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Violence has been a fashionable topic in late antique studies of late, a fact acknowledged by Martin Zimmerman in his conclusion to this volume. Drake's collection, which arises out of a conference on the theme, serves as a taster of some of the directions which this scholarship has taken, but offers no cohesive or coherent response to the issues raised. This can be a strength - many different viewpoints and perspectives are represented in these pages - but it can also be a weakness, as a number of pieces in the collection talk past each other, or do not have much in common. As Drake puts it in his introduction, the conclusions of this collection are 'decidedly mixed' (10). Some cohesion is imposed by the division into four parts, focusing on assessing accounts of violence in the sources, legitimate violence enacted by the state or others, violence in rhetoric and religious violence - there are also introductory and concluding essays as already mentioned. Such division helps to organise such a substantial volume (27 papers) but there is considerable overlap between the parts, as the comments below will make clear.

The task is a challenging one, however, not least because the collection exemplifies a broad conception of late antiquity, in both chronological and geographical terms. At times, indeed, the spread is so broad that the papers do not seem to reflect upon the same cultural complexes. This is the case, for example, with Clarissa Burt's piece on violence and negotiation in pre-Islamic poetry. Interesting though her study is, it illuminates largely how little this world had in common with the strategies for controlling violence in the later Roman empire and early barbarian kingdoms. S.J. McDonough's contribution on persecution under the Sasanian Yazdgard II, however, evokes a number of themes which are echoed elsewhere in the collection and show that the position of religious minorities could be a universally vulnerable one.
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The papers also demonstrate a broad range of scholarly approaches and styles. Some take a deliberately abstracted and conceptual approach. This is the case with the pieces by Gillian Clark and Isabel Moreira, both of which are primarily histories of ideas. Clark takes as her focus Augustine’s musings on the moral position of the carnifex and the implications of his legitimised and approved violence. Her analysis is of the arguments, not the realities, around the notorious tortures of late antiquity. This abstraction is taken even further by Moreira who examines the ideas about God’s violence in the afterlife and how these could be justified. These pieces sit slightly oddly against that of, for example, Linda Honey, who undertakes a thick description of a particular violent incident, the brutal treatment of Isaurian prisoners, described in a single short passage in Ammianus Marcellinus. The discrepancy of styles and of conclusions is striking, but perhaps to be expected in what is essentially a conference proceedings.

The far more important problem for the coherence of the collection is that neither Drake nor any of the other contributors attempt to define what violence is in this period. Undoubtedly this was a deliberate attempt to garner interpretations without imposing a rigid or prescriptive sense of what is involved, but it does not lead into a conversation about what should be considered as violence and what should not. So, for example, Michele Renee Salzman’s paper, ‘Rethinking Pagan-Christian Violence’ downplays the level of religious violence in this period by emphasising that the main victims were places and objects, not people, leading her to characterise Christian violence as relatively infrequent and unimportant in the religious transitions of the period. In the very next paper, however, Daniel Sarefield focuses precisely on the violent destruction of objects, in this case book-burning, as an important and prominent form of religious violence and one which was ‘significant for its persuasive force’ (295). Neither paper engages with the other’s radically different definition of what kind of violence matters, nor do the introductory or concluding essays offer any thoughts. Both approaches are interesting, but without dialogue between them, the collection feels oddly disparate.

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Furthermore, other papers in the collection focus on topics which would not be universally recognised as forms of violence. For example, Wendy Mayer's interesting piece on the destruction of the empress Eudoxia's reputation is an effective analysis of the functioning of a 'smear campaign' (205). As Mayer points out, the sources on Eudoxia point to a series of simultaneous and incompatible images of her, which should have warned scholars against adopting them in the wholesale manner they have. These activities could potentially be defined as violent, but Mayer makes no actual argument to consider them this way in her piece. Tziona Grossmark's paper, on the other hand, is really about risk broadly conceived, rather than violence per se. She analyses the dangers posed, according to Rabbinic literature, to Jewish travellers who stay in inns. Violence and robbery feature among these dangers but seem to be secondary to the risks such as exposure to idolatry, the difficulty of keeping the laws of the Torah, the possibility of deception by the innkeeper and the immoral behaviour of the mistress of the inn. In Bill Leadbetter's paper on the command economy in late Roman Aperlae, meanwhile, the violence is very difficult to see at all. Leadbetter shows that the importance of the purple industry meant increasing legal restrictions on the purple-fishers of Aperlae from Diocletian onwards and argues that the impressive record of church building in the region represented a local means of identity-assertion and display in the face of their oppression. He goes so far, indeed, as to see Aperlae as a 'Montaillou of stone', murmuring and hinting at resistance to a coercive state. No evidence of actual violence is presented however and Leadbetter makes no argument that the legal evidence should be read as a form of violence. As a result, the theme feels tacked on to an otherwise worthy discussion.

