

# Gift and Gain

## *How Money Transformed Ancient Rome*

Neil Coffee

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## Locating the Fault Line

### CONCEPTS AND SCOPE

Establishing prices, assessing values, determining equivalents, trading—all this preoccupied the primal thoughts of man to such an extent that in a certain sense it *constituted* thinking itself.

—Friedrich Nietzsche, *On the Genealogy of Morals*

The notion of interest, of the individual search after what is useful . . . does not present itself . . . as it functions in our own minds. If some equivalent reason animates the Trobriand or American Indian chiefs, the Andaman clans, etc., or once motivated generous Hindus, and Germanic or Celtic nobles, as regards their gift and expenditure, it is not the cold reasoning of the merchant, the banker, and the capitalist.

—Marcel Mauss, *The Gift*

Opinions about the nature of exchange in premodern societies have diverged widely. For Friedrich Nietzsche, mankind from its earliest days was engaged in commodity trade to such an extent that rational calculation became the dominant mode of thought. For Marcel Mauss, the members of early human societies did no such thing.<sup>1</sup> Instead, they employed gift exchange as the fundamental means of social interaction. Neither categorical statement is true, at least for Roman society. This chapter expands on the introduction to provide the background and concepts required to investigate how the two kinds of exchange commingled and clashed.<sup>2</sup>

### Gift, Gain, and Other Forms of Exchange

Across human civilizations, the forms of exchange fall into four types. The first is typical of the family, a kind of sharing. When parents provide food, shelter, clothing, and guidance to their children, they scarcely regard their giving as exchange at all. The rule is illustrated by the exceptional case of the modern British

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nature writer Ernest Thompson Seton. On his 21st birthday, Seton's father presented him with a peculiar present, a bill for all the expenses of his upbringing, starting with the doctor's fee for his delivery at birth. Being something of an ornery cuss himself, Seton actually paid it. In doing so, he followed his father in rejecting what is otherwise the prevailing norm of sharing within the family.<sup>3</sup>

The second type of exchange is redistribution, where an authority collects and transfers goods or services. An example of redistribution in the modern world is government assistance to the poor.<sup>4</sup>

The third type of exchange is the subject of standard economics, commodity trade. Unlike sharing within families, commodity exchanges are recognized as distinct events. Both parties assess the value of the trade, often with reference to money. When we consider buying some apples, we compare their price to our own assessment of their value. If we decide to buy them, we pay with some form of currency. We might be friends with the grocer, but the friendship is incidental to the transaction.

The fourth and final type of exchange is gift giving. Because of the cyclical nature of giving and receiving gifts, this form of exchange can also be referred to as "gift reciprocity," and as "reciprocal exchange" or "reciprocity," with the last two, more general terms indicating more naturally the giving of both objects and services. Like commodity exchange, gift exchange is recognized as a distinct act. Parties do not give simultaneously, however, but in turn, with some lapse of time in between. They convey a sense of generosity, without specifying the type, amount, or time of any return. So, in the modern world, when we give a birthday gift, we are expected to do so generously, without thinking about the birthday gift we will get in return.<sup>5</sup>

Ancient Romans used the four types of exchange in different proportions from citizens of the modern West. Further consideration of Juvenal's famous description of the Roman people lulled into complacency by "bread and circuses" illustrates the difference. The granting of "bread," the grain handouts that began in the late Republic, was a rare exception. Otherwise, Rome did not engage in state-directed redistribution as such.<sup>6</sup> Juvenal's "circuses," or chariot races, stand for the more common case. When emperors used military spoils and taxes to put on games, they converted the appropriations into large-scale benefactions.<sup>7</sup>

## The Importance of Gifts and Commerce

Gift exchange was ubiquitous at Rome and took a variety of forms. Romans gave gifts to divinities in public settings, from officials sacrificing animals for the good of the Republic, to individuals making votive offerings at temples to ensure their good health and prosperity. At household altars, honey cakes and incense were burned for the Lares, the gods that protected the family. Libations of wine were poured out to the divinized spirits of the dead at their tombs.<sup>8</sup> Among mortals, small gifts

were given on celebratory occasions. At the Saturnalia, these could include a cloak or a pig, or for guests at a dinner party, a book or bouquet of roses. Bequests were offered to the powerful in gratitude for their aid. Most offensive to modern morality was the giving of slaves as presents, a practice to which Seneca attests.<sup>9</sup> Most characteristic were the sizeable gifts given in the regular conduct of business and politics. These ranged from no-interest loans to large-scale public benefactions, including the offering of games, and the construction of aqueducts, commercial and legal fora, city walls, and theaters.

Gifts among mortals were made in one of two dimensions, either horizontally, among peers, or vertically, up and down the socioeconomic scale. A distinctive feature of Roman gift giving was the formalization of gift exchange in the vertical dimension, in the institution known as patronage. Patrons acted in a fatherly capacity, providing legal services and gifts to their clients. Clients favored their patrons with economic services and political support. The patronage relationship was enshrined in law, with legally binding obligations. It gave structure to Roman society by uniting individual wealthy patrons with groups of clients lower down the social scale.<sup>10</sup>

Gift giving was unusually significant at Rome relative not only to the modern West but also to its contemporary civilizations. Ancient Jewish society did not have a culture of reciprocity prior to its encounter with Rome. The wealthy gave alms to the poor in the form of nonbinding charity, but gift exchange was reserved for offerings to God. Social cohesion was produced not through mutual gift giving but through shared ideals and a common identity. Under Roman imperial domination, some Jews assimilated, but more pushed back against the intrusion of Roman gift practices perceived as manipulative. The rabbis re-emphasized the common ideals that promoted collective solidarity.<sup>11</sup>

Greek culture exercised a formative influence on Rome and had its own robust culture of gift giving. The first substantial document of Greek civilization, Homer's *Iliad*, centers on a dispute over gifts. At the opening of the epic, the greatest warrior of the Achaean army, Achilles, refuses to fight, because the leader of the expedition, Agamemnon, reclaimed a slave girl he had given to Achilles after an earlier raid. Agamemnon later regrets the confiscation and sends a delegation to offer gifts and bring Achilles back to the battle against the Trojans. Achilles rejects the offer, and eventually rejoins the fight only to avenge the death of his best friend Patroclus. The centrality of gifts in the *Iliad* indicates their importance to Greek culture from the time when the poem was written down in the late eighth century BCE.<sup>12</sup>

As in the Roman world, Greek gift giving came into conflict with an emergent commodity culture. In the *Iliad*, heroes exchange gifts among themselves but rarely engage in trade. In the later *Odyssey*, commodity trade plays a larger role, reflecting its growing importance in Greek society, though it is still regarded with suspicion. By the Greek archaic period of sixth to fifth centuries BCE, the advent of coinage and diffusion of money led to clashes between aristocrats who defended traditional values, including gift culture, and those who promoted the new ethic of the commerce from which they benefited. Traditionalists tried in vain to restrict certain

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goods, such as precious metals and cattle, to a sphere of elite exchange, not to be traded for humble items like food. The new technology of money had far-reaching effects. Its universal exchangeability even provided a model for the philosophical concept of the similarity of all matter in the cosmos.<sup>13</sup>

Heavily influenced as it was by Greece, Rome nevertheless had its own deep-rooted customs that gave rise to an even sharper encounter between gift and gain. Neither Greek nor Jewish cultures had legally recognized institutions of patronage, whereas the formal nature of Roman patronage embedded gifts at the core of Roman society and provided a validating model for other gift relationships. No Greek or Jewish observer claims for his own society what Cicero and Seneca do for Rome, that the exchange of benefactions was an essential force for social cohesion.<sup>14</sup>

Rome also had a distinctively deep tradition of commerce. Among the earliest documents of Roman history is a treaty between Rome and its future enemy Carthage, dating to 509 BCE. It required, among other things, that trade between the citizens of both nations be conducted in the presence of town officials. As this provision attests, unlike in the Near East and in Greece, from early in its history Rome did not delegate commercial activity to foreigners but allowed it to be carried out by its own citizens.<sup>15</sup>

Rome began issuing its own coinage around 400 BCE. Some 200 years later, around the time of the Second Punic War, the societies of government contractors known as *publicani* came into formal existence, and their tax farming and other activities would go on to become a major source of elite profit. By the late Republic, senators were prohibited from bidding on public contracts, but allied themselves with the knights and others who could. Part of this engagement was stipulated by law, which required land as security for bids on public contracts, land held most abundantly by the elite.<sup>16</sup>

