

and appropriate choice. The afterword provides additional value by contextualising the study as an early attempt to bring digital techniques to epigraphic questions, pointing towards potential future directions. Equally valuable are the many threads of ideas on identity and the life course that are introduced, but often left unexplored throughout the chapters. These might invite new questions that could be pursued via traditional or novel methodologies, or even through innovative combinations of the two.

Tulane University

ALLISON EMMERSON
aemmerso@tulane.edu

THE ROLE OF BIRDS IN ANCIENT ROME

GREEN (A.) *Birds in Roman Life and Myth*. Pp. xx + 227, ills. London and New York: Routledge, 2023. Cased, £120, US\$160. ISBN: 978-1-032-16286-7.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23002743

What is a modern approach to a history of birds in ancient cultures? Is it a history of scientific views concerning the subject; a cumulative compilation of different sources that mention birds in philosophy, literature, poems etc.; a history of ideas or metaphors concerning birds; or a study of archaeological objects and documents? In addition: what kind of outline is necessary and useful? Previous approaches sometimes preferred a glossary such as D.W. Thompson's *Glossary of Greek Birds* (1936). Newer studies try an interdisciplinary outline such as J. Pollard's *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (1977). It is difficult to manage the heterogeneous material in a few chapters.

Prima facie G. focuses on the Roman period of 100 BCE to 100 CE and offers 'Global Perspectives on Ancient Mediterranean Archaeology' as indicated by the series title. But the volume contains more manageable chapters, as the contents list shows: augural birds, farming and aviculture, fowling and bird-catching, and last but not least 'pets and pleasure'. These chapters lead from myth to emotions. G. works with a praxeological approach and starts in the midst of Roman society within different fields of interaction with birds. Thus, the volume is not a history of ideas, of science or of literature mentioning birds. But all the chapters integrate these aspects and take different perspectives into account. For instance, the book includes new studies in 'archeo-ornithology' to reconstruct beliefs and values as well as the problem of 'ornithomorphism' – using birds in everyday life and language as symbols and metaphors. The study of J. Mynott, *Birds in the Ancient World* (2018) was influential. 'This Roman ornithomorphism is explored throughout this book, in order to understand how birds were used to communicate ideas, values, and social differences' (p. 3).

G. is acquainted with the various problems of a 'multidisciplinary approach' (p. 4) by means of sources in literature and art, in zooarchaeology and in scientific ornithology. One problem is to identify the birds in Roman literature precisely, another problem is not to generalise an 'elite perspective' (p. 5) as representative of an everyday life with birds. Thus, a critical view is necessary on classical sources such as Aristotle, Pliny the Elder and Aelian concerning common bird knowledge, or on Cato, Varro and Columella concerning birds in agriculture. But why should we focus on this particular period? Firstly, it may be answered that it fills a gap in the literature. Secondly, it can be asserted that there is a 'dramatic

shift in that time reflecting the nature of the transitional period' (pp. 3–4) from the late Roman Republic to the early Empire. Political, social and religious processes have been affected by using birds in these political, social and economic contexts.

The first two main chapters focus on 'Omens, Augury, and Auspices' and 'The Augural Chickens'. Political strategy and social roles are analysed and underlined by classical sources from Roman literature such as Livy: 'all were put off when the birds refused their consent' (p. 14). Relevant actors are vultures, eagles, ravens, crows, owls and woodpeckers. The key terms are introduced in sub-chapters, such as *Templa* and later on, in more detail, in the case of chickens: *auspicia ex tripudiis, pullarii*. The negative auspices are illustrated by the well-known classical statement of consul Claudius: 'If they won't eat, let them drink!' (p. 71). In other words: drown them. These bird 'messengers of Jupiter' – sometimes well manipulated in the auspices – provide divine sanction. Such cases indicate 'political struggles' or even 'Augustan propaganda' (pp. 82–3).

The next Chapter, 'Farming and Aviculture', offers information on social and economic inequality in Roman society and about a kind of 'Gastro-politics' (p. 88) – aspects of production, distribution, preparation and consumption of food in this transitional period with 'new transport and communication networks' in agriculture. 'The Rise of Aviary' (p. 91) for commercial use and pleasure is described. The elite used peacocks, pheasants, chickens, ducks, partridges and doves for representational purposes and as extravagant food on the feast tables of the rich as, for instance, illustrated in Pompeii. Sub-chapters deal with chickens, geese, ducks, pigeons, peafowls, pheasants and guineafowls – accompanied by illustrations from mosaics and paintings. Breeding and 'farming methods became more intensive and sophisticated' for urban markets (p. 121). Foreign birds appeared in banquets. They communicated the status and wealth of the upper class, while poor people had the opportunity to catch and sell wild birds (p. 122).

