Check for updates

Classics edition of *Plato. Republic Book I*,[8] prepared, commented, and introduced by David Sansone. It is worth noting that, in many ways, Sansone's introduction to Book I can almost serve as an introduction to the *Republic* as a whole. Also of note is his view that, until more convincing investigations are carried out, 'there is no good reason to suppose that existing stylistic studies can reliably tell us that Book One dates to a different period in Plato's career than the other books of the *Republic*' (7). The third commentary is Christopher Rowe's *Aristotelica. Studies on the Text of Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics*,[9] which accompanies the anticipated critical edition of Aristotle's *Ethica Eudemia*[10] in the Oxford Classical Texts series, also edited by Rowe, and offers the reasoning, line by line, behind the choices of the critical edition. In that regard, it is not a philosophical commentary like the other two, but the philological footnotes to the critical edition. But Rowe's volumes represent a monumental scholarly achievement, given that 'the transmitted text of the *EE* [*Eudemian Ethics*] is in many places highly corrupt' (vii). At the end of *Aristotelica*, Rowe includes an appendix with the full dataset for the four primary manuscripts, which illuminates some of the typical errors occasionally found in them. Although these texts are not for the uninitiated, any serious reader of the *Eudemian Ethics* in its original language will benefit from having Rowe's volumes side by side.

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Roman History

We start this survey in Italy during the early first millennium BCE; a context on which Seth Bernard's new monograph offers an exciting, and in several respects transformative, contribution.[1] Its general claim is that, while Rome did not develop a historiographical tradition until Fabius Pictor, there was a keen and pervasive interest in history across ancient Italy, since the early Iron Age, which played out across a wide range of venues and media. The brief of the historian must be to jettison any hierarchical approach to

[8] *Plato. Republic Book I*. Edited by David Sansone. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. viii + 202. Paperback, £22.99, ISBN: 978-1-108-97047-1.

[9] *Aristotelica. Studies on the Text of Aristotle's Eudemian Ethics*. By Christopher Rowe. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. viii + 255. Hardback, £130.00, ISBN: 978-0-192-87355-2.

[10] *Aristotelis Ethica Eudemia*. Edited by Christopher Rowe. Oxford, Clarendon Press, 2023. Pp. xl + 176. Hardback, £40.00, ISBN: 978-0-198-83832-6.

[1] *Historical Culture in Iron Age Italy. Archaeology, History, and the Use of the Past, 900–300 BCE*. By Seth Bernard. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xviii + 312. Hardback, £54, ISBN: 978-0-197-64746-2.

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the interplay between textual and archaeological evidence, and to take as broad a view on what history amounts to as possible.

Bernard defines his project as an 'historicist' one. I am not sure whether Meinecke or Croce would have recognized that assessment, but the underlying assumption warrants unreserved sympathy, and has an important message to send, both on method and substance. Any form of engagement with the past warrants interest, and requires close attention in a project of cultural history. The book takes the form of a methodological introduction and five essays, mostly self-contained, but in helpful conversation with one another: ancestors (on burial practices), cities, founders, time (mostly on calendars), and images. There is much to enjoy every step of the way, and even more to learn: few books on ancient Italy have a comparable range, and the visual material that Bernard presents and talks us through will now be introduced to the English-speaking classroom on a much stronger footing. We get to revisit some old friends – the Capestrano Warrior, the Iguvine Tablets, and the Vel Saties fresco from the François Tomb – and we get to spend time with far less frequented material – the arresting cinerary urn from Montescudaio, the Iron Age huts under the fifth-century BCE temple of Colle della Noce, near Ardea, and the calendrical inscription from Capua. Bernard knows exceptionally well the geography and the topography of the country he talks about, and is thoroughly conversant with Italian scholarship, especially its latest developments.

He sees his undertaking in close connection with two major trends in the discipline: the push to go beyond 'Greece & Rome' towards a more capacious and integrative take on the ancient world, and the ambition to place non-elite viewpoints at the forefront. The first aim is comprehensively and compellingly met. Ancient Italy matters, and no proper history of Republican Rome can be attempted without thinking hard about the wider Italian backdrop.[2] The latter is less obviously apparent. The unwritten Italy that Bernard places at the forefront is largely an outcome of the consumption and investment strategies of the well-to-do. There are whole layers of historical experience that remain closed off to our sight, and domains of exploitation and oppression that the surviving evidence does not account for. We are not yet in a position to reconstruct the historical culture of an innkeeper of Falerii Veteres or of an Etruscan bricklayer; there is no Campanian Menocchio in sight. But Bernard is right to intimate that the people of ancient Italy were keenly and profoundly interested in their past, and used a range of strategies to bring meaning and order to it.

One of the key interlocutors of Bernard's project is the work of Dan-el Padilla Peralta, whose account of Roman religion in the mid-Republic attaches profound interpretative value to the interaction between Rome and Italy and to the patterns of mobility that resulted from it.[3] Their dialogue is not just a bookish one. They have also embarked on a collaboration with Lisa Mignone, which has yielded an important edited volume: a collective reconsideration of the mid-Republican period (here defined as '*c.*400–200 BCE'), which brings together eleven contributions on a refreshingly broad

[2] A message that is also at the core of a very recent, major editorial enterprise: M. Maiuro and J. Botsford Johnson (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Pre-Roman Italy* (Oxford, 2024).

[3] D. Padilla Peralta, *Divine Institutions. Religions and Community in the Middle Roman Republic* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2020).

