire lifecycle, following their journey from production to dedication to deposition within the sanctuary (fifteen of

<sup>15</sup> Still best exemplified by Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire. The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford, 2001).

<sup>1</sup> *Between Deity and Dictator. The Life and Agency of Greek Votive Terracotta Figurines*. By Sanne Hoffmann. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023. Pp. xi + 347. 85 illustrations. Hardback £109.00, ISBN: 978-3-110-76887-9.

which are chosen, with a preponderance, never really fully explained, towards those of female deities). Theories of object agency and an emerging interest in object biographies are extremely well-chosen as the frameworks in which to discuss a set of objects that were surely imagined to have some sort of efficacy in prompting a response from the deity to whom they were dedicated. It is so often the case that introductions lay out long explanations of theories that are then never again mentioned in the rest of the book as the author gets stuck in to the 'content'. Here, though, the theory is evoked effectively and explicitly at key parts throughout the thesis.

The first section is particularly compelling, exploring the production and retail of the figurines. A few sanctuaries have some evidence of workshop production on site, but it seems more usual that, in the big cities, visitors shopped in town before venturing to the sanctuary or else bought from stalls that workshops operated at the sanctuary. At the sanctuary of Demeter and Kore in Corinth, some of the figurines can be traced to particular workshops in the Potters District at Corinth. Figurines were also travelling large distances between production and dedication: the same Corinthian potters were exporting across the Mediterranean, especially in the Archaic period (we might be reminded of Eleni Hasiki's book on the disruption brought to the Corinthian Potters Quarter by increasing competition from Athens, covered in a previous review<sup>2</sup>). By the Hellenistic period it is an originally-Athenian product, Tanagra figurines, which are appearing in sanctuaries around the Greek sites of the Mediterranean. Since most figurines are found in fills, following sporadic clearings of old votives in crowded sanctuaries, there are not many examples of votives in the place their dedicants left them, though some examples, such as at Heloros in Sicily, show figurines placed on low benches or even inserted into the wall. Visual, literary, and epigraphic evidence help provide a picture of sanctuaries filled with clutter as worshippers clog up the best spots nearest the deity with their gifts, often despite strict rules to do otherwise as laid out in decrees, such as on a grumpy inscription from the Sanctuary of Asklepios on Rhodes. This is the moment at which the figurine's agency might be considered to be most 'vibrant' (33), working both as a pleasing gift for the god and as a memory of the dedicant. The section on the iconography of the figurines is less enlightening, somewhat dependent on traditional identifications, and relying on rather vague, catch-all themes of 'fertility' and 'apotropaia'. It proves similarly difficult to distinguish the original moment of deposition from later re-depositing. Sometimes, a whole mass of figurines have been carefully discarded together near their point of dedication (as at the Sanctuary of Athena at Chios, where they are buried very close to altar) and sometimes they have clearly been moved to serve as a fill layer beneath new structures (such as at the Sanctuary of Athena on Miletos).

The final chapter looks not at the end of individual figurines but the dwindling role of terracotta figurines as votives. Their demise is considered to be due to multiple factors: their replacement by other objects, such as lamps, that have become more appropriate; the disruption of tradition at different sites caused, for example, by the arrival of Romans; and also perhaps the changing nature of manufactured figurines – the increasingly dominant Tangara types favour domestic themes that may seem less compelling as votives. Hoffmann ends by considering how the figurines left behind might have

<sup>2</sup> Eleni Hasiki, *Potters at Work in Ancient Corinth*, Hesperia Supplement 51 (Athens, 2021).

acquired a different sort of collective agency, as votives were now components of collections, whose size and age stood as proof of the history and esteem of these sanctuaries.

This was clearly a well-deserved PhD success, though it could have done with more finessing in order to become a fully satisfying monograph. There are different views on the point at which theses should be published, and these vary particularly within the academic traditions of different countries. From a reader's point of view, there are points here that the report-style format of a PhD, requiring extensive surveys of sites and the lack of development of certain themes, for example, the iconography of the figurines, are somewhat of an impediment. Hopefully, we will hear more on this topic from Hoffmann as her research career advances.

