

downloads and his books have been bestsellers in the US charts. Nearer home, some students at the University of Cambridge have founded the Aurelius Society to meet and discuss this pursuit of *arete* and promote personal resilience and altruism.

Nancy Sherman is an academic at Georgetown University in Washington. Initially an ancient philosopher, more recently she has undertaken research training in psychoanalysis and focused on ethics. She is interested in applying her

knowledge to modern life and has worked with the military for several decades. She has considered Stoic ethics and post-traumatic stress, with a focus on Stoic methods for achieving calm. As well as publishing numerous academic articles she has written newspaper articles and blogged on modern Stoicism. She is thus an excellent guide to showing how Stoicism can teach grit, resilience and the importance of close relationships.

This book arises out of some graduate seminars at Georgetown in the autumn of 2019 which were closely based on ancient texts. Her ideas were refined in a series of university seminars and lectures in the US and Europe, and a BBC World Service discussion (*Calm in the Chaos: The Story of the Stoics*). Her thoughts were brought to fruition while writing this book during lockdown, where she put the teachings of Stoicism on resilience to the test. Her updating and reworking of the Stoic approach to life has been based on experience, and is not just an exposition of the Stoic texts of classical writers such as Seneca, Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius.

She divides the book into nine 'Lessons', a separate section of notes (including references to the sources) and a bibliography. The first two lessons describe the background ('The Great Stoic Revival' and 'Who were the Stoics?') and analyse the reasons for the current surge in interest in Stoicism. After this, Sherman discusses key areas such as 'Finding Calm', 'Managing Your Emotions', and 'Stoic Grit and Resilience'. Throughout she strikes a balance between the ancient world and the modern. Both areas are wide-ranging and thought-provoking. Examples of the former are Seneca's treatment of the madness of Hercules (*Hercules furens*) or the tears of Alcibiades in Plato's *Symposium*. Modern examples range from a case study of an aerial attack in Kosovo in 1995 that went wrong, the character of Donald Trump, an account of the death of her mother in a nursing home, the alt-right movement's appropriation of the classical tradition, and Black Lives Matter. She analyses these as all part of a single continuum, relating modern ideas and events back to classical parallels and interpreting them within a modern Stoical context. Her viewpoint and modern examples are all from a U.S. perspective.

Sherman has an engaging writing style. Her sentences are short and pithy. The register is conversational, colloquial even. She is good at conjuring memorable images. These all help conceal the intellectual heavy lifting that has gone into this work. She uses her knowledge of the classical world to give perspective

to modern concerns in a way that grabs the attention of readers and makes them think for themselves. She makes good use of the black and white illustrations which are all of good quality and reproduced clearly.

The book is an excellent example of how the classical world continues to have relevance to issues we face in our own time. She is keen to suggest the benefits that may be gained from an approach to life informed by Stoic ideas. While aware that there are limits, she sets out how we might build a healthy modern Stoicism, one that can help us face the things that we cannot change, developing the resilience that seems to be lacking in many modern lives.

I enjoyed reading this book. The arrangement by lessons and the style of writing meant that it was a pleasure to pick up and read. I would recommend it for a school library as a way of enriching students' experience of the classical world. Even better would be to encourage your A Level students, whether linguists, historians or Classical Civilisation students, to read it and discuss it, as an interesting introduction to classical philosophy in action. I am sure there will be some who will be encouraged to consider continuing with their classical studies at degree level after reading this.

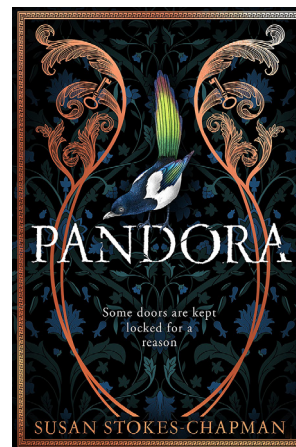
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Pandora

Stokes-Chapman (S.) Pp. 408. London: Harvill Secker, 2022. Cased, £14.99. ISBN: 978-1-787-30288-4.

Jodie Reynolds

Greenhead Sixth Form College, Huddersfield, UK
JReynolds@greenhead.ac.uk



This book had been on my list for a while as it combines two areas of particular interest for me: Georgian Britain and Greek mythology. Whilst I have thoroughly enjoyed many of the current forays into feminist retellings of various Greek stories, Stokes-Chapman has written a thoroughly entertaining and cleverly conceived story, which is different from many other attempts at Classical Reception for a popular audience.

The novel tells the story of the eponymous Pandora, a young woman who, having been orphaned at a young age, has been brought up by her not-so-kindly uncle. Dora is a well-constructed character, who constantly pushes boundaries and who displays ambition and bravery throughout the story. The other lead character is a young antiquarian named Edward Lawrence and, between them, they unravel a mystery relating to a strange Greek artefact which has come in to Dora's uncle's possession.

