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Catalina Balmaceda, *Virtus Romana: Politics and Morality in the Roman Historians*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. xiii + 297. Paper (ISBN 978-1-46963-212-5) \$45.00.

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Of course no book is perfect, and I would like more direct comparison between conceptions of *virtus* in the different texts, a task made more difficult by the book's strict organization by author. In the end, though, despite any flaws, Balmaceda's work succeeds in its main goal. It shows compellingly how the forms of virtue, courage, and public service required by a Roman man changed as Rome moved from republic to principate and that Roman historians took an active role in negotiating that change.

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Catalina Balmaceda,
Virtus Romana: Politics and Morality in the Roman Historians.

Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. xiii + 297. Paper
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Catalina Balmaceda's book serves as an introductory *vade mecum* to the major extant Roman historians (Sallust, Livy, Velleius Paterculus and Tacitus), arriving after a number of companion volumes of the past few years including the *Cambridge Companion to the Roman Historians* (A. Feldherr, ed., Cambridge 2009), the *Blackwell Companion to the Greek and Roman Historiography* (J. Marincola, ed., Malden, MA 2010) and *Roman Historiography: An Introduction to its Basic Aspects and Development* (A. Mehl, Malden, MA 2009). Balmaceda uses *virtus* as a way to focus her studies of each of the historians around a core Roman cultural concept — what it means to be a Roman *vir* — and this focus on intellectual history makes it a welcome volume for graduate school reading lists and for advanced undergraduates.

In the introduction, Balmaceda sets out her main ambit, to “show how a group of Roman historians not only wrote history but also helped to shape it” specifically with an “investigation into a culture’s conceptual categories of self-definition and goodness in action” (2). In short, she aims to investigate how the Roman historians shaped Roman culture and history by constructing ideals and rules for how to be a man (for *virtus* is, as all the studies note, derived from *vir*, “man”). In a sense, this makes her book a complement to Myles McDonnell’s *Roman Manliness* (Cambridge

2006), in that Balmaceda's focus is primarily on the Augustan and Imperial historians, while McDonnell's focus on *virtus* in the Republic makes a temporal boundary for his book with Sallust. The rest of the introduction summarizes both the book's contents and the main questions that have driven studies in Roman historiography for the past thirty years—issues of the truth value of the Roman historians and the role of rhetoric in Roman historiography studied by Wiseman and Woodman, amongst others. Balmaceda stakes out a middle ground in these debates: that these texts are rhetorical, with all that implies, but that our modern narratives of Roman history inevitably and inextricably depend upon them.

In her first chapter, Balmaceda sets out to define *virtus* and attempt to unravel its Latin roots and Greek influences and how we can differentiate between *virtus* as courage and *virtus* as moral excellence (“virtue” in our modern sense). She is right in showing how *virtus*, like many Roman moral qualities, is primarily social and relational—for many Roman writers true *virtus* earns *gloria* for serving the *res publica*. Cicero's influence on our ideas on Roman *virtus* and the place of *virtus* in Stoic thought at Rome also receive attention. Despite her best attempts, Balmaceda is not entirely able to break free of the influence of McDonnell here. While echoing the criticisms of Robert Kaster in his review (*BMCR* 2007.02.08), she still essentially accepts the basic premises of McDonnell's book, while arguing for more and earlier Hellenic influence through the concept of *aretè*. Much of the chapter is a digested form of McDonnell's basic conclusions, showing how *virtus* was always a contested term for the Romans.

The following chapter on Sallust tackles his account of the decline of *virtus* after the removal of any *metus hostilis* by the destruction of Carthage in 146 B.C.E. in his two monographs. Much of this chapter builds on the work of Batstone, Levene, Kraus, and Woodman, but a particular highlight is Balmaceda's exploration of the permeable linguistic boundaries between *vitium* and *virtus* in Sallust's narratives, “the disturbing way words that usually refer to *virtus* are now used to refer to *vitium*, and the proximity of meanings that, for Sallust, is even more dangerous” (77). This is a profitable direction in exploring Sallust's language, building on the problems of *virtus* in Sallust that Batstone showed years ago in his important article on the *synkrisis* between Caesar and Cato. In Balmaceda's telling, Sallust sees nothing but decline everywhere and no way out—a diagnosis of the Republic's fall with no cure or remedy.

