INTRODUCTION

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In 1964, the French director Louis Malle directed *Les amants*, a film which ends with the married Jeanne Moreau leaving with her lover, thus depicting adultery as a happy end with no punishment. A cinema showed the film and was fined for it by the State of Ohio on grounds of obscenity. The case went to the Supreme Court, where a discussion about the differences between art and pornography ensued. One of the judges, Justice Stewart Potter, wrote a well-known speech that has become a standard point of reference in such thorny debates: "I shall not today attempt further to define the kinds of material I understand to be embraced within that shorthand description [hard-core pornography]; and perhaps I could never succeed in intelligibly doing so. But I know it when I see it, and the motion picture involved in this case is not that".[1]

Public opinion also remains a concept that is difficult to characterise. By the mid-1960s more than fifty definitions had been collected; its number has increased, as is fitting for a subject thriving in many academic disciplines, including history, sociology and political studies.[2] Some scholars have even rejected giving a specific explanation of public opinion, preferring to set out some of its characteristics.[3] However, as Justice Stewart Potter asserted about art and pornography, public opinion is something that is easily distinguishable when we are faced with it.

The works that comprise this book were discussed in a seminar that took place in Seville in September 2016. Interestingly, in that venue, nobody attempted to provide a working definition of what public opinion was, and this introduction will follow the same course. One of the ways to understand public opinion, beyond methodological discussion, is to see it in practice. This book will therefore provide different case studies of public opinion in the Roman Republic. The aim is that the reader, at the end of each chapter or the whole volume, will be able to say about public opinion in Rome: "I know it when I see it".

Public opinion cannot be ignored; both elite and non-elite members of the citizen body have dealt with it throughout most periods of history. Public opinion hits our deepest nerves, those that make us social human beings, among them the fear or the experience of being left out and the social control of some members of a group by others. The urge to conform within a group has, of course, been one of our strategies for survival since prehistoric times; in a world peopled with dangerous animals, which were stronger, bigger and faster than human beings, only the pack guaranteed

1 *Jacobellis v. Ohio* case; cf. Gewirtz 1996.
2 Noelle-Neumann 1993: 58.
3 Lazar 1995: 38.

survival. The stakes are not usually so high today, but scientists have demonstrated that rejection from a group creates activity in the brain in the same areas as physical pain.[4] Public opinion can thus be a powerful tool for social control.

Elizabeth Noelle-Neumann drew attention to how those urges shape our responses and make us conform to what we perceive to be the majority public opinion. It should be taken into account that it is a question of perception, not of reality; perhaps what we perceive to be the mainstream opinion is in fact not, but we cannot access other people's brains to check that; we just hear the opinions that those people voice. When a group decides not to express their own opinion because they perceive themselves to be in the minority, Noelle-Neumann warns, the spiral of silence kicks in, in the sense that such silence feeds itself and makes that opinion seem even more marginal.[5]

In his seminal book *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit. Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962), the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas described the public sphere as "a forum in which the private people come together to form a public, readied themselves to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion".[6] For him, though, late 17th–18th century France and Great Britain constituted the starting point of public opinion, due to the existence of a rational and critical public debate together with a public sphere linked to the rise of the bourgeoisie (*bürgerliche Öffentlichkeit*), in which subjects could be discussed in a context of equality and liberty.[7] Previous studies had already focused on the public sphere, notably by the philosopher Hannah Arendt, who described it as the common world that gathers us together and prevents our falling over each other. According to her, the public sphere allowed multiple perspectives, aspects and spectators over sensitive political issues.[8] However, Habermas established a link between the existence of a critical public sphere and public opinion, which represented a leap forward in our understanding of those subjects.

Habermas' conceptualization of the public sphere and public opinion has had its fair share of detractors and criticisms. However, he undoubtedly brought those two terms into the core of political, philosophical and historical debates. That being said, Habermas acknowledged that his work was not complete: for instance, among other things, he overlooked the existence of the lively plebeian/popular public sphere during those same centuries. The comments regarding Habermas' work in this introduction will be limited to historical questions.

