

rather a history of great battles, rather than a history of warfare in the Greek world, accompanied by a useful introduction to the political and diplomatic history of the Greek world. Unfortunately, the author shows little if any acquaintance with the scholarship of the last thirty years that has revolutionized the study of Greek warfare. As a result, the accounts of battle and campaigns are quite stale, and show little understanding of the problems created by the nature of the evidence for each battle. On the other hand, the book can serve as a useful introduction for non-specialist readers interested in the traditional military narratives.

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Roman History

Do you want to hear something worth knowing? If so, you're in luck, because Pliny the Elder has 20,000 such nuggets ready for your delectation. Even better, one of the elder statesmen of Roman history, Richard Saller, has provided a fresh study of them in his new book, *Pliny's Roman Economy*.¹ Saller is famous for publications that have painted in broad brush strokes the landscape of Roman economic and social history as we now understand it. Here, instead, he offers a brief, focused study of a single author, albeit one whose *Natural History* is of extraordinarily ambitious scope. Published in 'The Princeton Economic History of the Western World' series, this is a book for both classicists and economic historians with a focused aim: to use Pliny to intervene in the long-standing debate over whether the Roman imperial economy enjoyed sustainable growth in the first two centuries CE (behind which lurks, as Saller notes, the more existential question as to whether the oppression of the Roman imperial project came with benefits). This question arises from a controversial methodological contention – that scholars' efforts to develop sophisticated proxies to enable quantitative assessment of ancient economic growth (now largely associated with New Institutional Economics) have so far failed, and thus that we should return, at least in part, to more traditional use of literary sources: 'at this point none [of those proxies] is reliable enough to justify neglecting our aristocratic authors' (3).² Pliny is particularly interesting here because eighteenth-century encyclopaedias have been seen (in part by the series editor, Joel Mokyr) as part of a culture of innovation that in turn fed the pronounced economic growth of that period.

Chapter 1 sees Saller sharpen his knives as he systematically cuts down each and every suggested proxy: shipwrecks, coinage circulation, lead and copper pollution figures derived from ice cores, stature, dated building and honorific inscriptions, and

¹ *Pliny's Roman Economy. Natural History, Innovation, and Growth*. By Richard P. Saller. The Princeton Economic History of the Western World, 112. Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2022. Pp. 198. 5 figures. Hardback \$35.00, ISBN: 978-0-691-22954-6.

² For a survey of recent work using NEI, see 'Roman History', *G&R* 68.1 (2021), 135–48; for the data proxies, and their uses, see 'Roman History', *G&R* 66.1 (2019), 142–3.

urbanization. A stand-alone excursus – something repeated after multiple chapters, a singular structural feature – by an archaeologist, Kevin Ennis, highlights the currently insurmountable difficulties with applying the most recently suggested such proxy, the Economic Complexity Index, to Roman antiquity. Chapter 2 introduces the contents, structure, procedure, readers, and goals of the *Natural History*. Most important, those for whom the work was allegedly written – at the ‘coal-face’ of production – would not have been able to afford Pliny’s epic tome. Even if they had, neither they nor anyone else would have been able to actually use it as a reference work, given its random structure and the utter inadequacy of the opening Summary (imagine having been bitten by a rabid dog, and searching through Pliny’s thirty-seven books for his forty contradictory remedies, only one of which is signposted in the Summary). Chapter 3 considers Pliny’s relationship with Nature – the capital N signalling its divine status. Influenced by contemporary Stoicism, he had a strikingly contemporary sympathy with the natural world and railed on moral grounds against human action that damaged – or dared to supplement – it. That was one reason for Pliny’s fundamental suspicion of technical and industrial development, a theme explored more in Chapter 4, which attacks scholars who use Pliny to argue for a Roman culture of innovation and thus growth. For Pliny, most such developments are the result of chance rather than design, and anyway a feature of the distant, even mythical, past. The list of innovations at the end of Book 7 thus contains not one Roman entry (and anyway nothing from the physical sciences apart from astronomy). Pliny bemoans the lack of investigative spirit in Romans of his day, though he seems to share it: technological advancements like the water mill or Roman concrete receive only passing mention as Pliny hurries on to more esoteric fare. The very form of the *Natural History* becomes proof of this stagnation: ‘if there is no *ratio* or systematic knowledge to understand the natural world, no regularities, only mysteries revealed by chance, it is not possible to design programs of research to manipulate it. The best one can do – and what Pliny aims to do – is to catalogue past chance discoveries to avoid losing them’ (69–70). Chapter 5 turns to Pliny’s economic reasoning. While we can glimpse odd snatches of modern economic principle, there is neither an overall system nor any application of it. At best, we find a ‘bounded rationality’ (e.g. 84), in which ‘the conflation of the moral with the economic leaves the analysis fragmentary and superficial’ (96). Pliny repeatedly answers economic questions by recourse to nuggets of preserved wisdom rather than calculation, and prioritizes minimizing risk over maximizing profit. Success seems to come from increased effort rather than calculation or innovation. Chapter 6 returns to the central thesis, demonstrating both how far is Pliny and his almost-Ludditic literary enterprise from revealing or contributing to a culture of innovation, and thus how different from the hypothesized eighteenth-century encyclopaedic comparanda. The evidence of Pliny, for Saller, thus speaks firmly against continued Roman economic growth.

