

academic discussion of the book into concrete examples. This would be particularly useful to add more depth to classes with GCSE and A level students who are looking at free-standing and architectural sculpture as part of Classical Civilisation. Furthermore, this book is accessible enough that the content can be adapted for students studying the Classical world throughout KS3.

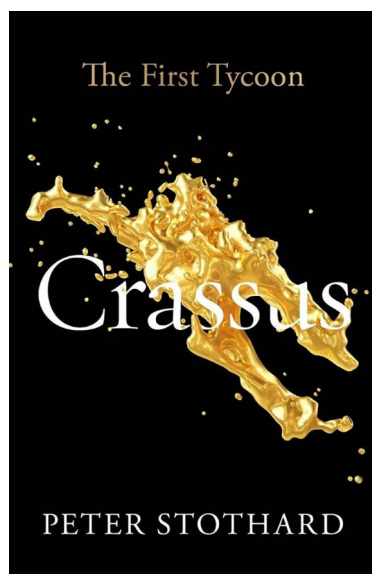
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Crassus: The First Tycoon

Stothard (P.) Pp. xii + 168, map. New Haven, CT and London: Yale University Press, 2022. Paper, £28.99 (Cased, £18.99). ISBN: 978-0-300-25660-4

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'The first tycoon of ancient Rome was also its most famous loser.' This zippy opening line to Stothard's compact biography of Marcus Licinius Crassus had me hooked from the outset. Sometimes I find that biographies of ancient Romans can become rather ponderous, but this neat little volume avoids this by virtue of its relatively short length. It is part of Yale University Press' new 'Ancient Lives' series, which aims to tell the stories of figures from antiquity in a way that makes the problems that they faced, and actions that they took,

understandable from the reader's modern world perspective. Whilst some may dislike this attempt to relate, I think that this can be very useful for a teacher trying to encourage sixth formers to grasp what can be a very confusing time period.

Stothard begins his biography with the event that most people relate Crassus with, his disastrous defeat at Carrhae in 53 BC. He then circles back to the very beginning and considers all of the events which led Crassus to his biggest mistake: death at the hands of the Parthians and the humiliating loss of the Roman legionary standards. In doing this, Crassus becomes a rather tragic figure, a clever man who built his fortune by novel methods: taking an army of highly educated slaves and using them to build a property empire, ruthlessly exploiting Rome's vulnerability to fire and inadequate safety systems.

I always considered my knowledge of the years leading to the end of the Roman Republic to be good, but I realised when reading this that I did not know very much about Crassus at all. Pompey and Caesar tend to get the headlines when the story of the "Three

Headed Monster' (the so-called 'First Triumvirate') is told. Crassus is often relegated simply to the role of banker, a shadowy figure in the background, whose role is not always entirely clear. Stothard's Crassus, rather than simply being portrayed as greedy, a modern view which is heavily developed from Plutarch, is an outsider, someone who had to forge a different path as he did not quite fit in. To the traditional senatorial elite Crassus had the right family credentials, but he was too young and too rich. However, to the populist elements he was a loan shark, only interested in what he could gain. He also lacked the military genius of Pompey and Caesar, despite coping well, if reluctantly, with the Spartacus revolt.

This book is not a good first foray into the first century BC. Due to its length, it is assumed that the reader already knows the main events and characters. What I found interesting was Stothard's analysis of Crassus' role in the Catilinarian conspiracy and the career of Clodius. Often, he is just confusingly in the background, with little consideration of what he was hoping to achieve. Here Crassus is outlined as a man with twisting loyalties, focused entirely on how he could become number one, with no consideration of the broader consequences of the actions he was taking. Stothard's account of Crassus' Parthian campaign gallops along, a little like his dashing cavalry hero son Publius, and there is a real sense of foreboding as the omens and advice ignored by Crassus are outlined.

This book is not footnoted, but there are useful end notes which would be helpful in allowing the reader to access Stothard's source material. He clearly uses Plutarch extensively, but there are lots of other helpful suggestions for further reading, both primary and secondary. There is also a handy timeline and map, which is always appreciated.

Overall, I thoroughly enjoyed this book and found that I was eager to read more due to the short chapters and engaging writing style. This would be a good addition to a sixth form library if students are studying the Fall of the Roman Republic, but they will need some background on the period first.

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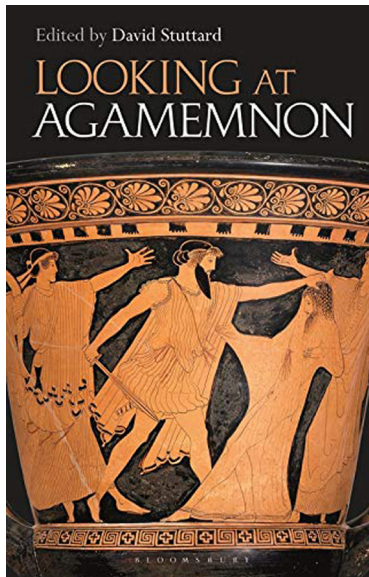
Looking at Agamemnon

Stuttard (D.) (ed.) Pp. viii + 228. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. Paper, £28.99 (Cased, £85). ISBN: 978-1-350-21434-7

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Stuttard's edited volume *Looking at Agamemnon* looks at the cultural, historical and theatrical impact of one of Aeschylus' most well-known, enduring and popular plays. Divided into 12 distinct chapters, this volume allows the reader to examine *Agamemnon* from many different angles. Each chapter provides a fresh perspective on an aspect of the play, each written by an expert in the field. Not only do many of the chapters focus on the play itself, but they also broaden the scope of their argument to assess not just the play on its own merits, but also the *Oresteia* in context. In this way, the entire story of house of the Atridae is both told and examined in this volume.



both throughout the chapter. In addition, there is excellent use of the animal kingdom and the depiction of Helen as a lion cub, nurtured in the fold as a member of the family, yet growing up to become violent, dangerous and destructive is striking (p. 46) and perhaps echoes the damage which the members of the house of Atreus will continue to do to one another, even after the events of *Agamemnon*.