*The Death of Myth on Roman Sarcophagi* is another publication arising from a PhD thesis, but is a very different proposition.<sup>3</sup> Whilst traces of that thesis survive, particularly in ridiculously long footnotes, Mont Allen has clearly considered not examiners but an audience. It is a very confident and engaging volume with the writer always aware of a readership beyond examiners, addressing the audience directly in a conversational and clear style, explaining back stories of mythic characters without clunkiness or unnecessary deviation, with the exception of a not-wholly convincing, brief diversion to Aquincum (125–9). The book aims to consider the possible reasons why myth scenes suddenly disappear on sarcophagi produced in Rome during the middle of the third century CE. The sheer expense of these sarcophagi (though tellingly, the value lies in the marble not the workmanship, whose labour would be cheap by comparison, despite it apparently taking between 1,000 to 1,200 workdays to carve [114]) suggests that such a clear change must need some explanation. The book takes us through a series of previously proposed reasons for this 'demythologization': an emerging Christian clientele demanding unoffensive, more neutral themes; the alienation of the elite from the city as political circumstances increasingly marginalized them, inviting a retreat to their villas and a preference for bucolic scenes that fit a romanticized vision of this new lifestyle; and the third century crisis whose precarities drove people to a new sense of reality and populism which eschewed the snobbish *paideia* implied by mythological scenes. The first is easily dismissed: this early Christian population is simply not large enough to have had the purchasing power to upturn a thriving business like sarcophagus-working. The idea of the dismissal of myth seems unlikely given that mosaics, silverware, and other high-end art forms all enthusiastically keep up the tradition in other spheres of the lives of the commissioners of these monuments. Having dismissed these, the author is able to put the next two chapters to work to suggest his own thesis. It does seem slightly odd for the first of these, which features the big reveal to be labelled as the conclusion, not least because it is followed by another, entitled 'coda', which looks forward to the early Christian handling of biblical myth. Nevertheless, the premise of the 'conclusion' is that it is not mythic narrative per se but its 'pastness' that starts turning off clients who want their dead to be more immediately with them, imagined in scenes of everyday life or generic themes that do not confine them to a distant, mythic past.

<sup>3</sup> *The Death of Myth on Sarcophagi. Allegory and Visual Narrative in the Late Empire*. By Mont Allen. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. xiii + 278. 63 illustrations. Hardback £75.00, ISBN: 978-1-316-51091-9.

The argument is intriguing, but it noticeably lacks corroborating evidence. One would have thought that such an urgency of sentiment would be detectable in other sources, such as epitaphs, but no such is presented. Importantly, Allen says, when myth returns in the guise of the stories of the Old and New Testament (some of course sharing the same iconographic conventions as the old mythic sarcophagi – a sleeping Jonah evoking sleeping Adonis), it is because these stories do not allude to a historic past but allow Christians to reaffirm their faith that will propel them to eternal life in the future, a reunion after death that paganism never assured. More unusually, perhaps, the distinction between mythic past and generic present or Christian future is not only posed as being about iconography but also form. Drilling is suggested as a feature of mythic scenes, applied to the hair of mythic figures and the portraits of deceased posed as mythic heroes but not to everyday scenes. A similar lack of drilling on sarcophagi featuring Christian narratives and symbols is seen as further evidence of a rejection of an appeal to a distant past and an insistence on the merging of the faithful deceased with the biblical stories that portend his own chances of salvation and everlasting life.