This book makes for a boisterous and enjoyable read. Saller is in an authoritative position to point out the flaws in the proxy data, and the first chapter stands as an important summary warning. He is entirely correct to point out the fundamental differences between Pliny’s encyclopaedic efforts and those of his early modern successors – and his picture of what Pliny actually says on Rome’s economy is on point. Nevertheless, this is a problematic book. First, it is not entirely clear that the comparison between Pliny and the eighteenth-century encyclopaedists has ever been rigorously made, so this sustained case to disprove it feels like something of a damp

squib. Second, although Chapter 2 reviews recent literary readings of Pliny, the book shies away from their implications. The *Natural History* is not, as Saller notes, a user-friendly manual. Saller assumes in fairly positivistic fashion that this was simply due to a disconnect between aim and ability:

I find it hard to believe that Pliny devoted years of sleep deprivation to write 400,000 words on 20,000 ‘things worth knowing’ (*res dignae*) out of a playful aesthetic. I take at face value his assertion that his purpose was usefulness (*utilitas*) rather than pleasure (*gratia*)... And yet in pursuit of a boastfully monumental achievement he had not given realistic thought to how his work could actually be used. (35)

But this trivializes literary approaches, and the book does not wrestle with the (more likely) possibility that Pliny is simply trying to do something quite different. The archaic trivia, the endless moralizing, and the assumption of theoretical positions so strained that they must have raised an eyebrow – I am thinking in particular of Pliny’s condemnation of the invention of flax sail because humans should be content to live and die on land, slightly ironic for a man who perished sailing full pelt towards a volcano – all suggest that this is an exercise in a particular kind of elite role-play. Saller uses the *Natural History* as a window onto the Roman zeitgeist, but it offers at most only a partial glimpse. At the simplest level, Pliny’s wholesale condemnation of mining clearly does not reflect his society’s attitude, otherwise presumably there would be no mining about which to complain. Saller’s research question assumes that Pliny can be used as a mirror to the Roman economy and Roman attitudes towards it, but that depends on the *Natural History* being a particular kind of thing; one that it seems fairly clear to me it is not. It is not sufficient to simply state: ‘In any case, literary interpretation of the work need not preclude the use of the text to explore Pliny’s economic thought’ (34). Put another way, using Pliny’s *Natural History* in this way is no less problematic than the assorted data proxies so maligned at the book’s outset.

Saller ends by highlighting how ‘Pliny’s moral advocacy of respect for Nature and his outraged criticism of heedless exploitation in pursuit of wealth surely resonate among a generation deeply concerned by environmental degradation and climate change’ (138). Another new publication explores a related theme. Much as recycling has become a more-and-more pressing issue today, so in ancient studies it has been almost entirely ignored. But if *Recycling and Reuse in the Roman Economy* is to be believed, it will become a *sine qua non* for understanding the ancient economy.³ A product of the ‘Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy’ series of the Oxford Roman Economy Project, this volume represents a first attempt to sketch out introductory pathways into a topic ignored in existing studies and data sets – in equal part, I suspect, because of a lack of prestige, the sheer difficulty of making progress, and its troubling implications. Its aim is tentative but ambitious: ‘to show how we might start to adapt our models of the ancient economy to accommodate the significant role of recycling’ (2).

³ *Recycling and Reuse in the Roman Economy*. Edited by Chloë N. Duckworth and Andrew Wilson. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 478. 132 figures. Hardback £110, ISBN: 978-0-198-86084-6.

After a brief scene-setting introduction by the editors, a longer essay by J. Theodore Peña provides a systematic literature review that tries to lay out relevant concepts and questions. His list of pertinent materials is worth quoting in full to give a sense of the scale of the topic: ‘construction materials, glass, metals, textiles, leather, ceramics, papyrus, elements of furniture, wheeled vehicles and ships, animal bone, various kinds of industrial and agricultural waste, including organic ash, shell, slag, olive pressings, and human and animal excrement and urine’ (51). The volume then proceeds in four sections. The first focuses on materials, with John Peter Wild on textiles, Erja Salmenkivi on papyrus, Simon Barker on statuary, and Tom Brughmans and Alessandra Pecci on amphorae. The second turns to chemical data and material flows, encompassing Peter Bray on copper-alloy, Matthew Ponting on silver coinage, and two essays by Patrick Degryse and Chlœ Duckworth respectively on glass. The third focuses on certain sites, and the questions prompted a geographical approach. It includes Alessandro Sebastiani and Thomas Derrick’s diachronic study of the multiple types of recycling at Spolverino, Beth Munro on the organized late antique stripping of villas, and Robin Fleming and Ellen Swift’s essays on Roman Britain, the first on the changing meanings of recycled building materials, the latter on artefacts made from mundane materials. The fourth contains an epilogue distilling a panel discussion that closed the 2017 conference on which the volume is based, including a revised *chaîne opératoire* flowchart that shows the inadequacy of the traditional linear extraction–production–consumption–disposal sequence.

This volume demonstrates both the promise and the importance of the topic. What has largely been considered an ad hoc feature of late antiquity born of necessity and decline is revealed as a ubiquitous structural reality of the Roman economy. Nor can it be slotted neatly into modern scholarship as a self-contained topic; its inclusion will permeate everything and ruffle feathers in so doing. A proper understanding of amphorae reuse, for example, cannot but destabilize the use of amphorae form to deduce content and construct quantitative models of Roman trade. Similarly, better data on the chemical composition of materials that reflects reuse will have ramifications for current provenance models. More broadly, that many materials were recycled together using similar processes problematizes the archaeological specialism by material that characterizes the discipline. Most excitingly for the historian, it exposes layers of activity and personnel we have missed – the specialized workers who separated, collected, and prepared materials for recycling; the middlemen responsible for its transportation and delivery; the developed organizational principles and structures of regulation. Our own pernicious neglect of recycling, in other words, may have caused us to miss something fundamental to antiquity.

