works. Ch. 5 (213–66) deals with the main ideological poles of Christianity and Paganism. B. maintains that Paganism continued to be strongly rooted during this period and describes Justinian's attempts to tackle the problem through an increasingly stringent approach to visible deviations from the Christian norm. Ch. 6 (267–318) looks at a number of ways in which Justinian promoted the legitimacy of his rule. Legislation geared towards the weaker section of the population, alliances with legal and church authorities, military campaigns, and an extensive building programme were all means pursued by Justinian. A case study of Hagia Sophia, arguably the apogee of Justinian's building projects, concludes B.'s analysis in ch. 7 (319–38). For B., it is the ideal example with which to end as it embodies all the efforts of the emperor to project himself as the undisputed authority in the sphere of political, social and Christian life. Part Four, ch. 8 (339–52), briefly summarizes B.'s conclusions.

A brief review cannot do justice to the wealth of information and analysis presented by B. The events studied are themselves complex and multi-faceted, which explains some of the omissions in the book. Some of the more serious weaknesses are to be found in the section dealing with Christian disputes in ch. 4, where one is left with the impression that B. has not fully appreciated the essential importance of the theological disputes, instead preferring, like many non-theologians, to place the emphasis on diplomacy, political realism and group emotional-psychological processes. Additionally, the somewhat uncritical acceptance of the reign of Justinian as oppressive and tyrannical should raise concerns. It is debatable whether Justinian's rule stood out as more repressive compared to that of his predecessors. Indeed, the sheer volume, content and diversity of sources available from his reign — many explicitly critical of the emperor — suggest otherwise. Wistfulness permeates B.'s work when he speaks of Classical *paideia* and Pagans (his capitalization). This is meant to invoke a 'golden period' of openness and freedom of expression: however, the existence of such an enlightened period of tolerance is more akin to the proverbial unicorn. Furthermore, it overlooks the centrality and importance of Classical education which remained the standard throughout the period of Late Antiquity and Byzantium.

Leaving aside the inevitable weaknesses, expected in such an ambitious and wide-ranging study, overall the book is an important and original approach to a pivotal reign. The attentive reader will find much to stimulate further thought and inquiry, not least in the application of social theories for the understanding of ancient societies and events. Certainly, B. has offered a new and thought-provoking perspective on the society of Justinian's Empire. His work will have an impact on the continuing scholarly debate about the sixth century.

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A. FISCHER and I. WOOD (EDS), *WESTERN PERSPECTIVES ON THE MEDITERRANEAN: CULTURAL TRANSFER IN LATE ANTIQUITY AND THE EARLY MIDDLE AGES, 400–800 AD*. London: Bloomsbury, 2014. Pp. xxiv + 200, illus. ISBN 9781780930275. £50.00/US$110.00.

This fine collection of essays examines the various ways in which a range of cultural objects, including information, individuals and artefacts, moved through and across the late antique and early medieval Mediterranean. The focus of several papers is on western sources and how they represented or otherwise engaged with the eastern Mediterranean (Wood, Esders, Noble), two chapters explore north–south connections (Fischer, Kaschke), while another analyses a number of late and post-Roman historians through the concept of the 'cultural broker' (Reimitz). Andreas Fischer's introduction (ix–xxiv) uses the so-called 'cup of Chosroes', a sixth-century Sasanian 'masterpiece' (ix) now in the Cabinet des Médailles of the Bibliothèque Nationale in Paris, to trace the various possible modes and routes (Byzantine, Visigothic, Merovingian, Abbasid, Carolingian) by which it may have been transmitted from the Near East to the Frankish West. This case study serves as an introduction to 'cultural transfer', a means by which modern historians have sought to understand issues of cultural exchange and interrelation (xv–xvii). Fischer notes the important change in recent uses of the concept, which have sought to refocus attention on multidimensional aspects of cultural transfer. Rather than assuming the unchanging nature of elements undergoing cultural transfer, 'modern research underlines the adaptability of the transferred element as an integral part

of its appropriation' by the recipient (xv). This emphasis on the mutability and hybridity of cultural objects over time and space is a notable feature of several of the papers in the volume.

Ian Wood's chapter on 'The Burgundians and Byzantium' (1–15) stresses the contacts which existed between Constantinople and the Gibichung kingdom of the Burgundians, centred on the Rhône valley, in the first few decades of the sixth century. Wood notes that the richness of the evidence for the government of the Ostrogothic kingdom, notably the *Variae* of Cassiodorus, has led scholarship to focus on the strong ties that bound Italy and Byzantium together. Through an astute reading of a number of letters preserved in the collection of Avitus of Vienne, Wood demonstrates the importance of Roman official titles, especially that of *magister militum*, to the presentation of Burgundian rulership, the cultivation of diplomatic and ecclesiastical connections between Byzantium and the Burgundians, and the use to which the former may have been attempting to put the latter in order to counter-balance Ostrogothic power. Importantly, Wood notes that the strong evidence for contact between Constantinople and the Rhône valley did not mean that either side necessarily understood the other: cultural contact was as likely to result in misinformation and misunderstanding as it was in clear and unambiguous communication.

The chapters by Helmut Reimitz, Andreas Fischer and Sören Kaschke focus on history-writing in different ways. Reimitz applies the anthropological concept of 'cultural broker' to various historians of the Visigoths and Ostrogoths, including Cassiodorus, Jordanes and Isidore of Seville, demonstrating how they sought to balance various interests and identities, and, in the process, provided 'new frameworks for integration in a larger whole that could be shared by all of the different social groups and identities involved' (44). The aim of such brokers was not to do away with differences of identity but to put them to socially constructive use. Fischer's chapter is perhaps the least concerned, at least explicitly, with cultural exchange. It serves, instead, as a useful introduction to the so-called *Fredegar-Chronicle*, a seventh-century Frankish text, and the various ways in which it discussed the Mediterranean and the means by which the author(s) gathered information about the Mediterranean world. Kaschke's short chapter (accompanied by two detailed tables) offers an overview of the historiographical sources of Bede's *Chronica Maiora* and the methods by which the Northumbrian monk combined them into his chronicle. The chapter raises more questions than it answers and should now be consulted in combination with P. Darby, *Bede and the End of Time* (2012).

The two outstanding chapters in the volume are those by Stefan Esders and Thomas X. F. Noble. In ten tightly-argued pages, Noble successfully overturns two long-standing interpretations of Byzantine rule in Italy in the seventh and eighth centuries, especially as it related to the papacy. First, he demonstrates that in secular and religious affairs 'the Byzantines exercised very little effective power or authority in Italy' (80) over the papacy, the Roman clergy, or the Roman and/or Italian populations more generally. Second, Noble challenges the idea that the Roman Church in this period came under greater 'Greek' influence. Even popes who were of 'eastern' origin were much more likely to act in the interests of the Roman Church than they were of the Empire. Esders' chapter on the western reception of St Polyeuctus, a military martyr saint, is an example of early medieval cultural history at its very best. Esders unpicks the various channels through which the memory of Polyeuctus was transmitted from Constantinople to sixth-century Francia in order to explain convincingly why the saint was invoked as a warning to potential perjurers in a peace treaty that divided up the territories of King Charibert in the late 560s.

In summary, the overall quality of the volume is high, it is thematically coherent and the papers make original contributions to their specific topics. Collectively the authors demonstrate the continued importance of the Mediterranean to the cultural imagination of post-Roman western Europe, in religious, political and historiographical terms.

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