
Book Reviews

Eusebius of Caesarea and Jeremy Schott, *The History of the Church. A New Translation*. Oakland: University of California Press, 2019. 552 pp. ISBN 9780520291102. \$17.95, £14.99

Eusebius' *Ecclesiastical History* is crucial and seminal but laborious and tricky. Indispensable though it is for studying Christian communities from Lyon to Edessa, Eusebius' reputation for laborious syntax, rare and obscure diction, elusive referends, and repetitive content—as well as quotations that intermingle his own style with those of other complex ancient authors—have left the *History* with few willing translators. Moreover, Eusebius' assumption of extensive knowledge on the part of readers requires that any translator provide meticulous introduction and heavy annotation. Few translations available are sufficiently faithful, scholarly, and accessible for university courses.

Jeremy Schott has therefore done a precious service to English-speaking scholars and instructors in producing this excellent new translation of the *Ecclesiastical History*. A brilliant scholar known for cutting-edge theoretical analyses of religious debate at the Constantinian turn, Schott here exhibits solid philological, linguistic, and historical acuity.

The translation is highly accessible, particularly in the visual layout of the text (which Eusebius, dubbed the “Christian impresario of the codex,” might have appreciated).¹ Unlike most previous translators, Schott has wisely inserted Eusebius' own chapter headings into the narrative immediately before the passages they name, as well as translating them at the start of each book, where Eusebius originally placed them. Equally wisely, Schott sometimes places the headings differently than our division of chapters, enabling students to identify

1. Anthony Grafton and Megan Hale Williams, *Christianity and the Transformation of the Book* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap at Harvard University Press, 2006).

easily where Eusebius discusses any desired topic.² To distinguish Eusebius' numerous sources from the Caesarean scholar's voice, Schott consistently uses smaller (but readable) font sizes and block quotes for inserted texts.³

On Eusebius' complicated syntax, Schott opts most often to break Eusebius' longer sentences up yet still relays Eusebius' locutions reminiscently of Eusebius' speech. An illustrative example comes in Eusebius' embedded *Oration on the Building of Churches* at Tyre, where Schott translates a 338-word sentence (*History* 10.4.14–16, pp. 465–466) not just into seven sentences, but into two paragraphs, leaving the twenty-first century reader with more manageable phrasings that nonetheless reflect Eusebius' style. Another, 164-word sentence, where Eusebius describes a Roman detachment closing in on an Antiochene Christian matron and her daughters, becomes eight crisp, thrilling sentences (8.12.3–4, pp. 409–410): here the pace slackens only for the matron's wrenching defense plea, riveting the reader up to the moment when the ladies thwart their would-be rapists by plunging into the Orontes river.⁴ Amid his partitioning of the Greek Schott deploys connectives skillfully to reproduce the elaborate subordination of Eusebius' locution.

At the level of diction, Schott renders Eusebius' lexemes with literal faithfulness, typically in everyday language. He prefers to retain the deep etymological roots of Eusebius' Greek: for example, where Eusebius invokes courage (*andreia*) Schott consistently includes “manly” in the translation. Likewise *epiphaneia* is translated as “epiphany,” *paradoxos* as “paradoxical,” *politeia* as “polity,” or *oikonomia* as “economy.” Some may find this tendency excessive. For example, Schott usually translates the important Eusebian term *philanthrōpia* and cognates as “love of humanity,”⁵ yet the word almost always signifies special favor from a superior to a subordinate. It is rendered to convey this

2. In one example, *History* 8.13 has the title “On the Presidents of the Church who Demonstrated with their own Blood the Authenticity of the Faith”, but the chapter only describes cleric-martyrs up to 8.13.8 and at 8.13.9 switches to a description of Roman emperors that continues through the end of 8.14. To fit this content Schott places the chapter title usually associated with 8.14, “On What the Enemies of Piety Were Like,” between 8.13.8 and 8.13.9 rather than at the beginning of 8.14.

3. I caught just one error in the block quoting, where at *HE* 2.2.6 (=Tertullian, *Apology* 5.1–2) a line and a half of Eusebius' words are included in the block quote of Tertullian—though there Eusebius himself hangs a genitive absolute of his own from Tertullian's words, uncharacteristically blurring the boundary between his source's words and his own.

4. In two renowned long sentences, though,—the famous 167-word opening sentence (1.1.1–2) and the confession and torture of Origen at 6.39.5—Schott leaves a single sentence.

5. On *philanthrōpia* in Eusebius, see Aaron Johnson, *Ethnicity and Argument in the Praeparatio Evangelica of Eusebius of Caesarea* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2006), 210–218.

asymmetry—indeed, “philanthropic,” which Schott occasionally uses, evokes this nuance. Such value judgments aside,⁶ outright errors are infrequent.⁷

Schott’s detailed explanatory notes explain persuasively either why he deviates from literal translation or why he has opted for one of several possible translations.⁸ And Schott deserves praise for some memorable renderings. Examples include Eusebius’ descriptor for the prophet Mani at 7.31.1, *maneis*, as “maniac”; Peter pursuing Simon Magus to Rome “hot on his heels” (*para podas*); “contemptible specimens of humanity” is Schott’s phrase for *phauloi anthrōpiskoi* (6.9.4); and in 7.12 three hesitant Christians are said to have deliberated and then “sped” (*hormēsai*) to Caesarea to confess and become martyrs.

