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Severan Culture. Edited by SIMON SWAIN, STEPHEN HARRISON AND JAS ELSNER. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007. Pp. 569. Cloth, \$160.00. ISBN 978-0-521-85982-0.

Ewen Bowie is already well known to students of the Second Sophistic and imperial literature, but he will surely become more famous with the publication of this collection of essays written in his honor. They serve as a testament to the work that Bowie has done—and continues to do—in this growing area of research; the reader can recognize this achievement with the aid of a list of Bowie's publications, which the editors helpfully supply as a guide for further reading. But *Severan Culture* also testifies to the close relationship Bowie enjoys with his many pupils and colleagues, from whom the editors solicited these fine essays. The inclusion of a Greek letter from Philostratus to Longus regarding a certain "sophist from Caledonia," elegantly composed by Donald Russell, not only adds a further shine to the book and draws a smile from the reader, but is in keeping with the genre of fictitious letters that grew increasingly popular in the Severan era and into the later empire.

Although the triad of editors, Simon Swain, Stephen Harrison and Jas Elsner, did not contribute any articles to the book, they have certainly set its inclusive tone and scope. There are 26 articles divided into three parts: Literature and Culture; Art and Architecture; and Religion and Philosophy. In the first part, Timothy Whitmarsh gives a broad overview of the prose literature of the period (Chapter 1) and Harry Sidebottom a similar one of its historiography (Chapter 2), before yielding the field to essays on more specialized topics. Despite the allure of the Greek literature of the period, the editors have brought contemporary Latin writers out of the shade with pieces on Hosidius Geta by Philip Hardie (Chapter 9), Minucius Felix by Jonathan Powell (Chapter 10) and Cyprian by Michael Winterbottom (Chapter 11). As these essays show, patristics does not suffer strict relegation to the third part of the book, but Christian authors and thought are kept in the foreground throughout. Standouts among the essays on Greek topics include Gideon Nisbet's essay on some saucy epigrams of Philostratus and Fronto (Chapter 4) and John Ma's evocation of the world of the fragmentary poet Nestor through an ingenious examination of his lean literary and epigraphic remains (Chapter 3).

The second part of the book covers material culture of the period, and any student of the High Empire, whether philologist or archaeologist, would do well to read Zahra Newby's essay on

transitional styles in Severan art (Chapter 12). The Severan Marble Plan receives thorough treatment from Jennifer Trimble (Chapter 16) and makes regular reappearances thereafter. Andrew Wilson's enlightening essay on urban development in the Severan Empire (Chapter 14) shifts the focus from Rome and Lepcis Magna, the ancestral home of Septimius Severus, and his analysis of building inscriptions shows how already in this period the imperial government was cultivating increasingly showy displays of servility and gratitude from civic elites and local governments, attitudes that found their full development under the Tetrarchy and later. Late Antique scholars will want to take careful note of the evidence he gathers.

Although, as Mark Edwards notes (and many scholars may feel), Christians "seem to belong to this age only by accident of chronology" (p. 401) the editors have given their thought generous representation in the third part of the book and thus made men like Tertullian seem more like denizens of the period than aliens. Edwards himself begins the third part of *Severan Culture* with an overview of Christian identity and attitudes in the Severan period (Chapter 18); some of these receive more detailed study in the essays that follow, for instance, in Richard Finn's on almsgiving (Chapter 19) and in Catherine Conybeare's on marriage (Chapter 20). But pagan and non-Christian issues are not neglected as a result; Joseph Geiger presents an interesting comparison of imperial sophists and Rabbis (Chapter 21) and Daniel Ogden examines contemporary attitudes toward magic, especially in Philostratus' *In Honor of Apollonius* (Chapter 23). The book ends, fittingly, with an examination of the figure of Socrates in religious, philosophical and sophistic thought (Chapter 26), tying past and present, Christian and pagan together.

Severan Culture covers an admirably wide spectrum of the cultural, architectural and especially intellectual endeavors of the Severan era, a difficult task indeed, although some areas are left curiously unexplored. For instance, Roman jurisprudence receives much less attention than other areas, like rhetoric and philosophy, being awarded only a short summary (pp. 481–3) in Michael Trapp's essay, "Philosophy, scholarship, and the world of learning," late in the book. As Trapp states, "In the field of legal thinking and writing, it is something of a commonplace that the Severan period was one of huge achievement and importance" (p. 481). But Classical scholars already familiar with the literature or archaeology of the era would have benefited from an article or two discussing current scholarly appraisals of the vast output of Papinian, Paulus and Ulpian or the

growing distinction between *honestiores* and *humiliores* in Roman society of the period. The *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212, which extended Roman citizenship to all free inhabitants of the empire and is referenced in several articles, would also seem to deserve more than passing treatment in any survey of the Severan world. Medicine receives similarly short shrift, with only a short sketch of Galen in Trapp's essay.

But these are minor complaints for a large collection that marshals excellent essays from a number of scholars in a serious attempt to cover many different aspects of an important era in Roman imperial history, and any omissions are sure to be remedied by further and similar works in the future. *Severan Culture* serves both as a loving gift to a well-respected scholar from his legion of students and as a harbinger of an increasingly bright future for a still overshadowed period in the High Empire.

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