*Pagan Inscriptions, Christian Viewers* is another example of how a PhD thesis can be re-focused as an elegant book, and similarly traces the ways in which Christian audiences respond to the ‘pagan’ past.<sup>4</sup> Here, Anna Sitz explores the fate of all those inscriptions that had long filled sanctuaries and civic spaces as the Greek world entered the Christian era. As Sitz says, we spend so much time recording and poring over buildings in order to imagine their pristine form at the moment of creation that we often forget to consider what these monuments looked like, and more importantly how they were perceived by viewers 500 or more years later. We are all familiar with the Sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi, but how many of us have paused to consider the innumerable crosses carved in the surfaces of the altar of the Chians in front of the temple (94)? Like Hoffmann, Sitz frames her discussion around the idea of ‘object agency’, contending that inanimate objects affect human behaviour and understanding; in the case of inscriptions, through their physical characteristics, context, and content. Focusing on Asia minor, her book includes some very familiar cities and sites (such as Aphrodisias and Ephesos and the Temple of Augustus and Rome in Ankara, home to our best-preserved copy of the *Res Gestae*) and others that will be intriguingly less familiar, such as the Korykian cave complex at Kilikia. The epigraphic habit had been so rife in the Greek East for hundreds of years that Christian populations had to make some choices about how to respond to the ‘pagan’ words inscribed in every corner of their cities. Of course, one option – the most dramatic – would be to destroy them all, either demolishing the entire inscription or deliberately defacing the offensive words and names, but, apart from anything else, doing this systematically would have meant dismantling just about every public building. Hoffman sets out to explore the range of ways in which these inscriptions were dealt with. Alongside those that were deliberate destroyed, other inscriptions were left in situ even as the space was repurposed, whilst others were subject to spoliation, in which they were reused in new contexts where the actual wording of the inscription may be considered or not. Sometimes, this repurposing leaves what might seem to us inexplicable incongruities: apparently

<sup>4</sup> *Pagan Inscriptions, Christian Viewers. The Afterlives of Temples and Their Texts in the Late Antique Eastern Mediterranean*. By Anna M. Sitz. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxv + 321. 64 illustrations, 2 maps. Hardback £71.00, ISBN: 978-0-197-66643-2.

the congregation at Sagalassos were happy to put up with cavorting satyrs still visible on the stones they had repurposed from the city's Temple of Dionysos. Throughout, the fates of these inscriptions are set alongside those of statues, not least because so often those inscriptions and statues relied on each other, with statue bases bearing deities' names. Sometimes, the removal of the statue from its base is seen to be its saving, as now an 'unnamed' offensive pagan deity can pass as generic figure. Elsewhere, as with gouged inscriptions, other statues were less lucky and they are found sprawled in situ and across the pages of this book like murder victims, Sitz clearly enjoying forensic description of the scene of the crime!

Some inscriptions were saved because they could be extrapolated to some extent from their religious association or because their 'paganness' could be overlooked in the pursuit of other more demanding needs, such as glorification of the city. The Temple of Zeus at Aizanoi was converted to a church, but second-century CE letters from emperors were kept unmolested on its walls, perhaps because they spoke to local pride, with Christian cross graffiti underneath them asserting the new religious context. Throughout, the book stresses the complexities of attitudes towards pagan remnants and the ways in which Christian populations accommodated the cityscapes to their own needs. Whilst some sanctuaries faced destruction or repurposing as churches, others were preserved as museums, and other spaces, such as the Sanctuary of Hekate at Lagina, continued to thrive because their role as communal meeting and trading points stayed relevant long after the ostensible reason for the meeting, the worship of a god, had faded (134). The human needs of Christian populations of the eastern Mediterranean had much in common with that of their predecessors, even if their religion had changed.

The edited volume, *Drawing the Greek Vase*, looks at the evolution of techniques used to record the images on Greek vases.<sup>5</sup> The papers move chronologically through the history of recording these vases from the seventeenth century to today. Throughout, a sequence of new technologies, from chromolithography to the camera and on to digital software, bring more tools to bear on the task. The point of the volume is that the pictures these technologies produce, often dismissed as simply illustrations serving the analytical texts they accompany, are actually 'active producers of knowledge' (2). The main contention is that drawing both reflects the needs of those commissioning them and also opens up the possibilities of what can be done and prompts some kinds of investigations over others. In the earlier chapters, the discussion often revolves around how different drawing styles are matched to prevalent interests in either iconography or form. In a later chapter, Nikolaus Dietrich stresses photography's role not simply as an efficient replacement for drawing but in offering new access to different qualities of Greek vases, such as the visual effects of their glaze. Throughout, John Beazley's presence hangs heavy, his own mantra quoted in several chapters: 'Draw: for the hand remembers as well as the eye.'