4 Einsenberger 2012.

5 Noelle-Neumann 1993.

6 Habermas 1989: 25–26.

7 Habermas 1989: xvii–xviii (first edition in 1962). The term *bürgerliche* could be understood as bourgeois or civil. It was translated into English as the first concept, suggesting class-consciousness (see McKeon 2004, who points out that this decision displaces attention from the civil character of the public sphere). Equally the substantive *Öffentlichkeit* could be translated as a public sphere (social meaning, as an institution) or as public (collective meaning, as speakers and audience; see Koller 2010: 263). See Hurlet's and Russell's chapters in this volume about this matter.

8 Arendt 1958.

Jürgen Habermas' approach was philosophical, not historical. While his command of philosophical processes is flawless, his historical interpretations were on some occasions filled in with broad brushstrokes. Historians have questioned Habermas' conception of the public sphere and public opinion. Modern newspapers and the diffusion of news constituted, for the German philosopher, one of the *sine quibus non* circumstances that enabled the existence of public opinion. Historians of different periods have called that hypothesis into question, asserting that the printing press or modern means of communication do not constitute a prerequisite. The oral circulation of news, rumours, and political gossip in communities and cities is attested from ancient Greece onwards as an effective way of circulating information.[9] Scholars have argued that even in early modern times, when printing presses were commonly used for books and pamphlets, handwritten pamphlets were preferred for circulating political ideas.[10] Technology drove a quantitative change in the use of public opinion, but no substantial qualitative changes seems to have resulted. Technology amplifies, but rarely creates new dynamics that were previously absent.

On the question of the public sphere, a subject treated in depth in two chapters of the present book, Habermas acknowledged the existence of a public sphere in other historical periods, including Ancient Greece.[11] However, he did not pay attention to the subject beyond that assertion. Gottesman's study of politics in Athens has brought to attention the existence of several public spheres, which were each composed of particular groups.[12] Kuhn has argued for the existence of a public sphere and public opinion in the Roman world.[13] Rosillo-López has proposed the existence of a public sphere in Late Republican Rome, defined by the rumours, gossip and political talks that circulated around the city, based on the existence of a certain freedom of speech, and disseminated by different groups of opinion at different social levels.[14] Centuries later, the medieval public sphere, for instance, has been described as being in a state of constant construction, in contrast with the permanent situation of the Habermasian public sphere.[15] In general, historians have argued that Habermasian model of the public sphere represents one of the possible concepts of the public sphere present through history, but in no way the only one or even the most legitimate.

The study of public opinion in other periods of history and other geographical locations is wide-ranging: the kingdom of Castile during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries (Oliva Herrer 2011, Olivari 2002), sixteenth and seventeenth

9 Cf. Lewis 1996 for Greece.

10 Olivari 2002.

11 Habermas 1989: 3–4, 7. On the public sphere in Athens see Gottesman 2014: 4–8.

12 Gottesman 2014: 4–8 (Habermas and Athens); Gottesman 2014, 20–22 (several public spheres). Gottesman prefers "the Street" to the term "public opinion". Cf. also Azoulay 2011.

13 Kuhn 2012.

14 Rosillo-López 2017. Freedom of speech should not be equated with the right of speech in public, which was more controlled in Rome; for instance, only magistrates and those called by them could speak in public in a *contio* (cf. Pina Polo 1989a and 1989b; Pina Polo 1996).

15 Oliva Herrer 2014.

century England (Fox 1997), or Paris before the eighteenth century (Piasenza 1993), to name but a few. These historical analyses, which span more than three decades, have used terms like "public opinion" or "public sphere", and have successfully demonstrated their existence before the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, before the diffusion of printed media, and outside the middle class that Habermas considered necessary. They have substantiated the use of public opinion as a valid concept in the historical analysis of pre-modern societies.