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range of themes.[4] The book has at least three key big points to make to the wider field. First, the period between the end of the Struggle of the Orders and the Hannibalic War is an age of deep change and wide horizons, during which the Republic went through profound changes in the political and intellectual dimensions. Second, no attempt to make sense of the development of the Roman polity can overlook the profound ties between Rome and Italy. Third, an approach that prioritizes political developments is historiographically unproductive and methodologically untenable, and must be superseded by a pluralistic and collaborative outlook that brings together different historical themes and as wide a range of evidence as feasibly possible.[5]

Each of the contributions gathered in this volume has important insights to offer; several productively link up with recent developments in the discipline. Bernard's chapter on the fourth-century Campanian elites develops some of the key concerns of the monograph discussed above. Parrish Wright and Nicola Terrenato take a thorough look at the presence of magistrates of Italian descent in the fourth century, further developing the key argument of Terrenato's 2019 book on the early expansion of Rome into Italy.[6] James Tan's sophisticated account of the *tributum* (contribution, tribute) and the role of *tribuni aerarii* (treasury tribunes) intersects with his wider reflection on public finances and statehood in Republican Rome. Nathan Rosenstein tackles the question of the funding structure of the Roman army in the fourth century BCE and the financial base on which it was predicated, and makes the attractive argument that the introduction of *ciuitas sine suffragio* (citizenship without voting rights) was driven by the need to expand the pool of resources: the numerous military engagements in the final part of the fourth century are explained against this background. Walter Scheidel makes a compelling case for the need for Roman historians to engage more productively with African history, and proves his point by a comparative discussion of slavery in Republican Rome and the Sokoto caliphate in Sudan; the exercise involves an imaginative use of analogy, but is highly stimulating. The choice to include a number of studies on 'material sources' is surely the most consequential aspect of the strategy pursued by the editors: Liv Yarrow's major overview of early heavy bronze coinage, Tymon de Haas on rural settlements, and (perhaps most strikingly) Angela Trentacoste and Lisa Lodwick on agroecology and animal husbandry send an important cumulative message on the need to widen the set of interests and expertise of practising ancient historians. The inclusion of chapters on urbanistic and architectural developments by Domenico Palombi and Penelope Davies is relatively less original a choice, but both papers impressively handle important material, and make a distinctive contribution to the discussion of problems of periodization.

Recognizing and advocating the value of an integrative approach like that pursued in this volume does not deny the enduring importance of studies that are more restricted

[4] *Making the Middle Republic. New Approaches to Rome and Italy, c.400–200 BCE*. Edited by Seth Bernard, Lisa Marie Mignone, and Dan-el Padilla Peralta. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xix + 348. Hardback, £100, ISBN: 978-1-009-32798-5.

[5] For a recent project in a comparable vein, cf. M. Balbo and F. Santangelo (eds.), *A Community in Transition. Rome between the Hannibalic War and the Gracchi* (Oxford and New York, 2023).

[6] N. Terrenato, *The Early Roman Expansion into Italy. Elite Negotiation and Family Agenda* (Cambridge, Cambridge 2019).

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and targeted in their thematic focus. The political history of the Republic has been especially well served over the last year; I shall just give some all too cursory examples, which will hopefully convey a sense of the liveliness of the ongoing debates. The *Libera Res Publica* series at the Prensas de la Universidad de Zaragoza, directed by Francisco Pina Polo, Cristina Rosillo-López and Antonio Caballos Rufino, has been gaining considerable momentum, and has reached its eleventh instalment in just over four years. Its latest offerings are a stimulating monograph on the political agency of the mid-Republican armies by Dominic Machado and a spirited and characteristically learned discussion of the period from the Social War to Sulla's dictatorship by Frederik Vervaet.[7] Important work has been unfolding at the intersection between history and law. Lorenzo Gagliardi has written a major study of the legal framework that regulated migration to Rome in the Republican period, and has decisively shown that the *ius migrandi* (right of migration) is a modern scholarly construction, which was crucially shaped by Mommsen but owes its name to Pietro Bonfante.[8] The argument is not altogether new, but Gagliardi develops it to an unprecedented degree of thoroughness, first through a magisterial overview of the modern historiography on the topic and the key concepts with which it engaged (notably *isopoliteia*, political equality), and then with a thorough discussion of the evidence for the statute passed between 187 and 185 BCE that enabled some members of the Latin communities to obtain the Roman franchise by migrating to Rome, and sought to address the risk of fraudulent claims to Roman citizenship by introducing a more rigorous vetting process. The *ius migrandi* is definitively refuted as a viable analytical category; concerns, debates, and conflicts over migration and its policing are brought into focus as a major theme of the second century BCE.

Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp, one of the most influential contemporary historians of the Roman Republic, has published a monumental work, well over 700 pages, in which he gives his fullest account to date of his vision of the political practice and culture of the period.[9] The size and scope of the book elude a brief summary; in a way, it is the culminating point of a sustained engagement with Republican history that ranges well over three decades. Seasoned readers of Hölkeskamp's scholarship will recognize some of the key themes of his engagement with the period being prominently displayed: the role of civic rituals to the understanding of the Republic; the central position that Hölkeskamp gives to rituals of participation, in which processions play a central role; and the complex interplay between distancing and visibility that is part and parcel of Republican politics – its *Inszenierung*, 'staging', as the title of the book puts it. Augustus' triumph in 29 BCE is the endpoint of this mighty tour de force, whose great reward is to link up some major aspects of Hölkeskamp's

[7] D. M. Machado, *Voluntas Militum. Community, Collective Action, and Popular Power in the Armies of the Middle Republic (300–100 BCE)* (Zaragoza, 2023); F. J. Vervaet, *Reform, Revolution, Reaction. A Short History of Rome from the Origins of the Social War to the Dictatorship of Sulla* (Zaragoza, 2023).