The volume foregrounds the difficulties that many of us looking at such drawings take for granted, particularly the inventive ways in which different hands have tackled the challenge of compensating for the curvature of a ceramic vessel when committing

<sup>5</sup> *Drawing the Greek Vase*. Edited by Caspar Meyer and Alexia Petsalis-Diomidis. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiii + 315. 147 illustrations. Hardback £83.00, ISBN: 978-0-192-85612-8.

its iconography to flat paper. Particularly important in this volume is the appreciation and analysis of the work of often overlooked draughtsmen. Some of those responsible for the illustrations of the great volumes, like Wilhelm Tischbein, who created the illustrations for the publication of the vases in William Hamilton's ill-fated second collection, we know well. Others are here restored to view for the first time, as with the draughtsmen working in early nineteenth-century Rome, named and explored by Marie-Amélie Bernard. As an illustrator at the British Museum, Kate Morton's contribution is invaluable in demonstrating contemporary techniques. It is very telling to hear how museum colleagues have talked about her work and how until recently the illustrator teams have been distanced from their own work, discouraged from signing their work.

Another compelling aspect of the volume is its exploration of the extent to which different coalitions of interested parties have benefitted from the drawings. Some of these are familiar – for instance, the importance of eighteenth-century illustrations not only to the *cognoscenti* who could afford D'Hancarville's volume of William Hamilton's vases but to potters such as Wedgwood. Both the iconographic content of Greek vases and the linear drawing style used to illustrate them come together to infiltrate Thomas Hope's *Designs of Modern Costumes* (1812).<sup>6</sup> Petsalis-Diomidis shows how the crisp drawings of contemporary women in its pages, wearing chic Greek fashion, are both set back into the world of Greek vases via their drapery and their *klismoi* chairs and by the manner in which the illustrations are infused with the patterns and motifs borrowed from vases that infuse their imagined domestic interiors. Another key interaction is between illustrators, academics, and dealers, a much closer, sometimes beneficial sometimes antagonistic, relationship than we would perhaps now not like to admit. Bernard's chapter explores Eduard Gerhard and Emil Braun's regular rounds of dealers in Rome during the first half of the nineteenth century to find specimens to draw, sometimes rushing to complete drawings before the arrival in town of the big collectors who would inevitably acquire them, whilst Vinnie Nørskov assesses the photographic archives of twentieth-century dealers, both licit and illicit. This, then, is a full and engaging volume, the different contributions talking effectively to each other. The only oddity is that the difficulty of the term 'illustration' itself is not tackled until the afterword, which seems a rather late opportunity to raise some crucial issues about terminology.

*Ancient Rome and the Modern Italian State* traces the treatment of Roman ruins in the course of 'place-making' to meet the challenge of Rome's emergence as capital of Italy and, briefly, of the fascist Third Rome.<sup>7</sup> From the late nineteenth century, Rome notoriously underwent a process of intense modernization occurring across the capitals of western Europe, of a type most associated with Haussman's project for a modern Paris. The occasion was made by the creation of Rome as the capital of the newly unified Italy, a capital that fifty years later would be completely recast to suit the ambitions and self-image of Benito Mussolini. The narrative is bookended by these events, ending with the collapse of fascist rule in Italy towards the end of the

<sup>6</sup> T. Hope, *Designs of Modern Costume. Engraved for Thomas Hope of Deepdene by Henry Moses* (London, 1812).

<sup>7</sup> *Ancient Rome and the Modern Italian State. Ideological Placemaking, Archaeology and Architecture 1870–1945*. By Alessandro Sebastiani. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xxiii + 274. 58 illustrations. Hardback £85.00, ISBN: 978-1-109-35410-3.