Schott’s apparatus for guiding readers through the translation is admirably up to date and helpful. Refreshingly, the focus of Schott’s excellent introduction is Eusebius’ activity as a scholar and communication of his ideology, rather than historical accuracy and sources. This communicates well the last generation’s reassessment of Eusebius, who has evolved from a dull, ham-fisted compiler into an adroit, prolific, and subtle public intellectual. Each book of the *History*, meanwhile, receives its own introduction that highlights key themes from the book. For example, Schott’s introduction to book 3 discusses Jewish revolts, Polycarp of Smyrna, Hegesippus, heresiology, and Rome’s centrality to second-century Christianity (pp. 168–174), while book 8’s introduction emphasizes Diocletian’s tetrarchy and the civil wars of 306 to 313 as well as persecution and imperial edicts against Christians (pp. 389–393). (Although Schott fits themes well to specific books of the *History*, readers should note that most themes described in these introductions recur across multiple books of the *History*.) If the translation’s general introduction errs on the side of discussing literary rather than historical context, the individual books’ introductions

6. One deviation from literal rendering is translation of Eusebius’ frequent superlatives as regular adjectives, e.g. at *HE* 1.1.6, 1.13.8, 5.4.pref.

7. I noticed clauses in the Greek that do not appear in English at *HE* 1.1.8 (ὅτι περ ἐξ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς προσωνομίας ἠξιώθημεν), 1.5.1 (μετὰ τὴν δέουσαν προκατασκευὴν τῆς προτεθείσης ἡμῖν ἐκκλησιαστικῆς ἱστορίας ἡδῶ), and 7.30.3 (τῆς ἀρνησθεῖου κακίας); at 1.13.8; Schott translates *boulēthēnai* as “planned”; on p. 120 the sequence of titles to *HE* 3.13 and 3.14 is reversed; in 3.23.6 future participles are translated as presents; at 5.1.57 ἄγρια καὶ βάρβαρα φύλα is translated as singular; in the chapter title for *HE* 7.2 *edogmatisen* is translated as “thought” where it must mean “declare as normative doctrine”; at 7.30.20 *boulais* is translated “advisers”; at 8.2.2 *mnēmē* becomes “collective memory.” There are also occasional missing section numbers: e.g. pp. 73, 155, 197, 199, 202, 257, 292, 296, 423, 434, 451).

8. For example, at *HE* 3.3.1 (p. 122 n. 5) Schott explains effectively his choice to translate *endiathekos*, typically translated “canonical,” as “registered.”

balance this with focus on historical events referenced in the *History*. Accordingly, each book receives a helpful list of alternative primary sources for historically-minded readers to compare with Eusebius' information, and the translation also has an appendix listing the dates of all bishops mentioned for major cities.

Schott's glossary lucidly explains numerous key words—particularly theological terms such as *logos*, *oikonomia*, *epiphaneia*, or *eusebeia* but also terms of identity such as *genos* (which Schott translates aptly as “race”), *martys*, *presbyteros*, and *paroikia* (“community”).⁹ And along with his translation choices, Schott's copious footnotes explain background information that Eusebius assumed of his readers. Especially notable are Schott's notes to the *Oration on the Building of Churches*, which flesh out the architecture of the church interpreted allusively by Eusebius (*HE* 10.4.37–46, pp. 471–473). Rarely did I think an explanatory footnote was needed that was absent,¹⁰ and I learned much from the annotations. The maps in the back of the book feature virtually every site mentioned in the *History*,¹¹ and the indices of names and of cited sources will be quite helpful to students pursuing specific topics.

It should be reiterated in closing that Schott's translation was a bold undertaking; it has generated a monumental achievement. It certainly deserves to become the next generation's standard English version of Eusebius' *History*.

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Adam Chapman, *Digital Games as History: How Videogames Represent the Past and Offer Access to Historical Practice*. Routledge Advances in Game Studies 7. New York, NY and Abingdon: Routledge, 2016. 290 pp., 13 b/w illus. ISBN 9781138841628. \$165.00.

Considering the popularity of digital games and their ability to shape historical consciousness, Adam Chapman explores digital games as a historical form in his

9. One term that could be explained is “imperium,” Schott's translation of both *hēgēmonia* and *archē* (some readers will likely wish these terms distinguished). Other terms to consider for later editions include “saint,” “philosophy,” and *politeia*: on the latter, cf. Michael Hollerich, *Eusebius of Caesarea's Commentary on Isaiah: Christian Exegesis in the Age of Constantine* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 164–204.

10. I noted one key omission: at *HE* 5.6.5 almost all manuscripts read *didachēn*, yet Schott opts without explanation to translate the reading of one manuscript, *diadochēn*. The most prominent textual variations, those involving Licinius in books 9 and 10, are explained admirably.

11. The only mentioned sites I noted as absent are Carthage, Adaibene, and Osrhoene.

book *Digital Games as History*. The author examines how games represent the past and discusses the kind of opportunities they offer in engaging with historical practice. He suggests that even if digital games are part of an ever-increasing entertainment business, many of them engage players with historical representations and provide more opportunities for historical reenactment than other historical forms; they thus necessitate deeper study. His work also seeks to define the relationship between different popular forms of history and their engagement with the past in an effort to broaden and complicate questions of history as practice.

Chapman pursues three key research goals in his book: (1) to create a framework of analysis for historical digital games, (2) to describe the nature of historical representation in these games, and (3) to examine games as broader systems of historical practice. The book is thus organized in three corresponding sections. In the first section (Chapters 1–2), the author puts forward his main arguments for the utility and necessity of studying digital games and presents concrete concepts and categories of these games and their structures. In these introductory chapters emphasis is also placed on player agency as well as on the tension between that agency and the game structure that are foundational to historical practice.