[8] Romam commigrare. *I Romani, i Latini e l'immigrazione*. By Lorenzo Gagliardi. Milan, Giuffrè Francis Lefebvre, 2023. Pp. xvi + 279. Paperback, €34.20, ISBN: 978-8-828-85987-1.

[9] *Theater der Macht. Die Inszenierung der Politik in der römischen Republik*. By Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp. Munich, C. H. Beck, 2023. Pp. 710. 79 illustrations. Hardcover, €48, ISBN: 978-3-406-80693-3.

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work into a coherent whole, providing the fullest overview to date of the work of one of the most influential and original scholars on the period. Producing an English translation of such a large and complex book would be no easy undertaking, but the benefits would be significant.[10] Hölkeskamp's latest volume is required reading for any advanced student of the period, and the sort of work that will be read with huge profit for its big-picture insights and its discussion of many problems of detail (the unwieldy set of endnotes that the publisher has mandated unhelpfully complicate the latter task). It puts forward a very distinctive account of Roman Republican history, and it is based on a very specific vision of what matters: gatherings, political communication, processions, monuments, memorialization are the familiar keywords of Hölkeskamp's discussion, in which Augustus serves as the terminal point and the embodiment of a traditional political culture that has deep Republican roots.

One of the great rewards of Hölkeskamp's work is its vast chronological range. Recent studies on much more specific topics have also been yielding important results, though. Milena Raimondi's monograph on Q. Caecilius Metellus Macedonicus shows the rewards that biographies can have to the exploration of wider historical problems.[11] Through her earnest engagement with the evidence for the life of an exceptionally prominent political figure of the mid-second century BCE, Raimondi goes on to tackle a remarkable set of historical problems that are connected by the initiatives of Metellus: the Roman expansion into the Iberian peninsula, the reshaping of public and monumental spaces in Rome, the politics of the triumph, and the complex backdrop to the emergence of the anti-Gracchan coalition in the 130s.

Raimondi also touches upon the slave revolt that broke out in Sicily in 133/132 BCE, on which Peter Morton has now produced a discussion that is as brilliant as it is timely.[12] His project is based on some clear and important working assumptions, which are of interest to any student of the Roman Republican period. The revolts of 133–132 and that of 104–100 BCE must be understood as intimately related developments; it is imperative to overcome the slave-owning focus and bias of the literary evidence, and try to bring into the discussion the viewpoints of those who initiated and sustained the revolts – the numismatic evidence can play a significant role. Sustained comparison with the evidence for slave revolts in the early modern and modern periods is also necessary, especially for the negative conclusions that it yields. What we see attested in Sicily in the 130s and 100s BCE is fundamentally different from what we find in the slave revolt of Nat Turner and in that of Bahia; a viable comparandum is the uprising at Haiti between 1791 and 1804, which led to the creation of an independent republic, and in which the grievances of the slaves and the cause of their emancipation is linked up with an even bigger political project

[10] For earlier major contributions in English, see K.-J. Hölkeskamp, *Reconstructing the Roman Republic. An Ancient Political Culture and Modern Research* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2010) and Hölkeskamp, *Roman Republican Reflections. Studies in Politics, Power, and Pageantry* (Stuttgart, 2020).

[11] *Quinto Cecilio Macedonico*. Romanorum laudatissimus. By Milena Raimondi. Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2023. Pp. 241. Paperback, €28, ISBN: 978-8-834-354087-.

[12] *Slavery and Rebellion in Second-Century BC Sicily. From* Bellum Servile *to* Sicilia Capta. By Peter Morton. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023. Pp. xvii + 248. 62 illustrations. Hardback, £95, ISBN: 978-1-399-51573-3.

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and with developments that are unfolding on the international stage. The same approach may productively be applied to the events in Sicily in the late second century BCE: that the sustained and highly consequential set of anti-Roman initiatives must be understood against the backdrop of tensions and discontent over Roman rule in Hellenistic Sicily, and are part of a wide set of connections between the slave rebels and the free population. They are best understood through the prism of the 'alternative states' once applied by M. H. Crawford to the study of the late Republican period;[13] Morton makes a point of speaking of King Antiochus instead of Eunus. Their longevity and reach suggests that they should be taken as a much more significant historical force than has usually been claimed. This is a big claim, whose importance is not overshadowed by the eventual failure of that political movement. Morton articulates it in lucid and jargon-free prose, offering a wide range of important insights into various aspects of the evidence, including the literary tradition on which he has well-founded misgivings. This book stands in the line of an increasingly well-established tradition of critical readings of Roman imperialism, from Myles Lavan to Katell Berthelot. The case it puts forward on the Sicilian revolts is compelling, and redefines the terms of the debate on a crisis that has for way too long been explained away as a marginal instance of servile disorder. It is to be hoped that this book is read and discussed well beyond the confines of the history of antiquity.

The welcome decision to collect Giuseppe Zecchini's late Republican papers in a single volume serves as a reminder of the importance of the contribution of one of the most knowledgeable and creative scholars in the field.[14] The volume does justice to the extent of Zecchini's interests, his command of the evidence, and the perceptiveness of his engagement with the main strands of the international debate. His ability to productively combine the handling of big-picture historical problems, the discussion of specific issues, and the close engagement with literary texts will proves especially inspiring. Caesar is of course a central presence in this volume, but there is room for plenty of other germane topics, from the portraits of Sulla and Cicero in Sallust to Nepos' *Life of Atticus*, from Asinius Pollio to important overviews of key concepts in the study of late Republican politics. Any keen student of the late Republic will do well to add this very reasonably priced volume to their working library.

