

a detailed study of two different parties given to poor people Grig is able to demonstrate how different attitudes towards the poor could be in the writings.

One might question, however, whether these images of the poor in the texts really depict the reality or not, especially because of the strong ideological position of poverty in Christianity. These three papers share the same limitation, which is also their strength: the argumentation stays inevitably within the Christian tradition, and while the articles illuminate the Christian way of thinking about and with the poor, they do not tell much about the other sectors of society.

A different approach is adopted by Cam Grey in his article ("Salvian, the ideal Christian community and the fate of the poor in fifth-century Gaul"). His examination of Salvian's ideal Christian community and its contrast with his presentation of the poor brings the reader to an appraisal of the new logic regulating the relations between the rich and the poor. According to Grey, the traditional values defining the relations between social classes were replaced by a "market-place logic", and bases this on Salvian's recurrent usage of commercial terminology in describing these relations.

Partly in the same vein, Caroline Humfress's article ("Poverty and Roman law") analyses the disputes regarding the legal position of the "poor" and whether it was to be interpreted as similar to the "low and degraded". She does not come to any definite conclusion, but it seems apparent that the attitudes towards the poor were changing. With many examples Humfress shows how in many cases poverty became secondary to the fact of whether one was born free or not, when it came to defining social position.

This collection brings out very clearly that the poor had a very different position in the Christian way of thinking that had been the case in the "pagan" Rome. Most of the authors acknowledge this difference, and what emerges from these papers is two very different images of poverty: one of destitution and endemic beggary from the Christian writings, and one of relative affluency from the pagan sources, documents and archaeological material. The question remains, whether the increased visibility of the poor is a result of a changing mentality with the introduction of Christian ethics, or whether it reflects a real change for worse in the living conditions over time. Although Rathbone's results do have some implications also for late Antiquity, otherwise this question still remains open.

*Harri Kiiskinen*

SUZANNE DIXON: *Cornelia, Mother of the Gracchi*. Routledge, London – New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-415-33148-7 (pb). 95 pp. GBP 18.99.

L'opuscolo di Dixon s'inserisce nella collana "Women of the Ancient World", che mira a presentare biografie concise di alcune figure femminili del mondo antico. Benché tutte le donne scelte come oggetto di studio (Olimpiade, madre di Alessandro Magno; Giulia, figlia di Augusto; Giulia Domna, l'imperatrice) siano personaggi notissimi, le loro vite hanno sicuramente meritato di essere studiate da esperti in grado di contestualizzarle alla luce di nuove scoperte e con bibliografie aggiornate. Il presente libro è una bella introduzione alla straordinaria figura di Cornelia, nota successivamente come "madre dei Gracchi". Dixon offre un'affascinante visione della fama e dell'afterlife di Cornelia nel turbolento periodo tardo repubblicano e più tardi (fino

ai nostri giorni). Cornelia, certo, divenne un mito (per i suoi scritti, la sua calma filosofica e la sua fertilità, ecc.), ma era anche una donna come tutte le altre. Molto utilmente infatti Dixon discute il rapporto tra mito e realtà. Il mito di una nobile donna icona, ovviamente poteva essere utilizzato per diversi scopi, tuttavia tale attività, la mitizzazione, doveva essere in un certo qual modo organizzata. Secondo l'autrice, sarebbe stata Sempronia, l'unica sopravvissuta dei dodici figli di Cornelia, a tener vivo il mito non solo della madre ma anche della famiglia. Gli argomenti di Dixon, sempre convincenti, sono espressi in uno stile chiaro e facilmente accessibile.

*Mika Kajava*

JASPER BURNS: *Great Women of Imperial Rome. Mothers and Wives of the Caesars*. Routledge, London – New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-415-40898-1 (pb). XXVII, 348 pp. GBP 27.50.

Questo simpatico volume, scritto in un modo attraente, offre una piacevole lettura, non solo per il grande pubblico, ma anche per gli studiosi. Le undici biografie (da Livia a Giulia Mamea) non presentano grandi novità ma sono capitoli concisi e ben documentati. Burns deriva le sue informazioni da studi anteriori ma anche direttamente dagli autori antichi; pertinente anche la documentazione numismatica. Il libro conclude con un breve epilogo su imperatrici tardoantiche nonché con un'appendice sulla cronologia dell'impero romano. Gli indici mi sembrano accurati. Buona lettura, dunque, per chiunque si interessi delle vicende delle donne delle case imperiali romane dei primi due secoli.

*Mika Kajava*

JASON KÖNIG: *Athletics and Literature in the Roman Empire*. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2005. ISBN 978-0-521-83845-0 (hb). XIX, 398 p. GBP 55.

Athletics in antiquity, viewed from different angles, has aroused scholarly interest in the last decades. Jason König's (hereafter K.) book is a welcome contribution to this vast general theme. According to the title, the focus is on Imperial literature which might imply that other textual sources, especially inscriptions, are not systematically handled. The reader will soon realize, however, that even though literature is in the spotlight, other sources are not omitted: throughout the book it becomes evident that the author is well acquainted with inscriptions as well as pictorial sources for athletics. K. in fact states that literature and inscriptions have to be studied together if one wants to gain a complete picture of either (p. 8). K.'s discussion on pp. 51–55 of the Hellenistic Beroia inscription (gymnasiarchal law) serves as a good example of his careful way of using inscriptions as evidence for ancient practices. He concludes the Beroia passage with a remark on the importance of being cautious of taking the Beroia degree as presenting standard practices in "the Hellenistic, yet alone Imperial period" (p. 55). The versatile nature of K.'s study is shown in the impressive bibliography which presents different scholarly areas, from sociology to many specialist fields in ancient history. The author's comprehensive