Christopher Moore's *The Virtue of Agency. Sōphrosynē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece*[8] offers a monograph on another well-known but less famous Greek virtue. This study, however, covers a lengthier period than Anderson's book on justice. It includes chapters not only on the classical period but also on the early history of *sōphrosynē* (traditionally translated as 'temperance', 'self-control', or 'sound-mindedness'), Heraclitus' fragments on *sōphrosynē*, Euripides' plays that touch on this virtue, as well as late Pythagorean texts, and an appendix on epigraphic material. Moore also discusses the translation in another appendix. There are, of course, chapters dedicated to the late fifth century, Xenophon, Socrates, three chapters on Plato, and one on Aristotle. I will resist the temptation of appraising such a monumental book here. Instead, I recommend anyone interested in virtue ethics and ancient theory of action read this erudite, well-written book.

DANIEL VÁZQUEZ

Mary Immaculate College, Limerick, Ireland
Daniel.Vazquez@mic.ul.ie

doi:10.1017/S0017383524000263

This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/), which permits non-commercial re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the same Creative Commons licence is included and the original work is properly cited. The written permission of Cambridge University Press must be obtained for commercial re-use.

Roman history

Three brilliant recent books get us to think harder about risk in ancient Rome and Roman approaches to risk-taking. They are very different from one another, both in the evidence they cover and the approaches they take, and that in itself reflects the ubiquitous, or indeed proteiform, nature of the subject matter: risk is all around, as we all know.

Jerry Toner has provided a general overview of risk in the Roman world that is in keeping with the remit and aims of the *Key Themes in Ancient History* series at CUP, and gives a fine example of how to produce a strong summative account whilst conveying a sense of the potential of the material and the scale of what remains to be done with it.[1] He engages, on the one hand, with recent work on risk and risk-taking in the social sciences, at the intersection between sociology and anthropology, and, on the other, with important contributions in ancient history, most notably Brent Shaw's argument that the Romans had a fundamentally different and profoundly narrower view of the future than the one prevailing in modern times. He seeks to explore areas in which 'various methods of probabilistic thinking' (p. 13) operated: law, religion, finance, trade. Even if Rome lacked a firmly quantitative or numerical

[8] *The Virtue of Agency. Sōphrosynē and Self-Constitution in Classical Greece.* By Christopher Moore. New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xiv + 394. Hardback £71.00, ISBN: 978-0-19-766350-9.

[1] *Risk in the Roman World.* By Jerry Toner. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. viii + 147. Paperback, £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-72321-3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

approach to risk, strategies to assess, recognize, and address it were developed well before the emergence of what Alexandre Koyré called 'the universe of precision'. Toner takes a fruitful look at the patterns of risk-taking and risk-avoidance, and to the development of a set of traditional attitudes in this area that he terms 'risk culture'. Oracular literature provides a valuable vantage point on what people may have feared or valued; the most rewarding aspects of the project, though, reside in the ability to bring down divides that in the modern experience are taken for granted: as Toner shows in Chapter 4, building techniques are just as significant parts of the problem as interest rates and attempts at dream interpretation. The problem has a further dimension: attempts to identify and address 'moral risks', whether luxury, adultery, or negligence towards the gods, could be turned into powerful features of elite domination and opportunities to crystalize the existing power relations between rulers and ruled. There might be a lesson for our times in this argument, even though Toner must be right in his emphasis on the fundamentally different approaches to risk between ancient Rome and 'modernity' (which in this book is tacitly defined as capitalistic and European/North American).

A key strength of Toner's book is the generous range of its coverage, both chronological and thematic. Two other contributions on risk take a much more focused approach. Julie Bothorel has produced the fullest account to date of lot-drawing in Republican Rome.[2] This is prima facie a topic of public law or institutional history, and indeed most of the book is taken up by the careful and reliable discussion of dozens of case studies: the draw was used to allocate tasks and commands among serving magistrates, and the dynamics and implications of that exercise were profoundly significant. The scale of the topic and the frequency of the practice, though, suggests that there is something even bigger at stake: the title of Bothorel's book, *Gouverner par l'hasard*, 'governing by chance', echoes that of an important study on Roman auspices that appeared a decade ago, Yann Berthelet's *Gouverner avec les dieux* ('governing with the gods').[3] The gods are indeed a fundamental aspect of the problem: by entrusting the resolution of a matter to a draw the Republic effectively allocates its solution to them, and takes it away from the human remit, albeit in a carefully harnessed way. It thus provides an invaluable opportunity to curb and control competition over power, and the patterns of advancement through the ranks of the members of the political elite. Bothorel convincingly shows that this is a key theme in Republican history; the various changes it goes through are a symptom of its significance. An important aspect of her contribution is the periodization it puts forward: a first phase when allocation by lot (*sortitio*) is the default principle, from the introduction of the four-member praetorship in 227 BCE to the reform of Gaius Gracchus that introduced the allocation of the provinces a year prior to the election of the magistrates; a phase between Gaius Gracchus and Sulla; and the late Republican period, in which a number of reform attempts were made, from Sulla's

[2] , *Le Tirage au sort des provinces sous la République romaine et au début du principat (227 av. J.-C.-14 apr. J.-C.)*. By Julie Bothorel. Rome, Ecole française de Rome, 2023. Pp. 569. Paperback €36, ISBN: 978-2-7283-1579-6. Open Access at: https://books.openedition.org/efr/48514?lang=en, last accessed 22.10.24).

