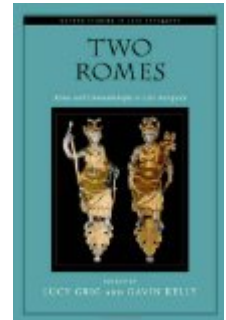


Lucy Grig, Gavin Kelly. *Two Romes: Rome and Constantinople in Late Antiquity.*
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Reviewed by Muriel Moser

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The present work is a collection of papers on the history of late-antique Rome and Constantinople, the two Romes of the later Roman Empire, delivered (all but one) at an international conference at the University of Edinburgh in 2007. It is a truly impressive achievement. Not only are its contributions of high quality throughout, offering fresh insights and thought-provoking discussions on aspects ranging from waterways to visual aesthetics, from housing, elite cultures and linguistic tastes to the political topography, from church councils to public processions of the Old and the New (or Second) Rome; but, as a whole, the complementary chapters are also of a coherence which is highly remarkable for such conference volumes.

The seventeen entries are divided into six parts. Part One, Rome and Constantinople in Context, is headed by an excellent introduction by the editors Lucy Grig and Gavin Kelly. They offer a comprehensive yet impressively concise exposition of the multiple explanations for the foundation of Constantinople and the (assumed) decline of Rome, their cultures, inhabitants and religious

outlook as well as their place in the political and imperial history from the fourth to sixth century A.D. Following this formidable *introitus*, Lucy Grig discusses late-antique approaches to the visual representation of Rome and shows how the city of Rome ‘consistently resisted visual encapsulation, or “Iconicity”’ (p. 36). Rome’s greatness, so her late-antique contemporaries claimed, simply made it impossible to represent the city in all its beauty, grandeur and ideological importance. Bryan Ward-Perkins then offers a comparative study of the infrastructure, the civic and private monuments and the churches of the two capitals, demonstrating the late, but steady, rise of Constantinople to the first place among the cities of the empire.

The three papers of Part II then examine the urban space and urban development of the two cities in comparative perspectives. John Matthews contributes a new translation of the *Notitia Urbis Constantinopolitanae*, paying particular attention to the topographical information this text contains. There are interesting omissions of, for instance, the aesthetic embellishments of the city or

the Arch of Theodosius. The shape of Greco-Roman Byzantium can, so Ward-Perkins seeks to reveal, however be traced in the regional inventory of the Age of Theodosius II. James Crow then looks at water, its management and politics of distribution among the baths, public fountains, religious foundations and private households in late-antique Constantinople. He discusses the gradual expansion of the city's system of aqueducts and cisterns (which accounted for the variation of water flow in between seasons) and traces their decline in the seventh century. Crow also furnishes fascinating glimpses into the political (ab)use of the imperial monopoly to grant access to fresh water as a means of enforcing imperial power, especially vis-à-vis aristocratic or (stubborn) monastic opposition. Carlos Machado analyses the transformation of aristocratic *domus* in late-antique Rome. The frequent encroachment of formerly public space by the local senatorial owners of these grand estates – an 'eruption of private interests into the public arena' (p. 157) – and the continuous use of *spoliae* for private buildings, so Machado proposes, point to the loss of imperial control and interest in the urban fabric of the city. The second part of his paper then traces the emergence of similar residences in Constantinople in their socio-political context. The shape of the first Constantinopolitan *domus* interestingly suggests that, in contrast to Rome, imperial control of urban space only tightened late in the city's development (in the 380s).

The two chapters of Part III then look at Emperors in the City. Mark Humphries offers a thoroughly stimulating study of the relationship between Valentinian III and Rome, arguing forcibly against traditional models which postulate the eclipse of imperial Rome by a Christian Rome. Humphries delineates how Valentinian II used Rome as a platform of imperial legitimacy and authority, re-establishing the old capital as a centre of power: Valentinian III spent over a quarter of his total reign in the city (from 425 to 455), whose demanding yet politically important senatorial

nobility he was able to domesticate to his advantage (see Humphries' revised study of Valentinian's urban prefects at the end of his contribution). A thoughtful study by Peter Van Nuffelen then illuminates the politics of public rituals and processions in Constantinople between 379 and 437 A.D. Imperial ceremonies, he shows, were not straightforward displays of imperial power; rather, they left room for improvisation and the unforeseen, and hence for the risk of losing face in public. Most importantly, they were a potential source of competition: emperor and bishop effectively had to share the public space in Constantinople, and so their performances had to be carefully adjusted to avoid open confrontation or rivalry; failure to reach a compromise could, so the fate of John Chrysostom suggests, have drastic consequences for the involved. Public rituals, then, were a complex means of communicating power, position and legitimacy, a game which, so Van Nuffelen demonstrates, demanded strategic skills, political talent, and patience.

