century. Some attractive items are enclosed in the more than forty irritating boxes mentioned above, which proffer tasty little gobbets of additional information, such as a story on the foundation of Constantinople from 'the famous British historian Edward Gibbon' – and repetition. One of them is ill-placed within eight lines of the end of its chapter. The phrase just quoted gives a hint of the intended audience and its level. The book is generously illustrated and well provided with maps and glossary, but the index is meagre, and more careful proof-reading and closer attention to style would have done the work a service. A revised edition could remove such blemishes and make it more useful. Boethius needs introduction just as much as Gibbon does.

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*Art and Archaeology*

What, if anything, defines 'Roman taste'? Not long ago, some scholars might have laughed at the very thought of it, as if a contradiction in terms. If Vergil voiced a collective sentiment when Anchises tells Aeneas, 'let others make art . . . *our* vocation is to rule the world' (paraphrasing *Aeneid* 6.847–8), then many Romans themselves may have scorned the question. Currently, however, the trend is for art historians to take a more sympathetic approach: the books reviewed here are testament to that. To begin with, there is Christopher Hallett's awaited monograph, *The Roman Nude*.[1] This duly begins with the *apologia* that the entire category of 'the Roman nude' tends to be regarded as either repulsive or ludicrous, with statues such as the so-called 'Pseudo-athlete' from Delos appearing in every handbook of Roman as the predictable *exemplum* of Roman cultural uncertainty. As it happens, the apparently bizarre conjunction of middle-aged head with youthful body is, I think, largely the result of a single unfortunate photograph of this statue being too often reproduced: when one encounters the piece in Athens National Archaeological Museum, it seems rather fine work, with no striking disparity of bodily features. But Hallett's revisionary purpose goes further than simply denying the comic effect of Romans without clothes. Relying heavily upon Larissa Bonfante's concept of 'nudity as a costume', he sets out to show that the original Roman view of unclad or half-clad figures in art was basically disconnected from any social taboos concerning nakedness in life. A fragment of the Republican poet Ennius famously deplores *nudare inter civis corpora*, probably on the grounds of distaste for pederasty within the Greek gymnasium ambience; and there is little reason to suppose that Roman attitudes towards genital display relaxed during the Empire. But when an emperor appeared in statue-form as if wearing little or nothing, it was like an inversion of the fable of the Emperor's New Clothes. Claudius or Hadrian may have been represented as naked: but cognitively they were categorized as sculptural nudes, wrapped up in a body-type that lay beyond moral concern. Of course there were localized sensibilities in this matter, and the nudity-costume was not without particular associations (heroic, divine – either way, essentially implausible as a simulacrum of reality). Nonetheless it was a suspension of belief as much as *pudor* – and, for the Romans, an important mode of reconciling themselves to a Classical tradition that would divide 'civilization' and 'barbarism' according to fondness for trousers. Some would argue that a key moment in the Roman

[1] *The Roman Nude*. Heroic Portrait Statuary 200 BC–AD 300. By Christopher H. Hallett. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xxi + 391, with 160 figs.

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reception of Classical art came when Attalos III of Pergamon, prior to his death in 133 BC, formally bequeathed his kingdom to Rome. It was a legacy which may be understood as obliging its beneficiaries to become curators of Pergamon as a bastion of Greek culture. Certainly, the Pergamene sculptural inheritance can be claimed to have 'lived on' thanks to Roman appropriation. A new case study by Andrew Stewart, entitled *Attalos, Athens, and the Akropolis*,[2] demonstrates how one victory-group created for the Attalids, the so-called 'Little Barbarians', originally dedicated on the Athenian Akropolis perhaps *c*. 200 BC, has come down to us because it was copied by the Romans. Socket-holes in marble bases from the Akropolis – surveyed by Manolis Korres in a technical appendix to Stewart's main text – indicate how the bronze originals were once arranged (seemingly on a parapet along the South Wall, above the Theatre of Dionysos). But we should know little more about the ensemble, beyond its brief description by Pausanias, if Roman copyists had not attempted selective replication ('selective', because – tellingly – no figures of the victors appear to have been copied). Stewart favours a Trajanic or Hadrianic date for this process, offering a medley of speculative reasons by way of support. The Roman appetite for gladiatorial combat is duly discussed; but perhaps we need look no further than Hadrian's consistent policy of pretending that Rome was born of Athens. Hadrian was not of course the first Roman to acknowledge the absolute cultural supremacy of Athens. In his correspondence with Atticus, Cicero implies as much. And we may assume that one of Cicero's celebrated enemies, L. Calpurnius Piso, also subscribed to such philhellene faith – if the remains of the so-called Villa of the Papiri are the fruits of his patronage. Despite Cicero's insistence that Piso was bereft of any sensibility when it came to elegance and decorum, the layout and fittings of this villa, constructed just outside ancient Herculaneum, with clear views of the Bay of Naples, attest an owner whose predilections were firmly located in Greece (including the many papyrus-texts from which the property gets its name). Perhaps it is because a latter-day plutocrat, J. Paul Getty, chose the same villa as prototype of his residence in Malibu, California, that some scholars have been reluctant to define a programme of late Republican 'taste' here – the assumption being, presumably, that Piso merely acquired what he could, or ordered copies for the sake of filling a spacious retreat. Now, thanks to Carol Mattusch (and the Getty Trust), proper assessment can be made of the sculptural assemblage once on display here. In *The Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum*,[3] the eighty-odd extant marble and bronze statues and busts are gathered in a comprehensive volume. As with Stewart's study of the Little Barbarians, we are conducted to antiquity by way of its 'afterlife' – a necessary route, since many of these pieces were excavated in the mid-eighteenth century; and there is also a thorough technical investigation of how bronze and marble reproductions were produced. For most readers, however, the main interest will lie in conjuring reasons for why the villa's ancient owner preferred a bust of one of the Ptolemies over Alexander, or why images of satyrs dominated his atrium. It may be, after all, that Cicero's judgement was right. The sculptors who made these imitative works