As much as they were invested in gift giving, then, Romans were also comfortable thinking in terms of money and were thoroughly engaged in commerce. This was a culture where all civil judgments were put in terms of money, even if the plaintiff only sought the return of property. By the time of Augustus, the poet Horace could well complain that, while Greek boys were busy reading poetry to polish their expression, Roman boys were studying fractions in order to calculate loan interest.<sup>17</sup>

### A Changing Gift Culture

If the advent of money had profound effects on Greek gift giving, the growth of commodity culture could be expected to exert at least as much influence in Rome, with its deeper commitments to both forms of exchange. And, indeed, we find signs of a changing relationship between gift and gain across contexts in Roman society. The clearest indications take the form of laws to manage gift giving.<sup>18</sup>



- From 204 BCE onward, legal advocates were not allowed to be paid or given gifts.
- As of the early first century, husbands and wives were effectively prohibited from giving one another large gifts.
- In the year 40 BCE, restrictions on bequests to nonheirs were loosened, so that up to three-quarters of one's estate could be committed as gifts in advance of one's demise.
- In 4 CE, acts of ingratitude by freedmen (ex-slaves) toward their former masters became liable to legal penalties.
- In the first century CE, it became possible to sue someone for failing to carry out a service offered as a favor, under what was called a *mandatum* contract.

Later chapters will address these laws more fully, but these simple descriptions testify to two basic facts. Gift relations were of sufficient practical importance to be subjected to legislation, not just regarding political corruption, but across social contexts from legal advocacy to marriage, and over the centuries. And the laws were only necessary because gift norms were repeatedly violated. To understand how a growing commodity culture contributed to these violations, we must begin by considering the structural dynamics of Roman exchange.<sup>19</sup>

## Frameworks for Interpretation

### GIFTS AS THE EXERCISE OF POWER: BOURDIEU

One of the major contributions to sociology of the eminent theorist Pierre Bourdieu has been his model of social action as competition. In his view, through words and deeds, individuals and groups within a society seek to maximize their advantage in relation to others by accumulating capital. For Bourdieu, capital takes not only the economic form of money, property, and other assets, but also two intangible forms with which it can be exchanged: the social capital of relationships and the cultural capital of prestige.<sup>20</sup>

Classical scholars have often analyzed Roman gift relations in these terms, whether or not they invoked Bourdieu. The internal history of Roman society has been told as a story of competition for power and resources, where elite patricians confronted angry plebeians, or elite factions jockeyed for position. Within these struggles, gifts were employed to create and spend all three forms of capital. Gift exchange was used to transfer economic capital, as in the donations of money that the emperor Augustus periodically gave to the Roman people (*congiaria*). The social capital of relationships was created and maintained through giving gifts and performing gratuitous services. The poet Horace writes of being accosted by a man who wanted an introduction to Augustus's confidante Maecenas, and who insinuates that Horace himself was taking advantage of his friendship with Maecenas. Gift relationships also yielded the cultural capital of prestige. Funding the construction

of a new forum or temple in the precincts of the city of Rome brought honor and authority (*auctoritas*), so much so that, after gaining sole control of the Roman government, Augustus restricted the privilege to himself and his inner circle.<sup>21</sup>

Gift exchange is one means of exercising power, by forming and transferring capital, with qualities that make it different from the alternatives of force, persuasion, and commodity exchange. Gift exchange gently binds the receiver with an ostensibly positive social bond. The flexibility in the quantity, type, and timing of giving and receiving provides latitude to seek the greatest advantage, especially for the stronger party. Where the gift relationship is not governed by law, it can be broken off without the consequences of violating a contract.

The elite of the late Republic accordingly traded in gifts and debt to advance their individual and factional interests in an intensely competitive political environment. The wealthy who managed public contracts and other larger concerns made gift relationships an integral part of their business engagements. In the early Empire, the ongoing status negotiations between the emperor and his circle involved the mutual definition of the benefactions the emperor would offer, from dinner invitations to the granting of pardons. Some mastery of gift gestures was essential to obtaining posts in imperial administration. Poets of the early Empire like Horace and Statius used their power to exalt and immortalize benefactors to return favors, assert their equal status, and avoid becoming subordinate clients.<sup>22</sup>

With power channeled through gift giving, its requisite generosity could feel false, leaving receivers and even givers feeling exploited. Publilius Syrus, the first-century CE author of stage mimes, wrote that “accepting a gift means putting your freedom up for sale.” The younger Seneca attests to widespread complaints from givers who were met with ingratitude, leaving them feeling cheated. The same power dynamics are found even in more balanced exchange relationships. The Roman version of friendship, *amicitia*, so often consisted of a utilitarian trade in services that ancient and modern observers have debated whether it involved any affection at all, much less selfless giving.<sup>23</sup>

Seen from this perspective, gift relationships closely resemble commodity trade, aiming directly at securing advantage. Just as commodity exchanges can involve debt, so gift exchanges involve “gift-debt.” The intertwining of the two modes of exchange as complementary ways of exerting of power gives the impression that the choice between them was simply a matter of tactics.<sup>24</sup>

## THE PROBLEM OF GENEROSITY

There was more to Roman gift giving than just the exercise of power, however. Its other dimensions can be most easily understood through brief consideration of a prominent Roman of the late Republic we will examine more closely in chapter 11, Cicero’s friend Atticus.

The contemporary biographer Cornelius Nepos writes the following about the gift giving of Atticus:

I wish to stress this one thing, that [Atticus's] generosity was never meant for a particular moment nor cunning. This we can see from the facts and circumstances themselves, namely that he never sold himself to those who were prospering but always aided those who were suffering.<sup>25</sup>

Atticus did not engage in gift-giving generosity that was calculated, aimed at creating temporary alliances or ingratiating himself with the powerful unlike, evidently, many others. Had he done so, he would have “sold himself” to the powerful. Instead, amid the political strife and mortal dangers of the late Republic, he risked aiding his friends and acquaintances in distress, regardless of their faction or political fortunes.

From Bourdieu's perspective, this description of Atticus must be a pure fabrication. Atticus must instead have used his extensive gift giving to form alliances and secure his interests against any turn of events. Nepos embellished his portrait because he was a personal friend of Atticus trying to remove the stain of false dealing from his reputation.

Nepos anticipates the seductiveness of this reading. He therefore urges his readers to set aside their preconceptions and look at “the facts and the circumstances themselves.” When we do, his judgment about Atticus becomes hard to refute. Needless to say, taking on severe risks to aid others hardly seems the behavior of an inveterate trimmer. Nor would Nepos have waved his false testimony like a billowing flag in front of his contemporary readers, who still knew Atticus well, particularly if they were culturally disposed to find the existence of a truly generous man laughable on its face. If we wish to reject Nepos's emphatic characterization of Atticus, it is a steep uphill climb.

At this point, it is worth asking why we should be so quick to condemn Atticus as a fraud and Nepos as a hack. The answer, I suggest, lies in the pervasiveness of Bourdieu's perspective.

