

Stokes-Chapman sets a lively pace and the various twists and turns in the narrative are revealed gradually. I experienced a real sense of foreboding as the tale progressed, possibly because I knew implicitly that there could not be an entirely happy outcome, given the original source material. Most people reading this book will have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the myth of Pandora, the woman allegedly sent by Zeus to reduce the population of earth (according to one version of the myth) and the opening of the jar (not a box) which brought various ills into the world. However, this is not to say that *Pandora* is a predictable story; indeed, it is a well-designed narrative which weaves significant elements of the source material in with Stokes-Chapman's own story-arc, resulting in the production of a very enjoyable page-turner.

It is clear from the Author's Note that much research went into the book and the scene setting within Georgian London is very evocative. I especially enjoyed the introduction of the real historical figures, such as Cornelius Ashmole and William Hamilton (and his wife Emma, mistress of Nelson). The book is certainly not a comedy, but moments of light relief are found, in the enjoyable character of Lady Latimer especially.

Overall, I can highly recommend this book. Students of Classics will undoubtedly enjoy the reworking of an old tale, but lovers of historical fiction more generally will find this hugely entertaining and very moving in places. I have no doubt that reading this will spark a wider interest in some of the mythology which is explored, and there is a handy list of further reading provided for anyone who wants to follow up. Stokes-Chapman is clearly another author to watch in the future.

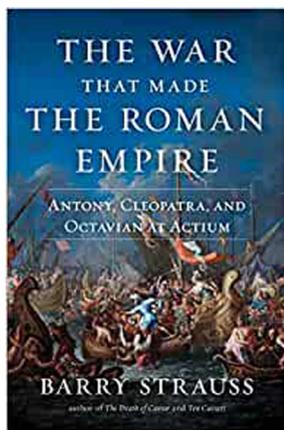
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The War That Made the Roman Empire. Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian at Actium

Strauss (B.) Pp. xii + 350, maps, pls. New York:
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Jonathan Eaton

Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK
J.Eaton@tees.ac.uk



The Battle of Actium is often used to symbolise the violent transition from Republic to Empire, through the brutal destruction of the last vestiges of organised resistance against the Principate. As Barry Strauss notes in this compelling narrative history, the battle can be viewed as a 'hinge of history'. Yet the battle must be understood within a broader frame of violent conflict and political manoeuvring throughout the period from the assassination of Julius Caesar through to the deaths of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, as

Octavian sought to establish his political mastery over Rome. It is this period which Strauss seeks to explore, setting the Battle of Actium within its political, economic and social contexts.

Strauss draws upon a wide range of literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological evidence to provide a broad perspective of the impact of this period of conflict on individuals and communities across the Empire and beyond. In doing so, this book usefully complements existing studies of Actium, whilst providing original insights into the motivations and political intentions of the key players. A wealth of comparative evidence is explored, including linkages with aspects of Classical Reception. The poetry of C.P. Cavafy, for example, is used effectively to explore the feelings of Mark Antony towards portents of his own demise.

A particular strength of this study is its focus on the knowledge and experience of key individuals in shaping their behaviour and political intent. In particular, Octavian's frequent machinations to encourage and exploit division and treachery amongst his enemies – even perhaps between Cleopatra and Antony – are highlighted as a personal strength, alongside his recognition of, and reliance upon, the superior skills of his subordinate Agrippa as a military commander. The importance of the figure of Caesarion (alleged son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar) looms large in Strauss' narrative, in contrast to other studies, as a key motivator for Octavian. By destroying the opposition offered by Antony and Cleopatra, he also secured his position by eliminating the rival claimant to be recognised as the son of Caesar.

Rather than viewing the battle in isolation, Strauss pays particular attention to the wider campaign waged by Agrippa prior to Actium to disrupt and deny the forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Of particular interest is Agrippa's seizure of Methone in March 31 BC. Through a daring lightning strike, Agrippa successfully deprived Antony of a key safe harbour and substantially disrupted his supply lines. Whilst Agrippa's victory provided a welcome propaganda victory for Octavian, it also placed considerable pressure on Antony's ability to feed his forces and maintain their unwavering support.

The economic context remains critical for understanding the decisions taken by Octavian in seizing and securing Egypt after the Battle of Actium. Most notably, the treasury of Cleopatra and funds secured by Antony in the East were essential for Octavian to secure his own political survival through settling the huge numbers of veterans eligible for retirement with land in Italy.

For Strauss, the 'hinge of history' at Actium was embodied by the two Roman protagonists, Antony and Octavian, through the differing visions they offered for the future of the Roman Empire, particularly whether the locus of power would reside in the East with Antony or in the West with Octavian. Inevitably, the eventual outcome was nuanced and, even in defeat, the lives and deaths of Cleopatra and Antony cast a long shadow in Roman art and literature.

Strauss has provided a compelling narrative history which successfully unpicks and explains the complexities of a dynamic period in Roman history. It reads with all the intensity and excitement of a political thriller, whilst maintaining necessary academic rigour to challenge established thinking about the place of Actium within its broader context. This book is essential reading for teachers and students interested in the transition from Republic to Empire, and the rise of Octavian and his imperial regime.

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