9. *A History of Rome*. By Marcel Le Glay, Jean-Louis Voisin and Yann le Bohec. Blackwell, Oxford and Malden, 2nd edition, 2001. Pp. xxiv + 563, with 55 plates, 32 figures, and 7 genealogical tables. Hard cover £70.00, paperback £16.99.
10. *G&R* 44 (1997), 254.
11. *Trajan, Optimus Princeps*. By Julian Bennett. Routledge, London and New York, 2nd edition 2001. Pp. xviii + 329, with 32 plates, 11 figures and maps. Paper £15.99.
12. *G&R* 45 (1998), 98.

Archaeology and Art

Suetonius relates how Vespasian, as it were, put one foot in the grave with tongue firmly in cheek. '*Vae*', *inquit*, '*puto deus fio*.' Such cynicism in the face of impending deification lingers on as a refreshing sentiment amid the often megalomaniac mortuary projects of emperors from Augustus to Constantine. But perhaps it could only have come from one such as Vespasian, who had no direct dynastic claim upon imperial power – and who may have cared little about the identity of his successor. For the central thesis of Penny Davies's study [B]★★*Death and the Emperor*[1] is that the monumental marking of an emperor's death was chiefly important for the purpose of achieving continuity of power. Vespasian's insouciance was therefore eccentric: for, as Davies states, 'quite apart from ensuring the emperor's continued existence after death, his apotheosis was a vital means of guaranteeing his descendants divine patronage, and thus setting them above potential pretenders to the throne.' The survey of this tradition brings together a number of monuments not usually grouped as a genre – so because it celebrates its honorand as *divus*, the Arch of Titus, for example, categorically joins the more obviously posthumous mausolea of Augustus and Hadrian; and familial 'supporting cast' monuments, such as the Ara Pacis and the relief panel showing the apotheosis of Hadrian's wife Sabina, are justifiably included. Given that the thesis here emphasizes the vested interest in the commemoration of a dead emperor by his actual, nominated or presumptuous descendants, some questions remain surprisingly unsettled (for instance: did Hadrian put a narrative frieze on Trajan's Column, or did Trajan plan it that way?). But overall this is a closely argued and coherent book, defining nuances of imperial iconography often overlooked. 'The emperor may be thought of as an architect in the broad sense of the term, as someone with the capacity for conceiving space and manipulating form; but if and when he did launch a specific design, its elaboration would have been the province of professionals.' This observation, made apropos of Hadrian, is reasonable enough. But it has also a partisan thrust. For Mark Wilson Jones, the author of [B]★★*Principles of Roman Architecture*,[2] is by training an architect; and it is a truth universally acknowledged that architects know best – except when a building goes wrong, in which case others are invariably at fault. This book is very much a professional appreciation and analysis of Roman architectural practice; proceeding on the premiss that while we have very little in the way of documentary evidence about individual Roman architects and their principles of design, a tireless tape measure and a sympathetic eye will yield the technical data and 'blue-print' strategies we desire. A first part of the book is devoted to considering the value of Vitruvius, and vicariously establishing a number of formal 'ground rules' of mensuration, geometry, and so on. Then two buildings are singled out for particular attention: Trajan's Column, and the Pantheon (on both of which the author has previously published his ideas, including the hypothesis that Hadrian – personally? – 'compromised' the Pantheon's frontal appearance). So this is not perhaps what its title