What about ancient Rome? The debate about the existence of public opinion in the realm of Roman politics started decades ago, with some scholars defining the terms by which ancient Romans understood public opinion. Meier, in his *Res publica amissa* (1966) stressed the role of *existimatio* as an important component of Roman politics, specifying that it had been underestimated.[16] In 1972 (*Le vocabulaire latin des relations et des partis politiques sous la République*), Hellegouarc'h analysed, among other political concepts, the use of terms like *fama* or *existimatio* in Roman politics and discourse, stating that the latter was equivalent to the modern concept of public opinion.[17]

Concepts such as *existimatio* and *fama* did not raise any eyebrows among historians; everybody who had read their Cicero recognized them as concepts that appeared regularly in his letters and speeches. The issue was in making the jump between ancient realities and modern concepts.

Yavetz was a bold pioneer in the use of the concept of public opinion as applied to Roman politics. In his book *Plebs and Princeps* (1969), he drew some remarks on the question of why some leaders became popular and others did not, that is, how the plebs arrived at an opinion. "The question is complicated and the answer complex, the data sparse, and the prospect of finding fresh evidence hopeless", he remarked.[18] Despite this statement, he did not falter and continued his quest.

In 1974, Yavetz published an article, "Existimatio, Fama and the Ides of March", which provocatively began: "Public opinion is as old as political history".[19] In it, he analysed how *existimatio* and *fama* were used to describe concepts akin to public opinion, engaging in a close study of their use in the sources, accompanied by a reflection on the role of *existimatio* during the last days of Caesar. But the question Yavetz asked *en passant* in his article, "Was public opinion taken into account in political decision making in the late Republic?", had to wait five more years for his in-depth answer through a case study.[20] In the meanwhile, Veyne published his seminal study about euergetism (*Le pain et le cirque*, 1976) and argued that public opinion did not exist in Rome. He argued that the people loved the sovereign and that only the senatorial elite could have an opinion, but they were self-constrained

16 Meier 1966: 9, n. 15.

17 Hellegouarc'h 1972: 363 stated that *existimatio hominum* or *omnium* had the specific meaning of public opinion; but ibid, n. 6 he added that *existimatio tout court* had also that meaning, thus enlarging the semantical range.

18 Yavetz 1969: 41.

19 Yavetz 1974: 35.

20 Yavetz 1974: 41.

to behave in a manner that did not contradict the popular image of the *princeps*, under the threat of being accused of treason.[21]

In 1978, Sordi edited a volume that focused on public opinion in the ancient world, focusing on the points of view of those who received it, the "propaganda recepita dall'opinione pubblica" (*Aspetti dell'opinione pubblica nel mondo antico*).[22] Unfortunately, the volume did not have a great impact on historiography, despite presenting a good number of studies from different historical periods.

Public opinion as a concept had a bigger impact the following year; Yavetz did not refrain from using the contemporary term in his 1979 book *Caesar in der öffentlichen Meinung* in which he studied, among other subjects, how the Roman people viewed Caesar and the impact of public opinion in Caesar's legislation. To which public opinion did the German title refer? In the chapter "Die öffentliche Meinung und die Iden des März" ("Public Opinion and the Ides of March"), Yavetz focused on the relationships between contemporary judgements about Caesar in the last months of his life, analysing the propaganda campaign organised by the enemies of the dictator and the rumours that circulated against him with the objective of damaging Caesar's reputation before the people. Furthermore, he reprinted in the appendix his previous article on *existimatio* and *fama*.

Interestingly, Yavetz's translators dared not be so bold as he himself had been. The English translation, *Julius Caesar and his Public Image* (1983), avoided the use of the term "public opinion" in the title, as if reluctant to apply such a contemporary term to Caesar, although that concept features throughout the main text. The same happened with the French translation, which used the title *César et son image: des limites du charisma en politique* (1990). Interestingly some reviewers of Yavetz's book used the concept of "public opinion" widely in their reviews without having any qualms about doing so.[23]

Even though Yavetz's book and article were widely read and cited (regrettably, Sordi's volume less so), the concept of public opinion, in relation to ancient Rome, did not enter *ipso facto* the vocabulary of ancient historians. It was a lengthy path, but the only way to move forward was to take the next step.

