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
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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

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who contracted to exploit the owner's natural resource, and sometimes also groups of brickmakers. As to the presence of indiction dates on some bricks, B. suggests that this was part of official verification of the delivery of production quotas, a possible explanation; the fact that it is easy to imagine ways in which the state could have checked delivery of essential supplies might explain why dates are uncommon on sixth-century bricks; it might also suggest that other explanations should be pursued. B. sensibly accepts that the information on the stamps may have been recorded for a variety of purposes (pp. 19–20).

B. provides a useful survey of the development of late Roman Constantinople (Chapter 4), as a precursor to his attempt to establish a chronology of stamps (Chapter 5); for this, factors such as the size of bricks, which became smaller during the sixth century, and construction techniques such as the proportion of bricks to stone and the thickness of mortar are significant. The chronology draws on information from dated sites (Chapter 6) and provides a context for some undated sites (Chapter 7). Chapter 8 then surveys the detailed information on brickstamps from the sites discussed in the two previous chapters to construct a chronology of names, while the following chapter returns to the issue of using stamps to date specific buildings. This approach might sound circuitous, but it is in fact a meticulous demonstration of how to cope with such difficult evidence, which is complicated by uncertainty about the find spots for some of the earlier material as well as by the practice of reusing bricks for repairs and even new constructions, and how to apply this to complex sequences of structures. Chapter 11 then demonstrates what can be achieved with the accumulated evidence: among the gains, the cistern on Divâni Ali Sokagi cannot be attributed to Phocas on grounds of brick size (pp. 129–30), Mango's suggestion that the church complex at Beyazit be identified with the Diakonissa is correct (pp. 131–4), and the Peristyle and Apsed Hall in the Great Palace is probably post-Justinianic (pp. 134–47). B. has succeeded in establishing a baseline for future work on Constantinopolitan bricks; as he notes, there is a large collection in the National Archaeological Museum, though this may be impossible to allocate between different sites and so be of limited use, but there will certainly also be new discoveries as central Istanbul is further developed. In the light of this ongoing work, it would be useful for scholars to have an electronic version of this catalogue, but B. has already provided excellent service to all those interested in the early history of Constantinople.

University of Warwick MICHAEL WHITBY
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A PALMYRENE TEMPLE

A. Bounni, J. Seigne, N. Saliby: *Le sanctuaire de Nabū à Palmyre. Planches.* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 131.) 104 b/w and colour pls, ills. Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1992. Cased. ISBN: 2-7053-0679-X.

A. Bounni: *Le sanctuaire de Nabū à Palmyre. Texte.* (Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique 131.) Pp. iv + 122, ills. Beirut: Institut Français du Proche-Orient, 2004. Cased. ISBN: 2-912738-32-6.

A sigh of relief went through the world of Palmyrene scholarship with the

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