This opening economic foray takes us nicely into a numismatic triptych. First, another volume in the ‘Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy’ series, *Coin Hoards and Hoarding in the Roman World*.⁴ This is the first fruits of the Coin Hoards of the Roman Empire Project, a collaboration between the Oxford Roman Economy Project and the Ashmoleum (and an impressive international list of institutional and

⁴ *Coin Hoards and Hoarding in the Roman World*. Edited by Jerome Mairat, Andrew Wilson, and Chris Howgego. Oxford Studies on the Roman Economy. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. 350. 86 figures. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-910-58976-2.

individual contributors, listed at 17–19). It aims to produce a comprehensive and freely accessible digital database, with stable reference markers, of hoards of all coinages in use from 30 BCE to 400 CE (although I note the website offers a search range from 100 BCE to 650 CE), which will ‘provide the foundations for a systematic Empire-wide study of hoarding and ... promote the integration of numismatic data into broader research’ (3). This volume memorializes the first phase of the project: the collection of as much summary hoard data as possible, and the inputting of some hoards at the level of the individual coin. It is in three sections. The first contains the Introduction by Chris Howgego and Andrew Wilson focused on practicalities, problems, and possibilities, and a chapter by Kris Lockyear detailing correspondence analysis and its benefits as an initial attempt to make statistical interpretative methodologies more accessible, and thus reproducible. The second section contains eight regional studies: Eleanor Ghey on Britain; Antony Holstein, Pierre Nouvel, Bernadette Soum, and Ludovic Trommenschlager on Burgundy; Jerome Mairat on the Gallic Empire; Athena Iakovidou and Sophia Kremydi on Southern Greece and Macedonia; Cristian Găzdac on Dacia; Ivan Bonchev on Moesia Inferior; Joshua Goldman on Palestine; and Thomas Faucher on Egypt. The third section begins the promised work of interpretation using this new data set, and focuses on the theme of longevity of circulation, with papers by Bernhard Woytek, Kevin Butcher and Matthew Ponting, Benjamin Hellings, Johan van Heesch, and Richard Hobbs.

This project is hugely desirable for both its digital and international dimensions, and showcases what a genuinely globalized approach to intellectual collaboration can achieve. Its vast ambition means that this volume is in many ways a place-marker – an introduction, a tentative description, and an exploration of possibilities. The project has been characterized by collective agency and flexibility, and that extends to an openness to the intellectual fruits to be garnered. That is simultaneously exciting and slightly frustrating. One might legitimately ask: why publish now? Granted that the second stage of the project – recording all hoards at the level of the coin, including both published and unpublished material(!) – will take a long time; still, could publication of this initial volume not have waited until stage one was complete, and thus offered a more complete set of regional surveys (Germany, Austria, Denmark, Scandinavia, Poland, and Ukraine merely await data entry)? Then again, one feature of the volume is the participation of multiple graduate and early career scholars, for whom speedy publication is important. Regardless, this volume marks the start of a project of significant import which will, in all likelihood, transform our understanding of the Roman economy as it develops, in ways expected and not.

Second, Liv Mariah Yarrow provides a new volume in Cambridge’s ‘Guides to the Coinage of the Ancient World’ series, on *The Roman Republic to 49 BCE*.⁵ After a brief introduction, Yarrow divides her study into four thematic chapters – money, monuments, mutinies, and mobilization – although it still proceeds chronologically. The first chapter covers the point of coinage (the type of state payment to which it was suited, as well as the wish to both echo and interact with communities already

⁵ *The Roman Republic to 49 BCE. Using Coins as Sources*. By Liv Mariah Yarrow. Guides to the Coinage of the Ancient World. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press and American Numismatic Society, 2021. Pp. 273. 220 illustrations, 7 maps. Paperback £20, ISBN: 978-1-107-65470-9.

employing this mechanism of transaction), the reason for the high degree of variety in Republican coinage despite this usually being a conservative medium (the need to respond to particular fiscal events, and Rome's gradually won hegemony which meant its coinage no longer needed to be easily distinguishable), and the extent of and usefulness of the quantitative numismatic data we can glean from this period, whether by die studies, hoard (correspondence) analysis – with an excursus on the work of Kris Lockyear which we have already encountered – metrology, or metallurgy (which depends, predictably, on what one considers a 'useful' result, particularly given the laborious, often invasive, procedures involved). The second chapter considers images on coins and their debated role as propaganda and/or art, focusing on moneymen's use of coins to explore the intersection between family legacy, the topography of Rome, and the needs of the state, and the ways this was increasingly exploited by those dynasts to whom the fall of the Republic is often credited. The third chapter turns to the light shed on Rome's external and internal conflicts by the numismatic evidence, covering defections of allies in the Second Punic War, the Sicilian slave revolts, the Social War, and the Civil War that brought the Republic to its (traditional) end, which last saw regular numismatic innovations to match the wider political and social turbulence of the day. The fourth chapter covers numismatic insights onto popular concerns, be they war, grain, divine favour, colonization, land grants, or liberty. An epilogue surveys available resources, with an excellent account of the extent of digitization and an admirable discussion of the controversy surrounding unprovenanced coins. The book is extremely well-illustrated: images of coins, both black-and-white and colour, appear on almost every page, with fulsome captions, and it also contains maps and some rather helpful infographics concerning, for example, the coin production process.

This is clearly a project born of genuine passion, and it is a lively read. It exhibits an excellent knowledge of the source material and an open-minded, imaginative approach to the ends it can serve. Yarrow is abreast of and adept at distilling the most current scholarship. There are some evocative sections, as when we see Gaius Gracchus thinking in 'old money' after the retariffing of the currency in the late 140s BCE (41). Most important, it shows clearly and irrefutably what can be achieved via coins, not just in problem-solving or correcting traditional interpretations, but also in the particular cast it can lend our narrative of ancient history. I learnt a lot. I do have two concerns, though these perhaps reflect in part the series as a whole. First, this is clearly designed not as a reference work but as a sustained walk-through of the nexus between Republican history and numismatics; indeed, the casual reader is made to engage thus. But the size of the book, the nature of the evidence, and the type of question to which numismatics is capable of giving an answer mean that we jump from case study to case study. That makes for a fragmentary reading experience, one not helped by the thirteen 'Boxes' that provide further excursuses. There seems, I suppose, a mismatch between format and endeavour.

That brings me to my second concern, namely that I am slightly unclear what market this serves. The books are a joint venture between Cambridge University Press and the American Numismatic Society, and are intended as an introduction for students and teachers of ancient history, but I am unconvinced that many will find this an easy way into the subject. While it signposts resources very well and gives constant concrete examples, little quarter is given to those unfamiliar with the general background (though there is a chronological table at xxx–xxxv); what, for

example, are students to make of the un glossed sentence, ‘we have a Capuan biunx (2/10s of an as) overstruck on a semilibral Roman uncia and similarly a quincunx (5/10s of an as) on a semilibral sextans’? I am thus not convinced that this will become a staple of introductory courses, but perhaps this is overly churlish; any project that furthers the future of those essential skills whose acquisition is increasingly discouraged by the short and pressured graduate study of today is to be welcomed.