Hall's chapter focuses on a wide-ranging issue of the *Oresteia* and as a starting point to the volume, this seems apt. However, the volume poses several excellent and interesting chapters which merely focus on a specific aspect. For example, Sommerstein directs his attention to what was ultimately the cause of all Agamemnon's suffering and ultimately, his death. Focusing on Agamemnon's ritual sacrifice of his youngest daughter, Iphigenia, he asks whether he ever had a choice in the matter. This is a chapter which complements those which precede it on the overall narrative of the *Oresteia*, while also allowing the reader to focus on an individual aspect. Individual themes continue throughout the volume with *nostos* examined by Alex Garvie, who again reaches out to examine the theme of homecomings, both happy and otherwise in Aeschylus' other plays as well as examples from the *Odyssey*. The volume also contains several excellent chapters on wealth and injustice and the aftermath of warfare. The Aftermath of Warfare chapter, written by Isabelle Torrance, is a difficult chapter due to the subject matter, with slavery and rape both covered throughout. Torrance addresses these issues as part of the wider impact of the Trojan War and skillfully uses modern plays and novels to examine the reception which the issue of warfare in *Agamemnon* has received. Throughout the chapter, Torrance asks the reader to consider the cost of the actions of Agamemnon and the impact they have on both him and his family, but also those who also partake in the sacking of Troy. This is skillfully broken down into sections which cover; the sacrifice of Agamemnon's daughter, Iphigenia, the enslavement and subsequent murder of Cassandra and finally, *Agamemnon* viewed through the more modern lens of the works of Seamus Heaney and Colm Tobin.

The final chapter of the volume continues and rounds off the theme of the reception of *Agamemnon* and the *Oresteia* in modern works but on this occasion, it focuses on the concept of obtaining revenge for the murder of a loved one. This final chapter focuses on modern plays as its corpus of choice, only examining those published after 2005. It is fascinating to see the impact of the entire saga played out in modern stage plays and the examples used are

The volume opens strongly by examining the entire saga of the house of Atreus in Edith Hall's chapter entitled: 'Eating Children is Bad for You: The Offspring of the Past in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*.' Here Hall lays out the past misdeeds of members of the house of Atreus. Focusing on the play itself, Hall also manages to examine the wider-ranging implications of infanticide and how this can lead to ruin for generations of a family. This is done well and associated with the wider context of Hesiod and Homer with references to

from various countries and contexts. The *Molora*, a play which sets the events of *Agamemnon* against the backdrop of apartheid South Africa. Written in 2008, it recounts the traditional tale of Aeschylus' play but with a nod to the history and tradition of South Africa. Klytemnestra recounts the murder of Agamemnon before the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC). This commission was legally established in 1994 to establish the truth of past atrocities under the apartheid regime. This gives a very emotive and present feel to the narrative. In addition, the chorus on the *Molora* consists of Xhosa women who dance and sing traditional songs which are then translated for the audience. This chapter, more than any other, reveals the enduring legacy and universality of Aeschylus' original composition. Thousands of years after the original, the story is still seen as strongly pertinent in different cultural contexts, and this, more than anything else, is what Stuttard's fine volume reflects.

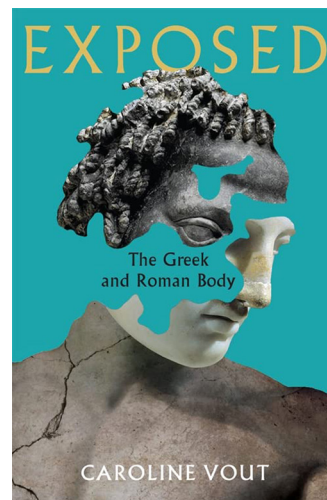
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Exposed: the Greek and Roman Body

Vout (C.) Pp. 423, b/w & colour ill. London: Profile Books, 2022. Cased, £25. ISBN: 9781788162906.

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This superb book should be in every school or college library. The human body is the focus for an account of how people thought and behaved in the ancient world from the Bronze Age to the early Middle Ages and beyond. Brilliantly written and lavishly illustrated, it is also the nearest thing to a classical page-turner you will read this year, and is both a window into the past and a mirror in which we see ourselves all too faithfully reflected.

The argument of this book is timely, delivering cogent body blows against the absurd 'supremacist' readings of the ancient world – readings which elevated the Apollo Belvedere to the status of a white paradigm and dealt in absurd binary accounts of race, colour and gender which the ancients themselves did not share. (How Roman, for example, was the corpse of a serving imperial soldier who was born in Palmyra and died on the banks of the Tyne?). At the same time Vout pulls no punches where the ancients were obviously men behaving badly. She calls out the institutional sexism, racism, genocide and enslavement of conquered peoples, while (equally) seeing the humanity of these conflicted embodied people. The book is refreshingly light on theory, preferring to let the ancient sources speak for themselves rather than make them part of a preconceived pattern.