The second section (Chapters 3–6) examines game structure in more detail, paying attention to their different attributes, rules, and controls. The unique possibilities and limitations inherent to different game structure impact the ways in which the past is represented, experienced and reproduced in each game. For example, the author discusses key differences between games that have a more emphasized element of reenactment (realistic simulation) and those that offer a more abstract representation and thus require a higher level of interpretation (conceptual simulation). He then goes to argue how such differences in game structure deal differently with time and space and thus shape the way in which each game engages with the past (Chapter 4). Chapman also draws our attention to different narrative structures and their affordances that allow players to construct powerful arguments about the past. For example, while some games explore more narrow historical events, others offer more possibilities for considering the wider historical conditions around an event and engaging with wider historical themes, such as diplomacy and conflict, colonialism, slavery, etc. (Chapter 6). To illustrate his points on game structure, Chapman employs a variety of well-known strategy, tactical and resource management games including the *Brothers in Arms* series, *Medal of Honor*, *Legion*, *Total War*, *Europa Universalis*, and *Making History*. Arguments extend also to

games with a wider historical scope—not limited to warfare—even when they combine historical events with science and historical fiction such as the popular *Assassin's Creed* series.

In the book's final section (Chapters 7–9), the focus shifts from historical representation to the active process of both experiencing and producing history in digital games, considering both the role of game developers and players. Chapman here argues that from experimentation with alternative histories and counterfactual historical narratives emerges the category of player-historians who actively produce history by the act of playing.

Chapman is successful in producing a well-researched, theoretically informed, and compelling work on historical digital games. The strength of this book lies in the author's examination of historical digital games in relation to other forms of history and to wider historical approaches. On the one hand, he advocates for studying digital games in their own right and consistently points to characteristics unique to the nature of games that set them apart from other forms, the most obvious being players' active participation and agency. On the other hand, he intentionally compares games to other forms of history, ranging from scholarly practices to historical reenactments and films, to challenge the primacy of the written word—especially that of the academic word. In doing so, he is able to offer a broader vision of what historical practice might entail.

Throughout the book, digital games remain in direct dialog with wider historiographical and epistemological discussions pertaining to the study of history and the ways in which our understanding of the past has been shaped. While Chapman acknowledges elements in games that might promote a deterministic and structuralist interpretation of the past or even overemphasize personal skill in historical outcomes, he argues that games can support multiple, even contradicting, historical narratives. The ability to provide different arguments about the likelihood and impact of historical events, Chapman suggests, is what allows games to question linear and fixed notions of historical narratives and thus align with postmodern historical studies.

This book seeks to produce strong arguments about the role that digital games can play in historical discourse, and it does so successfully. Comparisons with other historical forms and connections to current historical debates allow Chapman to address a wide audience interested in the study of the past in different historical forms and in the representation of the past in different media. To that goal, small adjustments in information organization and dissemination would have made the book easier to read and handle overall.

For example, when specific games are used as examples, the author is very effective in illustrating particular game structures and their impact on historical representation, and thus I wish he had done that more frequently. Weaving more examples and allocating more space to brief game descriptions and their characteristics would make this book more accessible to audiences which are not too familiar with digital games. In a similar vein, the book includes many technical terms which are well defined, used consistently and align well with the author's aim to provide a strong analytic framework for digital games. However, the volume of terms used runs the danger of making the book too technical and hard to read. A glossary with key terms and their meaning would have allowed easier access for readers. Similarly, a full list of all the games mentioned in the book would have been a welcome addition. Finally, there is such a large number of direct quotes from other scholars throughout the book that they are often disruptive to the narrative's flow.

The book would also benefit from more reviews and responses to the games by communities of players. Chapman acknowledges the need for more experiential and ethnographic studies towards the end of the book (Chapter 9) and even occasionally inserts his own and other players' experiences. The lack of further discussion on players' reception, however, prohibits a full understanding of games as historical practice. It also prevents the book from moving beyond questions about what games can offer to explorations of how digital games are being understood as historical representations and practices by the players themselves.

Overall, this is an exciting and meticulous investigation of digital games as historical representation and practice that contributes to a more expansive idea of what constitutes history. It is an invitation to rethink how we explore and experience the past and an encouragement to pay more attention to popular access to historical production that can shed light on history's impact on modern society. Chapman rarely discusses how digital games' structure and affordances can be relevant to other domains, such as education, preservation of cultural heritage, or even tourism. Yet his emphasis on the player's agency and the ability to produce historical meaning and construct arguments about historical events through playing opens new horizons for the ways in which we can study the past and engage the wider public in historical debates.

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Xiaofei Tian, *The Halberd at Red Cliff: Jian'an and the Three Kingdoms*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Asia Center, 2018. 470 pp. ISBN 9780674977037. \$49.95.

In the year 217, a plague ravaged the Han empire. Far deadlier than the coronavirus which forces me to write this review in self-quarantine, it seemed to touch every household, rushing untold numbers of men, women, and children to early graves. The sounds of weeping filled the streets. Common folk hung talismans to ward off evil spirits. Aristocrats blamed an imbalance of cosmic forces and wrote elegies for their beloved friends. Three years later, the Han dynasty collapsed, following nearly four hundred years of relatively stable rule. Three regional polities would compete to succeed the Han. The fighting would last for decades, and the land would not be unified under a single ruler again for another three and a half centuries, with the Sui in 589.

The period surrounding the collapse of the Han has long captured the Chinese literary imagination, but in two distinct ways. On the one hand, the poetry of this era is celebrated as the earliest exemplars of the personal lyric (*shi* 詩), a form that would become the most highly esteemed genre of Chinese literature. On the other hand, the military battles of this time gave rise to storytelling traditions that produced countless narratives, novels, plays, films, TV series, and video games.¹ The poetry is generally known by a reign-period name, Jian'an. The narratives are known by a political name, the Three Kingdoms. Despite the fact that many of the celebrated poets were also important military leaders, these two literary traditions are generally discussed separately. Culture (*wen* 文) and military (*wu* 武) shall not meet.