For those desperate to continue the tale beyond 49 BCE, a third numismatic offering provides solace: *Coins of the Roman Revolution 49BC–AD14. Evidence Without Hindsight*.⁶ This volume of essays, edited by Anton Powell and Andrew Burnett, employs the coins of this transitional moment as the mouthpieces of those opponents of Augustus whose words have not been preserved in our literary sources, and thus are our best means to resist the seemingly irresistible teleology that seduces scholarship of this period. As the Introduction points out, contemporaries imagined multiple outcomes other than those which materialized; their predictions, right or wrong, led them to act in ways that had significant repercussions on both the micro- and the macro-scale. Like Yarrow’s book, this volume thus seeks to celebrate the pedagogical value of the numismatic: ‘Coinage, always a medium which deserves study by the historian but often neglected in comparison with literary texts, is shown by the Roman revolutionary period perhaps at its fullest didactic value’ (x). But it is concerned only with Yarrow’s second theme: ‘monumentality’. The eleven essays assembled examine the minting energies of seven pretenders: Julius Caesar, Antony, Octavian, Sextus Pompey, Cato, Scipio, and Cornuficius – looking at both the ideals the coins herald, and the turmoils to which those ideals respond. We see in particular a transition from the family-focused designs of the Republic to more direct messaging.

The first essay, almost a second introduction, sees Raphaëlle Laignoux survey coinage of 44 to 29 BCE, suggesting that these issues’ similar *topoi* (theme) – with their common focus on military and religious titles, virtues, family, and piety – points to these actors’ largely similar political visions, seeking the broadest possible audience. The focus on power and the individual, and the unified ‘set’ of denominations that characterize the currency of the Principate, are thus revealed as the product of the civil wars. Lucia Carbone uses the iconography and metrology of eastern triumviral coinage to argue that Antony was the key driver of change, in particular introducing portraits of living individuals onto eastern civic coinage, and trying to align the Greek and Roman monetary systems. Claudio Devoto and Barbara Spigola turn to the shared language but radically different designs on the traditional, ancestor-focused productions of M. Porcius Cato and the innovative, complex designs of Metellus Scipio in coins minted in Africa in 47–46 BCE. The African focus continues in Guillaume de Méritens de Villeneuve’s study of Quintus Cornuficius, where the regional imagery is shown in the Roman context as an attempt to assert his legitimacy in traditional terms, to both a peripheral and central audience, after he fell foul of the triumvirs. David Wright argues in parallel that Sextus Pompey’s use of Scylla resonated beyond its Sicilian context, and aimed to speak to potential supporters in southern Italy

⁶ *Coins of the Roman Revolution 49BC–AD14. Evidence Without Hindsight*. Edited by Anton Powell and Andrew Burnett. Swansea, The Classical Press of Wales, 2020. Pp. 238. 87 illustrations. Hardback £60, ISBN: 978-1-910-58976-2.

where that creature had long been a protective symbol. Hannah Cornwell's paper zooms out to consider the broad, cross-factional use of 'PAX' as a legend on coins between 49 and 39 BCE, which she sees as creating personification rather than cult, geared towards asserting suitability as a guardian of the state. Arnaud Suspène and Jean Chausserie-Laprée examine one coin hoard, that from Martigues, which allows detailed comparison of the numismatic programmes of Antony and Octavian – the former focusing on force and family, the latter on himself and his adoptive father – and muses on the respective impact on the hoard's owner, who collected these and other issues indiscriminately. Amy Russell considers the intriguing 'SC' legend on Augustus' reformed bronze coinage, urging increased attention to the perspective of the Roman (wo)man-on-the-street, to whom these letters' increased prominence at the expense of individual moneyers guaranteed the continued existence and importance of the Senate, conceived increasingly as a homogenized – and not destructively-competitive – institution. Claire Rowan, treating coinage as a medium of cultural memory, explores the coins of the Augustan moneyers, L. Aquillius Florus and M. Durmius in particular, whose traditional appeals to their ancestors both advanced their careers and helped Augustus root his in tradition. By such means the latter reshaped the numismatic landscape, as he did the topographical, and rewrote Roman history via both. David Woods examines the same phenomenon, arguing that the limited repertoire for each suggests tighter control than previously thought. Woods uses this to try to explain the perplexing crab and butterfly on Durmius' coins (revealed as a rather obscure canting pun). Finally, Ben Greet considers the range of meanings invited by the eagle that regularly pops up on Augustus' coinage, in particular those evoked by the one serving as a courier on productions of 27 BCE, and how they might have been received by a variety of audiences. That multivocality of meaning was perhaps, Greet suggests, exactly why Augustus' regime, with its complex goals, employed this symbol.

This volume came out after the death of one of its editors, Anton Powell, and begins with a tribute by Kathryn Welch, but the volume itself stands as eloquent testimony to his scholarship, editorial skill, collaborative spirit, generosity as a mentor, Francophilia, energy, and legacy. It is a characteristically well-edited offering on a topic on which he had already made a substantial scholarly mark, showcasing the work of mostly early career scholars with a strong French contingent, the result of a panel organized by Powell at the 2016 iteration of the Celtic Conference in Classics – his brainchild – and published by the Classical Press of Wales, which he also founded.

Another important collection of essays, *The Alternative Augustan Age*, has the same desire to explore the 'underside' of this crucial period, and is appropriately dedicated to the memory of Powell (indeed it is edited by the author of the tribute to him in the previous volume, Kathryn Welch, with Kit Morrell and Josiah Osgood).⁷ In their introduction, the editors point out how often Augustus frames our approach to this period. As they put it, he 'symbolically assumes ownership of this entire period of history' (1), serving as a starting point even in recent attempts to critically reassess his contribution. Moreover, this long period of history has subsequently been treated

⁷ *The Alternative Augustan Age*. Edited by Kit Morrell, Josiah Osgood, and Kathryn Welch. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 394. 28 figures. Hardback £68, ISBN: 978-0-190-90140-0.

in either a homogenized or a linear way, which not only flattens out nuance, but promotes teleological interpretations. This volume instead shifts the spotlight onto other actors, not just by giving them their moment in the sun, but by not defining their importance in relation to Augustus. This allows us to see a 'series of alternatives – alternative spaces, alternative worldviews, and alternative narratives' (6), and thus reintroduces complexity and dynamism into our view of how the world changed – and did not change – at this historical 'watershed'.

