Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011. vi+344 pp. ISBN 978-0-521-85613-3.

This is a great book, an attempt not just to trace but also in sense to rewrite the history of Roman freedmen (and, by extension, much of Roman social and economic history too). It is particularly strong in offering a corrective to many older views and challenging the evidence upon which those views were based: Mouritsen (henceforth M.) is very keen to show why we cannot necessarily rely on epigraphic material to decipher a "freedman" mentality in Rome (see e.g. Chapter 8). Almost all areas of freedman life in Rome and Italy from 200 B.C. to A.D .200 are covered.

M. argues that while we cannot be sure how many slaves were freed and how early, it is nonetheless probable that many urban slaves, both male and female, were freed in larger households, often as early as young adulthood (Chapter 5, esp. 120-41). Manumission was not, therefore, principally a reward for services done (141-59). Nor was it a result of testamentary generosity gone mad (180-5): Augustus' reforms of the latter formed an ideological statement rather than a practical reform of any supposed abuses (80-92). It was not predominantly a product of slaves buying themselves out of slavery via their *peculium*, as often claimed in the past (159-80). Nor was it a purely economic transaction somehow balanced via *operae*, work owed legally by the ex-slave to their ex-master (224-6). Crucially for Mouritsen, it should not be seen as a simple way of incentivising slaves to work harder in the hope of reward. That may have occurred, but manumission was only one way of incentivising slaves and for the Romans manumission was often done relatively early, on the basis of character and in the hope for future services which were achieved largely on basis of trust, social expectation and continuing patronage. It was 'both very common and very selective' (140). He also argues (Chapter 6) that those who were freed and who subsequently succeeded in business would often have done so with the support of their patrons. There is little reason, 'outside philosophical discourse and lofty aristocratic snobbery' (211), to see their willingness to involve themselves in trading and manufacturing as anything very different from freemen outside the very highest level of the elite (which implies, of course, an interestingly "modernistic" view of the Roman economy). Freedmen did not, therefore, form a new entrepreneurial class that was somehow represented by institutions such as the *seviri Augustales* (248-61) competing with the free or thrusting themselves forward socially. Most rich freedmen were probably fully integrated into society via the *familia* of their patron with whom they were ideally expected to have close quasi-filial contact (see esp. Chapter 3, as well as Chapter 6: the book is excellent in showing just how those patronage contacts can be traced in texts such as Cicero's *Letters*). He goes so far as to suggest that any stigma of recent slavery might have little meaning within the *familia*. That is not to deny social prejudice against ex-slaves: alongside the stereotype of the "good" freedman in Roman thought he also traces that of the "bad" (see esp. 59-64). However, the absence of any justification of slavery based on race or "nature" created, according to M., a situation where any "stain" of slavery was largely a suspicion of the moral effect of a slave's life experience upon an individual. This meant that any stigma from slavery largely disappeared with the children of ex-slaves (261-78). Where the children of freedmen appear to be criticised (as one can trace, for example, in some of the poetry of Horace) it is because of their *novitas* or newness, not their *servilitas* (273-4).

This is an incisive and often very convincing model. There is, naturally, room for debate on such a wide-ranging combination of theses. For example, on the issue of the lack of "slave" stigma within the *familia*, one might cite Cicero's confidant Tiro as an example of the closeness of

freedman and patron. Even there, however, there has been some recent work (by Beard[1]) on the condescension of the choice of language in some of Cicero's letters to his ex-slave. It could also be argued that M. could give more emphasis to the hints of prejudice against freedmen's sons. He argues (for example) that references to the freedman parentage of Larcius Macedo are made 'in passing' by Pliny (262), but one can equally argue that Pliny's snobbery is a crucial element to the text. M.'s main concern, of course, is in undermining the idea that Romans had a "racial" conception of slavery, and one largely accepts his point. When he suggests, however, that freedmen and their children were largely stigmatised because they represented parvenus par excellence who had risen from nowhere rather than because of their connections with slavery, one wonders why the ex-slave "origins" of individuals could sometimes be cast in their face many generations after the fact (e.g. Aulus Gabinius, cos. 58 B.C.). Criticism of any other forms of "lowliness" seems to have been very much less common in our texts. Indeed, one of the many strengths of M.'s book is its comprehensiveness, and he cites a good deal of evidence showing how controversial the political rights specifically of freedmen's children (and grandchildren) could be (261-78). He also cites evidence how, in Roman eyes, there was a mechanism by which (moral) "servility" could be inherited by the free children of the ex-slave (e.g. 20 n. 58, 270). Finally, there is surely a little evidence (e.g. Cicero on Syrians) to show that the Romans could associate the idea of servility at some level with particular races. That is not to argue that it was the only or the dominant view of slavery among Romans, but M.'s praiseworthy aim of correcting older scholarly positions may lead him to acknowledge such views a little less than he otherwise might.