## ECONOMISM AND THE ANCIENT ECONOMY

The greatest strength of Bourdieu's model is also its greatest weakness. When social activity is seen as competition for forms of capital, the economic metaphor, so useful for describing interchanges of power, makes it difficult to account for the full range of social behavior. The problem is particularly acute when considering an ancient society like Rome that lacked the concept of capital, financial or otherwise.<sup>26</sup>

This is unfortunate, because Bourdieu's model might help resolve a long-running dispute. For decades, historians have debated whether ancient economies functioned much like modern ones, or whether they were fundamentally different. Those advocating the latter view have contended that traditional concerns for status precluded the development of profit-oriented rationalism. But recent scholarship has demonstrated that the market nature of the Roman economy was, if not

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comparable to modern capitalism, nevertheless far more extensive than previously acknowledged.<sup>27</sup>

This development has only widened the gulf between economic and social understandings of the ancient economy, because it has made quantitative assessments divorced from social considerations all the more compelling. As the gap has grown, the artificiality of separating economic and social exchange has become increasingly obvious. The editors of one recent volume have therefore stressed the need to “develop a conceptual framework for markets in the Roman empire that transcends the accustomed opposition of socially directed exchange and free trade.”<sup>28</sup>

Bourdieu would seem to offer just such a framework, one that unites economic and social behavior. Yet it has found few adherents among scholars of the ancient economy. The principal reason is that Bourdieu’s model, like every other one on offer, cannot account in quantifiable terms for how social factors affect economic performance. The same challenge has frustrated observers of the modern world, even with an abundance of evidence at hand to work from. The editors of a recent volume on economic sociology, a field devoted to uniting the two perspectives, point to the continuing need for “synthetic interpretations . . . relating the fields of economics and sociology.”<sup>29</sup>

Absent any reconciliation, there has been a drift toward a soft economism, which acknowledges social factors but subsumes them within economic models. Bourdieu has been most influential, but other professional historians and the public at large have participated in the trend. The Roman historian Ramsay MacMullen recently surveyed the whole of Western historical writing in order to assess how it has accounted for human actions. He concludes that, in recent decades, “causal analysis [has] had less and less room for people’s emotions, more and more room for people’s calculations and logic.” The instrumental view of human behavior has colored our modern understanding of gifts. As one anthropologist puts it, “contemporary Westerners are so uncomfortable with communalism and altruism that we tend to re-explain our generosity as self-interest.” Underlying this view of gifts is the fact that, as explained by one writer on the history of gift culture, “it is commonly taken for granted today that human life is driven solely by selfish, instrumental, and financial calculations.” In fact, the notion of universal selfishness turns out to be a story we tell ourselves, one unsupported by psychological research. But the Hobbesian outlook still frames our interpretation of the past.<sup>30</sup>

#### A BROADER VIEW: MAX WEBER

For another perspective, we can reach further back into the history of sociology to the work of Max Weber.<sup>31</sup> Weber describes four possible motivations for social action: instrumental rationality directed at advantage, value rationality directed at acting out principles, adherence to tradition, and emotion.

Commodity exchange generally results from just one of these motivations, instrumental rationality. The notion of commodity exchange as instrumental is embedded within the Latin language itself. The word *emolumentum* originally meant the product of a mill, such as flour. It came to signify “advantage,” “(financial) gain,” and the money that provided an advantage. In this last meaning, it embodies in one word the concept of commodity exchange (via money) used for an instrumental purpose (to gain an advantage).<sup>32</sup>

Gift exchange, by contrast, results from any of the four motivations, individually or in combination. Gifts are given to foster an emotional connection, adhere to traditional customs, or act out a value, such as a belief in the importance of generosity. Or they may be given for instrumental advantage, just as with commodity exchange.<sup>33</sup>

If we return to the example of Atticus, we find evidence for all four motivations in his gift giving. When Atticus aided his associates, he may have been acting to secure his well-being. Yet according to Nepos, he also genuinely believed in the value of *liberalitas* (“generosity”). He had a deep regard for ancient Roman traditions. And he could be a loving friend, as his private correspondence with Cicero shows. From a Weberian perspective, Atticus looks very much like the man Nepos praises.<sup>34</sup>

Not every Roman was an Atticus, of course. As Nepos implies, much of the gift exchange among his peers of Atticus was narrowly instrumental, shaped by commodity culture and political pressure. But Atticus was not a complete outlier either. There was a range of possible positions between his behavior and the extremes of instrumentality. Examination of individuals inhabiting these positions will show that the modern analytical divide between the economic and the social does not result from the inadequacy of current theory, or not simply that. We arrive at a fractured view of the ancient economy because Romans themselves encountered a real disjuncture between social life and the market.<sup>35</sup>

## Historical Change in Gift and Gain

If exchange behavior differs among individual actors, does it also differ across eras and cultures? Successive generations of scholars have disagreed. Early theorists of gift giving, such as Mauss and Polanyi, saw a wholesale historical shift from tribal cultures of the gift to market-based industrial societies. Subsequent research showed that market features were present in societies once considered innocent of them. This led to the opposite emphasis: all societies share fundamentally similar dynamics of exchange. The more homogeneous interpretation was influenced by the work of Michel Foucault. When Foucault described societies as static lattice-works of power, altered only by inexplicable ruptures, he made it easy to conceive of gift giving as just another mode of coercion.<sup>36</sup>

Most recently, the argument for major differences between exchange cultures has found new proponents. David Graeber has posited a long-term alternation between the dominance of a “human economy” of social relationships based on duty and a “monetized economy” of social relationships mediated by money. Under his theory, Western antiquity was a period of monetization, which was followed by a human economy of relationships during the Middle Ages, and ultimately by the monetary economy of modern capitalism beginning in the fifteenth century.<sup>37</sup>

A qualified return to the historicism of Mauss and Polanyi may become inevitable when we compare civilizations with their distinctive features. Within one civilization, however, the contrast between periods is rarely so great, yielding a more static, Foucauldian picture. This is particularly true for Rome, with its markedly conservative culture. When a member of a Roman legislative assembly wished to defeat a proposed law, he did not vote “no.” Instead he marked his ballot with “A” for *antiquo*, or “[keep it] the old way.” Roman historians and moralists lamented their society’s moral decline, but the very regularity of their complaints can suggest that there was no decline at all, nor any significant alteration in customs and morals.<sup>38</sup>

Yet Roman culture did of course change, and not only through extremes of internecine conflict and external conquest. In the elder Cato’s era, noble Romans were perfectly happy to dance and sing in front of others, but by the time of Cicero they frowned on such foolishness. So too, with greater effect, Roman culture drifted unevenly away from various forms of gift exchange. This process was accelerated by economic and political disruptions. But it was sustained by the steady diffusion of commodity thought and practices.<sup>39</sup>

## Types of Evidence

### THE LANGUAGE OF EXCHANGE

The prodigious loans Crassus gave during his political career, a cloak offered on the Saturnalia, jewelry demanded by an elegiac mistress: the context, type, and scale of these gifts are so vastly disparate as to nearly defy comparison. Yet a shared set of vocabulary, based in underlying concepts of exchange, provided a unified and flexible mental framework for what Romans saw themselves doing in each of these situations. In gift relations, key concepts included the good will (*gratia*) generated by benefits (*beneficia*) to others, which could lead to established duties (*officia*). In the world of commerce, relevant terminology ranges from general terms for money (*pecunia*) to specialized language for interest (*fenus*) and credit (*fides*).<sup>40</sup>

Some common Roman words for a gift, such as *donum*, can refer only to a gift object, while others, such as the words *munus* and *beneficium*, can also refer to services, like undertaking public office or providing funeral games.<sup>41</sup> The difference between object and service could nevertheless be important. Cicero contends that real generosity is expressed by providing services rather than giving money. Services

ranged from the fully immaterial, such as legal advocacy provided by a patron, to those that mixed effort with material goods, such as the private construction of public buildings.<sup>42</sup>

Other terms for exchange came freighted with value judgments. A generous man (*liberalis*) gave gifts with appropriate openhandedness; an extravagant one (*prodigus*) gave too much or to the wrong people. A thrifty man (*frugi*) stewarded his resources; a greedy one (*avarus*) grasped at wealth in a socially destructive way. From each of these concepts came positive and negative types of socioeconomic actors, in rhetoric and reality: the generous nobleman of Cicero's *On Duties*, the prodigal wastrel of Roman comedy, the frugal elder and younger Cato, the greedy comic pimp, or Horatian moneylender.<sup>43</sup>

While there was overall continuity in Roman socioeconomic thought over time, shifts in terminology nevertheless reveal significant variations. In some cases, socioeconomic terms gradually took on new meanings, as when one word for gain, *lucrum*, accumulated negative connotations over the centuries. In other cases, terms gained currency or were abandoned, signaling a change in values. A key Roman word for "generosity," *liberalitas*, fell into disuse after being tainted by the abuse of gifts in the late Republic, only to be revived and redefined in the early Empire.<sup>44</sup>

The measurement of word use over time provides a uniquely clear indicator of changing values across the culture. Graphs of word usage therefore form an important part of the arguments of chapters 4, 5, 7, and 13. Works are grouped by author, with average word counts given for each, so that authors are not credited with using a word more often simply because they wrote more or have more of their words preserved. All major works of the classical Latin corpus within the relevant time frame are included to indicate usage in various discourses. Where possible, the usage of authors writing in the same genre is also compared to show that trends do not result just from generic differences. Likewise, where possible, the use of multiple related terms is considered to avoid drawing conclusions from the idiosyncratic fate of just one.<sup>45</sup>

At the same time that we aim for a precise understanding of socioeconomic language and concepts, we must also recognize their suppleness and flexibility. Patrons, for example, distinguished in principle between giving to individual clients and to the public, but in practice often treated the two gestures as identical. Rather than attempting to organize all relevant terms into one conceptual scheme, I will proceed from the underlying categories of gift and gain and clarify terms in context.<sup>46</sup>

## STATUS

Patronage assumes the cooperation of social superior and inferior. In this and other gift relationships, social status is a key factor. So it is important to understand the status groups within and among which exchange was conducted.