The essays begin with Kit Morrell, who imagines Augustus as a magpie; less as initiator of reforms than adaptor of others' earlier reform attempts. A cluster of essays focus on the agency of the senate: Eleanor Cowan on its desire for *leges et iura* (laws and rights); Andrew Pettinger on its initiative in its own reform; Kathryn Welch on its award to Augustus of the famed golden shield as a message about community duty; Amy Russell on it persuading Augustus to accept the title *pater patriae* (father of the Fatherland) and its increasingly corporate self-conception (cf. her contribution to the previous volume). That same moment is also the focus of Tom Hillard's paper on the *populus Romanus* (people of Rome), since it showcases their abandoning of convention. Another cluster shows the possibilities afforded individuals and their forgotten or misunderstood contributions: Joel Allen on C. Asinius Pollio; Hannah Mitchell on L. Munatius Plancus; James Tan on Agrippa; Megan Goldman-Petri on C. Antistius Vetus; and Philippe Le Doze on Maecenas. The latter reminds us of the place of literature, and Geraldine Herbert-Brown shows that Virgil seems more singular when read without a dictatorial (!) Augustan framing. A further group of papers demonstrates the opportunities remaining to elites more broadly: Carsten Hjort Lange on triumphs; Wolfgang Havener on the new equestrian prefects and the senate's resistance to them; Josiah Osgood on the continuing military opportunities in Africa; and Matthew Roller on those offered by the centumviral court for fame-inducing oratory. Other papers demonstrate that Augustan policy did not always have an easy reception. Bronwyn Hopwood uses the *Laudatio Turiae* ('In Praise of Turia') to demonstrate the mixed reception of Augustus' marriage legislation; a new fragment of a municipal law from Troesmis serves the same purpose for Werner Eck. Paul Hay confirms the framing of the volume by demonstrating, via an investigation of the concept of the *saeculum* (long duration), that contemporaries did not think exclusively – or even commonly – in terms of an 'Age of Augustus'.

This is a welcome volume in both its premises and payoffs. Among the latter is the realization that the 'Augustan age' was in fact built by a much broader base of people. Another is the demonstration that the traditional periodization – which the editors abandon – is actively unhelpful. Reading these years together with those before – in which all the key actors were formed intellectually, socially, and politically – demonstrates numerous continuities of thought and attitude. Most surprising, perhaps, is the suggestion that such an approach pushes us to consider inverting the traditional view that under Augustus the losses of the senate were commensurate with the gains of the people. The picture here seems rather to be that the senate, both as individuals and as a corporate entity, did just fine, while the people let slip what little they (arguably) had. Certainly Augustus and the senate had a collective interest in the few senatorial casualties – tellingly, all *populares* (aristocrats) – of which we know.

This interest in agency beyond the emperor also informs, though in different way, a further essay collection, *The Social Dynamics of Roman Imperial Imagery*, edited by Amy

Russell (making her third appearance in this review) and Monica Hellström.⁸ This volume is interested in ‘imagery that makes reference to imperial power’ (2) that was ‘created or used in social contexts beyond the immediate sphere of the imperial family itself’ (1). It thus concerns the ways that non-emperors appropriated the emperor and his image to their own ends. The ‘social dynamics’ of the volume’s title, a term employed in economics, sociology, and psychology, refers to the ‘relationships that patrons and viewers had with others around them – and not just their ultimate rulers, but those immediately above and below them on the social scale’ (3). The underlying premise is thus that, though scholars have tended to focus on the work imperial images did in dictating and negotiating the relationship between emperors and their subjects, in fact *most* of these images were in environments entirely removed from the emperor. This volume builds from the premise that they were thus used much more widely as tools in other relationships; but that, in turn, led to changes in imperial imagery itself.

As one might expect of a volume honed over three conferences, this is nicely balanced, with papers covering the Lares Augusti (Amy Russell), imperial ideology among eastern client kings (Julia Wilker), Ovid’s Pontic poetry (Nandini Pandey), violent images of conquest from the eastern provinces (Caillan Davenport), the court’s role in the creation of imperial images (Benjamin Kelly), statuary in Roman North Africa (Monica Hellström), an altar in Carthage (Megan Goldman-Petri), the epigraphy of professional bodies (Nicolas Tran), and lead tokens (Clare Rowan). They thus cover a range of media, periods, and social settings. A final essay by Olivier Hekster, whose pioneering work inspired the editors, serves as a theoretical epilogue. Together, these papers paint a picture of continuity across time, stratigraphic appeal to diverse audiences, varying indicators of ‘success’, a blurriness in what counts as ‘official’, greater freedom afforded those of lower than higher status, and – perhaps most interestingly – the almost total lack of any sustained undermining efforts. Of the latter, the editors comment: ‘Everyone had a vested interest in upholding the schematic hierarchy that the imperial image-world made visible: as they used it to negotiate their own local relationships and hierarchies, they performed a loyalism that did, in the end, perpetuate real imperial power’ (21). We might add that the issue was also that even those attempting such resistance did so within their contemporary ‘thought-world’ – which in this period meant ubiquitous imperial ideology. To think outside the structures within which our thinking has been formed takes an effort and an ability beyond all but the most extraordinary minds.