Turning to Livy in her third chapter, Balmaceda correctly sees Livy as writing consciously in response to Sallust's works and his pessimism. For her, Livy's answer

is to restore *virtus* by putting forth *exempla* of great *virtus* by early Romans. In this reading, Livy “was constructing—and to some extent also fixing—Rome’s memory so as to protect and safeguard her true identity in an age of changes” (83). *Libertas* becomes an important secondary theme in Balmaceda’s work in this chapter, as she notes Livy’s use of *virtus* cluster around martial engagement with foreign enemies abroad, and the preservation and expansion of *libertas* domestically. I found this chapter to be the most diffuse of the book—something that is, admittedly, hard to avoid when trying to deal with the entire extant corpus of Livy in the confines of one book chapter. A finer and more focused study on similar questions is Ann Vasaly’s recent book, *Livy’s Political Philosophy* (Cambridge 2015).

As Balmaceda turns to writers of the imperial period in her final two chapters, the book really comes into its own. I suspect there are still many readers that are not as cognizant of the work of Velleius Paterculus as the other historians, and Balmaceda’s chapter here is a great introduction to the Tiberian writer. She highlights Velleius’ adaptation of the arguments of *virtus* and *novitas* found in Cicero and Sallust, and how Velleius’ work argues that, *contra* Livy, one does not have to go to the ancient past to find *exempla* of Roman *virtus* when Tiberius provides a multi-faceted *exemplum* in Velleius’ own day. In fact, Balmaceda observes that it is only through discussion of individual virtues that certain events of Tiberius’ reign are recorded in *Historiae Romanae*.

The final chapter on Tacitus is the longest and richest in the book. Starting from the *prima facie* surprising fact that Tacitus is far more apt in his corpus to attribute *virtus* to foreign enemies than to Romans, Balmaceda sets out to explore what makes a good man under the imperial system for Tacitus. She argues that Tacitus has a strict usage of *virtus* as courage in war, but that under the emperors such *virtus* is impractical and must be tempered by *moderatio*. By restricting *virtus*, Tacitus shows, in Balmaceda’s telling, there are different ways to be a good man under the Julio-Claudians and Flavians, one obvious example being his father-in-law, Julius Agrippa.

A brief conclusion wraps up the book, where Balmaceda charmingly and effectively imagines a dialogue between her four authors (a scene one imagines Tacitus and Cicero would appreciate), where they sum up their ideas about *virtus* in their respective times. Ultimately, as a companion volume to the Roman historians this is a worthy book. It is less successful when tackling *virtus* as a concept in the first century BCE, alternately arguing against and for a dualistic view of *virtus* between courage and moral excellence, but Balmaceda’s analysis of the changes in *virtus*

during the Imperial period reflected in Velleius Paterculus and Tacitus are a valuable and important complement to McDonnell's work.

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Lee Fratantuono, ed.,
Tacitus: Annals XVI.

New York, NY: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017. Pp. 200. Paper
(ISBN 978-1-350-02351) \$20.95.

Lee Fratantuono's recent Bloomsbury edition of Book XVI of Tacitus' *Annals* is a very good choice for undergraduate or graduate students studying this text in the original Latin for the first time. This edition demonstrates considerable scholarly erudition without getting bogged down. Fratantuono's commentary elucidates Tacitus' difficult grammatical constructions without providing excessive translation assistance for Latin students, and he discusses many textual quandaries, most of them involving emendations to the second *Mediceus* manuscript largely responsible for the survival of the extant Neronian section of the *Annals* (Books XIII-XVI). A fuller discussion of the textual transmission would have been welcome in the introduction but perhaps lies outside of the purview of this edition. The editor does not purport to furnish an exhaustive and authoritative scholarly commentary like the English one by Furneaux (1907), upon which Fratantuono relies heavily, or the German commentary by Koestermann (1967), upon which the editor draws less often and does not list in his general bibliography. Fratantuono does, however, make frequent use of Jackson's 1937 Loeb edition of *Annals* XI-XVI.

Fratantuono's edition and commentary are quite accessible for students new to Tacitus' laconic, ironic, and compressed Latin prose. The editor's discussions of the themes and characteristics of Book XVI, including the interplay between illusion and reality, servility and nobility; Nero's obsessions with Dido's gold and the Trojan origins of the Julian *gens*; and the pervasive theatricality of the Neronian regime, are all instructive without being overly pedantic. One of Fratantuono's most interesting observations is the degree to which the emperor's own forays onto the stage at the