The elite, who provide us with most of our written sources, can be defined as the members of the top wealth-designated census classes. These were senators and knights and, outside of Rome, municipal decurions, or local senators. There were no hard barriers between members of these classes, however. So a simpler and more flexible definition of the elite would be those “of sufficient landed wealth to live off their income.”<sup>47</sup>

Estimates of the numbers within each census class in the city of Rome reveal the larger society within which the elite lived and the scope for exchange between status groups. In the late Republic, the number of the first-class census category, which included the few hundred senators and some 10,000 knights, was approximately 40,000. Below these were some 60,000 in the second class; 90,000 in the third; 135,000 in the fourth, 200,000 in the fifth. Members of the fifth class were relatively poor, with property valued at less than the annual stipend of an infantryman, leaving them marginally but nevertheless substantially better off than the 615,000 or so indigent citizens falling below the property threshold for inclusion in the census.<sup>48</sup>

Property owners down to the fourth census class, making up at least a quarter of the population, or up to two thirds on a less conservative estimate, all had sufficient means to be involved in vertical and horizontal forms of reciprocity. Those at the lower boundary of the group tended to view gift exchange more skeptically, and to be willing to embrace of money and commerce as forms of fair dealing. The ex-slave and late Republican playwright Publilius Syrus voices such skepticism about gift giving in the quotation above. The early imperial poet Martial issues numerous complaints about being manipulated and humiliated in gift exchanges. Reciprocity was nevertheless important to this segment of society. Expressions of gratitude proliferated on the grave markers of the early Empire, ownership of which was just within reach of those at the margins of the elite sphere.<sup>49</sup>

Those left out of the census, and possibly those in the fifth class as well, were too poor to participate in gift exchange with the higher ranks. Their social superiors did not consider giving to the poor a proper gift at all because they could not reciprocate. For Seneca, providing aid to a beggar is “so trivial that it is not called a *beneficium*. For who ever called giving a morsel of bread a *beneficium*, or tossing anyone a copper, or enabling him to get a light?” On the other hand, the urban poor maintained reciprocal relationships among themselves. Gifts were widely given on holidays. The playwright Terence suggests that gift generosity, with emotional and value dimensions, was a feature of life across Roman society, which likely persisted in later ages. But by the late Republic, the poor has lost many of their traditional reciprocal bonds, having left kin and neighbors behind in the countryside. As a consequence, they became more dependent on relationships of cash and debt.<sup>50</sup>

The nature of exchange among this last group, the poorest and humblest in Roman society, is the hardest to discern, since our sources mainly provide elite perspectives. We do however have some evidence that can plausibly be said to reflect the values of the poor, such as from comedy and satire. More fundamentally,



despite disparities in wealth, there was a greater cultural homogeneity than is often found among different segments of modern industrialized countries.

The consequences of this homogeneity can best be illustrated by contrast with a situation in the modern world. In a now classic study, the anthropologist Michael Taussig analyzed the impact of economic development on indigenous societies in modern Colombia. Among these were Christianized workers employed on sugar cane plantations at the southern end of the Cauca Valley. Some of these workers were said to have entered into contracts with the devil to increase their production and wages. Their increased earnings came at great cost, however. Common belief held that the worker's fields and purchased lands would become barren, his livestock would die, and he would suffer an early, painful death.<sup>51</sup>

Taussig concludes from this situation that "there is a moral holocaust at work in the soul of a society undergoing the transition from a precapitalist to a capitalist order," within which "the ruling classes attempt to work the ruling principles into a new tradition [and] the preexisting cosmogony of the workers becomes a critical front of resistance, or mediation, or both." He argues that narratives developed by indigenous workers in response to exploitation, like that of the devil's contract, amount to critiques of capitalism comparable to those of that can be found in Aristotle and Marx.<sup>52</sup>

In both modern Colombia and ancient Rome, traditional cultures were coping with the advent of a market economy, but the social structures in play made for a very different experience. Rome may have been a merchant society, but it was neither bourgeois nor capitalist. In the late Republic and early Empire, there was a group of big businessmen positioned socially between the landed aristocracy and tradesmen, but they were small in number and politically marginal.<sup>53</sup> Unlike in modern Colombia, no capitalist ideology or modes of production were suddenly imposed upon the native population by business elites. Nor was the native population substantially innocent of market exchange, as in the Cauca Valley: Romans were generally acquainted with trade from the time of our earliest written records.<sup>54</sup>

With no system of developed capitalism, no imposition of market systems on an unwilling lower class, and no discernable class consciousness, the Roman world offers no point of purchase for traditional Marxist analysis.<sup>55</sup> Strange as it may seem, from a cultural perspective, the closest counterparts to the indigenous people of the Cauca Valley are not the Roman poor, but a segment of the elite who were more invested in gift exchange than anyone else in their society. The Roman elite certainly had among their number purveyors of evolving market concepts and practices analogous to the Colombian plantation owners. But they also had representatives of a traditional culture deeply committed to structures of reciprocity, who often had greater status, wealth, and authority. And of course many, perhaps most, participated in various ways in both forms of exchange. As a consequence, within the Roman elite itself, we can follow a conflict that, however different in other respects from the crisis in modern Colombia, nevertheless has

the same underlying dynamic: a traditional culture confronting a new, more highly commercialized one.<sup>56</sup>

## GIFTS AND HONOR

Apart from political office and social ties, the most important immaterial exchange good for Roman elites was honor. The striving for honor lay behind the competitive construction of buildings and even Caesar's choice to wage civil war. Bourdieu's model gives us a basic description of the relationship between gifts and honor. Gifts produce the cultural capital of honor that is exchangeable for other forms.<sup>57</sup>

Here, too, however, a Weberian perspective can deepen our understanding. Seen one way, the pursuit of honor, like participation in gift giving, is a value-rational activity. Cicero writes that "we are by nature . . . as zealous and as hungry as possible for honor (*honestas*) . . . and there is nothing we are not prepared to endure and suffer in order to obtain it." That is, the quest for honor could become its own end, sought even to the detriment of one's immediate self-interest. Under the Empire, candidates strove to secure public offices that, far from bringing financial rewards, cost them dearly.<sup>58</sup>

Seen another way, the pursuit of honor and gift exchange are instrumentally rational activities. The emperor Tiberius noted there were two paths to political office: goodwill from gifts (*gratia*) and honor from notable deeds (*merita*). The two activities could form a series, as when the gift of public games brought honor to the donor. In Bourdieu's terms, when a Roman aedile spent lavishly on chariot races and gladiators, he converted his economic capital into the social capital of a good relationship with the people and the cultural capital of an enhanced reputation.<sup>59</sup>

Despite their similarities, gift exchange and the pursuit of honor differ fundamentally, even within Bourdieu's framework of social competition. The accumulation of gift-debt (*gratia*) through gift exchange requires participation in a relationship that appears mutually beneficial, with some gesture of selflessness. Such (apparent) selflessness is not inherent to the pursuit of honor, which in the Roman world was an act of individualistic striving. The norm of generosity makes gift giving a value-rational activity, one rooted in traditional patterns of behavior and often propelled by emotional needs.

## GODS AND MORTALS

Romans often exchanged gifts with the gods through sacrifice and vows. Yet the two major Roman treatises dealing with gift giving, Cicero's *On Duties* and Seneca's *On Benefactions*, concentrate exclusively on mortals. Through their silence about the gods, Cicero and Seneca implicitly recognize the different nature of gift relations with the divine.

In appeals to the gods, mortals determined entirely the mode of exchange. Roman divinities could express themselves through signs, dreams, and oracles, but

they did not participate in framing their interactions as gifts or payments. Mortals were therefore left to structure these interactions as best they could so as to placate and control the divine powers. The result was a ritual practice that included gestures of generous voluntarism on both sides, along with contractual language to gently compel the deity's cooperation.