21 Veyne 1976: 543–552. Veyne agreed with Habermas that public opinion was born during the 18th century.

22 In the volume, Zecchini studied the opposition to Caesar in 59 from the point of view of the *optimates* ("L'opposizione a Cesare nel 59ª nell'interpretazione storiografica ottimate"). Valvo analysed Octavian and the role of public opinion in relationship with the *lex Pedia* ("Ottaviano e l'opinione pubblica di Roma in un passo livinano sulla *lex Pedia*), while Scuderi focused on Antony and the military ("Marco Antonio nell'opinione pubblica dei militari") and Cogrossi on the influence of Apollo in Augustus ("L'apollinismo augusteo e un denarii con il Sole radiato di L. Aquilio Floro"). Other chapters focused on the Empire: Sordi on antichristian prosecutions ("Opinion pubblica e persecuzioni anticristiane nell'Impero romano); Tedesco on Hadrian's prosecution of intellectuals (Opinione pubblica e cultura: un aspetto della politica di Adriano"); Belloni on the deity *Mens* in Pertinax' propaganda ("*Mens* e opinione pubblica nella monetazione di Pertinace") and, finally, Lassandro on peasant revolts and public opinion at the end of the 3rd century CE ("Rivolte contadine e opinion pubblica in Gallia alla fine del III secolo d. C.").

23 E. g. Albert in *Historische Zeitschrift*, 233 1981, 146–148 and Rawson, in *Classical Review* 34, 1984, 142.

Late Antiquity was one of the historical periods in which the concept of public opinion was readily established and applied. In 1979, Gregory published *Vox populi: popular opinion and violence in the religious controversies of the fifth century A. D.* In 1991, Rodríguez Gervás used such a concept, together with political propaganda, to analyse panegyrics in the Late Empire (*Propaganda política y opinión pública en los panegíricos latinos del Bajo Imperio*). Other scholars have done the same: for instance, Stenger ("Libanios und die öffentliche Meinung in Antiochia", 2012) has analysed how Libanius mobilised public opinion in support of emperor Julian, especially after the latter's death. Magalhães de Oliveira has focused on the control of popular opinion by sermon-givers in their speeches ("Communication and Plebeian Sociability in Late Antiquity: The View from North Africa in the Age of Augustine", 2017).

Scholars have also studied the impact of public opinion on Roman emperors. Aja Sánchez ("*Vox populi et princeps*: el impacto de la opinión pública sobre el comportamiento político de los emperadores romanos", 1996) described how popular public opinion was one of the few ways in which the people could have a political impact upon the Emperor. Flaig (*Den Kaiser herausfordern, Die Usurpation im Römischen Reich*, 1992) also considered the actions of the people at the games as an early form of public opinion.[24]

The creation of consensus through public opinion also constitutes a fruitful subject of study. Loreto (*Un'epoca di buon senso. Decisione, consenso e stato a Roma tra il 326 e il 264 a. C.*, 1993), when talking about political decision and consensus, stressed the strong role of emotiveness in public opinion. He also described as "consenso personale" the political credit of a person in the eyes of public opinion, analysing how that personal consensus could be created and accrued. David ("Rome: citoyenneté et espace politique", 2000) surveyed how public opinion was related to the consensus needed to govern the Empire; in his opinion, such public opinion was parcelled into small non-communicating units (people, army, provincial elites) that were subordinated to the Imperial authority. Ando (*Imperial ideology and provincial loyalty in the Roman Empire*, 2002), for instance, used Habermas to describe the "communicative actions of the Roman Government" and analysed how emperors used influenced public opinion to foster the community's commitment to the established order.