[3] Y. Berthelet, *Gouverner avec les dieux: Autorité, auspices et pouvoir sous la République romaine et sous Auguste* (Paris, 2015).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

enlargement of the praetorship in 81 to the reforms of Pompey in 52 and Caesar in 48. The Augustan settlement, as is the case in many other respects, is revealing of a fundamental aspect of Republican history: it leaves hardly any room for lot-drawing, with the appointment of a large number of legati *extra sortem*, i.e. without drawing lots, and with the princeps taking control over whatever lot operation was left. The draw retains a role in the imperial period, both in Rome and in municipal contexts, but is no longer a way of harnessing political competition: it simply dictates the timing of the career progression of individuals who have roughly the same age and experience.

Sortitio is thus a long-standing strategy for the containment of significant risk factors on the internal front. The work of Arthur Eckstein, two decades ago, firmly brought fear as a major explanatory factor into the history of Roman imperialism: the history of the transmarine wars has been made sense of through the rubric of the Realist paradigm, drawn from International Relations, and the political context of the Mediterranean world in the late-Hellenistic period has been shown to be rife with risks and threats. Pierre-Luc Brisson has now made a consequential contribution in the same vein, developing Eckstein's insights and applying them to the study of a specific segment: the four decades between the peace of Apamea and the sack of both Corinth and Carthage.[4] It was a 'unipolar age', as Brisson puts it: discussing what made it distinctive is a matter of real historical importance, and has special significance for those who are conversant with the developments following the end of the Cold War. The Mediterranean in the second-century BCE is a context of 'international anarchy', in which there is no overarching authority that might contain those who breach it and bring disorder into it. The unipolar set-up is seen as the outcome of a process in which the Roman Senate seeks involvement in the East because it regards the strengthening of the Seleucid and Antigonid kingdoms as a potential risk; the advent of Roman supremacy does not lead to a durable pacification, but to a new set of 'structural conditions of bellicosity' (a formula coined by Raymond Aron in a different setting), and a new set of risks: the choice of a number of small political and military players to strengthen their military resources might easily create the conditions for a pre-emptive military intervention of the unipolar force. The whole set of interstate relations in the Hellenistic Mediterranean can be seen as a complex risk-balancing exercise, in which tangible and psychological factors have relevant roles to play. On this reading, which explicitly takes issue with the influential paradigm developed by William Harris, there is no Roman exceptionalism to speak of, nor any distinctly Roman appetite for violence: Rome sought to address a security dilemma between getting involved on the Eastern front before being openly challenged or keeping a more cautious approach while risking unforeseen hostile action. In turn, the smaller polities of the Hellenistic world retained their concerns and ambitions; the model that Brisson sketches has the ambition to bring their agency into its proper focus.

The realist paradigm has long proved controversial material in the study of Roman imperialism, and Brisson's book does not set out to resolve that long-standing

[4] *Le Moment unipolaire. Rome et la Méditerranée hellénistique (188–146 a.C.),* Suppléments francophones de la revue *Phoenix*. By Pierre-Luc Brisson. Laval, Presses de l'Université Laval, 2023. Pp. xv + 478. Paperback $72, ISBN: 978-2-7637-4332-5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

disagreement. His contribution has three key rewards, which make it worthwhile reading to anyone who might be interested in this theme, whatever their methodological allegiances might be. It broadens the range of its theoretical reference points, with an especially productive engagement with the work of Aron; it provides a masterful overview of the debate that unfolded over the last fifteen years, and an equally successful overview of the intellectual background of the Realist paradigm, reaching back to the early twentieth century; and it keeps a strong and informed focus on the ancient evidence, literary and documentary alike.

