erotic has little place in Rome, and the impact of the senatorial classes' increasing political impotence has no parallel in classical Athens. Concerns about slipping into the cinaedic and the presence of a wide range of class and ethnic distinctions seem more pronounced on the Roman side. But there still exist many shared Greco-Roman ideas about the rôle of vision in love, ethics, shame, violence, and the evil eye. And finally, to the third question—does the volume avoid essentializing?—the use of modern film theory suggests a no, although this does not necessarily pose a problem. Concerns about passivity, about the gendering of the gaze, and about the violence done by or to the spectator are all ancient enough to have influenced modern Western thought rather than vice versa. Perhaps most valuably, the contents of this collection remind us to search beyond binary constructions such as those of active–passive or aggressor–victim despite the explicit programmatic statements of many an ancient witness—if not to avoid them, then to pluralize them.

University of Chicago SHADI BARTSCH
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni365

IMPERIAL HOUSES

S. HALES: *The Roman House and Social Identity*. Pp. xvi + 294, ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. Cased, £55, US$75. ISBN: 0-521-81433-2.

Many studies of Roman houses have appeared recently, but none, Shelley Hales would argue, has sufficiently treated these structures within an imperial framework. The book under review represents an interesting and wide-ranging, but ultimately problematic, effort to fill this gap. H. moves in three parts, from Rome via Pompeii to the provinces, seeking to assess the relationship between a house's decoration/architecture and its inhabitants' identities, and also to consider how this relationship illustrates the dynamics of acculturation across the empire.

Part One, 'The Houses of Rome in Ancient Literature', is primarily a text-driven examination of the ideology surrounding élite domestic arrangements in Rome. H. establishes an unorthodox foundation for this topic. She contends that one's 'Romanness' was constructed by adopting and defending one pole of a rhetorical dichotomy. For example, one might equally claim to be Roman as an illiterate farmer or an urbane man of letters. In regard to houses, H. sees two effects of this model. First, in speech and writing, when authors describe or condemn a house, they similarly embrace one side of several *topoi—domus–villa*, city–country, austerity–luxury, etc. Second, in actual houses, owners did not have to be so selective, but could claim *Romanitas* by bridging these dichotomies through what H. calls the 'art of impression'. Wall-painting epitomizes this phenomenon for H.: its relatively cheap cost is balanced by the luxury it depicts. Ultimately, one wonders if this provocative, though not fully convincing, discussion is well served by being cast in terms of 'Romanness'. This frame often feels forced or even superfluous, since H. herself shows how adaptable this concept could be, and ancient authors rarely reference it when discussing houses.

While H. is right to eschew a prescriptive view of the Roman house, her replacement is too amorphous to be very valuable. Even if the *topoi* H. identifies were crucial for a house owner, does engagement with them offer the best index of someone's claims of, or reaction to, Romanness? Moreover, how should this concern

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 2 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni366 Published online by Cambridge University Press

be detected objectively in the material record? These questions grow more troubling the further we travel from Rome, but, while there, H. offers cogent observations for the remainder of Part One—a discussion of the interpenetration of civic–domestic spheres and then a diachronic and thematic consideration of imperial palaces.

Moving to the archaeological evidence, H. begins Part Two, 'Pompeii—The Living House', with an astute investigation of the impressions houses offered to 'insiders' and 'outsiders'. She demonstrates that changes in context—from exterior to threshold to interior—shift viewers' perceptions of decorative elements. A *triclinium* in the House of Trebius Valens, for example, when seen from the house's doorway with the atrium in the foreground, alludes 'to the formal connotations' of entertainment (p. 113), but diners experience something quite different—the fantasies of a garden peristyle. The readings of the evidence feel stretched, however, when H. next focuses on wall-painting. Examining domestic motifs and themes, H. concludes that paintings catered to both sides of the rhetorical *topoi* described earlier, thus making the entire house a 'transitional space' (p. 162). Yet she also argues that paintings serve to 'transgress' other key dichotomies by, for example, blurring the line between Roman and alien, mortal and divine. This simultaneous acknowledgement and flouting of Rome's standards allowed Pompeian élites, H. proposes, to assert identities that had recognizable characteristics of Romanness and yet were somewhat distinct from it.

