Giovannini[28] might have been helpful here), the *Letters*, his self-representation, and Carlon's methodology, she offers in each chapter an analytic essay on the women involved, followed by letter-by-letter discussion (naturally this involves a good deal of exposition). The author displays, on the one hand, all Pliny's art in the construction of his work (she is sceptical of the notion of 'real' letters) and on the other his steady manipulation of the material to produce an ideal portrait of himself. Both enterprises are valuable. In the 'opposition' chapter the question arises of how far women in particular are necessary for this latter purpose. To attach himself to the younger Helvidius, Pliny was simply using Helvidius' relicts, who happened to be women. Carlon concludes by asking for a reassessment of the prominence of women in the age of Trajan; I end with a plea for writers to stop spelling 'enemy' as 'nemesis' (126).

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Art and Archaeology

Publication of finds from the Athenian Agora has arrived at volume 34: a catalogue of material that perhaps more than any other – excepting coins – encapsulates the history of the site. *Vessel Glass from the Athenian Agora*,[29] by the late Gladys Weinberg, and Marianne Stern, begins with a few fragments from the Classical period, when glass was an exotic substance, an accoutrement of Persian royalty, or else reserved for precious statuary. Quantity increased during the Hellenistic period, and multiplied with the advent of blowing techniques in the Roman empire. Yet it remained an eminently recyclable treasure: thus households that used glass would not normally discard it, unless by accident or upheaval. So it is that some of the finest vessels in this publication come from a property (the so-called 'South House', on the north-east slopes of the Hill of the Nymphs) evidently caught up in the 'brief but savage' Herulian raid of AD 267. Athens may broadly be said to have sunk into protracted decline thereafter – but the nuances of historical flux may still be registered in the record of glass fragments: such as a distinct vogue for Syrian-made lamps with built-in wick-holders, dated to the early fifth century AD, and attractively linked to the last phase of the (Neo-)Platonic Academy, with its eastern connections (and propensity, one may imagine, for 'burning the midnight oil'); and, of course, the different ideological uses of glass containers in Byzantine, Crusader, or Muslim service. *Another corpus of material placed at the disposal of historians is the third volume of *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain*.[30] Compiling a first volume of inscriptions on stone (plus

[28] A. Giovannini, 'Pline et les délateurs de Domitien', in *idem* (ed.), *Opposition et résistances à l'Empire d'Auguste à Trajan*, Entretiens sur l'Antiquité classique 33 (Geneva, 1987), 219–48.

[29] *The Athenian Agora, Vol. XXXIV. Vessel Glass*. By Gladys D. Weinberg and E. Marianne Stern. Princeton, NJ, American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 2009. Pp. xxxiii + 214. 36 plates, 25 illustrations (14 in colour), 23 figures. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-0-87661-234-7.

[30] *The Roman Inscriptions of Britain, Vol. III. Inscriptions on Stone*. By R. S. O. Tomlin, the late R. P. Wright, and M. W. C. Hassall. Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2009. Pp. 505. Hardback £70, ISBN: 978-1-84217-368-8.

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some on other surfaces) in 1965, Collingwood and Wright promised a supplement of material found since 1955. This is it: mostly 'monumental', ordered by site, and consisting largely of altars, official dedications and building records, and tombstones. Much of the material is fractured, weathered, or badly cut in the first place; much of it does no more than state which century of which cohort worked as a labouring gang on some fortification or road, or who paid a vow 'freely and willingly' to such and such a deity. Yet it struck me that the collection offers a resource beyond the needs of specialized readers. The geographical spread, extending west to Dyfed and north to Perth, is comprehensive, meaning that most schoolchildren will find something of local interest. A small number of the inscriptions may be related to the 'grand narrative' of Roman Britain, for example the Flavian dedicatory slab from Verulamium alluding to Agricola. Otherwise, however, the fragmentary details of a gravemarker – the age of the deceased, say, or reason for death (e.g. *ab hostis*, 'at enemy hands'), or identification of a bereaved wife/husband – will be enough to intrigue the historical imagination; and with the exegesis and translation supplied here (along with a good glossary), novices are well equipped to try epigraphy as a historical skill. *Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity*[31] is a volume of proceedings from a conference held in 2003. The contributions, ordered chronologically, range from the third millennium BC to late antiquity, yielding something for everyone (though very little on the Roman period). Overall, the various essays tend to stress the island's political independence in the face of successively Pharaonic, Achaemenid, and Ptolemaic impositions. As Herodotus (2.182) knew, Pharaoh Amasis had 'conquered' Cyprus (*c.*570 BC) – but this seems to have been a weak sort of annexation, not displacing the minor local kingdoms. The Ptolemies effected a more systematic control, and it was during the Hellenistic period that the peculiarity of the indigenous language faded – with excavations on the tiny offshore site of Yeronisos revealing a final flourish of Ptolemaic investment under Cleopatra VII. Throughout the period, however, trading exchanges between Cyprus and the Nile Valley were active – and so the predominantly archaeological focus of this book will complement the work already done on Cypriot connections with the Aegean and the Levant. A further collection of conference proceedings, supplemented by invited essays, comes with the title *Structure, Image, Ornament. Architectural Sculpture in the Greek World*.[32] From the various contributions, one might pick out a meditative attempt by Tonio Hölscher to rehabilitate the concept of 'decoration'. Hölscher forces us to admit that the sculptures attached to Greek temples were at once prominent and obscure. Difficult to install, they were also difficult to comprehend once installed. Generous provisions of thought, time, money, and specialist expertise were all required for a complete complement of architectural sculptures; yet it seems, from the silence of ancient sources, that no conspicuous 'programmes' of visual significance, allegorical or otherwise, were embodied here. So Hölscher addresses the paradox of 'high meaning and low communication' (58) with a plea for 'decoration' to be