Risk demands responses, and the creation and imposition of an order – of some kind – is an integral part of that strategy. Daniel Gargola's book is now a key reference point on the Roman ramifications of the problem; Dan-el Padilla Peralta has eloquently reminded us of the structurally oppressive dimension of the imposition of any Roman order.[5] James Ker has now made an utterly remarkable contribution to this debate by bringing time into the mix.[6] *The Ordered Day* is a dazzling exploration of how the day is made sense of, and spoken of in Roman culture. It explores three areas, through an impressive command of demanding and diverse evidence: the ways in which diurnal timekeeping was enabled and managed, and how time indications worked; Toner's concerns over precision (or lack thereof) in Roman culture also come into play here through a different route. The second part turns to literary representations of daily routines as strategies of being in the day, and as a way of defining an individual or a group in the social order. The problem, then, has a clear political dimension, and an historiographical one, too. There is a modern construction of the Roman day, and of Roman daily life, which has crucially shaped the teaching and popular depictions of ancient Rome, and whose most influential incarnation is Jerôme Carcopino's *La vie quotidienne à Rome à l'apogée de l'empire*. Ker's final chapter offers a most insightful charting of that line of inquiry, which has profound implication on how we go about ordering our own knowledge of ancient Rome. Nearly half a century ago T. P. Wiseman spoke of Classics as an indivisible subject, in which history and literature could unproblematically shed light on each other;[7] Ker's book shows that this aspiration still retains all its meaningfulness.

Over the last decade or so there has been a clear and firm shift in ancient history towards the exploration of history 'from below'; Roman history has been providing plenty of relevant case studies. Cyril Courrier's great book has placed the Roman plebs firmly on the map as a major political force, well into the imperial period.[8] Nicolas Tran has now taken Courrier's cue to produce an account of Roman history that is consistently framed around the plebs: a thought experiment, and a largely rewarding one.[9] There is no narrative discussion, of course, although the book does

[5] D. J. Gargola, *The Shape of the Roman Order: the Republic and Its Spaces* (Chapel Hill, 2017); D. Padilla Peralta, 'Epistemicide: the Roman Case', *Classica* 33 (2020), 151–86.

[6] *The Ordered Day. Quotidian Time and Forms of Life in Ancient Rome.* By James Ker. Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 2023. Pp. xiv+458. 9 illustrations. Hardback $59.95, ISBN: 13-978-1-4214-4517-5.

[7] T. P. Wiseman, *Titus Flavius and the Indivisible Subject* (Exeter, 1978).

[8] C. Courrier, *La plèbe de Rome et sa culture (fin du IIe siècle av. J.-C. – fin du Ier siècle ap. J.-C.)* (Rome, 2014).

[9] *La plèbe. Une histoire populaire de Rome.* By Nicolas Tran. Paris, Passés composés, 2023. Pp. 288. Paperback €22, ISBN: 979-1-0404-0380-7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

retain a diachronic focus. Tran's 'popular history of Rome' is organized around some key themes: the shape of the city as an inhabited space, its demography and its mortality rate (with some thoughtful pushback against the 'urban graveyard' model); the social and political organization of the plebs; and – perhaps most originally – the social differentiation within the plebs. Tran brings to bear his first-rate epigraphical expertise to produce a substantial discussion of the role of workers in the social fabric of the city of Rome. The final part of the book takes us to the discussion of plebeian sociability: the different levels on which it occurred, the spaces in which it unfolded, and the key role that festivals had in that connection. Tran's discussion is packed with stimulating information, and is consistently judicious; it has the rare quality of blending the clarity of the textbook with the energy and pace of the historical essay. As an overview of what a social history of Rome that is not centred on the elite has to offer, this book has a great deal to offer. An English translation would be invaluable, and would crucially benefit important and timely conversations on the direction of the subject.

Tran makes a point of writing great men out of the kind of Roman history he is interested in telling: his account is as far removed from biography as one can possibly imagine. Even the most committed detractors of the genre, though, are likely to concede that Jeff Tatum's extended biography of Mark Antony has most significant historical insights to offer.[10] At just over 480 pages of busily (all too busily) printed text, *A Noble Ruin* readily imposes itself as the most authoritative treatment of Mark Antony's life in any language, but is in a much broader sense a major contribution to the understanding of his times. It rests on a deep and long-standing engagement with the evidence on the period and the modern debates on the history of the Roman Republic, to which Tatum has been making characteristically insightful contributions over the last quarter of a century or so. The endnotes are as user-unfriendly as it gets (through no fault of the author), but are a brilliant testimony to the range and depth of the research that underpins this book, and should be used as a serious working tool in their own right. Tatum has taken stock of a vast body of scholarship, and has had to be selective; I was left wondering what he made of Giusto Traina's much slimmer, if comparably punchy, 2003 biography of Antony.[11]

The degree of detail that it attains and the thematic range it covers make Tatum's book a paragon for the biographical treatment of any major figure of the Republican age. What is especially impressive is how he has navigated the periods for which the evidence is slight or frustrating. Little is known about the youth of Mark Antony, but the opening chapter does an excellent job at sketching the social and political landscape in which a man of Antony's condition and standing joined the political fray. The discussion of the trajectory of A. Gabinius is also very rewarding, and the care that Tatum devotes to it is not just a measure of his scholarship: it is part of the core case of this book, which proposes to understand Mark Antony as a member of the Republican nobility, and views his whole trajectory as the endeavour of an individual who was seeking political affirmation within a Republican set-up. His conduct in the immediate aftermath of the Ides of March, and his ability to build a common ground

[10] *A Noble Ruin. Mark Antony, Civil War, and the Collapse of the Roman Republic.* By W. Jeffrey Tatum. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2024. Pp. xii+482. Hardback £26.99, ISBN: 978-0-19-769490-9.