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promises, a general handbook for understanding Roman architecture. But it is an arrestingly handsome production, with some of the finest photographs and drawings you could hope for; and throughout, there is a strong sense of both technical and aesthetic respect from one modern architect to his distant predecessors. Their names are irretrievably obscure: but their work caringly clarified here. For Wilson Jones, an amphitheatre such as that in Verona, or Rome's Colosseum, is primarily interesting for the manner in which its basic symmetrical scheme, based on the intersection of two 'focal triangles', could be indicated with 'a few sweeps of the compass'. The disjunction between the Roman amphitheatre's mathematical elegance of construction and its remorseless crudity of purpose is not remarked; though Hollywood has again made this a stereotypical aspect of classical 'civilization'. In B★★*The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*[3] by D. L. Bomgardner, a survey is conducted that says as much about the spectacles offered by amphitheatres as about their structural development and variation. It is, however, a studiously non-judgemental account. Bomgardner stresses the social hierarchy displayed by those who went to amphitheatres, not their bloodlust; he looks to gladiators as exemplary protagonists of 'courage, discipline and highly trained professional skill', not desperadoes slugging it out for the chance to see another sunrise. The gathering of epigraphical evidence, and focus upon such questions as seating capacities, or 'blind spots' for certain sections of the crowd, could lull us into the illusion that this amphitheatrical space was really nothing other than an empire-wide form of deterrent against 'anti-social behaviour'. It takes a bold historian to follow Keith Hopkins in declaring that 'we are dealing here not with individual sadistic psychopathology, but with a deep cultural difference'. That cultural difference is at least implicitly evident from the various and lively essays collected in ★★*The Art of Ancient Spectacle*[4] – not just because the beastwise violence of Rome is here juxtaposed with the cathartic and sublimated drama of Greece, but one contributor (Katherine Welch) indeed documents the structural modification of Greek theatres in the Roman world, in order that gladiatorial shows might be put on in the same orchestra-area that was normally occupied by a tragic chorus. Athenian philosophers protested at the change of use: but did the Romans feel no shame? Perhaps they did: for just as the Romans asserted that crucifixion was a Jewish or generally 'Asiatic' mode of punishment, so they also traced an aetiology of gladiatorial spectacle to ethnic others: this time closer to hand – the Etruscans. In his contribution to the volume, Mario Torelli examines the tenuous strands of evidence for this combative element of *funera tusca*; and one is grateful for this because, like the archaeological suggestion of human sacrifice in early Iron Age Tarquinia, it presents an aspect of Etruscan cultural identity which pro-Etruscan scholars are generally reluctant to pursue. So in Sybille Haynes's B★*Etruscan Civilization: a Cultural History*,[5] this Roman attribution of Etruscan gladiatorial *ludi* is mentioned so very briefly as to seem like a denial. The author may be forgiven that: she is after all in quest of civilized rather than barbarous Etruscans. And hers is a quest which delivers quite enough, without speculating as to the realities of certain bloodletting scenes in Etruscan painted tombs. For decades Sybille Haynes has been a campaigner for methodical analysis of Etruscan artefacts, notably bronzes. Now the extent of her knowledge of Etruscan archaeology generally is laid out in a clearly organized and generously illustrated volume – a valuable addition to the small number of Etruscological books both in print and in English. The author sets herself two primary tasks: first, to update readers with the present state of archaeological understanding of the Etruscans;

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and second, 'to survey the role played by Etruscan women'. Some specialists will grumble about the short shrift given here to, for example, agriculture and land use – all the sorts of questions raised by what the late Mauro Cristofani called *archeologia con i piedi*. But overall it is a highly dependable account of artistic production, religious practice, architecture – and, indeed, a social and familial structure in which women exerted more influence than their contemporary counterparts in most other parts of the Mediterranean. There was a designated 'Year of the Etruscans' in Italy back in 1985. From Haynes's book the reader will soon gather that excavation in Etruria since then has not idled, with new information arising from both 'major' sites (such as Tarquinia and Cerveteri) and previously obscure places (one of which, the fourth-century 'new town' of Musarna, in Tarquinian territory, is a rare omission by Haynes). Nor is there any sign of disaffection in Italy with the practice of staging mega-exhibitions with Etruscan themes. It is to the continuing shame of 'Cool Britannia' that our museum administrators (or their insurance agents) are incapable of accommodating the sort of show regularly arranged at the Palazzo Grassi in Venice, cultural headquarters of the Fiat Group. So residents of Albion must be thankful to feed on the catalogues made available by Thames & Hudson, of which Mario Torelli's [B★]*The Etruscans*[6] is the latest – and typically substantial – feast. A 'dream-team' of European scholars is assembled for the essays that accompany the objects on display, and the illustrations – including some unusual aerial views, thanks to the *Carabinieri* being more relaxed about helicopter-borne archaeologists nowadays – will be plundered for classroom slides. Torelli's editorial command is evident enough in the historical slant of both texts and exhibition; he is, as ever, adept at inserting Etruscan material into the wider academic trends of archaeology, art history, and ancient history. And yet one cannot help feeling that, by contrast to other recent Palazzo Grassi revelations – of the Maya, for instance, or the Phoenicians, or the Western Greeks – this display of state-of-the-art knowledge does not collect much that was not known, or gathered together, before. As Luca Cerchiai points out in his essay on 'The Ideology of the Etruscan City', certain basic impediments to understanding how the Etruscans developed urban society seem as insuperable now as they did several decades ago. The jacket-copy speaks of the Etruscans enveloped in 'an aura of mystery', a sentiment surely long past its sell-by date. All the same: we see them through a glass darkly – still. The Etruscans, at least, can enjoy the posthumous satisfaction of being defined largely in their own terms – even if, for the time being, we are condemned to speak (in Bruno d'Agostino's phrase) of the Etruscan 'non-*polis*'. The ancient Sicilians, by contrast, are hardly ever allowed that privilege, as evident from the very title of the conference-generated study, [B★★]*Sicily from Aeneas to Augustus*.[7] A useful synthesis by Robert Leighton concerning early Iron Age 'indigenous society' on the island soon offsets that title; what follows is a sequence of historical and archaeological essays ranging from the numismatic emblems of the Greek colonies to the romantic historiography of Sicily subsumed under 'the charm of the Siren'. Siculi, Sicani, Phoenicians, Greeks, Vandals, Goths, Byzantines, Saracens, Normans – by the Middle Ages the island already presents a palimpsest of cultures. Too often, perhaps, the dominant 'text' of this palimpsest is that inscribed by the Greeks – and a picture of the theatre at Morgantina, fringed with wildflowers, duly serves as front cover of this book. But the contributors here avoid returning to the temples and the theatres. Fibulae, wine jugs, and grain stores are shown to be no less significant in the island's history. Finally to another book of the same format, likewise spawned by an

