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THIS WEEK

A “mere *TLS* review”, writes Christopher Kelly this week, can hardly dislodge the long-established image of Byzantium as obscurantist, backward and inferior to the Rome that its civilization left behind. But in noting the key role of the historian, Judith Herrin (pictured), in forty years of patiently attempted revisionism, he hopes that 500 years of seeing East as essentially less than West might gradually be coming to an end. The books that he is reviewing include two volumes of essays which explore the myths of excess bureaucracy and isolation – and of women who are “over-sexed in public and over-pious in private”. Byzantium still, however, lacks a “major new history that moves beyond the recent rush of handbooks and companions”. Margaret Cameron, Herrin’s predecessor in the Chair of Late Antiquity and Byzantine studies at London, has made “an impassioned and sympathetic plea” for her fellow scholars to be “more ambitious”.



Peter Thonemann considers two new contributions to the study of Thucydides, the first showing the wide range of lessons that later thinkers drew from the *History of the Peloponnesian War*, the second, Geoffrey Hawthorn’s *Thucydides on Politics*, an “idiosyncratic book, mostly in a good way” which applies the principles of modern sociology to the clash of Athens and Sparta in the fifth century BC. Thonemann praises Hawthorn’s “boldness and clarity of argument” while being gently suspicious of his selection of passages to suit his thesis.

During the First World War Katherine Mansfield, John Middleton Murry, D. H. Lawrence and Frieda Lawrence shared a catastrophic idyll in Cornwall and London which, as Gerri Kimber reveals this week, provided the backdrop for an “unpublished and unnamed play by Tennessee Williams”. In a scene called “Night of the Zeppelin” the friends celebrate a cold Christmas with a charade about Nero fiddling at Rome and speculation on how much the price of a single torpedo would transform their personal finances.

PS

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