[11] G. Traina, *Marco Antonio* (Rome-Bari, 2003).

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

with the Liberators was 'a masterly performance of statesmanship' (127): it marked both the restoration of constitutional order and the first step in the revival of a strategy in which 'the idea of Caesar' kept all its traction. Towards the end Tatum even suggests that, had Antony prevailed at Actium, he might have handed control over the Republic back to the Senate, like Sulla had done. Unlike Octavian, Antony was 'no visionary': hence the need to place his study in a firmly Republican context, and to recentre his trajectory towards Rome, rather than towards Alexandria. He may be more productively compared to Gabinius, Scribonius Curio, or Cornelius Dolabella than to his rival in the civil war. Any reading of Antony must necessarily be attempted against the grain: the bias of the tradition is profoundly hostile, and one is ubiquitously presented with the tension between the accidents of survival and the deformation of what did make the cut. Against this backdrop, other accounts of Antony remain distinctly possible; Tatum's book will be a necessary and most rewarding starting point.

Emperors have been receiving a considerable degree of attention of late, with some important recent titles commanding much discussion, and receiving suitably ample discussion in this journal. Panayiotis Christoforou has made a productive and distinctive contribution to this new wave of scholarly interest by shifting the focus to how emperors were represented: away from what the emperors did, and focusing more closely on what emperors were supposed to be doing, or were deemed to be doing.[12] His emphasis shifts from the emperors to the emperorship as an idea, or indeed as a problem. This is not a study of imperial self-representation, nor a study of the political culture of the imperial age: it is an exploration of the roles that emperors were expected to fulfil, and of the strategies with which they were represented, of the range of roles and functions that were allocated to them, and of the hopes and fears that coalesced around them. The emperor is as much of a 'moving target' (4) as an orientation point. Christoforou articulates this point through six thematic chapters: after an introduction to the key ancient and modern representations of imperial power, he takes in turn the idea of the emperor as a guarantor of justice, as a benefactor, as a bringer of marvels, and as a subject of humour and derision. His stated aim is to provide 'a thought-provoking tapestry' (5): the implications of this study are in fact relevant to the understanding of the structural features of the imperial edifice. The fundamental lesson is that the visions of the emperor affect the whole of Roman society, and are not confined to the upper orders. The role of the emperor is an intrinsically paradoxical one, which cannot be adequately understood as the outcome of a totalitarian framework; while might and fear are essential parts of the picture, they are only a fraction of it. 'Liminality' is the key operating principle. Christoforou's elegant discussion yields at least three key substantive sets of dividends. First, it explores in impressive detail a staggeringly wide range of case studies, on which he offers thoughtful and reliable guidance: his coverage of the evidence is as thorough as it is creative, and will be an invaluable resource to students of the imperial period. Secondly, it is driven by a remarkable commitment to elide the differences between different kinds of evidence: at some point he speaks of a 'connectivity of genres'.

[12] *Imagining the Roman Emperor. Perceptions of Rulers in the High Empire.* By Panayiotis Christoforou. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xvii+271. Hardback £85, ISBN: 978-1-009-36249-8.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

In his approach, the *Acta Isidori* are as instructive a source as *Annals* IV, and the epigraphically preserved Menogenes dossier from Sardis sets the scene for the elucidation of major passages from Suetonius or the *Historia Augusta*. In times of stifling specialisms, this book reminds us of how invigorating the close reading of a wide range of evidence can be to the construction of capacious interpretative frameworks. Thirdly, it shows that material concerns are inextricably tied up with imaginary dynamics: as the concluding chapter powerfully shows, the emperor is at the centre of a set of discourses and preoccupations on prosperity and stability. The Golden Age theme is part of this motif. The development of the imperial cult is equally relevant to the understanding of the emperor as a temporal figure; in turn, the intimation that the emperor might indeed be a god, which is most forcefully articulated in Gaius Caesar's address to the Jewish embassy, should be taken more seriously than is customarily the case.

There is a further important dimension to this project. Christoforou never settles for an explicit periodization, nor is he interested in identifying evolving or developing patterns from one emperor to another, or from one dynasty to another: that is an intentional move, which focuses upon overarching patterns and on the conceptual stakes of his subject. There is an important, and in fact twofold, ambition here: to bring the subject into dialogue with the comparative study of other forms of autocracy; and to link it up with debates in political philosophy, with a brief engagement in the final chapter with Agamben and Hegel (in this order). There is much potential for outward-looking work on the back of this brilliant book; but the key point is that this is another piece of essential reading for anyone interested in imperial history.