With his new book on 'the *boni*, the nobles, and Cicero', Henrik Mouritsen has produced another first-rate contribution on late Republican history, in which his commitment to articulating important, lucid, and controversial arguments on major historical problems shines through.[15] His key contention is that a leading force in late Republican politics has been hiding in plain sight, and so far not been recognized as such in modern scholarship: the group that (in his view) Cicero consistently labels as

[13] M. H. Crawford, 'States Waiting in the Wings: Population Distribution and the End of the Roman Republic', in L. de Ligt and S. J. Northwood (eds.), *People, Land, and Politics. Demographic Developments and the Transformation of Roman Italy, 300 BC–AD 14* (Leiden and Boston, 2008), 631–43.

[14] *Cesare e i suoi amici*. By Giuseppe Zecchini, edited by Maria Teresa Schettino and Alessandro Galimberti. Milan, Vita e Pensiero, 2023. Pp. xxxi + 392. Paperback, €35, ISBN: 978-8-834-35238-0.

[15] *The Roman Elite and the End of the Republic: the boni, the Nobles and Cicero*. By Henrik Mouritsen. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2022. Pp. vii + 322. Hardback, £75, ISBN: 978-1-009-18065-8.

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boni (good men), and that Mouritsen proposes to identify with the 'naturally unpolitical' (122) groups that had considerable wealth and did not hold public office: a group to be distinguished from the *equites* (knights), which he proposes to identify with the *tribuni aerarii* that were central in the judicial reform of 70 BCE. Much of Mouritsen's scholarship has compelled us to problematize the political language of the Roman Republic, and has brought decisive challenges to categories that generations of students of the period had long been thinking with; on this occasion, though, one is left with the impression that the notion of *boni* is doing very heavy lifting indeed. It seems very risky to draw general conclusions on a central feature of Roman political language on the basis of the evidence of a single author. Moreover, Cicero's work itself suggests that there was scope for divergence: as Mouritsen himself concedes, on a number of occasions *boni* include senators and knights alike.

The book makes for very rewarding reading, though. The second part on 'property and politics' puts forward an important and timely case for the need to give greater attention to the material interests of those who took part in politics, and to regard the 'propertied classes' (a concept that had largely got out of currency) as a major actor in late Republican history. Mouritsen's case for their historical importance of that social group is also very significant, and so is his emphasis on the impact of their disengagement from politics, though. The study of their connection with Cicero is rewarding, and the far-reaching Italian backdrop of his politics has been thoroughly explored, notably through the close reading of a large number of passages (the lack of an *index locorum* might hinder the usability of an important asset of this work).

Themes of economic and social history have been receiving relatively less attention in recent scholarship on the Republic. 'The army and the land' remain a classic problem, though. The 2022 monograph of Obert Bernard Mlambo is no systematic attempt to reopen the dossier, but makes a powerful new contribution to its understanding and issues an important and highly productive methodological challenge.[16] Mlambo has in fact done something that, to my knowledge, lacks any precedents in the history of the historiography on the Roman Republic: he has compared and contrasted the evidence for mass land expropriation carried out by veterans in the first century BCE and the ample material on land expropriations in a contemporary context, namely post-independence Zimbabwe. He knows how veterans operate, how they organize and mobilize; he has done some fascinating oral history work, exploring their world-view, their vocabulary, and their politics. His key contention is that the violence that they deploy is structurally gendered: it is predicated on the generation of models of masculinity that establish the entitlement of the veterans to their share of power and material rewards.

Analogy has long been part and parcel of the study of Republican Rome: it has been in many ways one of the combustibles of the intellectual tradition that has taken shape around it. Mlambo does something much more radical here. As he beautifully puts it, 'Roman history has afforded me a mental platform outside the contemporary world and its history, into which I was born' (xiv). But the platform is open to a both-way traffic.

[16] *Land Expropriation in Ancient Rome and Contemporary Zimbabwe. Veterans, Masculinity and War*. By Obert B. Mlambo. London and New York, Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Pp. xxvi + 239. 10 illustrations. Hardback, £81, ISBN: 978-1-350-29185-0; paperback, £26.09, ISBN: 978-1-350-29189-8.

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Mlambo argues that the morphological similarities of the actions of veteran armies in the two contexts are deep and warrant a close comparative exam: their study can mutually benefit from this take. We are urged to look hard, back and fro, into two specific case studies, and we keep being alerted to similarities that are striking and often profound. Mlambo's 'mosaicist approach' (19) entails the spirited discussion of an array of relevant facets of the problem: the use of the body, the engagement with space, the role of fierceness, the handling and manoeuvring of dead and ailing bodies. Throughout the process, he succeeds in keeping a tone that makes the discussion intelligible to ancient and modern historians alike, and creates a productive middle ground between them.

The outcome is a most thought-provoking contribution to a field that is very much in need of fresh take on familiar, if often elusive, problems. Mlambo takes a number of risks in the process: the discussion has a staccato pace, and some of his solutions may prompt scepticism. Lucan is one of his key sources, and reconstructing the viewpoint of the veterans of the 40s BCE through the prism of the epic poem produced by a young man of equestrian standing in the mid-first century CE is far from straightforward; Caesar's *Commentarii* are comparatively far less exploited. The well-known bias of the evidence does cause an imbalance with the contemporary material: the speeches that Appian or Cassius Dio attribute to the veterans do not overlap at all with the oral history evidence that he has gathered in the early twentieth century. An important level of analogy might have been explored: the role of religious elements in the action of veteran expropriations. That receives little attention, although there is some discussion of veterans and spirituality (54–8), and the emphasis is rightly drawn to the chilling moment when Robert Mugabe recited a line of the Lord's Prayer at the 2007 UN General Assembly – in Latin (41–2) – as a significant appearance of the classical heritage in postcolonial politics. As he puts it right at the start of his riveting investigation (xv), Mlambo might be accused of comparing apples and oranges – but apples and oranges, as he reminds us, both evolved on Planet Earth, and are both made of matter. This is a book that all students of this period ought to read and think with. Its perspective on a well-trodden dossier will reinvigorate their historical imagination, and will equip them to ask bolder and more exciting questions.

