
Reviewed by: Brian A. Catlos
Religious Studies, University of Colorado Boulder
brian.catlos@colorado.edu

Date posted: 01 June 2021

This volume represents the result of a working group, “Constantine’s Dream: Belonging, Deviance, and the Problem of Violence in Early Christianity,” convened from 2009 to 2012, focusing on the maintenance of social order within the “small worlds” of the domestic realm. The emphasis is on the lived experience of the “little people” – including women, children and the enslaved – accessed by critically re-examining formal written sources, reading them against the grain, and controlling for the often-distorting agendas of their high-status authors. The authors draw on micro-historical perspectives to plum the social malaise that characterized the Roman and post-Roman world of Late Antiquity. They focus also on the “little big men” (cf.: Brown) who served as hinges between the local and imperial structures of power – regional and local elites whose crucial role in these societies has long been obscured or discounted. The power relationships that developed among these mid-level political and religious agents effectively comprised the socio-political fabric of these societies; their failure could have profound consequences in terms of stability. The accent is not so much on ideals and ideologies but on human agency and role of individuals in manifesting and giving substance to these otherwise ephemeral and abstract forces. The result is a collection of 15 engaging and original studies grouped in three parts, focusing respectively on women and children, slaves and “Knowledge, Power, and Symbolic Violence,” drawing on legal, religious and literary texts. This is a book that will be useful for specialists and graduate students as well as scholars of the pre-Modern in general, and historians interested in questions of violence and social control and historiographical methodology.
Table of Contents

Introduction. The violence of small worlds: re-thinking small-scale social control in late antiquity: 1
- Kate Cooper and Jamie Wood

1. Female crime and female confinement in late antiquity: 15
- Julia Hillner
2. Holy beatings: Emmelia, her son Gregory of Nyssa, and the Forty Martyrs of Sebasteia: 39
- Vasiliki Limberis
3. Power, faith, and reciprocity in a slave society: domestic relationships in the preaching of John Chrysostom: 59
- Jonathan Tallon
4. A predator and a gentleman: Augustine, autobiography, and the ethics of Christian marriage: 76
- Kate Cooper

Part II. 'Slaves, Be Subject to your Masters': Discipline, Reciprocity, and Moral Autonomy in a Slave Society: 103
- Chris L. de Wet
6. Constructing complexity: slavery in the small worlds of early monasticism: 131
- Lillian Larsen
7. Disciplining the slaves of god: monastic children in Egypt at the end of antiquity: 151
- Maria Chiara Giorda

8. John Chrysostom and the strategic use of fear: 173
- Blake Leyerle
9. The fear of belonging: the violent training of elite males in the late fourth century: 188
- Jamie Wood
10. Words at war: textual violence in Eusebius of Caesarea: 213
- Aaron Johnson
12. Coercing the catechists: Augustine's *De Catechizandis rudibus*: 256
- Melissa Markauskas

Part IV. Vulnerability and Power: Christian Heroines and the Small Worlds of Late Antiquity: 275
13. Reading Thecla in fourth-century Pontus: violence, virginity, and female autonomy in Gregory of Nyssa's Life of Macrina: 277
   • James Corke-Webster
   • David Natal
15. Women on the edge: violence, 'othering', and the limits of imperial power in Euphemia and the Goth: 318
   • Thomas Dimambro
Bibliography: 337