Another major contribution on the early Principate stands out in the recent bibliography, and warrants at least a brief mention here. Alison Cooley has produced a new edition of the decree passed by the Roman Senate in 20 CE, shortly after the conviction of the senator Cn. Calpurnius Piso for his involvement with the death of Germanicus, in which the penalties imposed on him and his family are set out in detail: the so-called *Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre*.[13] This document is known from several fragmentary copies that were found (mostly in Spain) from the 1990s, and its standard editions appeared in Spanish and in German respectively: it is a document of profound importance to the understanding of Roman political history in the early Principate, as well as on matters of public and criminal law. The fact that bronze copies of the decree were unearthed in Spain is in turn of considerable historical significance for what it suggests about the relations between Rome and the provinces. That would suffice to make this document a first-rate source on the history of the early Principate, and to salute Cooley's edition and English translation as an invaluable contribution to the teaching of a crucial junction in Roman history. But there is more: the inscribed copy of the Senate decree intersects most productively with the account of the affair that Tacitus gave in the *Annales*, and thus enables important insights into the working method of the historian, the extent of his reliance official records, and his chronological choices.

[13] *The* Senatus consultum de Cn. Pisone patre. *Text, Translation, and Commentary.* By Alison E. Cooley, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xii + 272. 10 figures. Hardback £64.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-49445-8, paperback £19.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-71456-3.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

Cooley has now produced the new reference discussion of this text, based on the direct scrutiny of the fragments of the inscription, and entailing a detailed commentary that remarkably sets it within its wider historical and intellectual context. The standard is what those who are familiar with Cooley's edition of Augustus' *Res gestae* would confidently expect. In this case, though, readers are also offered a further, even more substantial, set of guidance by the extensive introduction that opens the volume – effectively a short monograph, in which the Piso affair is discussed in painstaking detail, and the evidence of the *senatus consultum* is powerfully triangulated with that of Tacitus, and the edition of the document branches out towards the exploration of other related issues: its place in the political discourse of the Tiberian period (including an excellent discussion of aspects of Valerius Maximus' project), the monumentality of inscriptions in the early Principate (with a though-provoking use of Gérard Genette's notion of 'paratexts'), and the reception of the Piso affair in the work of Robert Graves. This essay is exceptionally dense, and not always easy to navigate, but the concluding general index offers an excellent orientation point. The overall outcome is a work of exceptional importance, which should feature on the shelves of anyone with a serious interest in Roman imperial history (a paperback edition is already available) – a book that can be read and used on several levels: as a first-rate teaching resource; as the authoritative treatment of a fraught junction in Roman imperial history; as the accomplished discussion of a host of thorny technical problems; and as a reminder that the detailed engagement with the evidence is never a dry pursuit.

A new monograph on Tacitus, meanwhile, shows how close reading can crucially enable and corroborate big-picture insights. Bram ten Berge takes a new look at the whole range of Tacitus' oeuvre, in a firmly chronological order, from the *Agricola* to the *Annales*.[14] His claim is as neat as it is important: Tacitus' work is built on the tight integration of some leading themes, and on a network of 'autotextual interactions', which reflect the conscious use of his earlier texts as source texts. Tacitus emerges as a consistent and focused thinker, whose craft as an historian and a writer develops over time, but whose fundamental concerns do not shift throughout his five works. He is consistently sceptical towards the imperial regime; he has a strong interest in the expansion of the empire and in what ethnography can bring to its understanding; and he is especially keen to bring out the connection between eloquence, delation, and power. On this reading, the *Dialogus de oratoribus* is a truly pivotal work, which links up the early monographs and the two great narratives of early imperial history, and does justice to the range and depth of Tacitus' intellectual interests. Agricola is much more than the protagonist of his earliest work: he is a role model for responsible participation in the imperial regime. The *Annales* are the venue in which the main themes of Tacitus' oeuvre are articulated most fully and most proficiently; there is, though, a fundamental connection with his prior work that is not confined to verbal echoes or unwitting parallels, but is intended to elevate Tacitus' earlier works to significant sources in their own right, and to works that can reasonably aspire to a canonical status. We do not have the whole of Tacitus' work, of course, and if the argument of this book is correct then we are likely to be missing many more important

[14] *Writing Imperial History. Tacitus from* Agricola *to* Annales. By Bram ten Berge. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2023. Pp. x + 411. Hardback $80, ISBN: 978-0-472-13343-7.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

connections. What does survive provides sufficient evidence to attempt what ten Berge calls a sequential reading: it should be read as a closely integrated whole, and should be understood in the chronological order in which it was produced. The case for this radical reframing of Tacitus' work is presented in a cumulative fashion, and involves the detailed engagement with carefully chosen sections of text, in the quest for plausible textual parallels among different works, written several years apart from one another. Intertextual arguments can often prove divisive, and it is likely that this aspect of ten Berge's argument will not encounter unanimous acceptance. His overall case, though, is largely compelling. This book is undoubtedly a first-rate contribution to the study of Tacitus, and more generally of Roman historical thinking. Those who are looking for an impressively well-informed and remarkably measured introduction to Tacitus, steeped in the careful engagement with the complex history of the scholarship on this author, will find invaluable guidance here.

