

quite a few looking at non-literary cultural dimensions. Quite a number of chapters are illustrated (some in colour), which is attractive and adds to the variety of analytical methods and appeal of this volume. There is a heavy emphasis on the fifth and sixth centuries, with Justinian, unsurprisingly, occupying a central position in the volume. I found Gador-Whyte's investigation of how Procopius uses *tyche* as an equivalent term for God particularly interesting. Neil examines the ways in which Roman bishops of the mid-fifth century engaged in benefaction for the city in place of (or in co-operation with) emperors. However, there is no real mention of the East, so it does seem a little out of place. Perhaps some comparison with what was happening in Constantinople would have been helpful. The idea that Innocent I was the son of his predecessor Anastasius I in the office of Roman bishop (57) is one I have criticized as being a misreading of Jerome (*Vigiliae Christianae* 61 [2007], 30–41). Gillett's musings on how otherness was defined in Byzantine literature has resonance for people today as ethnic tensions are evident in so many countries. Scott's argument that Malalas' trivia gives us a good insight into the fifth century and into the reliability of what has generally been regarded as an unreliable account is valuable for our appreciation of this source. With all the emphasis on the early centuries of the Byzantine empire, the chapters by Nash, Stone, Buckley, and Gielen that consider the tenth century onwards are helpful for the balance in the volume. I was a little disappointed with Stone's contribution in that it really did not set the analysis of the encomiastic literature in its historical contexts. There are the briefest of mentions of historical events, but nothing to really help the reader situate the material unless they knew something already about the reigns of the six emperors being praised. The same could be said of Buckley's paper and a presumption that the reader already has the historical context. All in all this is a welcome addition to Byzantine scholarship in Australia and an impressive showcase of what research is taking place here. It is a fitting tribute to the Jeffreys and would be of great benefit for those interested in the topic of Byzantine imperial involvement in culture.

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Ní Bhrolcháin, Muireann, *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*
(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2009) paperback; x + 210 pages; RRP €24.95;
ISBN 9781846821776

Muireann Ní Bhrolcháin has taught in this field for the past twenty-five years at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth. The book reads as though it might have originated as a series of lectures in that context. It introduces the reader to the background of the literature of the Old and

Middle Irish periods, and then gives a précis of each of the major groups of literature, recounting the storylines of some of the better-known tales. There are chapters devoted to the Mythological, Heroic, and Kings' Cycles, the otherworld, kings and goddesses, heroes, and poetry. A short afterword points out the sparsity of publications within this subject area, and laments both the lack of scholarly work on these materials and the rarity of translations produced by Irish scholars for the general public. The book incorporates a very attractive set of sixteen colour plates, including several manuscript images, some of which relate to the period of the literature.

It is unfortunate that they are not explained, or generally even referred to, in the text. These plates are, however, likely to appeal to the audience for whom the book is most likely to be rewarding: the general public and those with a casual interest in early Irish literature and culture more broadly. Despite the presence of a sixteen-page section of notes, a nineteen-page bibliography and an index, the book does not present any new scholarly research, analysis, or insights, and the scholarly audience is unlikely to find it of much interest. It is perhaps a matter of slight regret that any scholar contemplating publication of a more weighty survey of early Irish literature may find it more difficult to interest a publisher now that this introduction has been produced. This book would have benefitted greatly from the services of a serious editor and proof-reader. The cover is elegantly designed, featuring Jim Fitzpatrick's drawing of Oisín at Royal Tara, and the book would look well on any coffee table or bookshelf.

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Oakley, Francis, *Empty Bottles of Gentilism: Kingship and the Divine in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages (to 1050)*

(New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010) hardback; xiii + 306 pages; RRP \$38.00 ISBN 9780300155389

Francis Oakley's title comes from Thomas Hobbes [*Leviathan*, pt. 4, ch. 45], whom Oakley quotes at the beginning of his book. Oakley has argued most persuasively, taking a broad view of many peoples and their rulers, that the ideology of leadership across centuries, locations, and cultures remained sacral kingship which part in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the popes appropriated, eventually assuming the role of successors of the former Roman emperors. Oakley states as his aim over three volumes, this being the first, both to address in depth the political thinking of the centuries labelled as "medieval" and "to effect something of a shift in the perspective from which we characteristically view that body of thought" (ix). A challenging aim indeed! Oakley states that the Middle Ages has erroneously been omitted from the history of western political thinking. His proposed title of