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academic pow-wow: ** *Word and Image in Ancient Greece*.[8] It has become customary to speak of 'reading' ancient imagery, but we may do so on the rather careless assumption that all Greeks and Romans subscribed to the formulaic equivalence implied by *ut pictura poesis*. Stephen Halliwell, opening his discussion of 'Plato and Painting' in this volume, reminds us that the rapport was not so cosy. In Classical Athens, as he puts it, 'words and images jostled one another, co-operatively or competitively . . .' – and we have only to browse the epinician poetry of Pindar and Bacchylides to appreciate that, on one level, this jostling was not far short of downright competition between sculptors on one side and poets on the other. Essays here address important and highly debatable issues, such as the inscriptions on early Greek painted pottery, the programmes of imagery in Greek drama, and the place of theatrical experience in 'the history of vision': each contributor has valid and valuable things to say, and one of them at least (Jeremy Tanner) acknowledges an extraneous, non-classical source of intellectual stimulation for his thoughts. But if only a wider sense of vision could have been sustained throughout, one feels, the papers here would all have been given extra cogency. Pictograms in other cultures; the human 'instinct' for symbolic communication; the cognitive and neurological processes whereby the brain arrives at words and images – while not wanting to invoke the spectre of 'the two cultures', here surely was a gathering of humanities-people that needed a scientific presence. Prehistoric archaeologists rely upon such expertise; classicists could use it too.

NIGEL SPIVEY

NOTES

1. *Death and the Emperor: Roman Imperial Funerary Monuments from Augustus to Marcus Aurelius*. By Penelope J. E. Davies. Cambridge U.P., 2000. Pp. xv + 265, with 117 illustrations. £50.00.
2. *Principles of Roman Architecture*. By Mark Wilson Jones. Yale U.P., 2000. Pp. xii + 270, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. £40.00.
3. *The Story of the Roman Amphitheatre*. By David L. Bomgardner. Routledge, London and New York, 2000. Pp. xix + 276, with plates, figures, and tables. £60.00.
4. *The Art of Ancient Spectacle*. Studies in the History of Art 56. Edited by Bettina Bergmann and Christine Kondoleon. Yale U.P., 1999. Pp. 374, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. £35.00.
5. *Etruscan Civilization: a Cultural History*. By Sybille Haynes. British Museum Press, London, 2000. Pp. xx + 432, with 84 colour and 246 black-and-white illustrations, and 4 maps. £35.00.
6. *The Etruscans*. Edited by Mario Torelli. Thames & Hudson, London, 2001. Pp. 672, with 800 illustrations. £48.00.
7. *Sicily from Aeneas to Augustus*. New Approaches in Archaeology and History. New Perspectives on the Ancient World 1. Edited by Christopher Smith and John Serrati. Edinburgh U.P., 2000. Pp. xiv + 241, with figures. Hardback £47.50, paperback £16.95.
8. *Word and Image in Ancient Greece*. Edinburgh Leventis Studies I. Edited by N. Keith Rutter and Brian A. Sparkes. Edinburgh U.P., 2000. Pp. xiv + 258, with 48 figures and 2 tables. Hardback £47.50, paperback £16.95.

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