Having given emperors and senators their fair share of airtime, let us turn to very different quarters. Egypt wonderfully lends itself to studies in the *longue durée*, both in its internal dynamics and in its connections with other regions. Slavery is a theme for which we can access a record that ranges from Pharaonic times to the Umayyad period. It took the vision and energy of a great scholar like the late Jane Rowlandson to lay the foundations for a sourcebook that does justice to the topic in its breadth and complexity, and crucially enables and supports its teaching. Roger Bagnall and Dorothy Thompson led the completion of the project after Rowlandson's death, enlisting a number of outstanding specialists to bring together a set of 290 documents.[15] The result is a model for any future enterprises of this kind. The editors have tended to avoid the detailed elucidation of the single piece of evidence, and have instead sought to weave it into longer thematic essays that try to place the evidence into the bigger picture. That makes for demanding reading in places, but the rewards are considerable: the book makes accessible to the English-speaking reader material in a host of languages beyond Greek or Latin: Hieratic, Demotic, Aramaic, Coptic, and Arabic. This sourcebook is not just about sources, though: it also features a number of very successful historical essays. The introductory piece by Bagnall and Rowlandson on problems of definition and conceptualization is especially impressive, and should feature on the reading list of any slavery course. This formidably rich collection has the potential to transform the teaching of major aspects of Roman social history, from the pragmatics of enslavement to the role of imperial freedmen and the experience of enslaved workers; it should be required reading for anyone taking an interest in problems of dependence and exploitation in antiquity. Its overall focus, in fact, considerably exceeds the remit of Roman history, and is an apposite reminder that the discipline is part of much bigger conversations; in a distinctly different way, and from another angle, Ker's book makes the same point.

The final section of the volume touches upon the emergence of new forms of subordination and dependency, and special attention is paid to the colonate, a legal

[15] *Slavery and Dependence in Ancient Egypt. Sources in Translation.* Edited by Jane L. Rowlandson, Roger S. Bagnall, and Dorothy J. Thompson. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. xl + 485. Hardback £120, ISBN: 978-1-107-03297-2, paperback £39.99, ISBN: 978-1-107-68149-1.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

regime whereby registered tenants were attached to an estate for a long period of time, and were subjected to a range of obligations towards the landlord, which became especially significant in the late empire. Boudewijn Sirks has devoted a full-scale treatment to this topic, with the stated aim of encompassing its development in its full geographical and chronological extent.[16] The focus of his discussion is on the legal sources, which provide ample evidence for the existence of *ius colonatus* between the fourth and the sixth century, and enable the charting of its chronological debate with considerable precision. Sirks does not regard the colonate as a clearly defined legal or social status, or as an aspect of the overall production model in late antiquity, but as a specific form of exploitation that developed gradually, gained a more precise definition between the reign of Diocletian and that of Theodosius, and retained a significant role in the agrarian history of the Roman West and the Byzantine Empire. The discussion has an important methodological ramification: Sirks chooses to build his discussion through a method that he terms 'retrograde', i.e. by taking the codification of the phenomenon under Justinian as the starting point, and making his way backwards towards earlier periods, and understanding the evidence in light of what is known about later developments. The further back one goes, the less clear the picture becomes: breaking up the reassuring format of the linear discussion, though, can yield valuable lessons. The point of the method that this book puts forward is arguably just as significant as the authoritative account that it provides of a major development in the social and economic history of the late Roman empire.

Let us move to a topic of local interest and general significance. Most residents of North East England will remember the moment they first heard that the Sycamore Gap tree had been felled on the night of 27–28 September 2023: an act of senseless cruelty, for which two individuals are standing trial at Newcastle Crown Court. David Breeze has taken the chance to turn that grave loss to the heritage of the region into a catalyst for reflection, and even celebration.[17] The loss of such a beloved landmark focuses minds on the need to reflect on the duty of care that we have towards the landscape we inhabit, and on the bond of love that we have towards it. Breeze – the doyen of Hadrian's Wall studies – has gathered an impressive line-up of scholars around a simple call: to write a one-page piece on a specific stretch of the Wall. We are taken to sites large and small; we are shown artefacts and artworks, familiar and obscure alike; we are taken to old and new museums and are encouraged to remember and celebrate the contributions of generations of antiquarians and scholars. The journey is as visual as it is textual: each piece is flanked by a picture or a drawing. The starting point, of course, is a piece on the Sycamore Gap tree itself: Jim Crow located its earliest known record in a drawing in the diaries of the local historian John Hodgson, dating to October 1832. This is a remarkable volume in many ways, not least because of the supplement of affection that inhabits it – but it is, first and

[16] *The Colonate in the Roman Empire.* By Boudewijn Sirks. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2024. Pp. ix+348. Hardback £100, ISBN: 978-1-00-917260-8. For another recent major study of the colonate, which Sirks was not able to take into account, cf. O. Schipp, *Den Kolonat neu denken. Zur Aktualität eines Forschungsproblems* (Heidelberg, 2023).