It is the stated purpose of Xiaofei Tian's compendious new book, *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, to reunite these two traditions. The basic thesis of the book is simple: both Jian'an and the Three Kingdoms, from the very beginning, are ideas that have been reconstructed in retrospective nostalgia. Stated baldly, this thesis will likely strike western academics as obvious. All cultural history is constructed, and those constructions change throughout time. But Tian's thesis is merely a pretext for a splendid tour through

1. On a personal note, growing up in 1980s suburban Ohio, the *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* video game for Nintendo (itself a translated version of the Japanese game *Sangokushi* 三國志) was my first exposure to premodern China in any form.

Chinese literary history, conducted by one of the world's most capable guides. It is in the details that *The Halberd at Red Cliff* shines.

The sprawling chapters—which reach up to 72 pages in length—are arranged roughly chronologically. They begin with the writings of the third-century poets and the practices of their courtly community, move forward in time to their reception in the following centuries, and conclude with a thousand-year survey of representations of the famed Battle of Red Cliff in poetry, drama, novel, and film. An epilogue critically analyzes the gender dynamics of Three Kingdoms video games and homoerotic fanfic. A series of appendices translate key primary sources. For one scholar to command such a breadth of sources, with such attention to their music as well as their meaning, is an impressive achievement.

Part one, comprised of the first two chapters, focuses on the writings of the Jian'an community itself. Chapter one is the most compellingly argued and, to experts, will be the most controversial. It argues that Jian'an "was a romanticized era created from elegiac remembrance," even during the poets' own lifetimes (29). The founding documents of Jian'an poetry, such as Cao Pi's *Normative Discourses* (*Dianlun* 典論), were written in the shadow of the plague of 217, which wiped out many of his poet-friends. Cao Pi, as the Crown Prince of the ascendant kingdom of Wei, actively attempted to create a new poetic canon in order that the departed may achieve literary immortality in lieu of earthly longevity. "An era is born with the very declaration that it is over," writes Tian (29). Later writers such as Xie Lingyun (385–433) and Xiao Tong (501–531) crystallized this romantic image of Jian'an in their reimaginings, which themselves became canon. This despite the fact many of the writings of the Jian'an poets, preserved by chance in other sources, are much darker and more complicated than the romantic image. This tension, between the original work and the constructed context for it, is a theme that runs throughout Tian's book.

Chapter two discusses the complex ways that literary writing created, perpetuated, and negotiated the Jian'an literary community. It focuses on poems, poetic expositions (*fu* 賦), and letters describing the social practices of feasting and gift-giving. As Tian reminds us, power played a major role here: the Jian'an literary community was comprised of lords and vassals, in which allegiance is often exchanged for protection. There are long, fascinating tangents on the cooking of wild geese, on the discovery and exchange of precious jades, and on human sacrifice. Each of these has a payoff, as they explain the dynamics of crucial

images in Jian'an social writings—how vassals, figured as geese or jades or sacrifices, are trapped, consumed, owned, or exchanged by their lords. The Jian'an community is, in fact, more of a sociopolitical than a literary one, helping to establish legitimacy for the emergent Wei dynasty ruled by the Cao family.

Part two, comprised of chapters three and four, focuses on later generations' reimagining of Bronze Bird Terrace, an imposing tower constructed at General Cao Cao's orders, one which later became a site of nostalgia and image of impermanence. Chapter three describes Lu Ji's (261–303) writings on the Wei and its Jian'an-related sites. As a southerner who moved north in the period of division, Lu Ji was an outsider to Wei poetic culture but nevertheless entranced by it. In this way, Tian argues, Lu Ji was a fan writer in the strictest sense: one whose conscious goal was "*repeating with a difference*" the literary legacy he so admired (184). In so doing, he hoped "to write a new poetry, no longer merely of the north or of the south but of a unified empire" (196). Though convincing on the whole, this chapter is less coherent than the first two. An opening section on feather fans is largely superfluous: the pun on fan's two meanings (as air-wafer and as enthusiast) does not exist in medieval Chinese, even if Lu Ji was a fan who wrote about fans. Some interpretations of poems are advanced through rhetorical questions which are then treated as fact, as on pp. 189–90. Some of the evidence for Lu Ji's poetics for a unified empire seems more based on poetic convention than on any political agenda. Lu Ji's couplet describing wartime enemies, "Tatar horses gather like clouds; / Yue banners are everywhere like profuse stars" 胡馬如雲屯, 越旗亦星羅, is driven by the logic of parallelism, ubiquitous in premodern Chinese poetry. "Tatar horses" and "Yue banners" are standard synecdoches for northern and southern troops, referring (by further synecdoche) to armies from all over the world. They are not actual descriptions of "the ethnic identities of the northern and southern foes" (200), which, as Tian posits, would enforce an "us vs. them" mentality in both northern and southern Sinitic dynasties.

Chapter four provides a mini-anthology of poems on the Bronze Bird Terrace from the fifth through the fourteenth centuries. These poems are divided into two types: an early tradition (fifth through tenth centuries) which focuses on the Terrace as a melancholic site associated with Cao Cao's last will and testament, and a later tradition (eleventh century onward) which describes physical tiles from the Terrace which have been made into inkstones and sold on the antique market. The earlier tradition, on the Terrace itself, usually describes a troupe of female dancers performing for Cao Cao's soul tablet.