Ex Africa aliquid noui, 'something new out of Africa', then. As it happens, David Mattingly also ends his most recent major book on Africa in the Roman empire with the hope that his contribution might live up to the old saying.[17] He has produced, in fact, a major monograph that can have game-changing implications on how we make sense of Roman imperialism, and puts to bed a number of safe and lazy assumptions on the interplay between ancient history and archaeology. The title summarizes its key working assumptions, some of which will not be altogether new to those familiar to Mattingly's earlier work.[18] It is a study of Africa under the Roman empire, which firmly rejects the notion of 'Roman Africa' and the whole concept of Romanization

[17] *Between Sahara and Sea. Africa in the Roman Empire*. By David J. Mattingly. Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 2023. Pp. xxiv + 717. Hardback, $44.95, ISBN: 978-0-472-13345-1.

[18] Most notably in D. J. Mattingly, *Imperialism, Power and Identity. Experiencing the Roman Empire* (Princeton, NJ, and Oxford, 2011).

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to boot, denouncing it as analytically shoddy and politically untenable.[19] It also takes an inside out view, from the Sahara to the sea; the Tell of the Maghrib is as important a presence in this book as the Mediterranean corridors. The key historiographical and methodological tenets of this book will not surprise those who are familiar with Mattingly's distinguished work; what we are presented with here, though, is the outcome of nearly forty-five years of sustained fieldwork in North Africa, and an account of a vast regional setting that has few equals in the modern historiography on the Roman empire. Its interest and importance vastly exceed the confines of Roman history tout court. After a wonderfully illustrated survey of the topography of North Africa, which immerses us in the variety and complexities of its ecologies, Mattingly turns to a detailed discussion of the impact of several cohorts of incomers – Phoenicians, Greeks, and Romans – which ends with the sobering reminder that even in its heyday the Roman presence in the region was that of a minority of migrants; that in turns leads to a mightily instructive discussion of the indigenous communities (which Mattingly rightly refuses to label as 'tribes': historians of Caesar's Gallic campaign should take note), first in the west (Mauri and Numidae), then to the south-east (Gaetuli and Garamantes). A key concern of the project is to bring out the importance of plurality and the centrality of difference as a key mode of historical understanding. This is the hinge on which two key arguments of the book revolve: the Iron Age is an age of major development across North Africa, which explains to a considerable extent the widespread urban development and remarkable prosperity of the Hellenistic and Roman periods, urbanism is no import commodity; and the layers of early cultural identities keep playing a significant role well after the coming of Rome. Mattingly proposes to think in terms of hybridity and discrepant identity: pluralism is the operating principle, and different affiliations will have been entertained by different individuals and groups in various contexts.

Mattingly's book is a towering achievement. It is thus all the more inspiring to read and reflect on the concluding comments on what is missing and remains to be done (or awaits to be done better): more stratigraphic work, more household archaeology, more work on the communities beyond the limits of the empire, more excavations of large production sites, and much greater engagement with lesser-known sites that have so far attracted relatively little international attention. Mattingly has set an agenda and a standard that all students of the Roman empire will have to engage with for a long time to come – and they will be drawing great pleasure in the process too.

Mattingly is admirably keen to define and acknowledge his own positionality, and his undertaking is strongly engaged with developments in postcolonial historiography. Conversely, I have not seen a single reference to postcolonial debates in the excellent edited book on Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean world that is the outcome of a European Research Council (ERC) funded project based at the University of Leiden

[19] For a different take on the study of another regional context, cf. the important study by E. Hussein, *Revaluing Roman Cyprus. Local Identity on an Island in Antiquity* (Oxford, 2021), where the adjective 'Roman' is first and foremost used to identify a clear chronological remit, and where the key historical trajectory is captured in the Woolfian motto 'becoming Roman, staying Cypriot': '"Cypriot" should be taken to mean Argive, Phocian, Cretan, Athenian, Cilician, Phoenician, Syrian, Egyptian, and so on' (128).

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and led by Petra Sijpesteijn.[20] The volume takes us right to the edge of the chronological remit of this journal, and indeed of Classical studies, but it speaks to questions and debates that are central to our field, and makes methodological points that no student of antiquity should overlook. The lack of big theoretical statements does not in any way reflect the ambition of the project. Egypt is set within the busy network of connections that pervade the eastern Mediterranean; the familiar periodizations that carve out late antiquity and the early middle ages are imploded, and replaced with an exploration of roughly half of millennium from the standpoint of the history of the country itself. There have been other recent attempts to bridge the history of Roman Egypt with that of the early Arab conquest;[21] what this book seeks to do, though, is grander and bolder in scale. Its ambition is to reframe Egypt in the history of the eastern Mediterranean in the second half of the first millennium CE; like Mattingly, the editors are keenly interested in the *longue durée*, but towards the opposite end of the chronological spectrum. There is no appetite for defining what made Egypt (late) Roman, Byzantine, Sasanian, or Islamic; the focus is on its ties with the wider world, and notably on the connections between the Nile Valley and the Near East. Constantinople and Baghdad are arguably as important presences in this book as Alexandria. The presence of Egypt within different imperial setups is a key aspect of its history, but the main concern of this project is to explore how boundaries tended to be overcome. The Mediterranean and its connectivity are just a part of the picture, and arguably not the main one: the focus is, yet again, on what happens on the land. Sanjay Subrahmanyam's *histoire connectée* is not explicitly invoked, but seems a close blueprint for what the editors are setting out to do here. In the same spirit, the history of connections that is posited in this volume demands the involvement of a wide range of disciplinary toolkits.