Among mortals, the compulsion of contract would have dispelled any pretense of gift giving. Rather than act with the rigidity of ritual, those giving gifts to fellow mortals needed to exercise carefully modulated judgment as part of an ongoing dynamic relationship. We will follow Cicero and Seneca by restricting ourselves to this more uneven terrain.<sup>60</sup>

### A Periodization of Roman Exchange

We can now look ahead to the deeper explorations of subsequent chapters. Rome's culture of exchange can be divided into four periods, from prehistory to early Empire.

- An archaic *Foundation* period, which set the patterns for Roman socioeconomic thought and behavior seen in the historical era, extending to the early Republic.
- A middle Republican *Adaptation* period of the third to second centuries BCE, when Romans responded to a surge in wealth and commercial activity.
- An *Exploitation* period of the late Republic, when gift and gain were tightly entwined with high-stakes politics.
- A *Separation* period of the early Empire, when thinkers and political leaders attempted to disentangle the two discourses.<sup>61</sup>

Each of these periods is treated in a subsequent section. By considering them in turn, we can understand how they differed from one another, and so follow the shift from gift to gain in Roman society.<sup>62</sup>

because it is useful (*On Benefactions* 4.16.1). But the larger aim of his discussion is to address the situation in his own society. Griffin 2013, 39–40 points out the repeated contrast between gift and commodity in Seneca’s *On Benefactions*. Seneca’s views build upon those of Aristotle, who distinguishes among legally actionable friendships based on utility, those that depend upon rules and involve transactions requiring repayment, and those based on character, where what matters in gift giving is the intention of the giver (*Nicomachean Ethics* 8.13.1162b 22–34, 8.13.1163a 21–23). Inwood 1995 likewise sees in Seneca a contrast between “the genuine *beneficium*, an action wholly determined by intentions, and the material of interchange, the ‘goods’ exchanged in such an action” (261), where consideration of the latter leads too easily to thinking in terms of debt and advantage. On the conceptual similarity of gift and gain in Seneca’s philosophy, see further Li Causi 2012, 239 and chapter 13. Among those who have remarked on the Roman tension between spontaneous generosity and self-interest in exchange are Moussy 1966, 475–477; Dixon 1993, 452; Godbout and Caillé 1998, 176–183; Verboven 2002, 35–39; and Hanchey 2015, 116 n. 16. The next chapter sets out in full my general perspective on the issue.

10. My argument therefore contradicts two general propositions advanced by Carlà and Gori 2014. They claim that “Appadurai, Frow and Osteen [have] clearly demonstrated that a strong distinction between ware (commodity) and gift is not possible, and that the two spheres know continuous exchanges,” though they add that “it is important to recognize that in every culture there are particular objects which are considered inappropriate or less appropriate for commercial sale, because of their symbolic meaning” (p. 33). Yet the distinction is made throughout Roman culture, down to the moment where Seneca in *On Benefactions* reasserts it robustly. They also cast doubt on the possibility of distinct eras in the relationship between gifts and commodities, again with some allowance for changes, such as with the advent of modern economies. I set out my position more fully in the following chapter and compare it with theirs in chapter 14.

## Chapter 1

1. Epigraphs: Nietzsche 2013 [orig. 1887], 56; Mauss 1990 [orig. 1925], 75.

2. Bettini and Short forthcoming argue that a sound anthropological approach to Roman culture must rely primarily on textual evidence, seen in four complementary ways. It must concentrate on Romans’ view of their own culture (the so-called “emic” perspective). It focuses on concepts and practices with durable, rather than ephemeral, meaning. It examines how these concepts and practices cross spheres of activity. And it makes comparisons with other cultures where possible. I employ this sort of approach in my examination of Roman exchange.

3. Graeber 2011, 94–102 points out the fundamental universality of sharing, which he calls, provocatively, “baseline communism,” as well as its general neglect in the scholarship of economics and exchange. Among Graeber’s intellectual predecessors is the anarchist Kropotkin 1902, who responded to Thomas Henry Huxley and other social Darwinists by stressing the importance of social cooperation (see Arrow 1972, 345; for a lively snapshot of Kropotkin’s life and contribution, see further Ridley 1996, 1–7). I take the example of Ernest Thompson Seton from Graeber 2011, 92, who borrows it from Atwood 2008, 1.

4. This and the following two types are taken from Polanyi 1957. See van Wees 1998 for further theoretical discussion. Temin 2013 begins from Polanyi’s three-part scheme to

argue that the Roman economy of the early Empire can be adequately described in market terms, but then resolves all of Polanyi's categories to forms of market exchange. To these categories, one can add the possibility of withholding items from exchange as inherently untradeable or temporarily out of circulation. "Certain items in antiquity were removed from exchange altogether and reserved for rulers or the state; in many regions of Greece in the archaic period, land was inalienable, at least in theory, in an attempt to ensure the stability and continuity of the community" (Morley 2007a, 52 citing Morris 1986; more generally, Weiner 1992).

5. Osteen 2002a offers a useful survey of contemporary discussions of gift giving, beginning with the overview of Osteen 2002b. Gregory 1982 examines the distinction between gift and commodity exchange as a cross-cultural phenomenon (compare Osteen 2002b, 3–8). Bourdieu 1977 drew attention to the need for delay and difference in the return gift. For the ancient world more generally, see Carlà and Gori 2014b. For gift and gain in the Roman world, starting points are Spisak 1998 (drawing on Blau 1974); Griffin 2003; Spisak 2007, 35–40; and Griffin 2013, 41. Spisak differs from Griffin in stressing the potential for emotional satisfaction in gift exchange. A recent summary is provided by Hanchey 2015, 113–114, referring to, *inter alia*, Roller 2001, 133. Sahlins 1968, 140 (summarized by Donlan 1982, 140) further distinguishes among "balanced reciprocity" (gift giving in a personal relationship); "generalized reciprocity" (giving with a general expectation that one will receive similar treatment in the future, e.g., hospitality to strangers); and "negative reciprocity" (ongoing cycles of retribution). Negative reciprocity is a qualitatively different phenomenon, however. Neither Cicero nor Seneca associates retaliation with gift giving. Verboven 2014, 136–138 discusses generalized reciprocity as "altruism," referring to current work on the subject in sociobiology, and concludes that recognition of altruism in Roman society shows balanced exchange to be less important than has been thought. Rather than employ a notion of altruism, I consider behavior that would come under that heading as forms of sharing or gift giving. It falls into the latter category if it has any potential for reciprocity, including the broadest form of Sahlins's generalized reciprocity. Anthropologists, social theorists, and social historians have proposed further refinements to the basic definitions of gift and commodity (see, e.g., the overview of Carlà and Gori 2014b, 23–36). I proceed from the basic dichotomy for the sake of clarity and to provide a common basis for interpreting a variety of cultural phenomena.

6. Sharing is discussed comparatively rarely in Roman sources and does not come become a pronounced subject of concern in connection with other forms of exchange. We will, however, have occasion to consider related concepts such as that of "community" (*societas*). For grain handouts, see Robinson 1992, 131–134. On the marginal importance of state redistribution, see Bang 2012a, 296. Veyne 1990 [1969], 97–101 observes that public benefactions were not forms of redistribution, whereas "the corn dole was, by definition, the antithesis of euergetism" (p. 236). On p. 261, however, Veyne stresses that public benefactions by the Roman elite had relatively little effect on elections, and were not about heading off political insurrection, or "depoliticizing" the plebeians. He goes on to claim that elites gave benefactions because "they wanted to be loved" (p. 261). The following chapter will offer a different explanation. On redistribution, see further chapters 6 and 13.

7. Lesser figures did the much the same. Inscriptions on public works constructed by private benefactors often highlighted the generosity of the donor, framing private acts of redistribution as gifts. On the general phenomenon, see Egbert 1896, who at p. 249 notes

the common use of phrases like “with his own money” (*de pecunia sua*) and “by his own expense” (*sumptu suo*).

8. Mauss 1990 [1925] first described the structure and importance of gift exchange across cultures, though Wagner-Hasel 2014 has shown the influence of the earlier work of Karl Bücher. Saller 1992, 84 writes, “reciprocal exchange of favors comes up again and again in a way that sets Rome apart from other societies.” Beard, North, and Price 1998b, 148–165 survey Roman sacrifice.