Next, two books on Roman religion from opposing ends of our period. Lindsay Driediger-Murphy’s *Roman Republican Augury* represents a broadside assault on the functionalist approaches to Roman divination long in scholarly vogue.⁹ Based on her Oxford DPhil dissertation – of which one can perhaps see the seams and traces in its slightly singular chapter structure and lengthy close readings, respectively – this

⁸ *The Social Dynamics of Roman Imperial Imagery*. Edited by Amy Russell and Monica Hellström. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2020. Pp. 292. 51 figures. Hardback £26, ISBN: 978-1-108-79972-0. Full disclosure: I participated as a respondent in one of the three conferences on which this volume is based.

⁹ *Roman Republican Augury. Freedom and Control*. By Lindsay G. Driediger-Murphy. Oxford Classical Monographs. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. 277. Hardback £92, ISBN: 978-0-198-83443-4.

monograph bears an imposing photo of Jupiter on its cover, which achieves visually what Driediger-Murphy aims to do intellectually, namely putting at the forefront of our understanding of Roman religion ‘a being they perceived as vastly more powerful, more important, more knowledgeable, and more dangerous when crossed than themselves or any of their human friends and enemies’ (203). Interpreting Jupiter’s will was the ostensible goal of Rome’s official civic divination, both public auguries (‘signs with a permanent effect’, [2]) and auspices (‘signs which were thought to pertain to a specific action proposed at a specific point in time by state officials’, [2]), spontaneous or solicited. But Driediger-Murphy notes that augurs rather than gods have received the bulk of scholarly attention, the natural result, she suggests, of a modern cynical approach that assumes the system was ‘rigged’ to provide a tool for the former, whether the individual self-interested magistrate or the collective self-interested elite. She instead makes a sustained case for the exact opposite: that divination represented a sincere attempt to understand divine will, and thus a process of which the gods, not men, were in control. In this she is inspired not just by a (post-colonial) move within anthropology away from functionalism, but by parallel developments in the study of ancient Greek divination as well as broader trends in cultural Greek and Roman history that both problematise the practicalities of the traditional approach and demonstrate its anachronistic presumptions about the relative importance of religious sentiment and self-advancement.¹⁰ In one sense, Driediger-Murphy’s work can be seen as a clearing out, once and for all, of a corner of Roman religion where now-discredited stereotypes of ‘sterile’ Roman religion have outstayed their welcome.

The book consists of a long introduction followed by three chapters of unequal size. The former, after outlining the modern historiography and its perceived weaknesses, excavates the underlying principles of the traditional view to be refuted, namely the beliefs that ancient augural theory assigned humans control of the divinatory process, and that the ancient evidence shows magistrates so controlling the process. It also outlines Driediger-Murphy’s own four guiding principles of ancient augury: that it aimed to genuinely elicit information from Jupiter; that there were accepted and widely known rules; that it worked by consensus and thus could enforce elite behaviour; and that Roman religion, though it permeated Roman society, nevertheless remained a discrete and important factor in determining behaviour. The first and second chapters duly take on the established view of augural theory, the third the practice. Chapter 1 refutes the idea that the report of an augury was more important than its reality by thoroughly dismantling the two premises that underlie it: that what validated a divinatory sign was the nature of its reception by the one to whom it was given, and that the report of the sign was equal to the sign itself. Via painstaking assessment of the available evidence, Driediger-Murphy demonstrates not only that it does not support the traditional reading, but that the Roman view changes over time. This is important, because a chronologically stratigraphic review of the sources from Augustine back to Cato reveals that the modern consensus is characteristic of the imperial and late antique sources, not the Republican. This introduces an important

¹⁰ Indeed, Driediger-Murphy has collaborated with a leading voice in the latter movement, Esther Eidinow, in a cross-cultural edited collection, *Ancient Divination and Experience* (Oxford, 2019).

sub-thesis: that the current cynical misreading derives from a decline into precisely such flexibility under the empire (which of course perhaps risks replicating a different historiographical stereotype – a question for another day). Chapter 2 treats ‘watching the sky’, a method for taking the auspices in which the magistrate looked for lightning (famously – and ineffectively – employed by Julius Caesar’s silent consular partner in 59 BCE, M. Calpurnius Bibulus). This merits close attention because it seems on face value to be the archetypal example of elites’ mobilizing divination to their own ends, since the mere declaration of sky-watching seemingly stymied public business. Why would that be, if not because watching for a sign and receiving one were essentially identical, since it was expected that anyone could fabricate a sign? Driediger-Murphy demurs, rehabilitating and girding a suggestion originally made (but poorly evidenced) in early eighteenth-century Germany before being undeservedly buried by Mommsen (awareness of which deserves credit in its own right). This proposed that the act of watching in itself rendered public business impossible because, while it continued, the divinatory process was incomplete. Chapter 3 turns to practice, seeking to demonstrate that divination often produced results out of sync with the apparent interests of the human actors (thus proving the inadequacy of the functionalist model ‘in the field’). It discusses the inherent difficulty of eliciting ‘motivation’ for ancient actors, builds a corpus of counter examples, teases out the multiple different agents involved (and thus the impossibility of pointing to one simple ‘desirable’ outcome), and explores the measurable impact of augury on public life.

Driediger-Murphy has written a clear and powerful treatise. In its careful and systematic treatment of the evidence, it mounts a daunting case for an alternative reading of Roman augury. If its footnotes reveal that its thesis has been both long-floated and more recently presaged, there has certainly been no case as complete and focused, both theoretically and practically, as this. Most important, in my view, is the time Driediger-Murphy takes to consider the wider ramifications of her argument. Beyond its thesis, this book is a mission statement for a different approach to Roman religion. This encompasses an insistence on more genuine, devout Roman engagement with the gods (‘Rome as a deeply, consistently, passionately religious society’, [8]), the suggestion that frustration, fear, and even faith be put back into Roman religious experience, and thus a hypothesis that ‘religion’ be taken seriously as a self-standing factor in Roman society, which she claims runs in the face of recent insistence that the religious and the political are two sides of the same coin. I am not entirely convinced on this last. When Driediger-Murphy insists that a Roman actor heeding Jupiter’s instructions against his own immediate interests represents a religious motivation at the expense of the political (49), she both blurs the distinction between separation and opposition (see too 167) and misses, I think, that the magistrate is indeed genuinely motivated by religion but also thinking of the well-being of the state and his own fortune in the medium- and long-term. Put another way, Driediger-Murphy treats the current orthodoxy of religious-political blurring as a revisionist subordination of the spiritual into the mundane; in fact, I think, it is a recognition that the two were so intertwined that they simply cannot be usefully extricated. That co-existence is, to my mind, more interesting than a characterization of the augur as a ‘religious extremist’ (9), however important the corrective impulse. Driediger-Murphy is, I hasten to add, for the most part admirably restrained in not overstating her case, and recognizes throughout that her revised reading leaves ‘some