The book is straightforwardly divided into three sections (political and administrative connections; economic connections; social and economic connections). Its fifteen chapters are substantial explorations (never under twenty-five pages) of a wide range of themes: from historiography to trade, from scribal networks to administrative vocabulary and urbanism. Most of them are outside the remit of what may credibly be defined as 'ancient history', but each one has something valuable to offer to the members of our disciplinary tribe. Three are perhaps likely to be of special interest to the readers of *G&R*. Peter Sarris gives an inspiring and in places polemical discussion of the place of Egypt in the Justinianic empire, arguing that it was more strongly integrated in the fabric of the empire than usually recognized, while also acknowledging the weakening of the imperial fiscal structures in the sixth century BCE. The key message is that Egypt's history is remarkable and on the whole very well documented, but not altogether exceptional, and in many ways reflecting patterns that occur elsewhere in the empire. Yaacov Lev offers a synthetic account of the political history of Egypt over the space of half of a millennium, understanding the region as a crossroads of regional settings – the Red

[20] *Egypt and the Eastern Mediterranean World: From Constantinople to Baghdad, 500–1000 CE*. Edited by Jelle Bruning, Janneke H. M. de Jong, and Petra M. Sijpesteijn. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xvi + 508. 15 illustrations, 12 maps, 6 tables. Hardback, £90, ISBN: 978-1-009-17001-7.

[21] M. Langellotti and D. Rathbone (eds.), *Village Institutions in Egypt in the Roman to Early Arab Periods* (Oxford, 2020).

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Sea, Arabia, North Africa, and the Mediterranean world. Its integration into the caliphate engages with those fundamental geographical directions; Lev stresses the weight of Egyptian resistance to the integration within the caliphate, and views the Indian Ocean trade networks as the most successful avenue of integration into transregional networks in this period. On the religious terrain, though, things significantly diverge: Egypt becomes a Sunni country in this period, and its Islam is firmly embedded in its history from this period. The paper by Janneke de Jong (one of the volume editors) is a brilliant exploration of the persistence of Greek under the Arabic-speaking regime that took over in Egypt after the new power balance: a case study in the wider problem of the language shift, which entails a thorough quantification of the papyrological evidence between the sixth and the eighth centuries. In de Jong's survey it emerges that Arabic is hardly to be found in the Greek-Coptic archives; the two languages appear to be used in parallel and separate settings. The quantitative weight of the Greek evidence decreases steadily in the eighth century. There is sufficiently good evidence for loanwords; from the eighth century there is increasing evidence for the practice of Greek summaries in Arabic documents, and the other way round. The two linguistic groups did have contacts, as one would expect, and that system deftly enabled that. The Arab conquest is a deeply consequential turn, but the pace and nature of change must be tested against the complexity of the evidence. That is the distinctive aspect of the Egyptian dossier: the evidence is exceptionally rich, the degree of detail one can aspire to achieve is considerable, and there are valuable comparanda in the long term. The downwards trajectory of Greek, for instance, can be usefully compared and contrasted with that of Demotic after the Ptolemaic and Roman conquests.

Another ERC-funded project (yes, there is a theme here) is beginning to yield important results (again, in open access) and promises to give important insights into a number of problems of economic and social history on various scales. Since 2016 Clare Rowan has been leading a comprehensive investigation of tokens in the ancient world, across a very broad geographical and chronological range. A first important outcome of this major endeavour is a book on tokens in imperial Italy, which provides a systematic treatment of the bronze, brass, and lead tokens that were discovered in the peninsula.[22] The result is a study that brings together economic and social history in a novel and distinctive way, and successfully makes the case for the importance of a cluster of evidence that has so far been marginalized, underexploited, and at times misread. The previous full-scale study was published by Mikhail Rostovtzeff in 1905, and most scholars have since restated the view that tokens were a kind of small change, a sub-monetary system – a view that Rowan effectively refutes. As the readers of her numismatic work know, she has a striking ability to make technically demanding material accessible and intelligible to the uninitiated, and to show how a single piece of evidence is relevant to the exploration of big historical issues. The message of her book is that tokens are invaluable sources on the social history of imperial Italy. They are tools that enable and structure relations between people, and play a significant role in the lives of corporate bodies, especially *collegia* (associations), and are significant

[22] *Tokens and Social Life in Roman Imperial Italy*. By Clare Rowan. Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xix + 288. Hardback, £85, ISBN: 978-1-316-51653-9. Available in open access.

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vectors of imperial imagery. First and foremost, Rowan argues, they are vantage points on identities (probably the keyword of this monograph) that would otherwise be hidden from view. We are talked through a considerable number of venues and contexts: from the baths to the festival, from the *taberna* (bar, inn) to the route followed by the triumph. The focus is on imperial Italy, but may in fact be defined more narrowly: the evidence comes almost exclusively from Rome and Ostia; Pompeii, most remarkably, has not yielded a single token. One can make educated guesses on why that might be the case, but they are bound to remain inconclusive: while the abundance of material from the capital city and its port is easily explained, the absence from other contexts is harder to account for.

