

thought and hard work have gone into this wide-ranging and intriguing survey. Although many of the translated sources have already been published in fuller form, and with better commentary and discussions, Mathisen does include in his volume some rare and little-known sources which enrich our perception of late-antique Gaul. I, for one, was particularly fascinated by the excerpts from the early fifth-century Plautine-style play *Querolus*, and I urge Mathisen to publish a full-length translation of this play, with a substantial introduction and commentary.

One problem that bothered me while reading Mathisen's account is the image of the period that it projects. Late Antiquity, which has been masterfully portrayed by Peter Brown and many of his followers as an extremely dynamic and vibrant period, emerges from Mathisen's discussions as a rather stagnant society, even when colourful barbarians were criss-crossing its territory. One gets hardly any sense either of local variations or of any major changes through time. After all, the Roman empire of the early fifth century (from which Mathisen's earliest sources come) was rather different from the Frankish kingdom of the late sixth century.

Moreover, it is hard to envisage what kind of audience Mathisen had in mind when composing this book. *People, Personal Expression, and Social Relations in Late Antiquity* is emphatically not a textbook that could be used in a first-year undergraduate class. It is too dense for beginners, and assumes some knowledge of the historical, social and religious background of the period. Accompanied by the Latin volume, it seems rather more suitable for post-graduate classes, and I shall certainly use it as such. Yet I often wonder whether we are doing justice to our students when we use the handy and extremely useful source collections. By the end of their BA our students know Gregory of Tours, for example, only from a plethora of little gobbets, detached from their context and torn apart from the fluent narrative in which Gregory put them. Gregory himself would not have approved of such an enterprise. 'I conjure you all', he wrote at the end of his *Libri historiarum*, 'that you never permit these books to be destroyed, or to be rewritten, or to be reproduced in part only with sections omitted' (X.31, trans. Lewis Thorpe), and I think he had a point. It is one thing to read Gregory's entire *Libri historiarum*, a completely different thing to read merely the passages on Sichar and Chramnesind, or that on the nun's revolt in Poitiers. Needless to say, I also use collections of texts in my classes, but still I wonder whether our constant attempts to ease the life of our students are not more harmful than helpful. Despite that, Mathisen has done a great service to many teachers, especially in those remote places where library resources are inadequate.

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Ralph W. Mathisen (ed.), *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001. xi + 425 pp. ISBN 0 19 924032 9.

In his short introduction, Ralph Mathisen writes that 'law and society interacted in a complex dance of interdependence in which changes in society resulted in the creation of new kinds of authority, which in turn triggered the creation of new kinds of law' (pp. 3-4). Hence the links between law and society in Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages form the core of the sixteen papers collected in *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity*, fifteen of which were presented at the second biannual conference 'Shifting Frontiers in Late Antiquity', held at the University of South Carolina in March 1997. There are some famous names here, and many thought-provoking discussions. In a short review it is impossible to do justice to all the ideas and issues raised in the various papers. It will suffice to highlight only the most remarkable of them.

In a dazzling paper on the interpretations of the *Breviarium Alarici* (otherwise known as the *Lex Romana Visigothorum*) John F. Matthews demonstrates how the Roman legal tradition of the Theodosian Code was preserved in late antique and early medieval Gaul, even when it was incor-

porated into a newly composed code and interpreted by Gallic jurists under the auspices of a Gothic king. As he concludes, 'it clearly was envisaged by both the editors and by Alaric II, as well as by the nobles and bishops who endorsed the *Breviarium*, that Roman law would continue to define relations among the Romans living in the Visigothic kingdom' (p. 32). In her learned paper 'Spoiling the Egyptians: Roman law and Christian exegesis in Late Antiquity', Gillian Clark examines the influence of Roman legal traditions on the exegetical and polemical writing of Christian authors. She focuses on the case of Moses and the Israelites who despoiled Egypt, and with it manages to demonstrate quite persuasively how legal arguments were used in order to defend this unjust act. Finally, Catherine Peyroux's paper studies the governance of religious women in Merovingian Gaul, or more precisely the 'legislation on the licit and illicit proximity between nuns and male religious, both monks and clergy' (p. 243). As Peyroux rightly argues, the Merovingian interpretation of the canonical decrees on the matter were very flexible, and 'Merovingian women's monasticism grew up between the laws, in the interstices of sixth-century orthodoxy' (p. 255).

The rest of the papers in the volume deal with the legacy of Roman law in post-Roman Britain (Michael E. Jones); the role of bishops as settlers of disputes (Jill D. Harris); the *audientia episcopalis* and judicial violence in late antique North Africa (Noel E. Lenski and Leslie Dossey respectively); the development of Syriac canon law (Victoria Erhart); the rising social and professional status of lawyers, who eventually became the primary writers of history (Geoffrey Greatrex); the pagan *feriale campanum* and Christianity (Dennis E. Trout); the imperial use of honorifics in legal documents (Ralph W. Mathisen), Roman legislation on Jewish-Christian intermarriages (Hagith S. Sivan); late Roman legislation on Christian 'less-privileged' women, such as actresses and prostitutes (Judith Evans Grubbs); and fifth-century legislation on farmers and landlords (Boudewijn Sirks). The hands of editors of conference proceedings are usually tied, and they are more likely to make editorial concessions from which other editors are free. Hence, it is common knowledge that not all papers in such a collection are of the same quality. This, however, does not exempt the reviewer from mentioning that a couple of the papers in this volume (Antti Arjava's on the survival of Roman family law in the barbarian West and Kathy Peason's on the Salic Law and barbarian diet) are not up to scratch. These reservations aside, *Law, Society, and Authority in Late Antiquity* is an interesting collection of papers, which many scholars and students will find useful.

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Catherine Balmelle, *Les demeures aristocratiques d'Aquitaine. Société et culture de l'Antiquité tardive dans le Sud-Ouest de la Gaule (Aquitania, suppl. 10)*. Bordeaux/Paris: De Boccard, 2001. 497 pp., 349 figs. ISBN 2 910023 25 7.

'Rare opportunity to acquire luxury villa dating back in parts to the Antonine age, recently and extensively refurbished to include mosaic floors and wall-facings in the latest African styles in all major rooms, with copious use of Pyrenean marble throughout. Magnificent porticoed entrance-courtyard leading into garden peristyle with central fountain, with access to imposing apsidal audience chamber (250m²), first-floor gallery with panoramic views over idyllic countryside, summer and heated winter bath-suites drawing on water from adjacent river, fine library and collection of antique imperial statuary. Six principal reception-rooms, suitable for all seasons, luxurious private and guest accommodation, ample domestic and service space, the whole covering 6000m², and offering numerous possibilities for conversion to ecclesiastical use. Set in walled park of 13 ha, and surrounded by delightful 265 ha estate offering rich mixed agriculture (worked