Stokes-Chapman sets a lively pace and the various twists and turns in the narrative are revealed gradually. I experienced a real sense of foreboding as the tale progressed, possibly because I knew implicitly that there could not be an entirely happy outcome, given the original source material. Most people reading this book will have at least a rudimentary knowledge of the myth of Pandora, the woman allegedly sent by Zeus to reduce the population of earth (according to one version of the myth) and the opening of the jar (not a box) which brought various ills into the world. However, this is not to say that *Pandora* is a predictable story; indeed, it is a well-designed narrative which weaves significant elements of the source material in with Stokes-Chapman's own story-arc, resulting in the production of a very enjoyable page-turner.

It is clear from the Author's Note that much research went into the book and the scene setting within Georgian London is very evocative. I especially enjoyed the introduction of the real historical figures, such as Cornelius Ashmole and William Hamilton (and his wife Emma, mistress of Nelson). The book is certainly not a comedy, but moments of light relief are found, in the enjoyable character of Lady Latimer especially.

Overall, I can highly recommend this book. Students of Classics will undoubtedly enjoy the reworking of an old tale, but lovers of historical fiction more generally will find this hugely entertaining and very moving in places. I have no doubt that reading this will spark a wider interest in some of the mythology which is explored, and there is a handy list of further reading provided for anyone who wants to follow up. Stokes-Chapman is clearly another author to watch in the future.

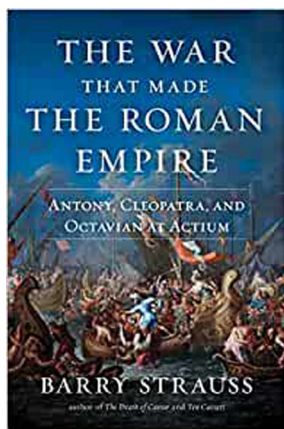
doi: 10.1017/S205863102300003X

The War That Made the Roman Empire. Antony, Cleopatra, and Octavian at Actium

Strauss (B.) Pp. xii + 350, maps, pls. New York:
Simon & Schuster, 2022. Cased, £25, US\$30.
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Jonathan Eaton

Teesside University, Middlesbrough, UK
J.Eaton@tees.ac.uk



The Battle of Actium is often used to symbolise the violent transition from Republic to Empire, through the brutal destruction of the last vestiges of organised resistance against the Principate. As Barry Strauss notes in this compelling narrative history, the battle can be viewed as a 'hinge of history'. Yet the battle must be understood within a broader frame of violent conflict and political manoeuvring throughout the period from the assassination of Julius Caesar through to the deaths of Mark Antony and Cleopatra, as

Octavian sought to establish his political mastery over Rome. It is this period which Strauss seeks to explore, setting the Battle of Actium within its political, economic and social contexts.

Strauss draws upon a wide range of literary, epigraphic, numismatic and archaeological evidence to provide a broad perspective of the impact of this period of conflict on individuals and communities across the Empire and beyond. In doing so, this book usefully complements existing studies of Actium, whilst providing original insights into the motivations and political intentions of the key players. A wealth of comparative evidence is explored, including linkages with aspects of Classical Reception. The poetry of C.P. Cavafy, for example, is used effectively to explore the feelings of Mark Antony towards portents of his own demise.

A particular strength of this study is its focus on the knowledge and experience of key individuals in shaping their behaviour and political intent. In particular, Octavian's frequent machinations to encourage and exploit division and treachery amongst his enemies – even perhaps between Cleopatra and Antony – are highlighted as a personal strength, alongside his recognition of, and reliance upon, the superior skills of his subordinate Agrippa as a military commander. The importance of the figure of Caesarion (alleged son of Cleopatra and Julius Caesar) looms large in Strauss' narrative, in contrast to other studies, as a key motivator for Octavian. By destroying the opposition offered by Antony and Cleopatra, he also secured his position by eliminating the rival claimant to be recognised as the son of Caesar.

Rather than viewing the battle in isolation, Strauss pays particular attention to the wider campaign waged by Agrippa prior to Actium to disrupt and deny the forces of Antony and Cleopatra. Of particular interest is Agrippa's seizure of Methone in March 31 BC. Through a daring lightning strike, Agrippa successfully deprived Antony of a key safe harbour and substantially disrupted his supply lines. Whilst Agrippa's victory provided a welcome propaganda victory for Octavian, it also placed considerable pressure on Antony's ability to feed his forces and maintain their unwavering support.

The economic context remains critical for understanding the decisions taken by Octavian in seizing and securing Egypt after the Battle of Actium. Most notably, the treasury of Cleopatra and funds secured by Antony in the East were essential for Octavian to secure his own political survival through settling the huge numbers of veterans eligible for retirement with land in Italy.

For Strauss, the 'hinge of history' at Actium was embodied by the two Roman protagonists, Antony and Octavian, through the differing visions they offered for the future of the Roman Empire, particularly whether the locus of power would reside in the East with Antony or in the West with Octavian. Inevitably, the eventual outcome was nuanced and, even in defeat, the lives and deaths of Cleopatra and Antony cast a long shadow in Roman art and literature.

Strauss has provided a compelling narrative history which successfully unpicks and explains the complexities of a dynamic period in Roman history. It reads with all the intensity and excitement of a political thriller, whilst maintaining necessary academic rigour to challenge established thinking about the place of Actium within its broader context. This book is essential reading for teachers and students interested in the transition from Republic to Empire, and the rise of Octavian and his imperial regime.

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