Weeber, K.-W. 2006. *Luxus im alten Rom. Die öffentliche Pracht*. Darmstadt, Primus Verlag. 192 S., 90 Abb. Pr. € 39.90.

Professor Weeber (Wuppertal and Bochum Universities) is well-known for a considerable series of books on the city of Rome and its daily life. In the tradition of his compatriots Ludwig Friedländer, Joachim Marquardt, and August Mau he presents a multi-volume *Sittengeschichte* of the ancient inhabitants of the biggest metropolis of the ancient world. The most recent book is dedicated to the public amenities given to the citizens of the *Urbs*. The term *Luxus* is defined as too great a richness, opulence, bounty, and so on, very seducing and corrupting, and therefore also dangerous for people who cannot handle it with care. In public life, the authorities tried to canalise these temptations by constructing and tutoring amenities for the whole population, hoping to keep them under control at the same time they gave them permission to yell during performances and transgress ordinary behaviour. That means that complexes like baths and theatres, the Colosseum and the Circus Maximus are presented at length in well-illustrated chapters. However, Weeber also includes sections about prominent urban features like aqueducts and porticoes. An interesting chapter focuses on the public latrines: they gradually developed into the luxurious *Prachtlatrinen*—a term coined by Richard Neudecker—in which the rich could ‘publicly’ defecate in an honourable way. The ‘democratic’ simple multi-seaters of the Republic and first decades of the Empire would be used by *hoi polloi* and in this way the clear class-society also reflected in urban facilities.

Weeber is gifted with a facile pen and displays an apt choice of ancient sources. But it is the emphasis laid on the latter that makes the book, in my opinion, very old-fashioned and sometimes tedious. All those authors are so witty, so excellent, have such a cute and critical eye. . . . The written sources are still considered as the *nec plus ultra* for our knowledge and understanding of the ancient world. Neudecker’s monograph on the splendid *latrinae*, to give one example, clearly shows how archaeological research adds indispensable information to the data known from the ancient sources, which is true for most aspects described above. A short alphabetical list of modern publications is added; a bibliographical note at the beginning of each chapter singling out specific works would, however, have been helpful. Now, the notes mainly refer to Greek and Latin authors. The book is addressed to the general reader, but will provide a lot of information for classicists and other students of Roman society as well.

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