[2] *Attalos, Athens, and the Akropolis*. The Pergamene "Little Barbarians" and their Roman and Renaissance Legacy. By Andrew Stewart. Cambridge UP, 2005. Pp. xxv + 358, with 287 figures. Hardback £55.

[3] *The Villa dei Papiri at Herculaneum*. Life and Afterlife of a Sculpture Garden. By Carol. C. Mattusch. Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2005. Pp. 416, with 220 colour and 280 black and white plates, and 3 maps. Hardback £65.

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remain unknown. Likewise, the painters of Roman domestic interiors did not, as a rule, leave signatures on their work; and the sheer cursive quantity of their handiwork, occupying the sort of surface where today we would expect wallpaper or simple emulsion, lulls the modern viewer into a certain disregard. Is this art – or is it merely 'craft'? It takes close scrutiny to resolve the dilemma; failing that, the microscopic homage of a large-size volume such as *Domus: Wall Painting in the Roman House*.[4] This is a remarkably handsome addition to the bookshelf of the antiquarian and practising artist alike, for not only are the images of high quality, but many are reproduced on a non-glossy paper that seems to share the quality of plaster. The decorations of twenty-eight houses from Rome and the Vesuvian sites are displayed in this way, along with building plans and axonometric reconstructions. Two essays complement the catalogue: the first, by Donatella Mazzoleni, is dominated by somewhat opaque verbiage about the poetics of space; the second, by Umberto Pappalardo, relays more useful information, including a valuably brisk account of the 'Four Styles', and an equally succinct resume of painterly techniques. Once a wall was freshly plastered, its fresco needed to be applied while still damp – within a few hours, therefore. Errors were not easy to rectify, time was of the essence: so this was a medium that favoured the bold practitioner. The close-up details so generously provided by this book testify to such boldness, scarcely matched in the European tradition until the time of the Impressionists. Livia's villa at Prima Porta, the villa of Poppea at Oplontis, the House of the Golden Bracelet at Pompeii, Rome's Villa Farnesina – whoever peruses this book will feel virtually admitted inside the premises to wonder at a patron's taste and a painter's skill. One or two of the chosen sites do not perhaps receive full justice here – Nero's Domus Aurea, for example – but overall the quality of reproduction is deeply impressive. The same cannot be said of the illustrations that come with the second volume in the series addressed to *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii*.[5] Many of the figures are line drawings which, while useful for determining where in a house a certain scene was once placed, do little to convey any pictorial presence. As for interpreting the choice and deployment of images, a spirited attempt is made to reconstruct the programmatic significance of the House of the Menander itself; for other houses in the block, however, the results are limited by the authors' defiant adherence to commonsense. If Ovid had popularized a subject in his poetry, that was sufficient reason for its appearance in any part of the house; and Venus will appear more often as the city's patron deity, not as some aphrodisiac in the *cubiculum*.

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[4] *Domus.* Wall Painting in the Roman House. By Donatella Mazzoleni and Umberto Pappalardo. Getty Publications, Los Angeles, 2005. Pp. 384, with 350 colour illustrations, and 3 foldouts. Hardback $150.

[5] *The Insula of the Menander at Pompeii.* Vol. II: The Decorations. By Roger Ling and Lesley Ling. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xxi + 541, with many plates and figures. Hardback £175.

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