Despite this start by Meier, Hellegouarc'h and Yavetz, the concept of public opinion took a long time to settle into the field of Republican politics. However, its use has increased lately. Pina Polo has studied how *contiones* represented important places for the circulation of public opinion (*Contra arma verbis. Der Redner vor dem Volk in der späten römischen Republik*, 1996) and how rumours allowed the creation of a public opinion ("Frigidus rumor: The Creation of a (Negative) Public Image in Rome", 2010). In his study of Roman politics from the point of view of the crowd, Millar mentioned *en passant* the crowd's reactions in assemblies as public opinion and how the latter could be roused by tribunes (*The Crowd in Rome in the Late Republic*, 1998). Jackob, coming from the field of political communica-

24 Flaig 1992: 62 arguing against Veyne's idea that only the Senate had public opinion.

tion studies, conceived of Cicero as *Publizist* and made some observations in later works about political public opinion, focusing on its function as social control.[25] Yakobson has used the term to study Rome's foreign policy ("Public Opinion, Foreign Policy and 'Just War' in the Late Republic", 2009). In Kuhn's edited book about public opinion (*Politische Kommunikation und öffentliche Meinung in der antiken Welt*), which includes an interesting introduction by the editor surveying the several meanings and connotations of this concept, Ando ("Empire, State and Communicative Action", 2012) has argued that the absence of public spaces (with the exception of taverns and crossroads) and the restrictions in political communication prevented the existence of a public sphere. Morstein-Marx has analysed Republican graffiti as an unauthorized form of plebeian communication ("Political Graffiti in the Late Roman Republic", 2012). Flaig (*Die Mehrheitsentscheidung: Entstehung und kulturelle Dynamik*, 2013) has suggested that consensus was a way for the aristocracy to control public opinion and decision-making. Courrier has studied plebeian collective actions in order to analyse their impact on the government, aiming to settle the question of the existence of one or several plebeian opinions (*La plèbe de Rome et sa culture*, 2014). Rosillo-López has surveyed popular reactions to cases of corruption ("The workings of public opinion in the Late Roman Republic: the case study of corruption", 2016) and has analysed the public sphere in Rome, how public opinion circulated and was used by the elite, and the existence of a popular public opinion (*Public Opinion and Politics in the Late Roman Republic*, 2017). In the latest survey of Roman politics, Mouritsen has used "public opinion" (with inverted commas) throughout his work (*Politics in the Roman Republic*, 2017).

This bibliographical survey, while not aiming to be absolutely comprehensive, has shown the development of the use of public opinion as a valid and useful concept to study the realities of ancient Rome. These works have demonstrated the possibilities of such an approach, but they have in no way exhausted it. The editor and the contributors of this volume consider that there is room for much development.

The present volume approaches public opinion in the Roman Republic with a structure divided into four parts. Part 1 concentrates on the nature and components of public opinion in ancient Rome. Part 2 discusses public opinion in relation to military and administrative questions, while Part 3 analyses how public opinion interacted with public dialogue. The final section focuses on the transmission of public opinion.

The first chapters explore the nature and character of public opinion. Hurlet presents a historiographical perspective on the existence of public opinion in Rome, considering whether contemporary elements that compose public opinion were also present in the ancient world. Following Habermas' study on public opinion, Hurlet analyses the presence in Rome of concepts such as reason, criticism of power, the presence of *Öffentlichkeit* (understood in the sense of "publicité"), representation, and the notion of authority over a group. He argues that public opinion constituted a reactive rather than a reasoned force, in which issues like the authority or the representation of an elite were preeminent.

25 Jackob 2005; 2007; 2012.

Russell questions the nature of "the public" in relation to public opinion. Was there a public realm in Rome? In Latin, the adjective *publicus* derives from the concrete institution of the *populus*, the well-ordered body of Roman citizens. In Roman political discourse, the *populus Romanus* constituted the single source of legitimate public opinion. Russell suggests that it was achieved not through an abstract notion of "publicness", akin to *Öffentlichkeit*, but to a group of real people that could be gathered and consulted (whether by speaking or shouting). Through that fiction, that specific group of people became *the populus Romanus*. Competing public opinions were treated by orators as being voiced by "not the true *populus Romanus*", thus reinforcing the conceptual indivisibility of the Roman people even though, in practice, such divisions existed and were fully exploited by skilful orators.

