

and belief that deviated from their own as paganism (or alternatively, as heresy or magic). The experiences of the ordinary people escape us.

Cameron (p. 131) applies the metaphor of organism to paganism that (he states) was dying a natural death and was mortally ill even before Emperor Theodosius' coercive legislation in the late fourth century. However, the reports of the death of paganism may be greatly exaggerated. Speaking metaphorically, we could alternatively see this organism in a process of metamorphosis instead of being terminally ill. Archaeological evidence shows the continuity of local religiosity, and this is also true of Rome and its surroundings. For instance, in the case of Ostia, as Douglas Boin ("A Late Antique Statuary Collection at Ostia's Sanctuary of Magna Mater and New Evidence for the Visibility of Late Roman 'Religion'", *PBSR* 81, 2013) writes, "the strength of this visible tradition can be appreciated without an appeal to any purported Late Antique 'pagan revival'". *The Last Pagans* has already produced lively discussions and reappraisals in which Cameron's ideas are either reassessed, challenged or developed further, especially in the conferences organized by Rita Lizzi Testa, Marianne Saghy and Michele R. Salzman, held in Rome (2013) and Budapest (2014), the proceedings of both of which are forthcoming. The story of the last pagans is to be continued.

*Maijastina Kahlos*

SAROLTA ANNA TAKÁCS: *The Construction of Authority in Ancient Rome and Byzantium: The Rhetoric of Empire*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2009. 978-0-5218-7865-4. 192 pp. EUR 60, GBP 40.

Takács' splendid and streamlined volume, now some years old, could with equal justification have been subtitled "The Empire of Rhetoric". The intensity with which rhetorics permeated the elite culture of much of Greco-Roman antiquity is, one may argue, something that can appear particularly foreign for modern mind, conditioned as it is by the traumatic circumstances of the past century to distrust most explicit forms of rhetorical persuasion. In fact Takács alludes to these factors in her Introduction, before setting out with great clarity her mission in this monograph: to mount an examination – designed for non-specialists – of Roman and Byzantine discourses on power, virtue, and the legitimisation of autocracy. The study is structured around four discrete chronological scenarios: the Late Republic until Caesar; from Augustus to the Antonines; the Christianised/-ising empire; and the Late Antique reception of earlier themes both in the Eastern Roman Empire and the Carolingian realm.

Chapter 1 ("Republican Rome's Rhetorical Pattern of Political Authority") sets off from quite a conventional point of embarkation: the Scipios and their projection of the *virtus* of Roman elite males (4–7, 16–24). As the Republican system became increasingly derailed by personal ambitions of the elite, as well as systemic handicaps, the 'rhetoric of the empire' increasingly developed into a moralising register of historiography, exemplified by Sallust. Like Sallust, other *homines novi* (Cato the Elder, Cicero) too seem to exhibit the strongest obsession with the *mores maiorum* (as well as being much occupied with 'Romanness', each in their own way), and Takács explains this dynamic very arrestingly (e.g. 24–32). She moreover demonstrates well how the nascent autocrats' appropriation of the discourse of moral excellence deprived the rest of the Roman elite males from their accustomed elements for self-promotion;

her formulation of the emperor as "the living, symbolic reality of Rome's behavioural code" (8) is particularly memorable. The chapter is rounded up with a stimulating section on Caesar's appropriation and adaptation of earlier Republican motives, especially the ideological complex around the title *pater patriae* (33–39).

Caesar's adoptive son is a natural subject for the early parts of Chapter 2: the Augustan ideological programme is not only well researched, but also shaped the whole institution that later developed into the 'office' of the Emperor. Reinforcing the inherited rhetoric of power was an important part of Augustus' agenda, and he took great pains to mask his autocracy – all the while buttressing his position by symbolic means. Classical reception and the *longue durée* of the Greco-Roman tradition are afforded some space in the section on Horace's *dulce et decorum est pro patria mori* rhetoric. The next chronological focal point is the period of Nero and Vespasian, with the first severely challenged and militarily resolved change of the ruling dynasty. In Takács' interpretation, with Nero there perished a heavy-handed and premature endeavour to dispense with some of the rhetorics of power as inherited from Augustus (55–62). The Flavian programme of *restitutio*, reasserting the imperial moral power and the dynasty's military providentiality, had to again rhetorically highlight the traditional conception of *virtus*, only to be largely undone by Domitian's bad rapport with the senatorial elite. If the Flavians had emphasised the 'Emperor as Father' ideology (cf. 72; though surely this would have been more effective with Vespasian, already advanced in years, than with his sons?), it was Trajan who brought to full fruition the associations of the emperor with Jupiter (73–80). The chapter is rounded off with a brief section on the reputation of Commodus and its enduring moral implications – as exemplified by the Hollywood movie *Gladiator* (2000).

