

useful index). The authors reflect on these problematic terms and discuss potential new approaches. The meaning of ‘Roman’, ‘Punic’ or ‘Vandal’ are repeatedly interrogated, serving to underline the need for care in using these problematic concepts.

The volume might leave one with the impression that the archaeology of North Africa is quite ‘iconoclastic’. Nearly all of the contributions focus on texts or inscriptions or the results of excavation. Even the chapter on ‘Architecture and Art’ is organised around specific building types and not categories of art. Given the tremendous quantity and quality of North African mosaics (see, most recently, Aïcha Ben Abed Ben Khader, *Tunisian Mosaics. Treasures from Roman Africa* (2006) or the series *Recherches franco-tunisiennes sur la mosaïque de l’Afrique antique*), it might have been worth devoting a chapter to the subject. This can be also said for ancient sculpture. Works by Christa Landwehr (*JDAI* 127.8 (2012/2013), 227–60) and François Baratte on North African sculptures (*CRAI* 160.2 (2016), 821–35) have demonstrated that North Africa has a lot to offer in this field. The lack of contributions on iconography is reflected by the quality of the images in the printed volume. In the photo of a votive stele to Saturn (fig. 16.1) the god is barely recognisable, as is the inscription discussed in the text. The images of the coins published in the contribution by Cécile Morrison (fig. 23.1 and 23.2) are presented in ‘reduced size’, which makes it hard to understand their iconography. The locations of all Donatist Bishoprics in the reprint of the Map of Salama (fig. 20.1) are difficult to read. Strangely, the eight maps at the beginning are of good quality, but not mentioned in any of the contributions. But this weakness of the volume is entirely in line with the state of research on North Africa, where iconography plays a decidedly secondary role. New and promising iconographic approaches that have already been proven fruitful in other Blackwell companions, like Lucinda Dirven’s contribution on statues, reliefs, and paintings in Ted Kaiser (ed.), *Companion to the Hellenistic and Roman Near East* (2022). They could have provided new insights on many of the themes covered by the volume, e.g. religion or local identities.

A *Companion* is always intended to present the state of the art on the field. And this is exactly what this volume does. The contributors include many of the leading researchers who work on North African soil, drawn widely from Brazil, the US and Europe. But, as Stefan Ardeleanu has already pointed out in his review (*Plekos* 24, 2022, 561–71), the volume lacks a single contribution by a scholar from the modern Maghreb. The absence of a modern North African perspective on their own history, archaeology and heritage is to be regretted. The high price is also likely to limit the volume’s impact in the Maghreb: it is scarcely affordable even for students in Europe. It would be unfortunate if this outstanding volume, largely written by scholars from an Anglo-American research background, was only read by scholars, students and general readers of the same academic environment.

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ANNA LUCILLE BOOZER, *AT HOME IN ROMAN EGYPT: A SOCIAL ARCHAEOLOGY*.
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021. Pp. x + 361. ISBN 9781108830928. \$99.99.

This book is a major new contribution to the study of households and everyday life in antiquity. Because the arid Egyptian environment affords extraordinary preservation, Egypt is in many ways an ideal place to study this subject. Making full use of this rich evidence, Boozer’s work helps to humanise our perception of the ancient world, foregrounding the emotions, sensations, and experiences of people’s daily lives. Rich in vivid, descriptive detail, this volume also makes an important argument: the home was a locus of historical change and agency, a site where ordinary people shaped history rather than merely getting swept up in its current. Domestic life was profoundly entangled with other spheres, contrary to ‘the artificial distinctions that scholars have drawn between the domestic, religious, craft, and mortuary spheres, to name only a few’ (232).

The book is largely organised around the human life cycle, with chapters devoted to different periods from conception to death (and beyond: a chapter on death and the afterlife rightly affirms

the extent to which the dead remained part of their households). Each chapter begins with a short vignette featuring two fictional characters, Pamoun and Tabes, at different points in their biographies. However, the life-cycle theme does not wholly determine the structure of the book, and some chapters focus on activities and contexts rather than life stages (e.g. a chapter on the practices involved in dwelling and homemaking; another on the care and maintenance of the body).

One of the most powerful aspects of this volume is the attention and respect that B. pays to ancient people's subjective experiences. Emotion, attachment and sensation emerge not as epiphenomena, but as drivers of history. Here B. makes excellent use of the extraordinary textual, visual and material record from Roman Egypt, presenting readers with numerous extended quotations from papyrological sources and abundant illustrations of domestic and other artifacts. Although the subtitle places particular emphasis on archaeology (B.'s area of specialisation), the book is thoroughly interdisciplinary. Some of the most moving passages are extended quotations and discussions of papyri, from private letters to legal texts. We read a letter from a child to his father, in which the young boy complains about his father's refusal to take him to Alexandria (78); a man writing to his absent wife to lament that he misses her so much that he hasn't been able to bathe since his last bath with her (137); a sister consoling her brother for the loss of his wife (223); and much more. Even legal documents may be deeply moving to modern readers through the specificity with which they describe their signatories via identifying physical traits, such as age, skin colour and scars. Although we will never ourselves meet 'Taorsenouphis, about forty-five years old with a scar on her left calf, and Tephorsais, about thirty-five years old with a scar on her left hand' (129), this brief description in a loan contract drives home the fact that these sisters were real individuals, with real lives and experiences, and the (literal) scars to show for them.

B.'s emphasis on subjective and embodied experience builds on recent developments in sensory archaeology and the archaeology of affect and emotion. Her attention to the sources also produces new historical insights. For example, she argues against the notion that people must have cared less for their children because child mortality was high (e.g. 214–15, 231). To the contrary, B. finds compelling evidence for strong parent–child bonds. More generally, she makes a case for the depth and importance of emotional ties between the members of Romano-Egyptian households. She argues that we should imagine those ties extending to the physical house itself, which would have held 'emotional significance to its dwellers' as the site of 'their most poignant memories of life and death' (231). Other arguments include an emphasis on continuity rather than (just) division between polytheistic and Christian practices within the domestic sphere (231–2) and a presentation of social identity as flexible and constantly under construction (e.g. 221).

For this reviewer, opportunities for quibbling are few. In order to acknowledge the complexities of ethnic identity in Roman Egypt, B. draws a distinction between 'ethnicity' and 'ethnic affinity' (22), but this opposition raises questions that could have benefitted from deeper analysis. The discussion of the biological *versus* social background of sex and gender (45–6) might have been nuanced by some more explicit questioning of whether there is ever such a thing as a pre-social or pre-cultural human body. It might also have been interesting to engage with the sparse, but intriguing, evidence for some individuals who might be described as gender-transgressive or non-binary (e.g. M. DePauw, *ZÄS* 130 (2003), 49–59).

Both professionals and students will benefit from this book, whose style is accessible and enjoyable to read. It would make an excellent textbook for a course on everyday life in Roman Egypt, and individual chapters could be assigned for a course on cross-cultural household archaeology; the chapter on 'settings and communities' includes some overview of general background on Roman Egypt, which would be helpful for students unfamiliar with this particular region or historical period.

This is an important book which deserves to be widely read and cited. B. has succeeded admirably in writing 'an account of Roman Egypt with the people put back in' (230). Staring out from mummy portraits and speaking to each other (and to us) in their letters, contracts and petitions, the real people of Roman Egypt make their presence vividly felt throughout this book. As a history written from below rather than above (230–1), B.'s carefully researched work reminds readers of the humanity we share with those who came before us.

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