This section is particularly powerful, as Tian shows in great detail the many variations on a theme, how delicacy and restraint give way to shifting perspectives of the poetic speaker, which give way to irony and satire. It allows Tian to explore many overlooked but fascinating poems from the Tang-dynasty (618–907), often understood to be a high point in Chinese poetry. The later tradition, on Bronze Bird Terrace inkstones, is another captivating story, in which the past becomes commoditized, traded, collected, exploited, and falsified (poets often complained of fake inkstones flooding the market). Sympathy toward the Wei dynasty, like old ink, gradually dries up as “the past is solidified into a tangible object, a hard thing, to be played with, exchanged, gifted, or stolen” (276). This chapter, which would have benefitted from being split into two, is nothing less than an expert course in how to read classical Chinese poetry. Tian brings our attention to minor verbal cues (the uses of similes, of images of light, of slight perspective changes) that radically shift a poem’s meaning. She contextualizes all of this in the changing standards of literary history, showing how aesthetic standards shift over time and how later events (such as the Song dynasty’s loss of the north in 1127) give new meaning to historical references.

Part three is comprised of one chapter, “Restoring the Broken Halberd.” The titular “broken halberd” refers to a weapon discovered in the sands of Huangzhou by the Tang poet Du Mu (803–852) in the 840s. He imagines the halberd to be a relic of the famous Battle of Red Cliff fought in 208, in which a chance turning of the winds led to Wu general Zhou Yu’s victory over the large naval fleet of Cao Cao’s Wei kingdom. This poem, Tian argues, is a turning point in Chinese literary history. Following Du Mu, Red Cliff overtook the Bronze Bird Tower as the main focus of literary representations of the Three Kingdoms period. As she traces a variety of these representations of Three Kingdoms military narratives from Du Mu’s time to our own, she notes four key inflection points, focusing on how they contextualize Cao Cao’s poem “Short Song.” The first is Du Mu’s poem. The second is polymath Su Shi’s famed “Former and Latter Rhapsody on Red Cliff” composed in 1082, which depicts a complex dialogue between a romantic’s and a realist’s attitude toward the legacy of Red Cliff. Su Shi’s work became so influential that no later writer could ignore it, and nearly all followed his lead in setting Cao Cao’s poem against the Battle of Red Cliff. The third inflection point is the novel *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* (seventeenth century), which shifts the focus from historical memory to military strategy and narrates the story from the Shu-Han kingdom’s perspective. As a result, Shu strategist Zhuge Liang becomes the hero, and Wu

general Zhou Yu becomes a capable but small-minded rival. The fourth inflection point is John Woo's 2008 film *Red Cliff*, which Tian contrasts with a 2010 mainland Chinese TV dramatization of the same story. Both modern adaptations, in contrast to the premodern texts, give greater visibility to women and common folk. Tian argues that the film, directed by a Hong Kong native, advocates for regionalism over national unity. To do this the film turns would-be unifier Cao Cao into a villainous monster by setting his recitation of the "Short Song" over images of Cao and his generals feasting merrily in juxtaposition with the Wu and Shu-Han troops solemnly burying their dead. The film thus attempts to "tame" the poem, which would otherwise exceed its context and create sympathy for the villain. The problem, from a literary historian's perspective, is that later readers assume the veracity of each of these recontextualizations of Cao Cao's poem. That is, as we get further away from Cao Cao's time, older representations seem to become truer, even if they were speculative to begin with. Indeed, as the very first chapter showed, the literary context of the early third century was from the very beginning shaped by the refracting prism of nostalgia. There is no "historically accurate" depiction of the Three Kingdoms, its wars, and its literary culture—only variations that spiral further and further from an imagined center.

In her discussion of the way different Three Kingdoms narratives contextualize Cao Cao's poem "Short Song," Tian posits a fundamental tension between poetry and narrative. Poetry, as the isolated detail, carries an aesthetic power that exceeds any attempt to contain it with a single meaning. Narrative, as the larger mythos, tries to pin down the poem's true meaning through contextualization. But no narrative fully explains the poem. It is always open to reinterpretation and recontextualization.

There is a similar tension in *The Halberd at Red Cliff*. Tian's brilliant readings of individual poems, her digressions into the details of material artifacts, her long descriptions of tangentially related cultural practices, her compilation of dozens of writings on a shared theme, her critical analyses of gender in Three Kingdoms fanfic—all of these exceed the larger arguments which they are meant to support. Like the individual aphorisms in a Blakean epic, or the tormented souls in a Bosch painting, or a series of conspicuous cameos in a period film, the particulars collected in Tian's book often threaten to overpower the whole. *The Halberd at Red Cliff*, then, is probably better read as a guided sourcebook on lore of and about third-century China than as a well-honed argument concerning it. The book's merits are in its presentation of primary texts.

Occasionally, however, we may feel the strain of the way these sources are put in service of larger arguments. For example, Tian overreads the Buddhist resonances of common words in her discussion of Xie Tiao's poem on Bronze Bird Terrace (p. 225–26). When tears “stain” (*ran* 染) the speaker's clothes and reveal his feelings to be “in vain” (*kong* 空, also “empty”), Tian assumes that Xie Tiao is invoking these terms' technical meanings in Buddhist philosophy. Yet, unlike many of his contemporaries, we have no direct evidence that Xie Tiao practiced, or even held any sympathy toward, Buddhism. Tian brings up *ran*'s religious connotations to heighten the sexual tension in the poem, claiming that Buddhist defilement (*ran*) is said to be caused by “desire or sexual passion.” Yet, to the Buddhist, the desire that causes defilement is not necessarily of the sexual kind. This minor interpretive blunder stains an otherwise graceful reading of the way Xie Tiao's poem elegantly evokes the complicity of its reader. There are other places to quibble with details of Tian's readings, often a matter of misplaced emphasis. For example, the line “Famous performers sing solo, unaccompanied by music” (202) is an infelicitous translation of 名謳激清唱, which does not stress solitude. But overall, Tian's renderings are sound, written in a mellifluous variation of the sinologese shared by scholars of premodern China.

