

concludes that by performing stories ‘at one remove’ it avoids ‘risking the crassness of dramatising the specific events of a young man’s death’. It also allows characters to be what Ralph Ellison called ‘enlarged’ and give those characters ‘possibilities [that] transcended the limitations that society placed upon them’ (Patrice Rankine). It is the courage and endurance of Antigone, rather than her rather sad end, that remains with those who study the play – they see her, says Morales, as a Malala Yousafi or Greta Thunberg, the lonely figure who stands against the world. Interestingly, that is not how Antigone herself would have been viewed in the ancient world. I remember Professor Hugh Bowden of King’s College London delivering a session at school entitled ‘Why Antigone was wrong, and Jason was right’. The students were outraged of course, but the Greeks would most likely have had less sympathy for a young woman who spoke out of turn and who acted outside what was acceptable for a citizen. This is why ancient myths are still resonant – they produce reactions because they challenge our worldview by presenting larger than life characters in larger than life situations. Of course, Antigone is not the only female heroine in this book: there are the Amazons as portrayed in *Wonder Woman*, representations of whom are often cited by the sort of men who belong to the Red Pill groups discussed by Donna Zuckerberg in ‘Not All Dead White Men’ as being to blame for all the supposed challenges to the male ego in the 21st century. Morales also discusses *Lysistrata* and the various versions inspired by it from Tony Harrison (*A Common Chorus* 1992) to Germaine Greer (*Lysistrata – The Sex Strike* 1999) and most recently Spike Lee’s *Chi-Raq* (2015). Purists may bristle at the changes made, but art only survives by being flexible enough to sustain such off-shoots, and myths are nothing if not flexible. Of course, fictional characters are not the only ones included in this book; for example, Morales discusses how Hippocrates and his views have been used to promote diets, but quite rightly states that Hippocrates himself would not have endorsed the modern diet culture. Gluttony (I am writing this on Boxing Day) is mostly disapproved of as a sign of extravagance, but being fat, or at least well-covered, would have been a sign of richness and prosperity, whereas being thin would suggest poverty and possibly weakness. Body-shape and the view taken of it varies according to culture and time – think of those plump Rubens ladies – and we should always be careful to take a step back when using examples from other cultures whether geographically or temporally distant. Morales specifically says that what annoys her in this case is that Hippocrates’ writings are being misappropriated ‘by the diet industry to promote misery and sickness’. Using myths or ancient exemplars is not always helpful. Other discussions centre around the way that ancient women were controlled in relation to dress codes, and the Oppian Laws of the late 3rd century BCE are cited along with Pentheus (*Bacchae*). I particularly enjoyed the pointed comment about politicians avowing family values only to be brought down by a sex scandal in this section. Clearly Ovid gets an in-depth discussion; and the topics of #MeToo and trans-rights feature prominently in the final chapters where there is a different take on the transformations. We should all be aware that the metamorphoses into animals and plants teach us that we should connect with all elements of our planet, seeing all of these as integral to the well-being of us all and this, if done properly, would eradicate sexual assault. A noble aim. There are some moving quotes from young people who, having been introduced to myths, realise that this is not a modern issue – the stories of Caenis/Caeneus, Teiresias and the possibly lesser-known Iphis and Ianthe are movingly told

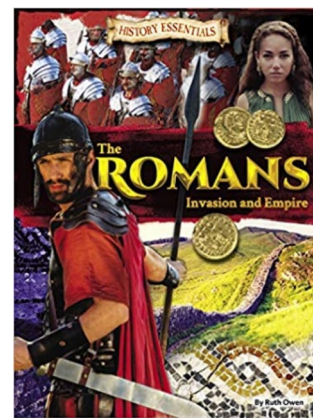
and make a fitting conclusion to this book. It is sometimes an uncomfortable read but one which would be a welcome addition to a school or departmental library.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631021000179

The Romans: Invasion and Empire

Owen (R.). Pp. 32, colour ills, colour map.
Tunbridge Wells: Ruby Tuesday Books, 2019.
Paper, £8.99. ISBN: 978-1-78856-037-5.

James Watson



This slender volume forms part of a ‘History Essentials’ series of books which the publisher’s website reveals is intended for children in Key Stage 2; other titles cover ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, the Stone and Bronze Ages and the Vikings. The subtitle of this volume on the Romans is ‘Invasion and Empire’, and although much of the book focuses on the wider empire – and especially Roman Britain – there are sections which discuss other aspects of

Roman civilisation too.

Each double-page spread in the book covers a particular topic that is brought to life by a combination of text and illustrations. Most of the illustrations in this colourful book are photographs, although some pages feature drawn reconstructions. The first topic discussed is the AD 43 invasion of Britain, but then the following double-page steps back to consider ‘Who were the Romans?’ The next several topics deal with various aspects of Roman civilisation – the empire, the army, domestic life, food, features of the city of Rome, and gladiators. Thereafter the focus shifts back to Roman Britain, with a general section on ‘the Romans in Britain’ followed by ones exploring Boudica’s revolt, baths (with a focus on Bath itself) and Hadrian’s Wall.