Second World War. Perhaps the most innovative part of this book is how it links back the fascist works of Mussolini to that earlier generation post-unification: plans for extricating ancient monuments and setting them in newly-created archaeological parks, classical exhibitions, and massive clearance, with which most students will associate Mussolini's Rome, are seen to have their origins in plans set forth post-unification as the new authorities looked to legitimate Rome as capital and mark its 'liberation' from the Papacy. For example, the 1911 *mostra archeologica* (archaeological exhibition) is seen as a precursor of the notorious fascist exhibitions, such as that which celebrated 2,000 years since the birth of Augustus. It provides a full narrative, the author weaving together the actions and motives of archaeologists, politicians, and architects and the ruins and new buildings they worked on. Four spaces are picked out for especial focus: the Ara Pacis and the Mausoleum of Augustus, brought together in the Piazzale Augusto Imperatore and the Imperial Fora and Colosseum, united by the Via dell'Impero. In dealing with these case studies, the author contextualizes the familiar fascist place-making strategies with their unification and even Napoleonic pre-histories as well as carving back stories, imagining how the monuments may have been experienced in the medieval and Renaissance periods (and these are the most evocative passages, recreating, if rather romantically, the gardens and alleys among which the ruins once sat in harmony). The text also offers some great opportunities for considering counterfactual history (though it does not stray into this territory). How would the Via dell'Impero (now the Via dei Fori Imperiali) look/mean differently with the never-realized Danteum along its length? And how would we interpret the Ara Pacis if it had been reassembled there rather than by the Tiber (168)?

Having said that, the overall story traced here is a rather well-rehearsed one and the main contribution of the book in this regard is to bring together in one volume material that is currently spread around in edited volumes. Having said that, there are some difficulties in navigating this book. Readers unfamiliar with the city may find it disorientating. There are very few maps, and the volume rather assumes readers know locations (for example, there is a long lag between the first mention of Piazza Venezia and the explanation of its significance to both the unification and fascist governments). The rhetorical style does not always make for an easy read and the whole text could have done with better copy-editing. There are some repeated formatting errors (double spaces between words) and some Italianisms, such as the repeated reference to 'the Trajan's forum'. For some reason, the Severan period is repeatedly written as 'Severian'.

Another aspect of this text which prompts ambivalence is its highly polemical style. The preface suggests that the book should serve as a warning not to repeat 'certain mistakes'. The changes to the city set in train from 1870 are viewed throughout as the destruction of the city and, more specifically, the complete removal of authenticity from the Roman monuments rescued, cleared of their association with the medieval city and juxtaposed with new buildings serving the ideology of the new governments. The term authenticity is 'used to stress the necessary historical meaning that monuments and sites of the past should transmit to the visitor' (xxvii). Sebastiani repeatedly presses the pickaxe into service as both a literal and metaphorical symbol of the damage done by unification and fascist modernization, which is characterized in violent terms as 'the worst scarring of the city's heart' (41). On the one hand, this heartfelt stance gives the text its drive and is a completely understandable response to fascist impulses.



It is easy to see how Mussolini's enacted vision of Rome is unpalatable: the whole Piazzae Augusto Imperatore configuration is certainly a TERRIBLE way of showing off the mausoleum of Augustus. But it rather seems to force certain narratives: Augustus comes out very well, rather uncritically posed as an example of an autocrat who allegedly shaped Roman place-making by reinterpreting not stripping historical accuracy. Most obviously missing is a clearer indication of how authenticity could practically be managed. How could the ancient pasts of Rome live harmoniously with Rome as contemporary capital city? The answer, in the context of the projects between 1870 and 1945, seems to be that Rome should have been left alone. In which case, how could it go on evolving? One of the advantages of Dorigen and Lesley Caldwell's 2011 edited volume on the way past and present entwined in the cityscape of Rome is the final chapter by Daniele Manacorda, which explicitly considers the enormous difficulties of balancing the city's ancient heritage and contemporary infrastructure needs.<sup>8</sup> An afterword of this sort would have very much helped this volume too.