room for manoeuvre' (55). But the tendency remains to characterize individuals as a class, just as when current political discussion declares that 'all politicians are crooks'. No doubt some are and some or not; or better, some display the semblance of crooked tendencies more than others. It is the fine-grained behaviour of individuals in whom genuine sentiment – whether religious or otherwise – and personal ambition were not simply opposed but overlapping psychological imperatives that reveals the Romans at their most familiar.

If *Roman Republican Augury* represents an pitched assault on a pillar of Republican religious scholarly orthodoxy, Matthias Gassman's award-winning *Worshippers of the Gods* is a stealth raid on a late antique equivalent.¹¹ Gassman's book returns to ostensibly familiar terrain – the fourth-century Christianization of the Roman West – in an ostensibly familiar way: the tetrarchic persecution, the Constantinian 'revolution', the Altar of Victory controversy, the emergence of the term 'pagan', and the dismantling of traditional cults all receive chapters. But once the reader gets past a rather frustrating lack of signposting, the importance of this book emerges. As Gassman outlines in the Introduction, scholarly models for explaining the gradual replacement of traditional religion by Christianity have gone from Franz Cumont's inevitable orientaling evolution via Herbert Bloch's binary conflict (complete with its evocative senatorial 'last stand') to the current accommodationist consensus of, for example, Peter Brown and Alan Cameron. One dimension of the latter is the rhetorical reading of Christian writings as inventing 'paganism' as a homogenizing identity into which they could assimilate their diverse polytheistic opponents, the more easily to be stereotyped and condemned. Another is the assumption that late antique non-Judaeo-Christians themselves had a largely 'secular' attitude to traditional civic life. Gassman believes that that model fails to adequately account for the nuance and complexity of our fourth-century sources. These Christian authors certainly had rhetorical directives, but Gassman contends that to dismiss everything they say about paganism on that basis is to miss that much of it chimes with the evidence – slim, but extant nonetheless – of what late antique polytheists themselves thought, spoke, and wrote about religion: "paganism" was not an empty polemical construct but a description, shaped by Christian vocabulary and theology, of a polytheistic piety whose devotees likewise saw the many cults of the gods as parallel, overlapping paths to a single spiritual reality' (83). Gassman's book thus does no less than reassert the reality of late antique paganism – not a spectral strawman summoned by Christian apologists, but a concrete religious position anticipated by both the developing pagan monotheism of the high empire (which celebrated a 'highest god') and the 'persecutory' legislation of the third and fourth centuries (which encouraged a religious binary between Christianity and everything else). Gassman is thus less interested in the development of a particular term 'paganism' in the fourth century (which is in fact itself something of scholarly linguistic phantom) but the hardening, among both Christians and the denizens of traditional religion, of this perceived binary and its accompanying

¹¹ *Worshippers of the Gods. Debating Paganism in the Fourth-Century Roman West*. By Matthias Gassman. Oxford Studies in Late Antiquity. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 236. Hardback £61, ISBN: 978-0-190-08244-4.

intellectual developments (such as, for example, a distinction between worship and piety, on the one hand, and belief and morality, on the other).

This thesis is made in five chapters. The first, on Lactantius, serves as a kind of control, demonstrating the starting point from which later thought diverged. His picture of a failed polytheism was limited to civic cult, excluding philosophy and private devotion, but where scholars have suggested he focused on the tetrarchic imperial equivalence with Jupiter and Hercules, Gassman maintains instead that Lactantius' dagger was aimed at the worship that underlay the actions of those emperors just as it did those of their contemporaries. Lactantius insisted that the core of religion was in the individual's commitment rather than state praxis; since traditional cult was centred on the latter (or so, at least, he claimed), it failed as proper *religio*. More than that, he offered a genealogy that explained the prominence that this *superstitio* had achieved via engagement with classical literature, especially Cicero as the archetypal theorist of traditional Roman religion. Chapter 2 proceeds to Firmicus Maternus, the spark for the project as a whole (vii). In Maternus, we see Lactantius' ideas developed against the changed political landscape of the Constantinian family's religious legislative programme, which though highly-debated, undoubtedly both represented a hostile rhetorical environment for traditional religion, while in practice leaving much of it untouched. Maternus, unlike Lactantius, expanded his scope beyond civic cult to encompass all traditional polytheism, public and private, which he connected not by a common history but a 'shared spiritual origin as diabolical counterfeits of Christianity' (73). This emerging 'paganism' will be foiled not in the Parousia but in the near future by mundane actors, a shift that revealed how much the late antique 'Overton window' had shifted. Chapter 3, in my eyes the book's most important contribution, begins with the anonymous Ambrosiaster, whose writing caricatures the imagined elite pagans he rebuts. In this, he furthers Maternus' conception of polytheism as a unified theological system – one *lex* (law) comparable to that of the Christians – by emphasizing the singularity of both its misunderstanding of the divine and the immorality of its teaching. But Gassman believes the latter is no imagined phantom, and uses inscriptions from Rome to offer, for the first time, as full an account as possible of 'the theological, ritual, and social contours of this new polytheism' (76), from the monuments of late antique pagans themselves: 'What evidence we do have...implies that their eclectic religious interests were united not only by a broad henotheistic theology but also by a belief that the many cults of the gods were vehicles for deep truths' (82). Chapter 4 uses the Altar of Victory controversy as a means to compare Ambrose and Symmachus as spokesmen for the traditional and the newly evolving senses of *religio*. Ambrose's manipulative manoeuvring of the emperors is read as the same new refocusing of religion on individual commitment, but extrapolated to the person of the emperor. Symmachus' clever but constrained response, and the ground he tacitly concedes, boxed in as he was by circumstance, demonstrates both the radical shifts in the religio-political sands since the start of the century, and how much was nevertheless still, even in 384, at stake. Chapter 5 turns to another late antique old chestnut, Praetextatus, the darling of the so-called pagan last guard. But rather than the man himself, Gassman juxtaposes the competing attempts to memorialize him in the 380s – by Symmachus, the Vestal Virgins, and his wife Paulina (and Jerome's riposte) – as a means to demonstrate the diversity of 'paganism' behind the tactically homogenous picture of Symmachus' *Relatio*. These groups, just like Christians,