As just mentioned, the book is stunningly comprehensive and there are just a small number of areas where material could be added. The first concerns sex and gender. The section on manumission rates for women is fascinating, though it was surprising to see it couched in terms of whether women were freed more often than men when recent work has surely placed the balance of probability very much in the opposite direction (see 190-6). Once freed, women appear to have laboured under legal disabilities (regarding inheritance and marriage) not necessarily shared by freedmen, and this might have been examined just a little more, as might concubinage and the "sexual" reputation of freedwomen (one thinks of Treggiari's work on 'libertine ladies'[2]). Secondly, the discussion of the idea that slavery created a stain by potentially warping a captive's character could include the "enslavement" of "free" people (and the reversal of the process) as seen in Roman comedy, novels, and the legal concept of *postliminium* (where a Roman who had been a captive abroad could return to his previous free status). Thirdly, some of the evidence arguing against the integration of freedmen within the wider society is perhaps rejected a little quickly. The evidence of freedman political activity in the late Republic may be massively exaggerated, but clearly Cicero and others felt the picture they drew would be believable to someone. Juvenal and Martial may only offer literary 'tirades' against freedmen (294), but tirades can still be highly significant, no matter how unfair or unrealistic they might be. While one *can* find reasons to reject Petronius' *Satyricon* as a key indication of Roman snobbery against freedmen (291-2), it is less clear than one *should* reject this material.

It could be argued that the evidence collected within this book offers a very positive view of the life of Roman freedmen. Indeed, M. himself raises the possibility that the division between free and freed in Roman society was dwarfed by the division between free and slave (296-7), implying that the freed were very much accepted. Elsewhere, however, he warns that we should

[1]   M. Beard, 2002. 'Ciceronian correspondences: making a book out of the Letters', in T.P. Wiseman (ed.), *Classics in Progress: Essays on Ancient Greece and Rome*, Oxford, 103-44, esp. 131-42.

[2]   S. Treggiari, 1970/1. 'Libertine Ladies', *Classical World* 64.6: 196-98.

not see Roman slavery as any more 'humane' because of manumission (203-5). He suggests, instead, that the 'tantalising' hope of (often unfulfilled) manumission may have made life psychologically worse for a slave, as well as helping to undermine class solidarity. Hope for freedom would have been crucial in slave control. There is a potential debate to be had about the consistency of these propositions when placed together, and the idea that manumission was vital in controlling slaves faces a problem in that it is very difficult to trace rural manumission (as M. notes). One wonders whether it might be simpler to say that slavery was exploitative and that allowing a minority (however large) of slaves their freedom and a degree of social integration only improved the institution in relative, not absolute, terms.

Ultimately, M. is keenly aware that the material he discusses probably represents the lives of not just a minority of slaves, but also a minority of freedmen. Rather than rise socially through what he describes as 'sponsored mobility', most freedmen, as he notes on his final page, may rather have fallen into the 'underclass' when freed (299). Perhaps the best summary of the book would therefore be this: it offers not so much a final statement of the Roman view of freedmen, but a Roman view of one, probably quite privileged, type of freedman.

M. triumphantly undermines old and lazy orthodoxies, but his book also makes clear some of the difficulties in moving from offering a corrective to those views to offering a new vision of Roman freedmen. It is a fundamental contribution to the subject of Roman slavery and a must-read for anyone interested in Roman social history more generally.

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Steven H. Rutledge, *Ancient Rome as a Museum. Power, Identity, and the Culture of Collecting*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012; xxiv + 395 pp. ISBN: 978-0-19-957323-3.

Any visitor to a museum is familiar with the fascinating power of artefacts that tell unwritten stories of civilizations and cultures. At the same time, the collection itself as displayed in a national museum or a private collection may be seen as indicative of the self-image and code of values of those collecting, presenting and viewing it. Steven Rutledge (henceforth R.) takes up this historico-cultural approach by having a closer look at ancient Rome in terms of a 'museum city'. As R. states in the introductory chapter ('Introduction: Museums and Muses', 1-29), his study examines in what ways the cultural objects that were collected and exhibited by the Romans reflected, or even shaped, their identity, power, values, and cultural memory. Based on modern museum studies and theories of 'cultural property', whose terminology is employed by R. with much circumspection, the book intends to decipher 'the relationship between objects, their context, and their potential significance' (20) by considering the 'praxis of objects' (15) as a central element in the complex process of symbolic communication.

Chapter 2 ('Collecting and Acquisition', 31-77) provides a general overview of how and why cultural material was acquired by Rome and what the possession and display of foreign cultural objects could signify in the context of Roman society. In accordance with the book's central thesis, R. maintains that the importation and private collection of artefacts were in effect manifestations of Roman power, esteem and identity, telling 'as much perhaps about the owner of an object as it does about the object itself' (31). This point is illustrated by the different ways artefacts were acquired in antiquity — plunder, violent appropriation, theft or purchase — and their display in triumphs and public monuments as emblems of Roman dominion over the enemy or, in private collections, as a means for members of the elite to gain 'cultural capital' and express their *humanitas* and other values. The tension between public and private is a crucial aspect in this context, and R. rightly points out that private connoisseurship was only socially acceptable as long