Rosillo-López engages with the question of how public opinion can be measured, which refers to the thorny question of reducing uncertainty in politics. After surveying the methodological limits of modern electoral polls and the criticism against quantitative means of measuring public opinion, this chapter studies how Cicero and his correspondents made electoral predictions, by identifying the general climate of opinion and gathering as much information as possible on the candidates (including measurable and immeasurable assets, such as the number of followers, the quality of the games and banquets provided or the feelings of the voters). Successful electoral predictions, made through qualitative means, occasionally had an impact on Roman politics, could reduce the uncertainty of a result, and could help a senator to plan his political decisions and thus act accordingly.

The second section deals with military and administrative matters, showing the role of public opinion in the competition amongst the elite but also in the elite's representation before the people.

García Riaza focuses on the mechanisms, procedures and consequences of communication to Rome of military successes obtained during the period of the transmarine expansion (3rd–1st BCE). Victorious generals chose carefully the ambassadors of victory among their staff, frequently relying on links of kinship and political *amicitia*. The importance of such decisions was linked to the impact on public opinion of the victory announcement and the defense of the general's conduct before the Senate, both moments that went a long way to determine the subsequent concession of triumphs. In this context, the role of the *populus* was indirect but relevant. The Senate decided on the concession of *supplicationes* and triumphs, but public expectations and the climate of opinion could influence the Senate's mood; in some cases, popular spontaneous *supplicationes* were carried out. Thus the *nuntiatio victoriae* had a significant influence on public opinion in Rome.

A provincial command was a determining chapter in the political career of a Roman citizen during the Republic: for a praetor or consul, it was the best opportunity to obtain notoriety and glory thanks to a military campaign, or to improve his social and economic status at the expenses of provincials. However, a provincial command could also entail negative consequences. Díaz Fernández analyses the political use of military disasters through the manipulation of public opinion, focusing on how commanders who failed in the wars in Hispania, such as A. Plautius and C. Hostilius Mancinus, were brought to trial in Rome, with important political

effects (such as Scipio Aemilianus' second consulship). What was the response of public opinion and what influence did it have on the trials? Military disasters had become a political weapon in the tensions between Senate and the people; a much better informed public opinion played an important role in politics in that context.

Blösel's contribution studies the manipulation of public opinion in awarding and even terminating *imperia extraordinaria* in the 70s to 50s BCE, that is, military commands given directly (*nominatim*) to high magistrates as well as to *privati* without the otherwise obligatory sortition. The five cases analysed in this chapter (four of them involving Pompey, although with different problematics) allow us to gauge the degree to which public opinion in Rome was disturbed by this legal anomaly, by reconstructing public discussion before the vote, since those commands had to be voted by the people.

The "Egyptian question", that is, whether and by whom king Ptolemy XII Auletes would be restored to the Egyptian throne, became one of the most debated questions in 57–57 BCE. Morrell examines the role of public opinion and its manipulation in this debate. Division within the Senate made public opinion an important battleground. Pompey was discouraged from getting the command after attesting negative public opinion in the assembly and in the Senate. There are mentions of various attempts to influence the attitude of the Roman people, including tribunician lobbying and pamphleting by Ptolemy himself. In some cases a direct effect on political action can be traced, especially linked to the proclamation of the Sibylline oracle, which attests to the impact of state religion in politics and the ethical qualms of the Roman people.

