Finally, B.'s book offers some fresh and detailed insights — notably those concerning Dio's political position under Macrinus, Elagabalus and Severus Alexander, and the dating of Dio's work, which are strictly intertwined things. B.'s style is elegant, but likely a little hard for non-Italian readers: long phrasing might look convoluted. Some misprints give the impression that the book has not been sufficiently checked before printing — but this unfortunately happens with very many books. Highly appreciated, on the other hand, are the final indexes (index locorum, non-literary sources, names) and a rich bibliography (though occasionally missing some works mentioned in the footnotes).

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HENRIK MOURITSEN, *THE ROMAN ELITE AND THE END OF THE REPUBLIC. THE* BONI*, THE NOBLES, AND CICERO*. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. vii + 322. ISBN 9781009180658 (hbk) £75.00; 9781009180672 (pbk); 9781009180665 (epub); 9781009190275 (PDF ebook).

This ambitious conclusion to Henrik Mouritsen's trilogy on republican politics constitutes a vital contribution to the field, aiming to redefine its analytical framework by focusing on the previously ignored constituency of the *boni,* wealthy landowners of the first class, who ranked below the equestrians. The volume is divided into three sections: Part I investigates the social meaning of *boni*, through lexicological and historiographical means. Part II discusses the relationship between the *boni* and republican politics, their material interests as wealthy landowners and their debts, while Part III focuses on the *boni*'s role at the end of the Republic.

M. builds his sophisticated identification of the *boni* with a distinct non-political group within the Roman elite mostly on Ciceronian writings, though he tests their limits through careful contextual reading and comparison with other sources. His interpretation of e.g. *De Lege Agraria* (154–62) or the Catilinarians (180–1) seems to accept Cicero's views on various issues as factual, implying that he was reproducing a pre-existing discourse. Similarly, the interpretation of *furor*/*amentia* of the *perditi*/*egentes* (165 and 171) seems to be understood literally (e.g. 'wasting one's resource both reflected and aggravated mental disturbances', 175). But this is a common trope (see e.g. Cic., *Har. Resp.* 10, 39, 50), and a discursive link between *furor*/Furies and civil war/*discordia* is found in epic poetry. The regularity M. spots in the use of *boni* to indicate a specific class (Appendix 1) might be due to Cicero's perspective rather than a shared ancient category. In ch. 8, M. acknowledges that *boni* also indicates the civic ideal of exemplary Roman citizen, constructing political discourse as a moralistic binary between honourable men and their opponents. However, a Sallustian fragment (*Hist.* 1.12M), which M. mentions once (88) and tangentially discusses later (134), stating that 'the rich were regarded as *boni* because they defended the *praesentia* [i.e. the current conditions]', suggests a more conventional interpretation of the noun: the *boni* are the author's supporters and the *improbi* his morally depraved enemies.

For M., the *boni* were a part of the elite not interested in politics and wanting simply to protect their *otium,* the internal peace that allows you to enjoy your resources. This term is politically more relevant than *concordia*, which is considered its 'essential precondition' (126). All politicians invoke *otium* to appeal to the *boni*, the intended audience of public oratory (73). This group dominated the Forum, formed the audience of *contiones* and public court proceedings and 'provided most of the participants in the legislative comitia' (69). M. argues that the narrative of *otium* and *tranquillitas* was not an ideology, which the *boni* never had. Here, reluctance to explicitly discuss modern categories emerges as a weakness of the volume. 'Ideology' is a contested category: e.g., Rosenblitt's argument (*AJPh* 137 (2016)) about fear in the rhetoric of late republican 'popular champions' could be applied to Cicero's leveraging of fear of losing property described in ch. 10.

Notwithstanding the *boni*'s central role in M.'s view of Roman politics, they are said to belong to the non-political classes, which include the members of the senatorial and equestrian classes who

were not directly involved in senatorial or magisterial roles but not the non-elite actors, which were included in Syme's use of the concept (Santangelo, *Studi Storici* 64, 2023). M.'s view of Roman politics leaves little space for non-elite agency, following P. J. J. Vanderbroeck's top-down reading of leadership and collective behaviour (150, n. 32): crowds emerged as political actors when elite leaders exploited their needs to further their individualistic politics (149) and most riots were pre-political reactions to food shortages (150). Though the *boni* are, in his view, deciding the elections, M. only considers individuals directly engaged as senators or magistrates as political, as he does in his recent article about populism (*Historia* 72 (2023), 334).

Similarly, debt is seen as an effect of the rising costs of politics, affecting the elite. M.'s analysis is perhaps too radical: the poorest indeed had no assets to offer as collateral (179), but there is no reason to believe that this forbade them access to credit except for 'informal, interpersonal exchanges' (189). Documentary sources from Egypt demonstrate that humble families commonly had debts (e.g. *P. Kron.*), often repaid through labour (e.g. the Harthotes archive), sometimes performed by children (e.g. *P.Mich.* 10.587). A second-century C.E. soothsayer's handbook (*Sortes Astrampsychi*) has two questions on debt (Q25 from the debtor's perspective, Q58 from the creditor's), suggesting that it was a widespread concern. Even if one accepts M.'s argument that debt is presented as solely an elite concern in the sources (182), this does not mean that it reflects social reality: non-elite actors are overlooked in elite sources, who saw them as an undifferentiated mass (Appendix 2) and were uninterested in their everyday life. However, there is no reason why politicians could not have used the argument of *tabulae novae* to appeal to their class and the lower classes simultaneously.

The final section of the book achieves important results. It nuances the notion of 'elite', by focusing on the different political interests of various groups (chs 13–14), provides the reader with a coherent reading of Cicero's political trajectory (ch. 15), placing him back at the centre of late republican politics, and offers a solid account of elite politics in the transition between Republic and Principate. Indeed, M.'s book is a must-read for all scholars of the Late Republic, with its useful appendices and refined scholarly discussion. If the argument is bound to divide readers, it will be impossible for any scholar to underestimate the importance of this work for future historiography on the subject.

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PAUL BELONICK, *RESTRAINT, CONFLICT, AND THE FALL OF THE ROMAN REPUBLIC*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2023. Pp. ix + 228. ISBN 9780197662663. £54.00.

There is an age-old divide among political thinkers, between those who believe a republic flourishes because of good institutions and those who think it flourishes because of civic virtue. In recent decades institutional thinkers have held the field, partly because it has proved difficult to render the idea of civic virtue meaningful to a modern audience. That task is not what Paul Belonick ostensibly sets out to do in this book, but it may turn out to be his main achievement. The book opens a way for us moderns to understand what earlier thinkers meant by republican virtue, and to put that concept to positive use.

B.'s starting point is the ancient sources' emphasis on moral factors in Rome's success and in the Republic's downfall. His focus is on what he calls 'restraint values': internalised self-control and restraint in action (the familiar value-terminology of *verecundia*, *temperantia*, etc.) which comprised a Bourdieu-ian *habitus* for the Roman political class. He argues both that these restraint values stabilised Rome's intensely competition-riddled Republic and that the Romans themselves understood this fact. The Romans went on about restraint values so much *because* they understood their importance in sustaining political culture, not because it was an empty literary trope. Men whose conduct was restrained and within predictable limits could be trusted with power, and B. shows an excellent understanding of this link between predictability and political trust.