One aspect of Tian's book that will be of particular interest to readers of *Studies in Late Antiquity* are the cross-cultural comparisons found in the early chapters. For example, when discussing Lu Ji's encounter with the former capital Luoyang in chapter three, Tian cites both Gibbon's and Petrarch's nostalgic reactions to seeing Rome centuries after its glory days. Merovingian and Carolingian gift-giving are evoked to help describe the dynamics of exchanges among the Three Kingdoms in chapter two. In chapters one and two, the symbolic and social aspects of feasting in Jian'an poetry bring up quick references to similar associations in ancient Greek, Mesopotamian, and Renaissance symposia. The comparisons are provocative but brief—just enough, perhaps, to excite interest in scholars of the premodern west. They are foretastes of the comparative feast that could be prepared by a future scholar working boldly across times and regions.

In short, *The Halberd at Red Cliff* is a finely crafted critical sourcebook of Chinese cultural history as seen through literature of and about the Three Kingdoms. Sweeping in ambition and encyclopedic in execution, there is something in it for everyone. The comparative classicist will find an informative introduction to early medieval China. The student will find guided readings through nearly two millennia of Chinese literature. The sinologist will find a

plethora of innovative interpretations of works to engage with. *The Halberd at Red Cliff* is a good companion to have by one's side while waiting out an epidemic.

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Rita Lizzi Testa and Giulia Marconi, eds., *The Collectio Avellana and Its Revivals*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2019. xxxii + 650 pp. ISBN 9781527521506. £105.99.

The volume is the result of a seminar held in September 2016 in Perugia, Gubbio and Fonte Avellana, at the Monastery of Santa Croce. Rita Lizzi Testa and Giulia Marconi from the University of Perugia were the instigators of this gathering of scholars from Italy, Spain, Finland, France, Switzerland, and the United States, as well as the editors of the fine volume under review.

The 2016 seminar followed on from two earlier conferences on the *Collectio Avellana* (*CA*), both organised by Alexander Evers at the Loyola University in Rome.¹ The first volume of papers from these conferences is yet to appear, as A. Evers and B. Stolte, *Religion, Power and Politics in Late Antiquity: Bishops, Emperors and Senators in the Collectio Avellana 367–553 AD* (Leuven: Peeters, forthcoming). Evers also contributes a chapter to the volume currently under review, which gives a useful analysis of the five-part structure of the *CA* and confirms its compilation in Late Antiquity.

The *CA* transmits 244 important church documents, dating from 367 to 553. Mainly written in Latin but sometimes translated from Greek, these documents include canons and pronouncements of church councils, imperial and papal rescripts, and imperial and episcopal letters from East and West. Many of these sources are preserved only in this collection, including most of the 145 letters of Pope Hormisdas, known as the pope who resolved the Acacian Schism that split the eastern and western churches for 35 years until 519. The compilation was produced in several stages between 530 and the end of the sixth century, and a manuscript was once held at the Monastery of Santa Croce in Fonte Avellana, where the theologian Peter Damian worked and flourished just after the monastery was built in the eleventh century. This locale, Fonte Avellana, drew its name from the hazelnuts (*avellanae*) that grew there near a

1. See <https://www.luc.edu/collectioavellana/index.shtml> (accessed 28 May 2020).

spring (*fons*), and the collection was thus named “Avellana” after the library in which the manuscript was once held.

Rita Lizzi Testa’s introduction provides a useful summary of the manuscript tradition and the offices of *notarii* and other archivists who passed it down through Europe during the Middle Ages. She advances a new theory as to the identity of the compiler, suggesting that Cassiodorus was involved in the early stages (xiv-xix). The 24 lightly edited conference papers that follow have been divided into three parts in a rather arbitrary division: 1. *The Collectio Avellana and Its Materials* (twelve chapters), which deals with the general structure of the collection and some of its singular items; 2. *Between Imperial and Episcopal Chanc[h]eries: the Notarii and the Compilers* (ten chapters), which deals with questions of transmission and archival locations and access; 3. *Medieval Revivals* (two chapters). Rather than give a summary of each chapter, I highlight below a few common themes and points of interest in regard to sources and methodology.

The first of these is Guido Clemente’s study of papal activity from 483 to 553, “The Power and the Doctrine from Gelasius to Vigile.” Clemente highlights the importance to these popes of the right to manage church property and judge clerics without interference either from emperors in the East or Ostrogothic kings in the north. Clemente criticizes previous studies (e.g. Neil McLynn and Carlos Machado at 8 n.14, but mostly unnamed, as on 11) for downplaying the religious significance of certain items (e.g. Gelasius’s *Adversus Andromachus*) in favor of theories of factional strife between bishops, senators, and other aristocrats. To bolster his interpretation, Clemente cites the lack of evidence not just in the *CA* but also in other papal letter collections such as that edited by Andreas Thiel in his 1867 edition, *Epistolae Romanorum pontificum*. Clemente reminds us that the contents of the *CA* cannot be studied in isolation but that other contextual sources must be considered as well.

Another chapter that compares the *CA* with other canonical collections compiled in Italy and elsewhere between the fourth and sixth centuries is Josep Vilella’s study of the canons from a little-known church council of Elvira (modern Granada) in the fourth century. Chapter 19 analyses some interesting parallels with and departures from the issues of discipline surrounding the worship of idols in the *CA* and the *Pseudo-Ilberitan* series. This is one of several studies of Spanish and other canonical collections which were in circulation at the time of the *CA*’s compilation.