In the book's final part, 'The Roman House on the Periphery of Empire', H. remains focused on identity as she pans from west to east to examine domestic arrangements in several cities: primarily Vasio, Verulamium, and Volubilis, then Antioch and Ephesus. As throughout the book, H. does not intend to undertake a survey, but instead offers a qualitative analysis of how houses might demonstrate élite understanding of their place within the empire. One conclusion, which seems inevitable, is that both identity and housing form were very much anchored in local circumstances, as at Vasio, where 'a house type derived from Greece was adopted by Gauls attempting to live like Romans' (p. 176). Indeed, H. dedicates nearly as much space to each city's topography and history as to its houses. A key question with which H. grapples, with limited success, is how to define and detect Roman influence and provincial aspirations. Her indices—engagement in the rhetorical *topoi* outlined in Part One or the presence of hierarchical decoration, views, and access discussed in Part Two—are hazy and seem susceptible to subjective assessments. It is difficult to see, for instance, how a row house in Verulamium 'recreate[d] a thoroughly Roman experience' (p. 187) because it had a main corridor that shaped occupant–outsider interaction, shared some decorative affinities with Italy, and showed gradations of decoration from room-to-room. H. ultimately proposes a system in which provincial élites competed in numerous spheres, from local to Mediterranean, seeking in each to evoke or play off that sphere's conception of Rome. At Ephesus, for example, depictions of locally significant myths share space with images of Roman military triumphs and busts of emperors. Élite identity and presentation were thus multi-layered, and center–periphery relations were complicated, since regional 'centers' might be more crucial frames of reference than the 'peripheral' capital.

In Part Three, as elsewhere, H.'s argument would benefit from referencing, and positioning itself within, lively debates about several topics, particularly provincial identity. (Jane Webster's suggestion of creolization as an alternative model [*AJA* 105 (2001), 209–25] comes to mind.) Additionally, given the book's range, its documentation is sparse, consisting largely of excavation reports. Text and documentation alike needed another proof-read; Amedeo Maiuri's publications, for instance, are ascribed to Petra-specialist Judith McKenzie in the bibliography.

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni366 Published online by Cambridge University Press

H. provides a service in studying the Roman house as an imperial phenomenon, and each chapter has compelling insights, but her focus on rhetorical dichotomies will leave readers wondering if her framework is appropriate for addressing this topic. While the days of combing the provinces for atrium houses have thankfully passed, H.'s impressionistic substitute swings too far in the opposite direction. Moreover, as H. seems to realize when she pushes houses somewhat backstage in Part Three, additional evidence and interpretive tools are required to understand provincial acculturation fully.

Wabash College JEREMY HARTNETT
doi:10.1093/clrevj/bni366

A BRICK MONUMENT

J. BARDILL: *Brickstamps of Constantinople. Volume I: Text. Volume II: Illustrations*. Pp. xl + 436, maps, ills, pls. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004. Cased, £295. ISBN: 0-19-925522-9 (Vol. I), 0-19-925523-7 (Vol. II), 0-19-925524-5 (set).

At a time when UK classics departments are focusing on the next research assessment, it is reassuring to have evidence that short-term publishing considerations need not determine all projects. 'Constantinopolitan brickstamps' is an epic saga: it is now 160 years since the first examples were published, and almost a century since there was recognized the need to create a comprehensive corpus within which individual items could be located. The hero of the tale, the Swiss archaeologist Ernest Mamboury, who assiduously collected material for almost four decades during the substantial redevelopment of central Istanbul from about 1914, died over fifty years ago, leaving notes, suggestions, and a mass of evidence for analysis. Bardill himself has been engaged in the project for a full indiction cycle, since the challenge was brought to his attention as a postgraduate at Warwick by Stephen Hill in 1989, and he has pursued it through doctoral work at Warwick, post-doctoral work in Oxford, and now in post at Newcastle. The third key agent for commendation is Oxford University Press, which has produced an exemplary two-volume set; the price is inevitably high, but the clarity of the catalogue and illustrations could not be bettered.

Brickstamps attracted attention because the information they contained, abbreviated names or monograms, occasionally dates or religious symbols, held out the prospect of enabling archaeologists and historians to establish a chronology, and sometimes also an identity, for structures now represented by little more than fragments of their brick frame. The challenge was to crack the monograms, expand the abbreviations, postulate identifications with known individuals, and gradually build up a brick sequence which could be used to understand the development of the capital of the eastern Roman empire during the fifth and sixth centuries, the period of its most rapid expansion and maximum size. To this end ingenious hypotheses were devised, a process which B. describes with some sympathy for the overall objective but without being seduced by such unachievable goals. Instead, B. gets back to basics. In Chapter 2 he reviews the interpretation and purpose of brickstamps, since the varied information contained in the stamps leaves even such fundamental issues uncertain. B. sensibly compares our slightly better information on brick production for Rome, and uses this to suggest that the names, whose individual significance is beyond our reach, probably relate to differing combinations of land owners, lessees

The Classical Review vol. 55 no. 2 © The Classical Association 2005; all rights reserved

https://doi.org/10.1093/clrevj/bni366 Published online by Cambridge University Press