As Rowan makes clear, this important study is the interim stage of a longer journey: more regional studies will be produced in the coming years (she will soon be turning to Asia Minor), and the importance of tokens is likely to come into even sharper focus. Regional studies have much to offer to the understanding of wider imperial trajectories and, as some of the works discussed above show, they remain a thriving strand of work. One recent work warrants at least a brief mention in this connection: Bradley Jordan's new full-scale treatment of the making of the Roman province of Asia warrants special mention for its thoroughness and lucidity, and for its attempt to bring some modern theoretical insights to the study of Roman institutional history.[23] It is likely to become the go-to discussion of that important topic for the foreseeable future.

Two important collections make new contributions to the appreciation of aspects of Roman social history, and to the interplay between history and law. The Bonn Center for Dependency and Slavery Studies brought together a number of legal historians to attempt a new collective exploration of the positions of slaves in Roman law and society.[24] The result is a set of studies (also available in open access) that make a timely and important collective case: the legal dimension of Roman slavery is highly diverse, and reflects in complex and problematic ways the diversity of the positions of slaves in Roman society. Martin Schermaier gives a strong-footed introduction, in which he reappraises Orlando Patterson's concept of slavery as 'social death' as a productive approach to Roman slavery (cf. an expression like *pro nullo haberi*, to be held void), and stresses the importance of differentiating *dominium* from the form of absolute property; comparison with transatlantic slavery is hardly helpful. The following chapters explore a number of interrelated facets of the topic: the legal position of the natural children of slaves (Thomas Finkenauer); imperial freedmen and slaves (Pierangelo Buongiorno, with a special focus on the first century CE); slaves who owned property (Richard Gamauf), the *dispensatores* (treasurers; Gamauf again). The second part of the book explores some specific topics: the position of slaves in inheritance law, and the concept of being *serui poenae*, slaves of the punishment (Aglaia McClintock); a revisitation of the legal basis of the *favor libertatis* principle, whereby in case of doubt a decision was made in favour of the freedom of a slave (Jakob F. Stagl). There is no

[23] *Imperial Power, Provincial Government, and the Emergence of Roman Asia, 133 BCE–14 CE*. By Bradley Jordan. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. xiv + 276. Hardback, £83, ISBN: 978-0-198-88706-5. Full disclosure: I examined the DPhil thesis from which this book stems.

[24] *The Position of Roman Slaves. Social Realities and Legal Differences*. Edited by Martin Schermaier. Berlin and Boston, de Gruyter, 2023. Pp. vii + 310. Hardback, £70, ISBN: 978-3-110-98719-5. Available in open access.

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concluding chapter, but the closing piece by Martin Schermaier does have a summative quality to it, as it provides further examples of the complexity of the position of slaves in Roman law: he speaks of a 'legal grey area' between social practice and the letter of the law. Slavery is so central to the production model that the legal system had to allow the scope for independent agency. Kostas Vlassopoulos' 2021 book on ancient slavery has made a comparable, if larger, claim for the importance of acknowledging the diversity of the phenomenon across space and time;[25] somewhat surprisingly, the contributors to this collection have not had a chance to engage with his work (which is absent from the very helpful bibliography), but productively contribute to the same agenda. This book has three fundamental rewards that command attention. It showcases in English (and to the English-speaking classroom) the work of some of the most accomplished scholars currently at work in the European historiography on Roman law. It brings to bear a remarkable range of legal evidence for Roman slavery, and presents a variety of teachable examples in the process. It makes a valuable case for the robust engagement with the legal evidence to the study of any major problem of Roman economic and social history.

This methodological premise also informs another important recent collection, which sheds welcome light on the place of the real estate market in Roman history.[26] Marta García Morcillo and Cristina Rosillo-López have brought together a team of scholars that is as diverse as it is high-power. The outcome is a series of essays in which the benefits of bringing together different approaches and different skillsets emerge with striking clarity, and an overall take on the scope and remit of the Roman economy emerges. Only a cursory overview can be attempted here: Rosillo-López offers a brilliant overview of the instances of government intervention into the property market, which compellingly shows how seriously the issue was taken at several junctions; García Morcillo experiments with theoretical insights that have so far found little attention in Roman history, and explores the relevance of the tension between value and market price in the property market, and the strategies through which Roman law seeks to engage with that; Dennis Kehoe continues the debate on Brent Shaw's recent argument that serious economic prediction did not really have a place in Roman culture, by focusing on the use of land as a guarantee for long-term loans. Paul V. Kelly's discussion of the property market in late antique Egypt envisages a divergence between agricultural land markets, which he regards as fundamentally rational, and housing markets, in which he sees little evidence for the use of financial rationality and no enabling conditions for it. Max Koedijk provides an invaluable exploration of the evidence for property transactions in Cicero, and in the process takes on the influential arguments of Moses Finley and Peter Temin, which assume that price information was widely and readily available: Koedijk stresses the inefficiency, opaqueness, and uncertainty of the market. Dominik Maschek explores the brutal property investment practice of members of the Italian elites in the late Republic, and attractively argues that this was a significant aspect of their economic interests as land investments: the concept of 'urban predation' is put to good use to conjure up a picture of gaping inequalities and shifting political allegiances. There is

[25] K. Vlassopoulos, *Historicising Ancient Slavery* (Edinburgh, 2021).

[26] *The Real Estate Market in the Roman World*. Edited by Marta García Morcillo and Cristina Rosillo-López. Abingdon and New York, Routledge, 2023. Pp. 310. 28 illustrations. Hardback, £125, ISBN: 978-1-032-03533-8.

