

honorary inscriptions; lists of names; epitaphs, milestones, etc. Within each section the order of the texts is strictly chronological.

Apart from a few archaic inscriptions datable to the VIth century B.C. (see the dedications n. 101–103, and n. 361, on a lecythos discovered in 1961 at modern Istria), the bulk of the texts belongs to the six-hundred years between the late IVth century B.C. and the late IIIrd A.D. (the last Roman emperor mentioned is Decius (249–251); see n. 322). The collection as a whole is therefore of great value only for the Hellenistic and Roman ages. Seven important historical documents from Istros were recently included by L. Moretti in his *Iscrizioni storiche ellenistiche* II (1976), nr. 125–131; another important text (*ISM* I, nr. 54) was since long known to students of Dittenberger's *Sylloge*<sup>3</sup> (nr. 708). Among the documents here published for the first time, n. 12 (p. 80 f.) can be usefully compared with those previously known (esp. nr. 8 = Moretti, nr. 125) to illustrate Istrian foreign troubles in the IIIrd century B.C. with both Greek cities and barbarian neighbours. It is a 'non-probuleumatic' ('ἔδοξε τῶν δήμων) decree put forward by the archons in honour of one Dioscurides, son of Strouthion, who is much praised for his help to the city by means of "many embassies to both Greeks and barbarians concerning peace" (l. 8–10). As usual in Istrian documents, this new one is dated by the current ἐπιμήνιος (i.e., the president of the *boule* and assembly), not by the eponymous magistrate of the city (the priest of Apollo Iētros).

This volume can justly be considered a crowning achievement of D.M. Pippidi, who has dedicated much of his life to the history and antiquities of the Dobrudja in general (see esp. his part in *Din istoria Dobrogei* I (1965), and the Italian version of the same, *I Greci nel basso Danubio* [1971]), and particularly to the archaeological excavations of ancient Istros itself.

D. Asheri

Nicolaio di Damasco, *Vita di Augusto*. Introduzione, traduzione italiana e commento storico a cura di Barbara Scardigli, in collaborazione con Paola Delbianco. Nardini ed., Centro Internazionale del Libro, 1983. 276 pp.

Herod's lovers (and haters), in this country and elsewhere, would be happy to hold in their hands a good new commentary on Nicolaus Damascenus. But the preserved part of his encomiastic *Vita Augusti* says, of course, nothing about Herod, since it deals only with Octavian's youth until the end of 44 B.C. A sizable portion of it is concerned with the conspiracy against Caesar and its immediate consequences. The text is fragmentary (a rough estimate is that the extant is about one tenth of the original work).

All the *excerpta* derive from the collections *De virtutibus ac vitiis* and *De insidiis* by Constantinus Porphyrogenitus (Xth century). Owing to the fact that Nicolaus draws on Augustus' own autobiography and other good contemporary sources, after a period of scepticism in the last century the reliability of this *Vita* has been revalued.

Professor Scardigli, well-known particularly for her first-class monograph on *Die Römerbiographien Plutarchs* (München 1979) and her contributions to *ANRW* on the Late Empire, has provided an excellent Italian translation of the *excerpta* (following the numeration of Jacoby, 90 F 125–130, i–xxxi = 1–139), a brief introduction and a comprehensive historical commentary.

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Miriam T. Griffin, *Nero: The End of a Dynasty*. Batsford, London 1984, pp. 320  
17.95 £

The author of *Seneca: A Philosopher in Politics* (reviewed by J. Geiger in *SCI* 3 [1976/7]) is certainly in an advantageous position in relating the story of Nero's reign. Mrs. Griffin's long acquaintance with the personalities, events, ideologies and conflicts of the period is apparent everywhere in this wise, mature and balanced account of Nero's predicament and ultimate failure. Yet even Mrs. Griffin feels the need to resort to what seems by now to have become a standard feature of the genre, namely the *apologia* for writing an imperial biography. "This study", she declares in the preface, "is intended to be a hybrid, biographical in its concentration on the Emperor's personality and problems, historical in its analysis of his fall in terms of the interaction of that personality with the political system" (p. 8). Hence she banishes from her account any matter that might benefit more from a discussion ranging over several reigns; conversely, Nero's reign is treated as an *exemplum* of the viability of the principate as a political system. Following her contention that "for the historian, the most important event of Nero's reign was its collapse", she wishes, she says, to explore "how far the political system itself contributed to Nero's failure".

Before considering her solution to these questions, to which both parts of the book are devoted — for her answers are adumbrated already in the description of "Nero's Principate" (pp. 37–182) and fully developed in the "Post-Mortem on the Fall of Nero" (pp. 185–234) — a few words on the nature of the book are called for. It is a hybrid in yet another respect: it is intended for both the scholar and the general reader. In this respect it is entirely successful (for example, the discussion of Tacitean methods and purposes on pp. 83–7 can benefit both potential audiences). Mrs. Griffin's method is ever one of rigorous analysis; the evidence is made to yield solid results; anecdotes