[17] *Hadrian's Wall in Our Time. By* David J. Breeze (ed.), line drawings by Mark B. Richards. Oxford, Archaeopress Archaeology, 2024. Pp. xiii+224. 21 drawings, 75 colour figures, 15 b/w figures. Paperback £24.99, ISBN: 978-1-80327-734-9.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

foremost, a splendid repository of information, elegantly laid out and clearly presented, and a brilliant entry-level account of what the Wall has to offer to its visitors, whatever their interests and persuasions might be, and of the place it has in the communities that it touches. It should be on the radar of anyone who has even a tangential interest in Roman Britain, and should be warmly recommended to anyone who might be thinking to explore the Wall. *J. Collingwood Bruce's Handbook to the Roman Wall* (now in its fourteenth edition) will of course remain an irreplaceable resource, but the evocative power of this little book and its impressive accessibility will be hard to match.

Three recent works make important contributions to the study of the history of the discipline and its politics in inspiringly different ways. *Zapruder* is no traditional academic journal: it is a magazine that the Bologna-based *Storie in movimento* project has been producing for the last two decades, at the intersection between public history and political activism. Its stated brief is the exploration of social movements and social conflict, and its typical format is that of themed issues devoted to topics of cross-disciplinary significance. The first 2024 issue is devoted to the collective exploration of 'the weight of antiquity in contemporary times' and to the role of ancient history as an academic field in that connection: much of the discussion revolves around Roman history, starting from the Monty Python-inspired title *Romanes eunt domus.*[18] Francesco Casales, Simone Ciambelli, and Francesco Reali have gathered a line-up of scholars, mostly early-career, who make a powerful collective case for the ability of ancient history to be firmly contemporary. Much of the discussion, though, is rightly taken up by the shortcomings of the discipline as we currently know and inhabit it: Carmen Ruiz Vivas and Ambra Russotti denounce the sexism that mars the field, whether in the scoping of its questions or its recruitment practices; Alessandro Cristofori stresses the imperative need to link up the study of the ancient Mediterranean with that of East Asia, and on the parameters through which that should be responsibly conducted; and Andrea Avalli discusses instances of the degree to which Italian classical studies remained implicated with the legacy of fascism well after the war. There is also room, though, for case studies that put to the test the notion itself of 'classical' and the term 'Classics': Alessandro Roncaglia writes on the joys and the perils of working as an historical adviser to a TV series; Valentina Cabiale problematizes the notion itself of 'archaeological find'; and Mattia Di Pierro explores the enduring legacy of the notions of 'people' and 'plebs' in later discussions of social conflict, with special emphasis on John McCormick's reading of Machiavelli's *Discorsi. Romanes eunt domus* is the most substantial intervention into the debates on the decolonization of ancient history to have been made outside the English-speaking world, and one of the most informed and productive ever to have been put forward. It makes a rewarding read for anyone working in the field, whatever their persuasions might be; from early 2025, it is also available in Open Access.

One of the most valuable take-home points from the collection – well articulated in Emilio Zucchetti's contribution – is that the concept of 'cancel culture' lacks any analytical value. Advocating fundamental change in an academic field or in an

[18] *Zapruder. Storie in movimento. Rivista di storia della conflittualità sociale* 63 (2024). Pp. 163. ISSN: 1723-0020; ISBN: 979-12-223-0544-8. See https://storieinmovimento.org/2024/03/16/romane-eunt-domus-storia-antica-contemporanea/, last access 22.10.24.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