Some more obvious forms of violence in late antiquity receive very little discussion by comparison. Military violence is touched on only in passing in a few papers and violence in entertainment goes unmentioned save in Zimmerman's concluding piece. This is striking, since both are staples in the scholarship of the earlier Roman empire. One type of violence which is very well represented in these pages, however, and which receives some excellent analysis,
is legal or state-sanctioned violence against Roman citizens. Most of these appear in part II of the collection, which focuses on 'legitimate' violence of various kinds. Jill Harries kicks the section off well with a thoughtful general discussion of the legal tradition. She demonstrates not only that Republican laws on violence continued as a framework down to the times of Augustine and Theodosius II, but also that this continued reverence for the *mos maiorum* in the Christian era led to a great deal of confusion. Hartmut Ziche’s contribution takes this same broad conceptual approach, but applies it to the violent processes of tax collection in late antiquity. He rejects the idea that the late empire was a period of especially heavy taxation but notes that an increase in the violence associated with the process is plausible due to the injustices of the system and the efforts of local elites to distribute the burden away from their own class and onto those who were least able to pay. Other papers in this section focus on particular sources or incidents. Sofia Toralles Tovar, for example, examines papyrus evidence for the violence in the processes of arrest and incarceration in Egypt, confirming the terrible conditions under which the prisoners of the Roman state suffered. Thomas Sizgorich’s piece, by contrast, focuses on the trial held in Lazica in 556 which operated as a performance of the principles of late Roman imperialism and was intended to dazzle the Lazi with the power of Roman law: ‘a hierarchy of reason and violence’ (175). The legal violence of the emperor appears in a more negative light in Eric Fournier’s paper, as he reveals the vulnerability of Christian bishops to exile at the hands of their Christian rulers. Although Fournier notes that exile ‘ranks fairly low in the spectrum of violent acts’ (166), he none the less sees it as a reason why bishops felt compelled to build and maintain the networks of support which so characterise the late antique episcopate.

Papers on this same theme of state violence appear in other parts of the collection, demonstrating that any thematic divisions must of necessity be artificial. Daniel Washburn’s discussion of the Thessalonian affair in the fifth-century histories, for example, examines perhaps the most famous moment in late antiquity when an emperor enacted violence against his citizens. Washburn
demonstrates that in treating this episode, the historians felt compelled to set out the ideal balance in the relationship between ruler and people, and that the role of the church was another complicating element in their accounts. Jacqueline Long, meanwhile, looks at a moment when an emperor restrained himself from violence: when Aurelian backpedalled on a threat to kill all the citizens of Tyana. Different explanations of this decision in different sources, she shows, trace a shift in the sense of what made a good emperor. Young Kim's account of Epiphanius of Cyprus and the 'geography of heresy', meanwhile, maps the processes of textual exclusion of heretics against the manifest violence that threatened them in the law codes of the period. All of these papers emphasise the continuing power of the late Roman state and its ability to inflict violence as it felt necessary. They give a strong sense of the vulnerabilities of ordinary citizens in the face of governmental coercion.

Indeed the pervasive cultural embeddedness of violence is a theme which emerges from a number of the papers in this collection. Papers such as those of Clark and Moreira, already mentioned, show that violence was embedded in religious conceptual frameworks of the period. Janet B. Davis demonstrates that the same was true of the rhetorical curriculum, where speech topics often revolved around incidents of violence. Davis argues that although these exercises might seem abstract, they nonetheless reflected, constructed and helped to sustain a 'culture of violence' (204). These papers, among others, raise the question of whether late antiquity was an especially violent age, and this is one of the framing issues raised by Drake in his introduction.