Ando takes into account several tendencies in the creation, management and representation of public opinion outside of Rome in times of civil war, focusing on mechanisms and tropes. During the Caesarian civil war, the space of politics was suddenly enlarged. Even within a mode of thought that was essentially bilaterally unipolar (each place being imagined as linked to Rome, and by that fact to each other), distance and temporality remained obstacles to conceiving of politics as shared. Claims upon space and time amounted to a claim as to where and how communication occurred and, naturally, whose opinion ought to count in any assessment of public or popular opinion. Ando analyses how Caesar represented the conduct of politics and the content of public opinion in his *Bellum Civile* as a reaction to the changing nature of republican politics during a civil war, with networks of communication becoming pan-Mediterranean and multipolar.

The papers in the third section analyse public opinion as a part of public dialogue. Thus public opinion could be developed for internal use (Pina Polo), as a reaction to the vision and the control of the people (Hillard), or to justify their decisions and politics (Welch).

Fear is an emotional reaction against a real or imagined threat that will supposedly bring pain and suffering to an individual or to a group of people. Fear is therefore linked to uncertainty about the future, and appeals to self-preservation and survival. As a result, fear can be useful to promote internal social unity and collective action, reducing or eliminating dissenting opinions. Pina Polo examines how Cicero managed to turn into enemies of the people those persons whom Cicero him-

self considered enemies of the Republic. To achieve this objective, the orator delivered speeches before the people in popular assemblies, the places where, together with rumours, news and information were transmitted, as a means of creating public opinion. What can provoke fear? Loss, especially: loss of liberty, loss of property, ultimately loss of life. This was Cicero's main argument in his speeches before the people: he tried to make clear to his audience what they could lose if they did not confront their enemies. The rhetoric of fear aims to replace debate, presenting only one possible solution and, thus, polarising public opinion.

The rhetoric of fear continues in the next contribution. Hillard tackles the case study of the restoration of the equestrian juries in 70 BCE as a means of measuring the influence of public opinion in that political debate. He examines how Cicero used that rhetoric of fear to hammer upon the senators the perception of a condemnatory public opinion, which should as a consequence heap shame on them. The Roman elite, who fed on applause and approbation, needed public opinion as external validation that gave force to the impact of the judgment of others, in this case that of the people, upon the Roman senatorial elite.

The following chapter takes us to the Triumviral period. Welch ponders on the failure of the Triumvirate in 43 BCE to convince the Roman people of the necessity of proscriptions. The Triumvirs (as a group and as individuals) took note of public opinion when they instituted the massacre of their enemies; thus the strategies to sell their message changed over time. A large portion of the population wanted to see Caesar's assassins brought to justice, so Antonius' "pitch" for the proscription, Welch proposes, emphasised the sacrilegious nature of Caesar's murder. The continuous explanations and justifications by the Triumvirs are related to the fact that at all times the leader(s) of the day were deeply conscious of, and responsive to, the opinions of the people of Rome.

The final section concentrates on the transmission and communication of public opinion, during and beyond the lifetime of the Roman Republic. By analysing the *Commentariolum petitionis*, Tatum deliberates on how this work aimed to create an image of Cicero as an unexceptional and sound candidate, still within the parameters of a new man, in a clear attempt to sway public opinion. Although Cicero is the ostensible addressee, this work implies a wider but elite readership which constitutes its true audience. By explicit means, such as open flattery, or implicit ones, such as its deployment of highbrow or traditional literary conventions, the *Commentariolum petitionis* endeavours to depict its readership as *boni* who will respond favourably only to a candidate whose personal and civic virtues reflect their own values and who openly respects their elevated place in Roman society. It describes a Cicero who, though a *novus homo*, is thoroughly sound.

Finally, Yakobson assesses Velleius Paterculus' representation of the civil war of 49 BCE in his work. The context of 30 CE, just five years after Cremutius Cordus was prosecuted *de maiestate* for praising Brutus and Cassius in his history, should be kept in mind. Velleius, apparently a sincere Imperial loyalist, depicted with sympathy the losing side of the civil war. In that sense, the historian represented the opinion of a "new class" of the imperial governing elite, that is, people who did not belong to the old Republican aristocracy and who owed their positions to the