The final book arguably deals rather better in tackling contested heritage and the roles of autocratic regimes in manipulating that heritage. *Digging Politics* explores these issues with regard to the states of east-central Europe, with especial focus on Romania.<sup>9</sup> Whereas, in the previous volume, Trajan's Column is venerated by later Roman emperors and twentieth-century Italian dictators for its depiction of Roman triumph, as evidenced by the two-time defeat of the Dacians in the Dacian Wars, in Romania the Dacians are the heroes. Alexander Rubel shows how, in assuming the rotational presidency of the Council of the European Union in 2019, the Romanian public chose a logo based on the 'draco', the dragon standard flown by the Dacian soldiers and depicted as Roman trophies on Trajan's Column. And, whilst on that column, we last see Decebalus (the Dacian leader) about to meet his end, at Henri Coanda airport, the visitor to Romania is met by a marble bust labelled, perhaps hopefully, as the Dacian leader. The example shows a clear pride in tying these countries to an ancient landscape whilst demarcating themselves from Rome. Florian-Jan Ostrowski traces how, in the 1970s and 1980s, Bulgaria turned to the material remains of Thracians, not just as a means of asserting a coherent history, reiterated by narratives and images on stamps, but as a means of articulating a specific identity that differentiated it from other Soviet states and allowing a mode of communication with other countries through international exhibitions that showcased the gold and armour excavated from Thracian burial mounds. This sort of activity, in marrying national identity to resistance to Roman invasion, is not that unusual, of course: in 1865 Aimé Millet's *Vercingetorix* was erected on Mont Auxois and Thomas Thorneycroft's *Boudicca* arrived outside the Houses of Parliament in London in 1902. What is different here is that the nation-building done in the nineteenth century by the western states of Europe had to occur and recur in eastern Europe following the redrawing of borders and break-up of the Austro-Hungarian empire after the First

<sup>8</sup> Dorigen Caldwell and Lesley Caldwell (eds.), *Rome. Continuing Encounters Between Past and Present* (Farnham, 2011).

<sup>9</sup> *Digging Politics. The Ancient Past and Contested Present in East-Central Europe*. Edited by James Koranyi and Emily Hanscam. Berlin, De Gruyter, 2023. Pp. xi + 356. 44 illustrations. Hardback £103.50, ISBN: 978-3-110-69733-9.



World War and the rise and fall of the Iron Curtain after the Second. The consequence of those redrawn boundaries is shown very clearly in Melinda Harlov-Csörtán's documentation of the history of a Mithraeum built along the militarized *limes* (frontiers) of Pannonia in the third century. At the time of its discovery in Fertőrákos in the 1860s it was in the midst of Austro-Hungarian territory. However, after the division of territory into Austria and Hungary and then during the Soviet period, it became once again militarized borderland. Surrounded by landmines and search lights, it was both physically and intellectually overlooked (the government not much interested in Roman history). Even very recently, the Hungarian government has pulled out of an application to UNESCO to have its own stretches of Roman frontier be included in the pan-European *limes* project.

Throughout, the volume reinforces how the stories we tell of our past evolve and change as contemporary generations and governments need something different from it. Christoph Doppelhofer shows how quickly a heritage can be overwritten, not in this case by regime change and autocratic rule but by popular culture. He looks at how Dubrovnik's heritage cityscape has been recast by *Game of Thrones* fans who see the city not as the Croatian UNESCO site relating its once history as the city-state Ragusa, but as King's Landing, capital of the Seven Kingdoms. As the tourist industry catches up with demand, local sites receive new names and local names become forgotten. The force of this tourist gaze threatens to erase and disrupt local memories and narratives so hard won following the terrible experience of the Yugoslav War.