There are, unfortunately, some features of the book which could cause confusion, and there are also occasional errors. The map which begins the book (p. 2), for example, is stated to show ‘the Roman Empire at the beginning of the 2nd century AD’ but includes Hadrian’s Wall (not begun until AD 122); the labelling of the map is also inconsistent, with areas of the empire shown as ‘Britannia’, ‘Gaul (Modern-day France)’ and ‘Modern-day Spain’. Later in the book one reads of ‘England’ (p. 4) and ‘Wales’ (p. 20); whilst these terms may be meaningful to younger modern readers, it might perhaps have been worth clarifying that these names did not come into use until after the Roman period. We read that ‘*Insulae* had no running water or toilets’ (p. 12), but the accompanying – and otherwise excellent – reconstruction drawing of such an apartment block that illustrates that double page seems to include an individual making use of a wooden *latrina* (p. 13). The same double page suggests that

a Roman's 'city house' was a *domus* and that he might also have a 'beautiful villa in the countryside' (p. 12), but also refers to what could certainly be features of urban dwellings as those of 'a Roman villa' (p. 13). Two seemingly contradictory statements are given on a single page (p. 22), where we read both that 'the Iceni lived peacefully under Roman rule' and that 'Boudica and her people had suffered years of Roman rule'. Those with knowledge of Latin might regret the sentence 'Roman soldiers fought with *pilums*' (p. 10), but more serious is the error contained in 'the Romans believed that a spirit called a *lares* protected their home' (p. 13) when a plural term is used as if it were singular. Two other erroneous statements claim that Augustus was Julius Caesar's nephew, rather than his great-nephew (p. 7), and that Vindolanda was a 'fort at Hadrian's Wall', rather than a fort that pre-dated and remained distinct from the Wall (p. 27).

Despite these issues, there are many positive features of this book. The range of topics covered is impressive, even if most have to be covered at a superficial level. The double page entitled 'The Roman Empire' discusses roads, the army, numerals and Latin as well as the geographical extent of Roman control and the idea that non-Romans could gain citizenship (pp. 8–9). 'Family life and homes' includes discussion of infant mortality and covers the lives of women as well as men and of poorer as well as richer Romans (pp. 12–13). Ancient evidence comes to the fore in the section on 'Boudica's revolt', with mention made of Cassius Dio, Tacitus, and archaeological evidence (p. 23). Drawing attention to surviving Roman evidence continues with discussion of the Vindolanda tablets (p. 27) and, especially, on the double page entitled 'Roman Bones' (pp. 28–29), where readers are introduced to the idea that a person's diet and even their life histories can be recovered from skeletal remains. The 'Lant Street girl' is discussed as an example, and we learn that she was born in the southern Mediterranean, moved to London at the age of nine or ten, and then died at the age of 14 (p. 29).

The book ends with a glossary of terms; the explanations given are generally helpful, although the description of a merchant as 'a person (usually from history) who buys and sells goods' seemed a little unclear (p. 31). The words included in the glossary appear in bold when used earlier in the book, which will help young readers to understand the book's content (provided they realise that they should look in the glossary for guidance). Many of the features of the Roman world discussed seem likely to appeal to the age range for which the book is intended: they can, for example, find out about war elephants (p. 5), Roman foodstuffs (pp. 14–15, with a flamingo, sea urchin and dormouse pictured!), and the Roman use of 'a sponge on a stick' when in the *latrina* (p. 17). Gladiators also receive their own double page which will interest young readers, although their parents might like to be aware of the gory detail included that 'a cut across a fighter's stomach could release their intestines onto the sand' (p. 18). It is impressive, however, that the book ensures that these lively aspects of Roman life appear alongside other, more-complicated issues, such as slavery, migration and Romanisation, that are presented in an accessible way.

Whilst it is a shame that certain aspects of the volume prevent it from being completely clear and fully accurate, this book nonetheless could serve as a fine introduction to the Roman world, and particularly to Roman Britain.

doi: 10.1017/S2058631021000180

This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives

licence (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/>), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is unaltered and is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press must be obtained for commercial re-use or in order to create a derivative work.

A Fatal Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum. Murder in Ancient Rome

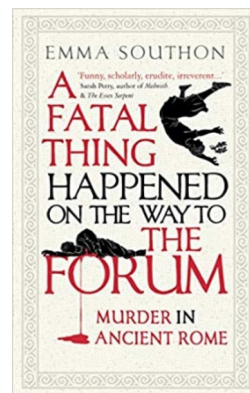
Southon (E.). Pp. xii + 339. London: Oneworld Publications, 2020. Cased, £16.99.

ISBN: 978-1-78607-837-7.

<https://oneworld-publications.com/a-fatal-thing-happened-on-the-way-to-the-forum-hb.html>

J M Lashly

Former Head of Classics, Shrewsbury High School
jolahly@gmail.com



I had high hopes of this book; the topic was interesting, and the title well-chosen, and I enjoyed the introduction which was written in an informal and accessible way. This would be useful for a school library I was thinking, and I was amused by the occasionally colourful language in the early chapters. The premise of the book was engaging, and Emma Southon was good at bringing ancient events to life with modern references, but as I read on, I was increasingly concerned by sweeping statements and historical inaccuracies in a book which purported to be

explaining an aspect of ancient history. The book is divided sensibly into different occasions for murder: that between senators, murder in law, in the family, in marriage, murder by slaves, magic and famous murders which took place in and of the imperial families as well as murder used as judicial punishment; and to be fair there are plenty of examples, backed up by primary sources for all of these. However, the inaccuracies spoil it for me. In chapter 1, Murder on the Senate Floor, we are informed that Cicero 'had Catiline executed without trial'. There were undoubtedly executions without trial as a result of the Catilinarian conspiracy; Cicero's exile was as a result of them, but none of them was Catiline; he died fighting at the battle of Pistoria, and later in the chapter on magic Southon states, regarding Cato, that he 'got his way in 146 BCE [with the destruction of Carthage]'. There is no mention that he died in 149 BCE without ever knowing of the destruction of Carthage; then again that Tiberius (Murder in the Imperial House) sent 'guards to execute his ex-wife [Julia] ... on the day he became Princeps'. Tacitus tells us that Tiberius let her waste away reckoning that no one would notice as she was out of the public eye. Such inaccuracies spoil a book. Southon has gathered a large number of anecdotes on murder together and they are very entertaining but as I continued reading, I became less