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also scope for the exploration of local cases beyond the city of Rome (Francisco Pina Polo on Cicero's Italian villas; Annalisa Marzano on elite properties in the Positano area, on the Bay of Naples; Maria Letizia Caldelli and Cecilia Ricci on the affairs of the *gens* Neratia between Saepinum and Luceria). Other pieces will bring to the English-speaking classroom material that has mostly been discussed in other historiographical traditions: Luigi Capogrossi Colognesi on the estates of the Veleia Tablet; Jean Andreau on the Sulpicii Tablets from Pompeii (very much a live front of cutting-edge work at the intersection between economic and legal history); Emilia Mataix Ferrándix on *horrea* (granaries) and large storage facilities; and Sofia Piacentin on imperial estates in the North-Western provinces (a preview of an ERC project led by Alberto Dalla Rosa). This is the kind of book that, quite apart from the real importance of some of the arguments it puts forward, contains scores of research questions and puzzles that are worthy of further exploration; a brilliant statement of the vitality and relevance of the discipline, and of the rewards of combining technical expertise with the engagement with new theoretical parameters.

Let us end with a foray into historiography, and a potentially path-breaking contribution to that domain. Over the last decade Justin Stover and George Woudhuysen have been producing a remarkable set of jointly authored contributions on late antique literature in which they have been bringing to bear a set of expertise ranging across and impressively integrating textual criticism, palaeography, stylistic analysis, and *Quellenforschung* (study of sources). They have now teamed up for a project that encompasses some of the work they have published to date and develops it to a much greater extent. The centrepiece of the major monograph they have produced (another open access volume) is a reassessment of the historical and literary importance of the work of Sextus Aurelius Victor, an historian born in North Africa in *ca.* 320 and still active in 389, whose connections with key figures of the political elite of his time are well attested.[27] Ammianus Marcellinus singled him out as a major author; most of modern scholarship, though, has dismissed him as an irrelevant compiler, largely on the evidence of two works that are attributed to him, the *De Caesaribus* and the *Epitome de Caesaribus*. Through an exacting discussion of those texts, Stover and Woudhuysen reach some important conclusions: there is no evidence that they were read before the early middle ages, and they share significant parallels with one another; their titles in the manuscript tradition are respectively *Historiae abbreviatae* and *Libellus breviatus*, effectively pointing to the fact that they are later abridged versions of a lost fourth-century historical work, written by Aurelius Victor, ranging from the Augustan period to the second half of the fourth century. In the process, Stover and Woudhuysen write a brilliant treatment of the modern scholarship on late Imperial historiography, and touch upon a range of difficult if rewarding topics: their discussion of historical epitomes in antiquity (44–71) will now be the starting point of investigations of the topic, happily superseding the classic treatment offered by P. A. Brunt over four decades ago.[28]

By restoring Victor to his rightful place in the history of Roman historiography they then find themselves in a position to make some big-picture conclusions of even greater

[27] *The Lost History of Sextus Aurelius Victor*. By Justin A. Stover and George Woudhuysen. Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2023. pp. xxii + 552. 5 illustrations. Hardback, £125, ISBN: 978-1-474-49287-4. Available in open access.

[28] P. A. Brunt, 'On Historical Fragments and Epitomes', *CQ* 30 (1980), 477–94.

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significance. The striking dearth of Latin historians from Hadrian to the late fourth century is suddenly filled by a major lost author that may be understood on his own terms. Alexander Enmann's 1884 theory that there was a lost historical work on which the work of most later historians was based (the *Kaisergeschichte*, 'History of the Emperors') is denounced as a scholarly figment; the influence of the biographer Marius Maximus on later historians is downplayed in a similar vein; the *Historia Augusta* is vindicated as the work of a single author, who depends heavily on the information of Aurelius Victor; Eutropius – whom generations of Latin students have been taught to regard as a paragon of dullness and simple-mindedness – emerges as a keen and intelligent reader of Victor, who shares his interest in institutional history; even Greek historians in late antiquity rely on that lost text and reflect its periodization choices. A close re-reading of Ammianus Marcellinus also shows evidence for his stylistic debt towards Victor.

The landscape of late antique historiography is revolutionized as a result of this tour de force. Stover and Woudhuysen write engagingly and clearly, and the reader is masterfully led through a cumulative argument which has the air of soothing inexorability that the finest empirical demonstrations achieve. There is plenty left to discuss and no doubt much to argue against. The debates on the *Historia Augusta* that have unfolded over the last century or so are unlikely to have been brought to a close, and the *Kaisergeschichte* still has authoritative defenders; Stover and Woudhuysen themselves draw attention to a number of areas that warrant a new lease of research, and identify a new edition of Aurelius Victor as a pressing priority. Two reasonably safe guesses may be made, though: the account they have put forward will be the necessary starting point of any future investigation of late antique historiography, including those that will be heading in very different directions; and their sharp and engrossing discussion will prompt new interest in the topic from a number of quarters, and will encourage scholars who have not so far worked in this area to dip into waters that require fresh, earnest, and energetic exploration.

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Reception

Following their 2013 monograph, *Helen of Troy. Beauty, Myth, Devastation*, Ruby Blondell delivers a study on screen representations of Helen in the USA, ranging from *The Private Life of Helen of Troy* (1927), via *Star Trek*, Hollywood epics, and *Xena: Warrior Princess*, to *Helen of Troy* (2003).[1] Blondell takes a rounded approach

[1] *Helen of Troy in Hollywood*. By Ruby Blondell. Princeton and Oxford, Princeton University Press, 2023. pp. x + 322. 15 colour and 50 b+w illustrations, 1 table. Hardback, £35, ISBN: 978-0-691-22962-1.

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