

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

as it did not clash with the ideal of moderation and the popular call for the public accessibility of art.

The next chapter (Chapter 3: 'Viewing, Appreciating, Understanding', 79-121) deals with the actual process of viewing and investigates in what way the Romans' attitudes and reactions to viewing art reflect more general notions of society, power, and culture. R. elaborates on the vital distinction between elite and non-elite audiences, given that the reading and appreciation of art required a certain degree of historical and artistic knowledge — a province that was foremost accessible to the upper strata and thus reinforced the social divide between the elite and the masses. Yet, despite this 'hierarchy of the gaze' (80), Rome's visual culture still allowed for a shared (elite and non-elite) understanding of the objects' meaning. R. identifies three areas for which he convincingly demonstrates these collective aspects of the visual language: the widespread prestige accorded to *imagines*, the mere pleasure associated with viewing, and the "translation efforts" by the elite to make the meaning of the cultural media accessible to the general community.

After this more general overview of the semiotics of Rome's visual culture, the next three chapters analyse in more detail a variety of paradigms that exemplify the nexus between cultural material and Roman identity as postulated by R. The analysis is structured along the types of objects that were collected. Although R. self-critically acknowledges that his categorization might appear artificial and non-exhaustive, he has in fact put forward a most instructive heuristic array of basic categories. He begins with graphic examples from the sphere of warfare commemoration (Chapter 4: 'Displaying Domination: Spoils, War Commemoratives, and Competition', 123-157), which range from spoils, honorific memorials of virtuous Romans to objects witnessing Rome's political alliances and friendships with other nations. As R. astutely concludes, such objects not only refer to the past and commemorate history, but they actually create and transmit a reality that reasserts Roman core values and claims to Roman domination and superiority. A similar interpretative syntax is found in other, 'domestic' forms of commemoration (i.e. forms unrelated to warfare), which mirror Roman beliefs — be it Roman *pietas* as reflected in relics from the regal period, monuments for women that depict idealized female behaviour (but also, implicitly, their resistance to a male-dominated ideology), or the commemoration of great men and their achievements as they are recalled in their houses (Chapter 5: 'Constructing Social Identity: *Pietas*, Women, and the Roman House', 159-192). While the sacred nature of many cultural objects might have deserved some more comprehensive expounding, R. again proves much original thinking in unearthing, classifying and contextualizing the various instances. This is also true of the final set of paradigms: Rome's display of the monstrous and exotic (Chapter 6: 'The Monster and the Map', 193-219). R. argues that, apart from the territorial conquest of the world, Rome also aimed to bring the chaotic, disordered natural world and its wonders and strangeness visually under her control. This integration of the distant world into the city implied mapping and measuring it (for instance, in the form of cartographical depictions or allegories of the provinces), but also collecting and exhibiting curiosities and wonders in the city such as rare animals and minerals, deformed human bodies or special plants. R. points to the ideological ambiguity of this symbolic appropriation of the 'other' by Rome, since it simultaneously represented a metaphor of the extraordinariness of the Roman Empire or, in R.'s words, of 'Rome's monstrous self' (216).

Chapter 7 ('Imperial Collections and the Narrative of the *Principes*', 221-286), the most comprehensive chapter, discusses the legitimization of imperial power as conveyed by the imperial collections at Rome. The fact that since Augustus Rome's symbolic language of politics and its expression of Roman ideology had been shaped and controlled by one single dynasty adds another interesting facet to R.'s examination of the 'praxis of objects'. R. spotlights central sites (including the Palatine collection, the Portico of Octavia, the Forum Augustum, the temple of Concord and the Forum of Peace), aiming to provide a reading of these monuments as programmatic texts, particularly by considering the interplay between the objects displayed in

these collections. What follows are detailed interpretations of the collections and their contexts and, as R. emphasizes, the often ambivalent message they disseminated to cement imperial authority such as the tension between stability and destruction, violence and culture, or the intertwining of Greek and Roman history and culture. A particularly interesting read is R.'s analysis of the collection of the Temple of Concordia, where he proposes an alternative understanding by highlighting the imprint of Tiberius' personality and proclivities on the collection rather than an Augustan narrative, as is commonly held.

Chapter 8 ('Access and Upkeep', 287-309) shifts the focus from the contextual meaning of cultural objects to a more pragmatic aspect and considers the problem of — to put it in modern terms — "cultural heritage preservation" at Rome. R. painstakingly investigates the process of building construction and restoration, as well as the issue of finance, security and general upkeep of cultural property; at the same time he does not fail to link his observations to the overarching question of what these measures tell us about the underlying Roman mindset: the maintenance of Rome's patrimony served the elites to wield their socio-political power, but also to perpetuate the city's physically cemented *romanitas*. The monograph closes with a brief outlook on the cultural shifts under the influence of Christianity in late antiquity (Chapter 9: 'Epilogue', 311-314).

R. is well aware of the fact that his book addresses several issues that have been widely discussed in scholarship before; occasionally, he (somewhat apologetically) points to the great number of previous studies, which is also attested in the book's thorough bibliography. But *Ancient Rome as a Museum* is far from being the proverbial old wine in new skins: R.'s valuable contribution lies in narrowing down the vast ocean of material to a number of pointed questions which are grounded in a fresh perspective on the object, its context and meaning in ancient times. Throughout the chapters, his argumentation remains compelling and focused on the main purpose of the study. Even though some of his interpretations might impart more sophistication to Rome's visual culture than it apparently had, the large spectrum of observations and ideas R. has assembled in his analysis presents many original insights and perceptive lines of thoughts that invite further reflection. This is especially owed to R.'s knowledgeable grasp of the source material and his sharp eye for interesting detail and information. The book's focus on Rome's aesthetic world is, as it were, intensified by the aesthetic experience which this richly illustrated and elegantly written work offers to the reader. In sum, R.'s monograph is a very stimulating study that sensitizes the reader to the importance of the language of objects. It is a trove for any classicist interested not only in the factual history of artefacts, but in the narrative behind the objects.

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Sandra Gambetti, *The Alexandrian Riots of 38 C.E. and the Persecution of the Jews: A Historical Reconstruction. Supplements to the Journal for the Study of Judaism 135*, Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2009. 336 pp. ISBN-9789004138469.

The problem of the Alexandrian riots of 38 CE is not only that of a local event reproducible only controversially by means of an elaborate, often difficult-to-interpret corpus of evidence. It is, perhaps first and foremost, an issue concerning a variety of far greater topics, among them the conduct of the Principate *vis-à-vis* dynamics within the provincial system as a whole, and the emerging tensions between Jewish communities and their neighbors on the one hand, and the central government on the other. A book dealing with the riots is, therefore, welcome, if only for the sake of reopening to discussion some premises which had rigidified as early as Philo's presentation of the events.