9. Saturnalia gifts: Catullus 1; Martial *Epigrams* 12.81, 14.1, 28, 70, 71. For interpersonal loans see Finley 1999 [1973], 54; Verboven 2002, 127. Veyne 1990 [1969], discussed further in the following chapter, investigates large-scale public benefactions. On bequests, in his speech *For Flaccus*, Cicero says, “I have heard, Lucullus, that great bequests came to you as a result of your outstanding generosity and great benefactions during your governance of the province of Asia with consular powers” (*maximas audio tibi, L. Luculle, qui de L. Flacco sententiam laturus es, pro tua eximia liberalitate maximisque beneficiis in tuos venisse hereditates, cum Asiam provinciam consulari imperio obtineres*, 85). See further David 1992, 138. Slaves as gifts: *On Benefactions* 6.3.4. Verboven 2014, 144–145 gives another set of examples.

10. Crook 2013 addresses the differences in horizontal and vertical dimensions. Although individual relationships can be found at Athens that meet the definition of patronage, overall “the [Athenian] ideology of democracy found such asymmetrical bonds to be inappropriate” (Millett 1989, 25). Patronage has been a contested category in Roman studies, with considerable debate over its relationship to the Roman word *patrocinium*, which had a narrower sense than the English term. See Wallace-Hadrill 1989. The brief description of patronage here is from Alföldy 1988, 10. Saller 2000 provides an overview, building on the seminal Saller 1982. I use the word “socioeconomic” here in its full sense but later employ it more narrowly, for the sake of convenience, to refer just to the dynamics of gift and commodity.

11. Inwood 1995, 244: “Roman society, more than some other hierarchically organized ancient cultures, depended on the reciprocal exchange of services and favours among members of the same social class and also between members of different classes.” Verboven 2014, 133: “Mediterranean cultures emphasized gift-exchange as a central principle in social interaction.” Schwartz 2010, 72–74, 167–168.

12. The *Iliad* episodes are in books 1 and 9. See Wilson 2002, Seaford 2004, 34–39.

13. On the differences of exchange in *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, see Seaford 1994, 18–22. Kurke 1999, 19, drawing on Morris 1996, examines the conflict between traditional and “middling” elites in Greek culture beginning in the archaic period. The concept of spheres of exchange was developed by Bohannon and Dalton 1962 and extended by Parry and Bloch 1989. Morris 1986, 8–9 and Kurke 1999, 10–11 discuss spheres of exchange in Greek culture. For the general argument for changing Greek socioeconomic culture, see also Kurke 1991. Ormand 2014, 19–34 surveys the criticisms of the interpretations of Morris and Kurke, then defends a clarified version. He restates the key point that there were no opposed classes in archaic Greek city-states, but rather opposed traditions developed and engaged by those with access to political power (pp. 25–26). For a different view of these changes, see Seaford 1994; Seaford 2004; and Seaford 2012. Seaford 2004 emphasizes the conceptual changes that influenced philosophy. Domingo Gygax 2016, which studies the origins of public benefactions (“euergetism”) in Greece, should be mentioned here, though it came to my attention too late for me to engage with it.

14. On Roman gift-giving traditions as indigenous, see Kloft 1970, 71, cited by Manning 1985, 77 n. 8 as well as chapter 5. Flaig 1993, 300–301 notes the absence of claims that gift giving held Greek or Jewish societies together. In this vein, in addition to the epigraph to the introduction, Cicero writes, “strong too is the bond of fellowship effected by mutual interchange of kind services, and as long as these kindnesses are mutual and acceptable, those between whom they are interchanged are united by the ties of an enduring intimacy” (*magna etiam illa communitas est, quae conficitur ex beneficiis ultro et citro datis acceptis, quae et mutua et grata dum sunt, inter quos ea sunt, firma devinciuntur societate, On Duties* 1.56). Seneca opens *On Benefactions* by writing, “I propose to speak of benefactions, and so study that thing which most of all binds human society together (*de beneficiis dicendum est et ordinanda res quae maxime humanam societatem alligat, On Benefactions* 1.4.2.). By contrast, Aristotle considered it virtuous to return gifts but mainly to avoid indebtedness (*Nicomachean Ethics* 4.3).

15. Trade treaty: Polybius *Histories* 3.22. The authenticity of the treaty and its dating to the sixth to fifth centuries are generally accepted. See Viglietti 2011, 256 n. 134, as well as the more cautious approach of Aubert 2007, 163. Roman and Italian citizens engaging in commerce: Weber 1976 [1909], 316, quoted in a note in this chapter below. Ober 2010 develops Weber’s point that the Athenians left commerce to noncitizens.

16. Evidence for the origins of Roman monetization is reviewed by Harl 1996, 21–37. Morel 2007, 496–497 provides a recent summary. The first coins paid to soldiers seem to have been produced around 400 BCE, before the traditional date for the advent of Roman coinage of 338 BCE.

17. Weber 1976 [1909], 316: “The Roman companies of publicans were the largest capitalist enterprises in Antiquity. Participation in these enterprises was limited to men with vast capital holdings in slaves and cash. They also needed to have extensive landed possessions, preferably with Italic status (which was privileged and therefore at an economic advantage), since they had to offer land as security when bidding for contracts. This last condition, by which only land enjoying full privileges under Roman land law could be offered as security, had the effect of giving the capitalist class in the Roman state a distinctively national character. It was much more so than had any similar class been in the Near East. Under the Ptolemies, for example, the publicans seem to have been mainly foreigners, and in Greece the smaller states actually encouraged foreign capitalists to make bids in order to have more competition. As a result of its dissimilar policies the ancient aristocratic features of Rome’s society and economy were greatly strengthened. Hence a contrast with the Greek democracies.” So similarly Crook 1967, 235; Jones 1974, 163 n. 72; D’Arms 1981; and Aubert 2007, 167, with n. 18 on senatorial involvement in business ventures of the knights (*equites*) despite their ineligibility to take up public contracts directly. The rendering of all judgments in monetary terms: “among the most distinctive traits of the classical Roman suit is *condemnatio pecuniaria*: whatever the claim, judgment against a defendant is always in a sum of money” (Daube 2014 [1979], 85). Horace’s lament: *Letters* 2.3.325–30.

18. The *lex Cincia* of 204 BCE forbade legal advocates from receiving payment or gifts for their services, before or after a legal proceeding (Crook 1967, 90–1; Finley 1999 [1973], 57). Saller 2000, 839 attributes the willingness of Roman elites to perform this service in part to “the strength of the reciprocity ethic.” The dating of the law against large gifts between spouses is from Cherry 2002. On these two laws see further chapter 3. Restrictions on bequests were loosened by the *lex Falcidia* (*Digest* 35.2.18; Flaig 1993, 300). It superseded the



*lex Voconia* of 169 BCE, which limited bequests to legatees to less than half of one's estate (Gardner 1986, 130). The *Lex Aelia Sentia* implemented by Augustus made the ingratitude of freedmen legally actionable (Tacitus *Annals* 13.26–7; Suetonius *Life of Claudius* 25; *Digest* 37.14.1, 5; 40.9.30). Discussion at Griffin 2013, 211. On the *mandatum contract*, see Griffin 2013, 55–60, drawing on Michel 1962. Quotation from *Digest* 17.1.1.4, as translated by Griffin 2013, 56.

19. No doubt many gifts were exchanged in ways that were at least habitual, if not enjoyable. Michel 1962, 438 and Verboven 2014, 144–145 observe that the majority of gifts were of modest value, though possibly still of great significance to the receiver. The same Martial who, as we will see, bemoaned that gifts were traps, delighted in creating a book of witty tags for Saturnalia gifts. Scale may have made a difference. Small gifts are less laden with significance; larger ones have greater potential to shift social positions, not least by laying a social inferior under a burden of obligation. Even at larger scales, a Cicero or a Pliny could patronize localities outside Rome in a smooth exchange of favors to the apparent advantage of both sides. On Cicero's patronage of Italian cities, see Meier 1980, 163–164. Pliny represents his relations with Comum as largely unproblematic in letters such as 4.16. So likewise those most involved with market exchange, merchants and traders, naturally engaged in reciprocal social relations, if not for pleasure, then certainly to bring greater stability to their life and work through long-lasting relationships with their business associates (Bang 2008, 5). Like the laws described here, this book addresses the increasing number of gift exchanges that became problematic.