A number of contributors, however, answer in the negative. Even though Zimmerman sees the celebration of violence as a peculiarly Roman trait, he maintains that the violence of past societies is not truly measurable and therefore not comparable. The articles by Walter Pohl and Ralph Mathisen, meanwhile, each in its own way, reject the idea that the barbarians were more violent than the Romans. For Pohl, violence in late antique armies was
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brought about by their structure and how they were used, not their increasingly 'barbarian' composition. He points out that our sources play up the violence of barbarians for a number of reasons, and doubts that the sixth century was any worse than the ages either before or after it. Mathisen also focuses on the textual image of the violent barbarian, and breaks down its origins and functions. Although he admits, therefore, that barbarian pillagers, were not 'in reality looking for art and poetry' (34), his emphasis is on the ways in which barbarian violence was manufactured by Roman authors as an appropriate antithesis for proper, civilised behaviour. Wolf Liebescheutz disagrees. His contribution, on the violence in the barbarian successor kingdoms, sees Germanic society as markedly more violent than what had come before, largely due to the systems of compensation and retribution outlined in the law codes. Contra Zimmerman and others, therefore, Liebescheutz sees Merovingian Gaul as 'more violent' than Roman Gaul, precisely because violence was no longer purely a state monopoly (46).

Different definitions of violence, and of what kind of violence matters most, are once again behind these different conclusions. The conclusions reached by these scholars, however, also depend in large part on the approaches they take to their sources. Whereas Pohl and Mathisen emphasise the constructed nature of literary accounts of violence, Liebescheutz takes them far more at face value. This is a fault-line which divides papers throughout the collection. On the literal side, for example, we find Amelia Robertson-Brown's attack on scholars who downplay the violence in struggles between pagans and Christians for control over Panhellenic sanctuaries. The active contestation over these, she maintains, has been for too long neglected or denied. On the sceptical side, by contrast, we find Brent Shaw, who doubts that the picture of circumcellion violence which emerges from our sources bears any reference whatsoever to the realities of the African countryside. The violence in these accounts, he insists, is purely fictive. Ultimately, those scholars who 'believe' their sources see more violence than those who do not, and it is a strength of the collection that it includes papers from both perspectives, rather than imposing a single viewpoint,
even if coherence is reduced as a result. Nonetheless, some of the best papers in the collection show that the issue is not a simple one. David Riggs, for example, grapples thoughtfully with the status of his evidence in his piece on the Christianisation of the countryside in North Africa. He notes the 'profound disconnect' (298) between the rhetoric of his sources and the realities on the ground, but concludes in the end that the balance between coercion and persuasion was complex and that the two were not mutually exclusive. Edward Watts, meanwhile, shows that even undoubted moments of violence are constructed for us by our historical sources. He examines the ways in which the murder of Hypatia was described in three different subsequent accounts and notes that each source uses the episode as a vehicle through which to express ideas about legitimate civic violence. We need not doubt that Hypatia died horribly, to see that our picture is inescapably shaped for us.

Relatively few papers in the collection, however, really get to grips with the task of 'explaining' the violence of late antiquity. The main exception to this is an excellent contribution by Carlos R. Galvao-Sobrinho which attempts to understand the violence of the early Arian controversy. Galvao-Sobrinho insists that we must 'take theology seriously' (324) in examining these disputes and insists that the doctrinal controversies were far from abstract for the laity of Alexandria. On the contrary, he maintains, theological differences created crises of 'radical doubt' to which believers responded with violent anger (331). Galvao-Sobrinho's article is a timely reminder that the mentalities of late antiquity, and the violence which resulted from them, are not as far from our world as we might wish.

Ultimately, this collection of papers is a valuable addition, not just to the history of violence but to the field of late antiquity in general. Indeed, although Drake's introduction sets the papers in the volume into the framework of the long-established 'decline and fall' vs 'change and continuity' debate in late antique studies, in many ways the collection shows how far most scholars have moved past that rather narrow and increasingly political argument. The quality
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of the papers is mixed, perhaps inevitable in a volume of this length and deriving from a conference, and the overall impression can be incoherent at times, but there are some important contributions within its pages which will be of interest to scholar, student and lay reader alike.

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