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*Provincial Soldiers and Imperial Stability in the Histories
of Tacitus* by Jonathan Master (review)

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REVIEWS

Publishers are invited to submit new books to be reviewed to Professor Gareth Williams, Department of Classics, Columbia University, 1130 Amsterdam Ave., 617 Hamilton Hall, MC 2861, New York, NY 10027; email: gdw5@columbia.edu.

Jonathan Master. *Provincial Soldiers and Imperial Stability in the Histories of Tacitus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2016. Pp. ix, 238. \$70.00. ISBN 978-0-472-11983-7.

The tendency of history to repeat itself can be comforting as well as confounding. In his monograph, Master focuses on the didactic nature of Tacitus' historiography to address this concept. According to Master, Tacitus' *Histories* demonstrate that the failure to integrate provincial soldiers through citizenship and appropriate rewards was one of the fundamental causes of the civil conflicts of 69 C.E. and the Batavian revolt. Tacitus uses these events to instruct his Trajanic audience that provincial soldiers need to assimilate as Romans invested in the future of the Empire in order to avoid a similar crisis.

Over the course of the first century C.E., Rome's armies were increasingly composed of provincial soldiers, who were both "vitaly important" and "dangerously unstable" to the principate (60). These soldiers were viewed as barbarians or even "virtual slaves" (2), and the Batavian revolt proves that they "harbor[ed] dreams of independence" (3). Although it is difficult to make claims "from these soldiers' perspective" (72), Master argues that Tacitus presents such a point of view: these men viewed the creation of instability as a road to rewards. Tacitus' solution, according to Master, includes citizenship as well as the manipulation of the soldiers' ethnic identities "from Other to Roman" (6).

Chapter 1 uses the Batavian revolt as a model for the ways in which reliance upon provincial soldiers proved dangerous for the Romans. Tacitus' treacherous narrator, Julius Civilis, has instructive critiques of Roman provincial mismanagement. In chapter 2, Master surveys the Empire to show how the entire East was "spring-loaded" for revolt in 69 C.E. (74). Tacitus maps the Empire as a "catalog of current threats" (75), revealing structural problems in the Empire and the tenuousness of Rome's grasp. Chapter 3 turns to Tacitus' annalistic structure, which becomes more limited as the distinction between *res externae* and *res internae* grows nebulous. Chapter 4 returns to the Batavian revolt as "a sustained illustration of the inseparability of provincial from Roman" (141). Chapter 5 concludes with the lessons of the *Histories*.

Comparative texts often provide the strongest support for Master's discussion. For example, the first chapter considers precedents for the Batavians' arguments in Cicero's *Pro Balbo*, Sallust, and Quintilian. In chapter 2, Augustus' *Res Gestae* illustrates the role of geography and ethnography in claiming control. The annalistic format discussed in chapter 3 prompts a comparison of Livy's use of *res externae* to chronicle imperial growth with Tacitus, whose external affairs provide a foil to the politics of the principate. In chapter 5, the Social War provides a model for the integration of non-Romans into the Empire through citizenship.

Master's most comprehensive argument explores the Batavian revolt as representative of the mixed nature of the conflicts of 69 C.E.: the rebellion was both

civil and foreign (*interno simul externoque bello*, *Hist.* 2.69.1), provincial and Roman. While other scholars have noted this hybridity, Master adds that the lack of clear distinctions in ethnic identity has noteworthy implications for the management of the Empire. According to Master, the Gauls became “Romanized” (145) after moving on a “continuum toward being Roman” (145), particularly in their modes of thinking. Once integrated, there was no return to a “non-Roman identity” (142) or “pre-Roman condition” (145), as is shown by the fate of Cologne.

In addition to the Batavians, Master addresses the armies of Vitellius from the Rhineland and the Flavians from Syria. However, an earlier and more comprehensive outline of the composition of the legions in 69 C.E. would be helpful, as would further discussion of the status of the auxiliaries versus that of the legionaries, who had citizenship (2n3). Master is not always clear on the differences between these ethnic groups, including the histories of conquest of their provinces of origin, or their current legal status with Rome, each of which pertains to his overarching claims.

Master’s conclusion both restates his argument and introduces a wrinkle: although ethnic groups in *Histories* 1–4 seem to conform, the Jewish excursus of book 5 contradicts his central claim. Master thus opens avenues for further investigation. Ethnic identity is demonstrably central to our evaluation of the legions in the *Histories*, and Master’s analysis provides a welcome study for both Roman historians and historiographers.

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Mario Telò. *Aristophanes and the Cloak of Comedy: Affect, Aesthetics, and the Canon*. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2016. Pp. xiii, 237. \$55.00. ISBN 978-0-226-30969-9.

A paradox in the career of Aristophanes has simultaneously spurred and defied explanation ever since antiquity: how did his remarkable comedy *Clouds* go from a disastrous reception at its debut in 423 B.C.E. to being a canonical classic? Providing a satisfactory explanation of this paradox is, in turn, simultaneously hampered and unfettered by the very little raw information that has been preserved about the initial failure in performance and why the script seems to have enjoyed a conversely robust reputation in later times. Mario Telò argues that Aristophanes’ narrative in his scripts largely dictated this process by providing the narratives and metaphors that later readers, especially scholars, used to assess both the play’s failure and its redemption. While Telò’s own narrative is not impossible, his presentation fails to take into account all of what little is known about the phenomenon, or to anchor it in a sufficiently rigorous framework to make his case compelling.

Telò claims that the narratives Aristophanes embedded in the revised version of the script of *Clouds* and in the scripts of later plays, primarily *Wasps*, provided a historical narrative by which scholars in antiquity built up a canon in which *Clouds* was vital—ironically so, given the play’s initial failure, but vital