on the relation between poetry and power in the Neronian and Flavian periods, given Cameron's insistence on the importance of the poetry of the first century A.D. for Claudian. But this book contains much of interest, especially for students of late antique history and literature.

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CHRISTIAN SCRIBES

K. HAINES-EITZEN: *Guardians of Letters. Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature*. Pp. x + 212. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000. Cased, £49.95. ISBN: 0-19-513564-4.

Guardians of Letters is a further contribution to the cultivation of the rich soil (already broached by Roger Chartier and others) lying between cultural history, literary history, and textual transmission. Using a range of interdisciplinary approaches, H.-E. tracks the figure of the scribe in second- and third-century Christian (and, for comparative purposes, pagan) culture, and the story she tells is compelling and thought-provoking. What emerges most tellingly from this book is a sense of the fudging and myopic complicity that has made this elusive figure both a central prop in conventional scholarly edifices and an unexamined *donné* of received wisdom. It is the clearest mark of an important contribution to learning that one does not realize the need for it until it appears.

'The scribe', as traditionally constructed by scholarship, is formed of an amalgam of classical Roman and early medieval evidence: male, of servile status, 'professionally' trained primarily to write, and institutionally tied to a 'scriptorium'. Examining a range of literary and papyrological sources, H.-E. shows that the evidence suggests that early Christian texts were transmitted by a more diverse group: sometimes free, sometimes female, and not necessarily tied to any institution encouraging (what we anachronistically term) 'mechanical' reproduction. It is this very diversity that forms the bedrock of H.-E.'s argument: in the absence of institutional control, and in the absence of any sociocultural homogeneity on the part of the scribes, 'copying' becomes an actively empowered process. Scribal activity is not merely reduplication but subtle intervention, correction, insinuation. Chapter V offers the fascinating proposition of textual variance not simply as 'error', but as an ideologically guided attempt to control and renuance the sacred texts in the midst of the contemporary wars over (amongst other things) heresy and orthodoxy. In this context, the sociocultural identity of the scribe becomes paramount: the guiding principles of her or his existence become the beacons that direct the meaning of the text.

As will be clear, this is a bold and provocative thesis; and, indeed, one that (as its author avers) cannot be substantiated definitively in such a brief compass (the main text is only 132 pages long). Notwithstanding these limitations, there are, however, several areas in which the argument might have been better shored up, not least in connection with the use of literary evidence. The primary exhibit in this area is Hermas' *The Shepherd*, where the author is said to have copied a text offered him by a divine visitant letter by letter, 'for I could not find the syllables' (2.1.4). Hermas appears to be a slave or a freedman, but not a traditional Greco-Roman 'professional' scribe: he thus offers (we are told) testimony to the non-traditional means of circulation of early Christian literature. But how do we interpret this story? H.-E. comments that she is not interested in the question of whether the story is 'entirely fictional' or 'contains a

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kernel of historical "reality" ' (p. 36); rather, it is the 'representation' that it offers that counts. But this argumentative move is disingenuous, because it seeks to reinstate the straightforward evidentiary status of the story even as it adverts to the problems of using literary sources as windows onto practice. The story could instead be interpreted as a variation upon the Christian *topos* whereby the divine visitation cuts across the conventional circuits of power and plugs straight into the meek and lowly. In other words, the story might depend for its rhetorical surprise upon the reader's presumption that texts are usually copied formally and 'professionally'. I offer this interpretation *exempli causa*, the broader point being that literary sources need interpretation according to their own idiosyncratic ruses and generic play.

In a short book on an enormous topic, the question of which material to privilege is inevitably a nice (and, to an extent, arbitrary) judgement. This is particularly pronounced in Chapter V, on textual harmonizations and deviations in early papyri: clearly a vast topic, but the examples are chosen (to a neophyte's eye) judiciously. Chapter II, on female scribes, on the other hand, seemed to me to get the balance wrong. The story of Thecla the scribe is intriguing (pp. 50–2), but given that it is unattested before the seventeenth century (!), little weight can be placed upon the observation that 'nowhere is the plausibility of a female scribe questioned' (p. 51). More surprising than the admission of possibly superfluous material (the ancient sources are, after all, exiguous) is the underinterpretation of the material that does survive. H.-E. is rightly contemptuous of masculinist assumptions in modern scholarship about the gender of scribes, but she fails to explore gender dynamics in the period under review. It is striking, for example, that women are repeatedly associated with calligraphy in the sources she cites (*καλλιγραφεῖν*, p. 42; *καλλογραφοῦσα*, p. 48; *pulchre scriptitent*, p. 49): what might this association tell us about ideologies of gender in early Christianity? Is this a way of attempting to focus women's scriptorial abilities upon form rather than content, that is to say, away from the real interpretative power?

Overall, however, this book is vigorous and engaging. It deploys effectively the widespread current interest in the intersection between literary history and cultural materialism, whilst retaining an enviable grasp upon the several methodologies appropriate to the ancient evidence. For this alone it offers a shot in the arm to studies in the field, even if one suspects that the brevity of the book will mean that it will not persuade everyone. There are a couple of scribal errors in the text (*ῥήματα* for *ῥήματι*, p. 110; *ἔιτε* for *εἴτε*, P. 111; also 'was' for 'were', p. 124). Traces of the embattled politics of OUP typesetters?

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ATHENIAN ENTREPRENEURS

P. V. Stanley: *The Economic Reforms of Solon.* (Pharos: Studien zur griechisch-römischen Antike 11.) St Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae Verlag, 1999. Pp. iii + 329. Paper, DM 58. ISBN: 3-89590-067-2.

If Solon had not offered a bounty for every dead wolf handed over to the authorities, Athenian animal husbandry would not have developed, there would have been no leather industry and no rich tanners, and we would never have heard of Cleon. Much has been written since antiquity about the unforeseen consequences of Solon's reforms, but Phillip Stanley is the first, I think, to suggest this set of surprising ramifications (pp. 251–2, 295–6).

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