But the most powerful stories are not about the objects that archaeologists curate but the very discipline itself. Gheorghe Alexandru Niculescu considers how continued reliance of models of culture-history (the practice of associating different archaeological assemblages as distinct to cultures that belong to people of specific ethnicities) hampers the evolution of Romanian archaeology, whilst Emily Hanscam recommends other ways of thinking about the Romanian past by thinking more about landscape than the identity of the people who have occupied and exploited it. More alarming is the story told of 'illiberal humanities' in Hungary. Katrin Kremmler's reports on the thriving continuity of racial taxonomies, a branch of science discarded in western Europe after it had become irrecoverably connected with Nazism and used as justification for the regime's racist and genocidal manias. Exhibitions of ethnic origins put on as part of the right-wing 'folk' festival, Kurultáj, aim to demonstrate an ancient eastern Eurasian prehistory to challenge Western orthodoxies. Exhibited crania and reconstructions show a shared Europicid-Mongolid racial type in order to support a common ethnicity between 'Magyars' (the tribes who ended up in what is now Hungary after the collapse of the Roman empire) and Kazakh tribes. Kremmler is careful to note that her shock at this comes from her grounding in a different scholarly culture. That backlash against racial taxonomies in the West did not touch academics isolated in post-war eastern Europe and so current generations of students and scholars have not inherited the same ingrained aversion to the approach as she has. Nevertheless, it is clear that this kind of archaeological pursuit plays right into the political narratives and myth-making of the Orbán government. Kremmler's approach is typical of the measured care with which the discussions are conducted by a group of scholars based both within and without the countries discussed, careful to avoid the kind of condemnation that might come easily from the comfort of the perspective of the outside onlooker. The book situates its case studies into a wider context of grappling with cultural heritage, precisely to fight

the ongoing stereotyping of these nations as different from and behind western Europe. It is a powerful volume not because it shines a light on those countries in particular, but because it should invite all of us to take a good look at ourselves and the frameworks with and within which we work.

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### *Philosophy*

This year, Aristotle readers could purchase something old and something new for their libraries. The old thing is Diana Quarantotto's edited volume on Aristotle's *Physics* I, published in 2018 but now finally available in paperback at an affordable price.<sup>1</sup> People will remember that this book includes excellent commentaries on each chapter of *Physics*, like those by Andrea Falcon, Timothy Clarke, Laura M. Castelli, Lindsay Judson, David Charles, and Isván Bodnár, to name a few. The volume also contains a preface, an illuminating methodological introduction, and a collaborative translation of Aristotle's text. The main takeaway is a balanced appraisal of the importance of *Physics* I and its introductory role within Aristotle's physical project.

For something new and somehow related, we have Nathanael Stein's *Causality and Causal Explanation in Aristotle* (sadly, the author makes no reference to Quarantotto's volume, which would have helped his argument).<sup>2</sup> This is a monograph on one of Aristotle's signature contributions to philosophy that somehow manages to be audacious in its aim, carefully argued, and thought-provoking, even though one might not agree with some of Stein's interpretations. The book starts with the observation that for all the influence Aristotelian causes have had, it is 'surprisingly difficult to say what the theory is, or whether it is even a theory at all' (1). What he means is that, unlike other influential philosophers, Aristotle is unclear about the basis and justification for his pluralism about causes: we lack explicit discussion about second-order questions on Aristotle's treatment of causality, and the canonical chapters that present the four causes in *Physics* II seem to do it without a preamble or obvious philosophical motivation.

Stein's solution is to reconstruct an Aristotelian theory of causality, allegedly following the text closely. This is where the book's project is risky, since, as Stein recognizes, 'There are, then, good textual and philosophical explanations for the fact that it is difficult to discern a clear and unified theory of causality in Aristotle's general remarks about

<sup>1</sup> *Aristotle's Physics Book I. A Systematic Exploration*. Edited by Diana Quarantotto. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii + 282. Paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-316-64789-9.

<sup>2</sup> *Causality and Causal Explanation in Aristotle*. By Nathanael Stein. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xi + 287. Hardback £54.00, ISBN: 978-0-197-66086-7.