[31] *Egypt and Cyprus in Antiquity. Proceedings of the International Conference, Nicosia 3–6 April 2003*. Edited by D. Michaelides, V. Kassianidou and R. Merrillees. Oxford, Oxbow Books in association with CAARI, 2009. Pp. xii + 260. B/w illustrations. Hardback £45, ISBN: 978-1-84217-339-8.

[32] *Structure, Image, Ornament. Architectural Sculpture in the Greek World*. Edited by Peter Schultz and Ralf von den Hoff. Oxford, Oxbow Books, 2009. Pp. vi + 238. B/w illustrations. Hardback £40, ISBN: 978-1-84217-344-2.

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accepted not in the rather derogatory sense it has now acquired ('mere decoration' – French *décor*, implying lack of 'deeper' content or meaning), but rather with the powerful ambivalence of the Latin *decor*, implying both adornment and propriety. It is a pity, I think, that Hölscher does not extend his methodological discussion to the art-historical notion of *decorum*; however, if similarly shy of the term, other contributors here are more or less engaged with just that notion, as far as it applies to retrieving the 'messages' from temple sculpture. Robin Osborne, for example, speculates why centaurs are 'good to think with', while satyrs are not. He bypasses the (admittedly little-known, and lamentably unpublished) Dionysiac pediment from Figareto on Corfu, and ignores Marsyas as a possible theme, but we take the point: certain subjects evidently satisfy 'the narratological or theological demands of temple sculpture' (12) better than others. But how far can particular meanings be assigned to either generic or particular sculptures? The Olympia pediments, for example, are notoriously evasive of determinate interpretation: here, Hilda Westervelt offers a carefully argued case for the west pediment to be a representation not of the battle of lapiths and centaurs at the wedding of Perithoos but rather of the fight that ensued when the centaur Eurytion made advances on the daughter of Dexamenos, king of Elis – at a wedding where Herakles happened to be among the guests (*cf.* Bacchyl. fr. 44). Though inherently plausible, this is of course counter to the tradition that Pausanias relates. Nevertheless, we may wonder if the 'Elean centauromachy', having appeared so prominently (and with such technical virtuosity) at this major Panhellenic site, subsequently became a generic part of Classical temple decoration; and, as it was used elsewhere – on the Hephaisteion, the temple of Apollo at Bassae, and so on – lost its local particularity. Such is the nature of artistic decorum: the meeting point of formal design, visual precedent, and semantic association that constitutes 'propriety'.

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General

The phenomenon of companions, guides, handbooks, and introductions covering every conceivable part of the classical world continues apace. In this crowded marketplace it is becoming harder and harder to create a unique selling point for new volumes. *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*, edited by Michael Gargarin, has, however, taken the 'genre' to a new level with a seven-volume guide to the world of classical antiquity (from the Bronze Age to the fifth century AD), running to over 3,000 pages.[33] As an author of one of the articles in this *Encyclopedia*, I must at the outset declare my own interest in the project. As such it is best for the work to speak for itself. One of its distinctive features is its attempt to provide comprehensive coverage of the field. In addition to broad overviews of key areas (literature, history, archaeology, art, philosophy, science, and religion), the work comprises more than

[33] *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Edited by Michael Gargarin. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010. 7 volumes. Pp. 3298. 550 illustrations. Hardback £625, ISBN: 978-0-19 517072-6.

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