

BOOK REVIEW

After the Crisis: Remembrance, Re-anchoring and Recovery in Ancient Greece and Rome. By JACQUELINE KLOOSTER and INGER N.I. KUIN. London, UK and New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2020. Pp. ix + 265. Hardback, \$115.00. ISBN: 978-1-350-12855-2.

Originating in a 2016 conference under the OIKOS Anchoring Innovation initiative, this edited volume explores how communities in ancient Greece and Rome negotiated communally transformative and traumatic events. Its proceedings focus on events from Classical Greece through Augustan Rome as reflected principally in literary, numismatic and epigraphic sources. As its title suggests, the book is especially concerned with the aftereffects of social and political crisis: the framing and articulation of “crisis narratives” in collective memory, historiography and ideology; the rhetorical adaptation or mobilization of such narratives by particular actors; the ways in which communities came to grips with crises in their aftermath; and the changes that major crises often catalyzed within the social order.

Containing twelve chapters in all, the book is divided into five parts, each comprising two or three thematically unified installments. The first trio of chapters is led by the editors’ introduction, which explains the volume’s methodology, terminology, aims and intellectual influences in the study of historical crises. The next two chapters, one centered on classical Athens, the other on imperial Rome, engage specific exempla of crisis remembrance and resolution. Tim Whitmarsh’s chapter identifies four “ideological strains” (20) in Athenian political discourse regarding revolution, some of which view it positively (as a sign of advancing democracy), others negatively (as a destructive, if sometimes necessary, rupture in the status quo); Michèle Lowrie turns to the early principate, locating Velleius Paterculus’ political formulation of *securitas*—a byword for peace, prosperity and safety among citizens—as an extension of philosophical discourse on freedom from care (e.g. Cicero’s *tranquillitas*) that runs parallel to the more Republican-inflected metaphor of the “body politic.”

The second and third divisions of the book address instances of “Crisis and Recovery” in Greek and Roman contexts. The Greek chapters focus on historiography, beginning with Lisa Irene Hau’s examination of the Hellenistic historians Duris and Phylarchus, whose emotive, gripping styles—maligned by the likes of Polybius and held as exemplars of sensationalizing “tragic historiography”—tap into the sights, sounds and pathos of the scenes described to provoke audience investment and empathy with victims of violence. Polybius takes center stage in Andrew Erskine’s contribution, which analyzes three “turning points” in his account of the Roman takeover of Greece; these moments reveal the historian’s acute sensitivity to the uncertainties and “alternative paths” surrounding this gradual but momentous change in Greek lives.

At this point, the volume largely takes leave of the Greek context; its last three sections, comprising the latter seven chapters, are trained on the succession of crises in the late Roman Republic. Alexandra Eckert traces the memory of Sulla’s terror in Roman political rhetoric and practice in the decades following, with particular attention to how later figures, like Caesar and the Second Triumvirate, defined their own programs (with varying levels of success) in counterpoint to the Sullan example. Annemarie Ambühl’s chapter on Lucan’s *Bellum Civile* detects in the poet’s grim account of the war a series of “what-if” scenarios raised by the narrator and characters that envision possible chances for the avoidance, or at least delay, of the carnage wrought by the civil wars.

The next set of contributions by Luca Grillo, Carsten Hjort Lange and Mathieu de Bakker are linked by the theme of “Resolving Civil War,” and explore, respectively, Caesar’s account of the siege of Corfinium, which evokes Thucydides’ Corcyra episode and recent memories of the Social War to portray its author as an effective crisis-solver; how Octavian signalled and actualized the end of civil wars, considering specific policy decisions and rhetorical cues in tandem with comparanda from modern civil conflicts; and Dio’s set-piece in *Roman History* 52 that sees Agrippa advocate a return to Republican government before Octavian, in language nevertheless engineered to display loyalty and ensure a peaceful transition to monarchy. The book’s last two chapters center on Roman families in civil war: Josiah Osgood and Andreas Niederwieser survey the fortunes of Republican families who suffered under Sulla’s dictatorship and their scions’ subsequent efforts to “reknit their families back into the political community” (182); Andrew Gallia’s closing chapter illumines the shifting perspectives and norms surrounding the Roman family—especially vis-à-vis its parallel institution of the state—during and after civic crisis, and the literary representation of families as

alternately a bastion of moral integrity or another theater of societal decay.

This is a valuable book on important, pervasive and perennially relevant subject matter (the year 2020 proved an opportune time for such a volume to appear). Its approach fruitfully combines new methodologies in historiography, cultural memory and rhetorical study to open fresh perspectives on familiar texts and events. The eleven contributed chapters are generally accessible, insightful and effectively argued, though some felt more loosely bound to the volume's guiding program. Where the book may leave some readers wanting more is its somewhat limited historical scope, weighted heavily toward first-century Rome; for a study on a theme as widely applicable as crises in the ancient Mediterranean, more diversity in the times and places under examination would have made this volume all the richer. In a more positive light, however, one could approach these gaps as an invitation for further work after the engaging models Klooster and Kuin have assembled here. This is a fine volume, well worth reading and as attractive for its insights into ancient communities as it is for the connections it inevitably stimulates with our own contemporary crises.

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