education system does not involve undoing or overlooking complex intellectual traditions. Quite the contrary: as several contributions to the *Zapruder* issue show, a serious engagement with the history of the discipline is part and parcel of any attempt to challenge and change its politics. That can also sharpen our reading of the political debates of our own time. The idea that major historical change might take the shape of a major anthropological commotion has been gaining new and sinister traction. The theory of 'ethnic substitution' is integral to the world-view of much of right-wing thought in Europe and North America; in at least one G7 country it explicitly underpins government policy. It is not an altogether new idea. The German historian Otto Seeck (born in Riga, trained in Berlin) framed his six-volume account of the history of the decline of the ancient world (1895–1920) around the concept of the 'extinction of the best' (*Ausrottung der Besten*): the most talented and the most decent individuals disappeared within the space of a few generations, making way for people that were both less capable and less morally strong. Seeck was an historian of commanding erudition and ability: his work was as influential as it was hotly contested even shortly after his appearance. His theory is as repulsive as it is deeply immersed in some key themes of the intellectual debate of the time; it is, in a way, a significant episode in the early reception of Darwinism in the wider intellectual discourse. Simone Rendina has written a brilliant reconstruction of the key aspects of Seeck's thought, the periodization choices that frame his work, its position in the historiographical debate, and its later reception.[19] His book is an excellent example of how to revisit a great and inherently problematic classic. It builds on a thorough knowledge of the evidence on which Seeck worked, it is informed throughout by a critical spirit, and it is consistently preoccupied with the connections between Seeck's work and the intellectual debates of the time. More work in the same vein (and of comparable standard) is needed to sustain the important debates on the shape and direction of the discipline by giving them much-needed historical depth.

A uniquely powerful contribution to that process comes from the autobiography of one of the greatest historians of our time.[20] Peter Brown's *Journeys of the Mind* ends its narrative in 1987 (the year of the passing of two key figures in Brown's life: his mother, Freda Warren, and his mentor, Arnaldo Momigliano), but it charts the emergence of a new way of understanding late antiquity and a new field of studies. Brown has produced a detailed account of his intellectual trajectory, where readers who are familiar with his work will recognize the distinctive combination of imagination, elegance, and warmth that is so typical of his prose. He achieves a very felicitous balance between the account of an extraordinary life trajectory, which took him from Dublin to colonial Sudan, from Oxford to Berkeley and then to Princeton, with formative stays in Paris, in Iran, and in Turkey, and the development of the themes and questions that informed his scholarship.

Seeck's work had a distinctive role in Brown's trajectory at some point in the early 1950, as he was an outstanding student at New College Oxford, and he started reading widely on the later Roman history, gradually populating the world of Augustine that he

[19] *Otto Seeck e il tramonto dell'antichità*. By Simone Rendina. Bologna, Società Editrice Il Mulino, 2023. Pp. x + 148. Paperback €16, ISBN: 978-88-15-38901-5.

[20] *Journeys of the Mind. A Life in History*. By Peter Brown. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2023. Pp. xv + 713. Hardback £38, $45. ISBN: 978-0-691-24228-6.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press

would later bring to life in his 1967 biography. Seeck was one of the foremost figures in the field, and Brown read his work with great care, exposing himself to the argument on the *Ausrottung der Besten* and the vision of the decline of early modern Catholic Europe that it sketched. Brown's reaction had the customary moral and intellectual clarity that would go on to inform his work: 'Such odious pronouncements were not for me' (277: one of the few negative statements to be found in over 700 pages). However, Seeck's work opened up questions that awaited proper investigation, and to which Brown would devote so much of his later work: restoring the historical agency of the protagonists of late-imperial history, and recognizing the significance of their contribution to their time without uncritically accepting the categories of decline and fall. For that purpose, the works of Santo Mazzarino and Henri-Irénée Marrou were much more fruitful guides. Brown's book is an invaluable document on the history of the modern historiography on the ancient world, and a remarkable provocation on its future development, and on the ways in which it can be meaningfully opened up. The flow of the narrative is sustained by a whole series of encounters and conversations: from Marrou to Momigliano, from Mary Douglas to Michel Foucault. But the most lingering lesson of this work is arguably the sense of kindness and gratitude which emanates from every page. That, too, is a fundamentally political point.

FEDERICO SANTANGELO

Newcastle University
federico.santangelo@ncl.ac.uk
doi:10.1017/S0017383524000275
This is an Open Access article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution licence (https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted re-use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Reception

While the reception of Greek tragedy is by now well-trodden terrain for the classical reception scholar, responses to Old Comedy are still harder to come by. Peter Swallow's study of the reception of Aristophanes in Britain in the Long Nineteenth Century examines the playwright's appearance, following a period in which there had been 'few translations, and no commentaries' in English, and his obscure contemporary references proved irksome to Hellenists (23).[1] As a result, while the political – or intentionally apolitical – dimensions of his case studies are a consistent topic throughout the study, we also see Swallow unpick some more subtle or 'subterranean' receptions among their more explicit companions. This is particularly the case in the chapter on W. S. Gilbert (1836–1911), who, although known as the 'English Aristophanes' (4), showed little in the way of direct acknowledgement of his Attic predecessor. However, characterizing Gilbert as a beloved, but moderate humourist, Swallow identifies several modes of Aristophanic reception across a number of his

[1] *Aristophanes in Britain: Old Comedy in the Nineteenth Century*. By Peter Swallow. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xii + 285. 30 b/w illustrations. Hardback £83, ISBN: 978-0-19-286856-5.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383524000275 Published online by Cambridge University Press