The volume then moves to literary culture and looks at the role of the two cities in panegyric, and, in turn, at the place of panegyrics in the political cultures of the two cities. Roger Rees makes a case for seeing the *Panegyrici Latini* as a carefully crafted collection of panegyrics assembled by the provincial aristocrat Pacatus. Pacatus, Rees proposes, sought to exert political influence by highlighting the importance of Rome as the ideological seat of the empire and, drawing parallels with Constantine's grand victory at the Milvian Bridge, of Theodosius' recovery of the city in 389. John Vanderspoel then offers a stimulating rereading of Themistius' *Oration 3*, given in Rome in 357 and dealing with the status of the two cities in the empire. He attractively proposes that the final sections of the speech which praise Constantius' investments in Constantinople were not part of the original speech delivered in Rome. The speech would thus have closed at 46c with a reference to Plato, as did Themistius' earlier orations. This would also explain how it was possible for

the philosopher-orator to be on good terms with the Roman elites who, like Symmachus and Praetextatus, translated his works into Latin. In the second part of his contribution Vanderspoel looks in detail at Themistius' take on the two cities in later speeches, in particular in *Oration 14*, given to Theodosius in 379 shortly after his accession to the throne, and in *Oration 13*, delivered in Rome on the request of Valens. Vanderspoel points to the possibility of a downgrade of the status of Constantinople (more probably of the privileges granted to the city), who preferred Antioch. En passant, Vanderspoel also provides interesting thoughts on the development of the city and its senate under Constantius II and the division of the empire as well as Constantinople's role in this process.

Two entries then focuses on verse panegyrics: Gavin Kelly reviews the portrayal of Constantinople in Claudian's poetry, written for a western audience after 395, in a period of serious fraction between the two parts of the empire. Kelly dissects how Claudian refuses to call Constantinople a New Rome; its status as the second capital of the empire is merely alluded to; it is also never called by its name, *Constantinopolis*. Claudian's fierce anti-eastern and anti-Constantinopolitan polemic in *In Eutropium*, in which he blames the city and its inhabitants for allowing the eunuch Eutropius to take up the consulship, is, so Kelly underlines, full of invective against the constitutional status of Constantinople as a second Rome. It is likely that with his exaggerated vituperations against the city, Claudian surpassed western criticisms of his age, hence using his poem as a sort of 'trial balloon to test probably lines of attack' (p. 261). Andrew Gillett then investigates the political uses of epic verse panegyric in the fifth century West. His study of the poetry of Claudian and Merobaudes, Sidonius Apollinaris and similar poets (their works are listed at the end of the chapter) carefully disentangles the stylistic mechanism embedded in this form of literary praise which, so Gillett shows, formed a powerful means of politi-

cal communication used by the fifth century generalissimos to influence the senatorial aristocracy of Rome which was (still) a vital political support group.

Part V then turns to investigate the Christian nature of the two cities. Benet Salway's re-examination of the *Itinerarium Burdigalense* suggests that its author travelled from southern Gaul to Constantinople not as a pilgrim but as a companion to a higher magistrate on official business, and that his trip to the new Constantinian Christian sites of the Holy Land was planned at a later stage, possibly influenced by advance praise for the sites from the imperial court circles in Constantinople. John Curran then unmasks Proba's *cento* as a subtle defence of senatorial lifestyle propagating values such as obligations of property, *familia*, and *clientele*, a move that was much to the displeasure of Christian thinkers like Jerome. In a provocative paper Neil McLynn then powerfully proposes that the famous reference to Constantinople as a Second Rome in the third canon of the Council of Constantinople in 381 was, in fact, a formula that meant little in practice. It was employed, he skilfully reveals, to avoid reinforcing Constantinople's hierarchical position and, thereby, to safeguard the existing patriarchal authority. The section closes with the contribution by Philippe Blandeau. Blandeau surveys the political intentions underpinning the relationship between the bishop of Rome and his Constantinopolitan colleague. He demonstrates that while the rapport was mostly cordial, there was no question of a transmission of the apostolic legacy. Rome employed Constantinople in its quest for the construction of unity in the Church, while at the same time making sure that 'any political justification for its (Constantinople's) responsibility was simultaneously eliminated' (p. 383).

In a final paper, Anthony Kaldellis seeks to establish the existence of a Byzantine Roman 'national identity' and, thereby, to pave the way for revisionist accounts of the Byzantium empire as a

‘nation state’. Kaldellis emphasised that the Byzantines were deeply influenced by Roman political ideas and concepts and that they used their Roman past as a source of legitimacy. They should, he argues, be understood as a nation state, with Constantinople as the nation’s capital: ‘what went on in Constantinople in a very real sense gave historical and institutional expression to the broad consensus of Roman provincial society’ (p. 402). The volume closes with a general index as well as an *index locorum*, which greatly facilitates its handling.

Together, these seventeen well-edited entries hence offer promising new approaches to both familiar and less often viewed material and reveal some of the rich insights that can be gained from looking afresh at the two capitals. Not all of them examine both Rome and Constantinople to the same extent, and there are some areas which receive no or only few attention, including the relationships between Rome’s and Constantinople’s senatorial elites, and, more generally, between the western and eastern imperial courts or in the economic and military realm. Yet, this does not impinge on the quality of the volume. Indeed, it is to be expected that a good few of the entries will become must-reads for scholars in the field. The extensive bibliography (31 pages) includes both classic treatments as well as recent research, reflecting again the breadth of material and historiography on Rome and Constantinople its contributors examine, challenge or revise. “Two Romes”, then, is a truly enjoyable, informative and inspiring read. It is highly recommended not only to historians of late-antique Rome and Constantinople, but to anyone interested in the history, culture and religion of Late Antiquity.

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