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Review Editor: Andrew Devereux (History: University of California San Diego)

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Cooper, Kate, and Jamie Wood, eds. *Social Control in Late Antiquity: The Violence of Small Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020). Pp. xiv + 380. ISBN 978-1108479394
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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 plumb 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.



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