Disputed papal elections were an ongoing problem in Rome during the centuries documented by the *CA*. The contests of rival popes Damasus-Ursinus,

Boniface-Eulalius, and Laurentius-Symmachus are treated by several of the volume's contributors. An often-overlooked element of these conflicts and the correspondence they generated is picked up by Clemente (8–9) and Michele Salzman (Chapter 8) regarding the influential role played by the senatorial ambassadors who carried letters to Constantinople for Roman bishops. Salzman focuses on the Senate of Rome's influence on the outcomes of the disputed papal elections of the fifth and sixth centuries. Julia Hillner (Chapter 11) also highlights the importance of papal networks in the eastern court, with a focus on the influential imperial women who were in regular correspondence with Pope Hormisdas during the Acacian schism. At the end of the schism, between 519 and 520, Hormisdas exchanged letters with Anicia Juliana, daughter of Emperor Olybrius and granddaughter of Valentinian III, as well as Anastasia and Palmatia; Hillner has also translated these rare examples of female correspondence (Appendix II, 238–41).

While most chapters deal with the two hundred years of church history documented by *CA*, two deal with its *Nachleben*. In the first, Giulia Marconi (Chapter 24) looks at the reception of *CA* after copies were made at two monasteries in Polirone and Nonantola in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. Both monasteries were patronised by Matilda of Canossa and their scriptorial activity in this period was governed by canonists “interested in corroborating the authority of the papacy through late antique documents” (562). The second is a study of the marginalia in the same two manuscripts (Marco Palma and Raffaella Crociani, Chapter 23). In an Appendix (520–35) they document all the “attention-catching” signs put in the margins between the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

The volume concludes with a comprehensive General Bibliography of recent studies. There are not a few mistakes in English expression (e.g. *costum* for *custom* [xxxii], *Vigile* for *Vigilius* [Chapter 2]; *Chanceries* for *Chanceries* [part II]) but this is understandable when authors are writing in a language that is not their mother tongue. Other chapters are in Italian, German, and French. The cover blurb describes the volume's purpose as follows: “All these fresh studies have led to new hypotheses regarding the period in which the collection, or at least some of its parts, took shape and the personality of its author.” This might be overstating the originality of the contributions, and it is questionable whether we can refer to the “author” of the collection, when none of its varied works were written by the compiler. Nevertheless, *The Collectio Avellana and Its Revivals* adds considerably to the sum of scholarly knowledge on the *CA* and its reception in the High Middle Ages. It will be instructive to scholars working

on a range of topics pertaining to the world of Late Antiquity and will also be a useful pedagogical tool for those seeking to unravel the complexities of the *Collectio Avellana* for the first time.

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Amelia R. Brown, *Corinth in Late Antiquity: A Greek, Roman, and Christian City*. London and New York: I.B. Taurus & Co. Ltd, 2018. xiv + 341 pp., 35 bw illustrations. ISBN 978178453831. \$59.99 (paperback).

There are few urban centers so rich in late antique archaeology as Corinth, the city near the Isthmus of Greece. Excavations there since 1896 by staff and students of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens have generated an enormous corpus of information related to the Roman forum and its surroundings. Other major projects in the region carried out by Greeks and Americans especially have shed light on Corinth's harbors, Isthmian sanctuary, fortifications, Christian basilicas, and rural sites and villas. Collectively, archaeology has produced such rich evidence for Late Antiquity in this region that a barrage of specialized studies over the last generation have effectively overturned old historical narratives of urban decay.

Corinth in Late Antiquity (hereafter, *CLA*) marks the first serious attempt to bring together hundreds of technical articles, books, and epigraphic and literary evidence in a comprehensive synthesis of the later Roman city. In its embrace of "all the available sources for the Corinthian city center and urban public life" (8) between the second and seventh centuries, the book differs fundamentally from other recent studies of individual late antique sites, buildings, and features (e.g., *Corinth*, *Isthmia*, or *Kenchreai* series volumes) and from the thematic explorations of specific elements of life in the late antique city (e.g., Richard Rothaus' important study of late polytheistic contexts). Brown's picture of late antique urbanism affirms these earlier works by emphasizing vibrant continuities and complex redefinitions but makes its case at the ambitious scale of the entire city. In this respect, *CLA* constitutes a work of immense practical value in that it surveys a myriad of specialist literature to identify and highlight threads of continuity and change.

The work has two aims that guide its content and organization. First, the book comprises a critical reappraisal of the role of authorities in the late

antique city and region between the third and sixth centuries. As the capital of the province of Achaia and the see of the archbishop, Corinth was host to local, ecclesiastical, and imperial authorities for over half a millennium. Leadership initially included the provincial governor and his staff together with elite landowners and city council members, and, eventually, imperial agents of Constantinople and the church hierarchy. Brown seeks to show that while administrative boundaries and authorities changed during this long period, elites remained central agents in urban life, even at those moments when old public buildings were extensively demolished (civic authorities, after all, organized the demolition: 112 and 164).