20. Bourdieu 1986, with the explanation of Swartz 1997, 80. From a biological perspective, Alexander 1987, 85 distinguishes between “direct reciprocity,” in which the giver of a benefit receives a direct return from the recipient, and “indirect reciprocity,” in which the giver instead builds up reputation and status. Alexander's indirect reciprocity is similar to Bourdieu's social and cultural capital.

21. Zeiner 2005 on the literary production and social positioning of the Flavian-era poet Statius and his associates is one application of Bourdieu's thought to Roman gifts. Horace relates his encounter at *Satires* 1.9. On the importance of letters of recommendation and their status as gifts, see Saller 1982, 108–110, 162–164; Verboven 2002, 287–329. On the competition for Roman honor, see below in this chapter. On Augustus's restriction of public benefactions, see chapter 12.

22. These are principal conclusions of major works dealing with Roman gifts: Dixon 1993 (elite gift and debt, especially 459–60); Verboven 2002 (business dealings); Roller 2001, 129–212 (interpersonal relations with the emperor); Saller 1982 (imperial administration); Gold 1982, White 1993, Bowditch 2001, Nauta 2002 (poets). Two recent edited volumes provide sets of articles on ancient gift giving: Satlow 2013; and Carlà and Gori 2014a.

23. The quotation from Publilius Syrus is *beneficium accipere libertatem est vendere* (B5, cited by Lentano 2005, 135 n. 30). For Seneca, see chapter 13. Horace, Martial, and Pliny likewise complain of the flagrantly manipulative use of gifts. For the views of Horace, including on his relationship with Maecenas, see Bowditch 2001. On Martial and Pliny, see chapter 13. Roman friendship has been its own area of study, where the main question has been whether *amicitia* was “fundamentally instrumental” (Saller 1982, 13). This interpretation is suggested by the semantic ranges of *amicitia* and *amicus*, which extend from the English “friendship” and “friend” to include political allies and business associates. In his philosophical writings, Cicero distinguishes between



“common and ordinary” (*vulgari . . . mediocri*) *amicitia* and that which is “true and full” (*vera et perfecta*, *On Friendship* 22). Elsewhere he calls the former “political, pretend friendships” (*illae ambitiosae fucosaeque amicitiae*, *Letters to Atticus* 1.8), in contrast with his true friendship with Atticus. It is this true version that involves love (*amor*, *On Friendship* 31). Verboven 2002, 41–43 follows Saller in emphasizing the instrumental nature of Roman *amicitia*. I follow the view of Powell 1990, 21–23, Konstan 1997, and Williams 2012, 44–54 (who surveys these discussions) that affectionate friendship was a significant part of the Roman experience, as explored further in chapter 8.

24. The concept of “gift-debt” was developed by Gregory 1982, 57–61 and applied to Roman society by Roller 2001 (e.g., p. 141 n. 19). Seneca cautions against the application of commodity vocabulary to gift exchange but violates his own precept. See further chapter 13. Lentano 2005, 131–135 remarks on the conceptual similarity and interchangeability of gift and commerce in Roman thought, a view that fits with some modern cross-cultural perspectives (Carlà and Gori 2014b, 33, quoted in the notes to the introduction). Veyne 1990 [1969], 218 sees the workings of power in Roman gift relations as limited. In his study of Greek and Roman public benefactions (euergetism), he acknowledges that gift giving creates social ties and that elites exerted real political influence through gifts (pp. 218–219) but interprets Roman euergetism as largely symbolic. In his view, public benefactions served the political ambitions of a tiny number of Roman senators but not other members of the Roman and provincial elite (p. 232); even in elections, largesse was not decisive because other factors were at play (pp. 223–228); and elites gave benefactions primarily because “they wanted to be loved” (p. 261). Garnsey 1991, 168 points out that his interpretation underestimates the scope of political action. “The ruler/ruled relationship in cities [outside Rome] was not empty of power,” and the Roman central government worked through provincial elites. Veyne nevertheless touches on a key point when he writes that “two types of men were sworn enemies of the new style of human relations and of the gifts that symbolized them: those who regretted that the old obedience existed *no more* and those who regretted that the sense of legality was *not yet present*” (p. 218), citing the late Republican general Lucullus as an instance of the former, and the Emperor Galba of the latter. Veyne’s suggestion that there was a period when traditional gift values held greater sway, followed by a period of exploitation, followed by an attempt at their legal management, anticipates the periods I argue for more fully.

25. *illud unum intellegi volumus, illius liberalitatem neque temporariam neque callidam fuisse. id ex ipsis rebus ac temporibus iudicari potest, quod non florentibus se venditavit, sed afflictis semper succurrit*, *Life of Atticus* 11.3–4.

26. Swartz 1997, 80–81 summarizes these criticisms of Bourdieu’s model, as does Lebaron 2003, including those of Koritz and Koritz 1999, though Lebaron defends a version of Bourdieu’s views (these positions are surveyed at Smelser and Swedberg 2005, 17–19). Bourdieu himself criticized the “economism” dominant in socioeconomic studies (Bourdieu 1998, 83) even as he moved closer to it, describing the dynamics of symbolic capital as a “market” (Bourdieu 1997, 232–33). Unified models offered by economists such as Becker 1976, 205 and Coleman 1990, 180–196 (whose version of rational choice theory proceeds explicitly from Bourdieu) have faced similar challenges. For a response to Becker’s cost-benefit social analysis from the perspective of behavioral economics, see Ariely 2012.

27. Finley 1999 [1973] advocates for the preeminent importance of status, responding to the formalist position of Rostovtzeff 1963. Morris 1999 and Manning and Morris 2005,

144–148 provide overviews of Finley’s work and legacy. Scheidel and von Reden 2002 try to reconnect contemporary research with Finley but cannot overcome their “contributors’ overall skepticism about the continuing viability of Finley’s orientation and conclusions” (Cohen 2003). Bang 2008, 17–60 surveys discussions of the ancient economy, and Scheidel, Morris, and Saller 2007 summarize research on Greco-Roman economic performance. A notable example of economic rationalism in the ancient economy is Rathbone 1991. In the records of a farming estate in third-century CE Egypt, he finds a highly rationalized accounting system and the large-scale production of produce for sale. He argues that this evidence supports the view that profit considerations were a significant influence on economic activity elsewhere in the Roman Empire.

28. Bang, Ikeguchi and Ziche 2006, 20. Saller 1982, 126 writes of the “artificiality of separating economic and social exchange.” Other efforts to integrate social life into the understanding of the ancient economy include Harris 1993; Morley 2007a; and Scheidel 2012b. Morris, Saller, and Scheidel 2007, 7 and Manning and Morris 2005 in their introduction advocate turning to the social-scientific methods and theories applied to the modern world for new unifying perspectives on antiquity. Andraeu 2006 argues for the compatibility of values and monetary-based systems within the Roman economy. Lo Cascio 2006 adopts an institutional perspective, highlighting the Roman imperial state as both rule-setter and actor within the economy. Bang 2008 offers a synthetic view of a “Roman bazaar,” where imperfect information and regulation inimical to commerce kept trade locally focused and led merchants to cultivate social relationships for security.

29. Smelser and Swedberg 2005, 20, referred to by Scheidel, Morris, and Saller 2007, 7 n. 28. Related observations at Scheidel 2012a, 9 n. 20.

30. MacMullen 2014, 1. Among the motivations he identifies are four forms of reason (economic, common, scientific, and moral) and moral culture. The observation on contemporary Westerners is from Berking 1999, 145, as summarized by Osteen 2002b, 18. “It is commonly taken for granted . . .”: Visser 2009, 314, and see also p. 328. Ricard 2015 surveys the lack of evidence for universal selfishness. As a separate example, Rand, Greene, and Nowak 2012 show how, in economic game studies, subjects who respond more quickly tend more toward cooperation with the rest of the participants, a sign that cooperation is intuitive. Reflecting on a debate among anthropologists over why individuals in traditional societies share food with the larger community rather than keeping it for themselves and their families, Ridley 1996, 99 remarks, “like most social scientists, anthropologists did not feel the economist’s obsessive need to explain away benevolence.” Indeed, some have posited that “the very evolution of society and culture . . . depends on the evolution of peace-making actions—i.e. acts of reciprocity—that draw humans away from the State of Nature in its ‘Hobbesian’ meaning” (Service 1975, 60, summarized by Carlà and Gori 2014b, 25).