The next chapter, 'Fowling and Bird-Catching', discusses hunting methods, the consumption of wild birds, recreation, rare birds, decoys, hawks and falcons. The legalities in the *Digest*, for example problems with storks, and especially the hunting method of the so-called *harundo*, are described. This was a special Roman technique of liming birds: fowlers, mostly young men and boys, hid in bushes and smeared the wings with lime, for example for catching a blackbird or mistle thrush; everything is nicely illustrated by figures (pp. 131–8). The consumption of birds was widespread, including even 'flamingo tongues' (p. 147). Ostriches from Africa were used for gladiator fights in the arena, and decapitated ones 'run on for a time, to the amusement of spectators' (p. 148). But falconry for hunting was not as popular in ancient times as it was in medieval Europe: the Romans 'valued their domestic flocks too much to show any interest in keeping or hunting with predatory birds' (p. 154).

The last chapter introduces the relation between pets and pleasure by means of Roman garden culture and paintings. A variety of bird species such as doves, pigeons, blackbirds, thrushes, fly catchers and golden orioles is presented. Livia's garden room shows 69 birds, song birds and beauty birds, one in a cage, perhaps a nightingale. Roman gardens were places for aviaries for pleasure and joy – mainly for the rich. But 'Pest Birds' were disliked. Children played with birds. Cockfighting is illustrated by a mosaic from Pompeii. Talking birds, parrots, were rare. Pliny accused Claudius Aesopus, eating the tongues of talking parrots, of 'cannibalism' (p. 180), and he talks about them as if they were little slaves (p. 183). Other companion birds and 'The *passer*' (pp. 190–4), Lesbia's *passer*, the sparrow, were loved.

In contrast to Pollard's *Birds in Greek Life and Myth* (1977), fabulous birds such as the phoenix are excluded by G.; and the kingfisher, too, as not so relevant for Roman myth and life. However, Pliny knows this bird as a real species in Italy; Ovid and other writers present kingfisher stories; and the bird appears on a famous mosaic in Pompeii, placed

beside marine wildlife. A further research *desideratum* is the later reception of Roman bird politics. In the age of enlightenment Montesquieu shows himself being impressed by the Roman auspices. He explained them as political strategies of the elite to convince the Roman people, for instance, to start military action. So, Jupiter's messengers were politically instrumentalised. But G. concludes that many questions are open, and there is still potential for further studies.

Overall, this is an excellent monograph, and it fills a gap. It analyses the very heterogeneous views and relations concerning birds in this period of Roman history. The book is an interdisciplinary treasure for all who are interested in human-animal studies, the role of birds and their meaning in and for Roman society.

University Duisburg-Essen

HANS WERNER INGENSEIPE
h.w.ingensiep@uni-due.de

RELIGION AND ECONOMY

WILSON (A.), RAY (N.), TRENTACOSTE (A.) (edd.) *The Economy of Roman Religion*. Pp. xx + 354, figs, ills, maps. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2023. Cased, £83, US\$110. ISBN: 978-0-19-288353-7.

doi:10.1017/S0009840X23002202

As Wilson points out in the introduction to this fine volume, 'religion has been almost totally absent from most discussions of the Roman economy' (p. 1). Although the six-page bibliography of relevant scholarship with which his paper concludes might seem to belie this assertion, it is indeed the case that scholars of religion in the Roman world have generally paid scant attention to the economic dimension of their subject, while scholars of the Roman economy have paid even less attention to religion. It is the purpose of this volume, which originated in a conference held in Oxford in September 2016, to make a case for remedying that absence.

Wilson's introduction and a concluding essay by G. Woolf bracket ten strikingly diverse papers. The only one not presented at the Oxford conference is J. Rüpke's paper 'What Did Religion Cost in Ancient Rome?'; first published in German in 1995, it surveys the annual expenditure and revenue of a priestly college in Rome, the *pontifices*, as a case study in the financing of public cult. Rüpke concludes that 'the economic importance of the public priesthoods for the economy and those areas deeply involved in religion is small' (p. 39). The following paper by C.R. Potts, 'Investing in Religion: Religion and the Economy in Pre-Roman Central Italy', is one of the best in the volume. Potts gathers a wealth of material data from the sixth and early fifth centuries BCE that demonstrates the role of Mediterranean sanctuaries as sites of consumption, production and trade as well as 'repositories of knowledge and power' (p. 57). She argues that major sanctuaries provided economic as well as devotional motivations for travel and exchange and that a desire to participate in the resultant network may have stimulated the elites of central Italy to construct similar sanctuaries of their own. With the next paper, J. Domingo's study of 'Cost Differences in Temple-Building between Rome and the Provinces', the temporal focus shifts to the first century and a half CE. Domingo first describes a