could distinguish between religion directed outwards towards public cult or inwards towards the self if it suited them. The point, it slowly emerges, is that Alan Cameron's seminal demolition of the idea of a pagan party of resistance was right only in that there was no unified party; there was resistance, says Gassman, just highly diversified and disputed.

Taken together, these case studies testify to an important shift in elite conceptions of religion in the fourth century, the gradual, incremental steps of which are lost without such close, detailed, successive reading. The case studies here, each read 'in its own intellectual, social, and religious world' (16), and their juxtaposition reveal that Christians and pagans actually had a shared general conception of paganism, although it was an umbrella for an eclectic range of views on both sides. Again, as with Driediger-Murphy, elements of the thesis here explored have been teased in early scholarship; but immersion in the particularity and complexity of the fourth century reveals a payoff of great importance of our understanding of late antiquity: 'The term *paganus* was a Christian invention; the idea – and crucially, the practice – of a polytheistic religion that united the worship of many gods was not' (106). Paganism, in fact, was 'a still-potent reality' (177).

Noticeable in their absence from Gassman's enlightening study of the late antique religious landscape are the Jews. Traditionally, their position has not been thought to need much elaboration beyond the litany of their mistreatment at the hands of successively more zealous Christian authorities; but Ross Kraemer's latest tome, *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity*, takes issue with this portrait of passive persecution, and in so doing opens up a fresh landscape of nuance, complexity, and agency in diaspora Judaism.¹² I have reviewed this at length elsewhere, so will be brief.¹³ Kraemer seeks to demonstrate that despite the apparently limited evidence for diaspora Jews in the post-Constantinian period – something usually explained on the basis either that, in contrast to their rabbinic counterparts, they converted, forcibly or not, to Christianity – they remained an important late antique stakeholder group, and that with some creative use of sources we can write their histories. Since diaspora Jews of the fourth to seventh centuries left no written evidence, the sources in question are epigraphic, Christian-authored, and most of all legal. Kraemer's careful discussions of such evidence – each of which refuses simplistic or quick conclusions, and thus belies simple summary – builds a picture of a Jewish diaspora existence distinct from that in late Roman Palestine and Babylonia (the source of the rabbinic tradition) and embedded in the wider realities of the Mediterranean. And it is one that, rather than echoing previous binary narratives of tolerance and intolerance, reveals instead both the vibrancy of late antique Judaism and its critical importance to the wider politico-religious debates of the period. Conditions certainly worsened for Jews over the long late antiquity, but they did so slowly and unevenly, and were still better than for many other contemporary minority groups, since actions against Jews ultimately aimed at border-policing rather than eradication (unlike those against 'pagans' or 'heretics'), something partly explicable on the rather counter-intuitive

¹² *The Mediterranean Diaspora in Late Antiquity. What Christianity Cost the Jews*. By Ross Shepard Kraemer. New York, Oxford University Press, 2020. Pp. 486. Hardback \$99, ISBN: 978-0-190-22227-7.

¹³ 'Reviews', *Journal of Roman Studies* 112 (2022), 330–1.

basis that eradication would imply the eschaton, in the realizing of which established powers had little interest. More important, that overall trend – and its focus on inter-religious tension – obscures the much more textured realities of daily life, in which Jewish actors often exerted as much influence as their non-Christian peers. Kraemer's book thus reveals the forgotten realities not of a minority group for a brief moment in time, but of a huge empire-wide stakeholder group over multiple centuries. Just by its topic, then, it would likely prove important, but the rigour of its readings and its sensitivity to its subjects make it an instant classic.

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Art and Archaeology

This review again reflects the exciting chronological and geographical range within which Classicists operate and the diverse approaches and disciplinary knowledge that illuminate the ancient world for us. Alexa Piqueux's monograph, *The Comic Body in Ancient Greek Theatre and Art, 440–320BCE*,¹ explores how costume and gesture entwine with speech to bring alive the comedy body, drawing equally on images painted on vases and extant texts of Old and Middle Comedy. One of the greatest difficulties of working with these two data sets is that the texts originate in Athens while the majority of vases that depict comedy were actually made in southern Italy and Sicily. This necessitates a first chapter that investigates the 'Italianness' of these vases, the extent to which they might be directly reflective of Attic comedy, drawing on that comedy more generally for thematic inspiration, or showing adaptation of Greek comedy and its performance in Italian contexts. This might involve looking for clues in the images of the construction of temporary stages on which travelling troupes might have been performing in Italy (57) or considering the way in which particular comic themes, that seem so peculiar to Athens, might have played to different audiences in Italy by appealing to contentions within local societies, for example generational divides in Paestan society (66).

The remaining chapters focus more precisely on the physical appearance of comic actors, considering masks, padding, phallus, gesture, and movement. The discussion starts with masks and an exploration of the creation of comic ugliness through their references to other types of faces, whether monstrous, animal, or ethnically 'other', particularly by resembling the faces of satyrs or the Black African, a discussion that perhaps needed a bit more disentangling and extended discussion. A key aspect of Piqueux's

¹ *The Comic Body in Ancient Greek Theatre and Art, 440–320BCE*. By Alexa Piqueux. Oxford Studies in Ancient Culture and Representation. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2022. Pp. xviii + 365. 87 b/w and colour illustrations. Hardback £88, ISBN: 978-0-192-84554-2.