The book's other apparent goal is to provide an introductory survey of Corinth in the Roman and late antique periods. It does this through efficient description (191 pages plus endnotes), brief chapters (typically 10–20 pages), 35 figures (maps, plans, and photos), and two valuable appendixes summarizing relevant textual evidence (inscriptions and literary testimonia) and the history of American excavations at Corinth. This aim of surveying explains why the text strays so often from its explicit parameters (third through sixth centuries) to discuss the entirety of the known city (and territory) from origins to medieval times, including even areas and buildings without clear late antique archaeological remains or phases. Indeed, the second-century writer Pausanias, rather than the presence of late antique archaeological remains, is the organizing guide to several chapters. Occasionally this twofold purpose of making an argument and offering a survey leads to incongruences: a section on urban and rural domestic space, for example, seems out of place in a chapter on spaces of civic administration (Ch. 2). Generally, though, the work offers a useful summary of what has been said about the city while also advancing a broad and compelling case for vitality of leadership in the later centuries of antiquity.

CLA unfolds through eight chapters structured around the theme of continuity and change in authority, amenities, and public space. The first three underscore the constancies of urban life. Chapter 1 offers a cursory introduction to Corinth's topography, connective landscape, and history of scholarship before turning to the changing composition of the city's ruling class in Late Antiquity. Chapters 2 and 3 argue that, despite discontinuities in traditional religious spaces and civic basilicas around 400 C.E., the Roman forum remained a central place for political display and public commercial life into the later fifth or sixth century, evident through new investments and refurbishments. Chapters 4 and 5, in contrast, emphasize the ruptures in Corinthian urbanism.

Investments in major entertainment spaces such as the odeum, theater, gymnasium, and stadium ended dramatically in the first half of the fifth century as imperial officials diverted resources to other projects, especially Corinth's massive fortification walls (72). Similarly, public statues of Corinthian and imperial elite formed a constant presence in and around the forum until their intentional and systematic destruction by order of civic officials in the late fifth and sixth centuries.

The next two chapters cover sacred space, with Chapter 6 describing sites in the forum and Chapter 7 detailing those elsewhere in Corinth and its territory. The discussion of traditional religious spaces tends to focus on what Pausanias says about shrines and temples, making only occasional note of specifically late antique evidence for these sites. The presentation of evidence for Christianization in the city and region, on the other hand, offers a clear discussion of churches given current knowledge of their chronology. Brown's overview underlines both the absence of early Christian basilicas in the forum and an apparent association of these buildings with cemeteries and former sanctuaries beyond the forum. Chapter 8, the last main chapter, provides a compelling overview of how major new investments in urban and regional fortifications impacted public architecture at Corinth and Isthmia: the ubiquitous reuse of old building material to construct these new edifices explains why it is challenging to study public architecture at these sites today.

While the book comprises a powerful and sweeping refutation of the old plaguing image of Corinth in decline, its other major contribution lies in its accumulation and exhibition of a vast array of scattered studies and evidence. The book is a veritable goldmine of bibliographic research (numbering over 1,500 entries) and interesting facts and finds that are often buried in specialist publications less known beyond the narrow circuit of Corinthian scholarship. We read, for example, of the governor's granaries at Corinth in 401/2 CE and the entanglement of the region in ecclesiastical disputes of Rome and Thessalonica. We encounter curious and intriguing contexts: an acclamation to the emperor Theodosius found in a quarry near the eastern harbor Kenchreai, and the destruction debris from a commercial *peribolos* that buried the building's occupants alongside their money bags. We meet interesting individuals in epigraphy and sculpture, such as the bishop's muleteer, a boy comedian, a third-century gladiator, a doctor of horses, pickle-sellers, a fireman, benefactresses, and beast hunters who dedicated a statue to

their doctor. The study's encyclopedic character will make it a valuable starting point for any explorations of the city's history in Roman and late antique times.

The cost of this broad canvas, however, is depth of research, such that readers will need to constantly examine whether specific claims in the text are justified by the documented evidence and level of argumentation. One should be wary, for example, of breezy assertions about the region's population ("about 30,000 in the second century, and into Late Antiquity," 25) when endnotes indicate a wide range of modern estimates and methods of estimation; or statements on the quantity of coinage in the fourth century ("more than from any other century but the twelfth," 57) citing studies now 70 years old. One must likewise watch out for overstatements such as the Roman bath at Isthmia remaining in use for several hundred years beyond the mid-fourth century (citing an unrelated article from 2016; 82): the bath was half-collapsed after 400 C.E. and served only as a site of storage and limited occupation. Brown's democratic approach in embracing a wide array of modern scholarship often equalizes studies of different methodological type and quality. When discussing domestic space, for example, the results of salvage digs are summarized alongside those of systematic stratigraphic excavations without noting their differences (45–51), while an early fifth-century construction date of the trans-Isthmus Hexamilion wall, based on a series of secure stratigraphic deposits, is dismissed (without clear reason) in favor of a date perhaps as "early as the middle of the fifth century" (153). References to dates sometimes also raise concerns. How confident should we be that hairstyle, quality, and carving depth in statues can pinpoint specific decades in the fourth or fifth centuries (86–87), given the challenges of stylistic dating and the constant and complex reuse of statues documented in Chapter 5? A tendency to cite archaeological reports without consistently noting the basis for chronology prompts questions about reliability given the latest downdating of ceramic chronologies at Corinth and critical scholarship about the circulation and differential survival of late Roman coinage. It is worth emphasizing here that this work's description of archaeological evidence largely reflects a summary of what excavators have reported about buildings and contexts rather than an original reanalysis of the primary evidence itself. A systematic reexamination of contexts and assemblages in terms of new knowledge of pottery and coinage could alter the phases of major urban changes outlined in the work.

These concerns do not diminish this book's picture of a thriving urban center in the later Roman era, even as they invite us to dig into the original primary and secondary sources that lay at its foundation. In that sense,

Brown has offered scholars of Late Antiquity and students of the Corinthia an immensely useful resource: a point of departure for deeper exploration of a major provincial capital transformed by local elite and imperial intervention in antiquity's final centuries.

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