Chapter 3 ("Appropriation of a Pattern") shifts the focus on the later Imperial rhetorics of power, and the applications of the *restitutio* ideology for the glorification of current rulers or their dynasties. The Severan Juliae and their posturing as a *mater patriae* receive a brief but fine analysis, as does the penchant of the emerging dominate of Diocletian for emphasising even more the apical position of the emperor and ridding it from the fiction that Augustus had concocted. The ideological endeavour of Diocletian and his colleagues, like several earlier morally articulated programmes of *renovatio*, necessitated a substandard outgroup, which in this case was provided by Christianity. In the context of the subsequent cessation of pressure upon Christians under Constantine, the open-endedness, ambiguity and utilitarianism of the emperor's stance is usefully highlighted by Takács (94–99). Constantine's successors, however, fell back into the older pattern of the emperor's moral excellence – this time earning him the providential favour of the Christian God – legitimating his rule (99), but without the emperor attempting to usurp the position of a 'Father' (apart from Julian: 100–7). From the Christians' new position as the imperial ingroup responsible for the empire, there arose the need for a figure who would create a new framework for Christians wielding power – and though Takács mostly focuses on Augustine (107–12), other bishops such as Ambrose were engaged in a broadly similar negotiation of roles. Claudian is taken up as a case study for the classicising treatment of the Roman virtues and imperial providentiality.

This classicising reception of the earlier rhetorics of power is a good subject to carry over the shift to Chapter 4 ("The Power of Rhetoric"), which covers quite varied chronological, cultural and political contexts that nonetheless are linked in different ways with the inherited elements of the earlier discourse on imperial providentiality, and the joining of these with Christian rhetorics. Justinian, "the prohibitive father" (122), and his somewhat anachronistic

programme of *renovatio* is a striking example of this "cultural and intellectual compromise" (120). Notably, the foreword of Justinian's *Institutes* includes both the mention of Christ, a litany of honorific adjectives essentially deriving all the way back from the Republic, and an allusive echo of Vergil *Aen.* 6,851–53. Regarding the demise of Phocas and the ascent of Heraclius, Takács observes quite brilliantly that (like in so many cases of earlier imperial changes of dynasties, e.g. the Flavians and Severans), it was the periphery that injected back into the faltering centre the traditional and defining values (127f.) and restores the *status quo ante*; echoes of Domitian and Trajan as portrayed in Pliny's *Panegyricus* invite comparison. The religious and moral overtones in Heraclius' conflict with Persia are also well treated, though now Glen Bowersock (*Empires in Collision in Late Antiquity*, 2012) should also be consulted. The following short detour in the Carolingian west (134–39) seems abrupt, but is certainly thought-provoking, especially if studied with the last section regarding the motifs of divine providentiality and virtuous rulership in Greco-Frankish and Greco-Bulgarian relations.

If Takács' book does not endeavour to challenge all scholarly simplifications or schematisations, it should be remembered that it nowhere promises to do so in the first place. The book's literary style and its division of the subject matter invite favourable comparisons with such classicists-turned-essayists as Daniel Mendelsohn and Anne Carson. The flow of the prose carries the argument beautifully, with occasional touches of almost Symean irony. The footnotes are sparse but always well structured and pertinent (another factor reminiscent of Syme), and much the same can be said of the Bibliography. Some omissions are striking, however: for example, one would have expected some engagement with McCormick's *Eternal Victory: Triumphal Rulership in Late Antiquity, Byzantium and the Early Medieval West* (1986), and Ando's *Imperial Ideology and Provincial Loyalty in the Roman Empire* (2000). But in a work aimed at a general interested readership, these omissions and others like them are not so much a defect as a conscious and judicious way to keep this attractive and useful book approachable and slim, as well.

*Antti Lampinen*

LESLIE BRUBAKER – JOHN HALDON: *Byzantium in the Iconoclast Era c. 680–850. A History*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2011. ISBN 978-0-521-43093-7. 980 pp. GBP 100, USD 165.

In recent years, we have seen numerous multidisciplinary studies on Medieval Mediterranean history. Yet, the iconoclast era of Byzantium has not attracted a significant amount of interdisciplinary research. This comprehensive joint publication by the Byzantine scholars Leslie Brubaker and John Haldon aims to fill this gap. The volume sets an ambitious goal for itself (to say the least) by claiming to challenge a number of conventional views on iconoclasm. Essentially, this means a notable deconstruction of the triumphant iconophile view of iconoclasm. The main argument of the book is that iconoclasm was not as significant a phenomenon as both the iconophiles and the previous modern scholarship have presented. Throughout the book, critical reading of a wide range of sources from texts to visual and material sources of various types is granted a pivotal position.

In addition to the introduction and the concluding 12th chapter, the book entails eleven chapters. The chapters can be divided into two groups: the five opening chapters provide a