31. Carlà and Gori 2014b, 29 n. 120 describe an approach in modern scholarship on gift giving that “aims at contesting visions of human beings as self-interested and rational maximizers of profit, but of course does not exclude that an altruistic behavior can have, in a cultural and social context, also a ‘self-interested’ reason, consisting either of social visibility or even simply in the feelings connected with the adhesion to a particular moral ideal,” citing Komter 1996, 4 and Vandeveldel 2000, 7. The Weberian perspective I adopt is a version of this approach.

32. Weber’s categories: Weber 1978 [1956], 85–86. While his analysis of social action remains useful, few would now credit the existence of a Roman “capitalist class”

(*Kapitalistenstand*) Weber 1976 [1909], 316. Weber was closer to the mark when he wrote that “it was not ‘greed for gain’ as a psychological motive that was tabooed; in practical life the Roman office nobility . . . was just as possessed of the *auri sacra fames* [divine hunger for gold, *Aeneid* 3.57] as any other class in history. Rather, it was any *rational*, continuously organized, and in this sense specifically ‘bourgeois’ form of acquisitive operation, any systematic activity, that was looked upon with disdain.” D’Arms 1981 updates Weber’s interpretation by showing how the elite engaged in commerce nevertheless. On the identification of instrumental rationality and commodity exchange, see Swedberg 1998, 23. On *emolumentum*, see *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae*, s.v. *emolumentum*.

33. Others have offered variations on Weber’s typology. For gifts in particular, van den Ven 2000, 3–4 proposes six possible motivations: (1) altruism (making others happy); (2) egoism I (exchange); (3) egoism II (social approval); (4) strategic (signaling to build trust); (5) fairness (reproducing norms, reducing inequity); and (6) survival (evolutionarily determined through natural selection). Economists have recently recognized the practical limitations of modeling altruistic behavior as individuals contributing to public goods only for their own eventual utility. They have therefore recognized the “warm glow” from giving as a contributing factor in generosity, resulting in models that better predict giving behavior (Andreoni 1990; Bernheim and Rangel 2007, 62). The “warm glow” has remained something of a “black box,” with no definitive parsing of its composition or operation (Bernheim and Rangel 2007, 63), but it can be equated to Weber’s motivations of emotion, value, and tradition. I use Weber’s scheme for its simplicity and clarity, which leaves room for elaboration when considering individual situations. In terms of approaches to gift exchange, my use of a relatively simple model follows Mauss, and my employment of detailed cultural descriptions in successive chapters follows Veyne 1976, who further explains his method in Veyne 1979. On these two methodological possibilities, see Silber 2004 and Colpaert 2014.

34. Dixon 1993, 456–459; Roller 2001, 133; and Gregory 1982, 51 refer to relationships as one goal of exchange, and Verboven 2002, 44–45 refers to emotion as another, all, except for Gregory, in a Roman context. More on all of these points in chapter 11. For the affectionate bond between Atticus and Cicero, see Williams 2012, 231–232, quoting *Letters to Atticus* 1.18.1. On the private and semiprivate nature of Cicero’s letters, see Hall 2009, 24.

35. Weber’s analysis does not offer a mechanical model of how the social and economic interact, any more than did Bourdieu: “Weber’s type of causality can be called interpretive; and it differs from functional or mechanical types of explanation” (Swedberg 1998, 23).

36. For the concept of historical “rupture,” see Foucault 2002 [1969]. Goldstein 1994, 2, quoting the summary of Mayer 1997, 7 n. 13, describes the “utter incompatibility” of Foucault’s work with “the practice of history,” writing further that “there is little attention paid in Foucault’s work to the question of how smaller changes within a discursive field inevitably altered that field and affected relations and orientations among the elements within it.” See also May 2006, 55–56.

37. This paragraph draws from Carlà and Gori 2014a, 20–22. The last sentence quotes from pp. 21–22, referring to Graeber 2011, 209–210.

38. Reviewing Veyne 1976 on public benefactions (euergetism) in the Greek and Roman worlds, Garnsey 1991, 166 observes that “the identification of points of transition from one political culture to another does pose problems, and these are particularly acute in the case of a historian operating from a Foucauldian perspective.” Roman voting: Botsford 1909, 178–179.

39. Singing and dancing: Wiseman 2008, 12, referring to Macrobius *Saturnalia* 3.13.4–15. My historical argument follows trends identified by scholars of Roman law. Crook 1967, 239–240, cited by Griffin 2013, 58, remarks that from the first century BCE to the third century CE, “gratuitousness and *noblesse oblige* in contract were an old tradition less and less honored in the observance, as services became more specialized and what had once been amateur became professional.” As a consequence, “the distinction between the gratuitous services of status-equals and the paid services of status-inferiors had partly ceased to be real even in Cicero’s day and grew steadily more unreal.” Michel 1962 argues that in the Empire especially *beneficia* were gradually replaced by commercial and legal institutions. He observes on p. 442 that it was possibly a sign of the decadence of reciprocity (“*gratuité*”) that it required legal sanction for support. Saller 1982, 119 n. 2, Griffin 2013, 59–60 have taken issue with Michel’s conclusions, arguing that his evidence for a decline in reciprocity among *amici* is partial and inconclusive, and that Republican and Imperial practices and beliefs around gift exchange showed a high degree of continuity. Seneca’s concerns for gift exchange (very distinct for Roller 2001, 79–83; less so for Griffin 2013, 60–61) were arguably those of an outsider (Griffin 2003). Saller 1982, 22–23 has likewise disputed the views of French scholars such as Hellegouarc’h 1963, 570 who cites changes in linguistic usage as evidence for the decline of gift institutions from vitality to vacuity under the Empire, by demonstrating the continuing importance of gift relations in Imperial administration. Vivenza 2012, 30 concludes that “in general terms, attitudes towards the economic foundations of existence, like attitudes towards work and the professions, did not change with the transition from Republic to Empire.” A related argument for continuity in the understandings of *amicitia* and its associated concepts is made by Williams 2012, 57. Despite these objections, Griffin 2013, 57 acknowledges that Seneca is indeed reacting to a changed climate, and the bulk of Michel’s evidence remains uncontested, along with Crook’s conclusions. Roller 2009 distinguishes between “exemplary” and “historicist” elements in the writings of ancient Roman historians. The exemplary approach considers the conditions of the past fundamentally similar to the present and invites comparison of the reader with the figures of the past as exemplars of moral virtue or vice. The historicist approach is a relativist one, seeing greater discontinuities between ages, so that the peculiarities of earlier cultures must be more minutely investigated and do not allow for easy moral comparison with the writer’s own era. While modern historians favor the historicist perspective, Roman historians tended toward the exemplary. Yet, as Roller writes, “Roman historical consciousness, whose fundamental mode . . . is exemplary, does manifest a certain awareness of change over time” (p. 216). It is from such points of awareness, along with other evidence, that I make the argument for the transformation of Roman exchange culture.

40. Verboven 2014, 142 writes that “gift giving should not be studied per se but in relation to other institutions such as markets, money, law, political assemblies, etc.” The kinds of evidence reviewed here will contribute to drawing this larger picture. Moussy 1966 investigates the meaning and use of *gratia*. Building on this and Hellegouarc’h 1963, Saller 1982, 8–22, Verboven 2002, 35–48, and Verboven 2014, 143 provide surveys of the Roman gift vocabulary.

41. Even when *munus* refers to a gift object, ancient sources connect the word more closely to the action of giving than they do *donum*, despite the fact that *donum* is the noun form of the verb “to give” (*donare*). The jurist Ulpian writes that “the difference between *donum* (gift) and *munus* (gift) is one of genus to species. For Labeo says that the genus is *donum*, so called from the action of giving (*donando*). The species is *munus*, which is a *donum*

given for a particular purpose, such as a birthday present or a wedding present” (*Digest* 50.16.194). A *munus* also involves a greater sense of obligation: “a *munus* is properly something we enter into from necessity, by law or custom, or by the order of someone who has the authority to compel it” (*Digest* 50.16.214) (Zimmerman 1990, 482 n. 26). Seneca takes the notion of a service to a further level of abstraction, defining a *beneficium* as “the act of a well-wisher who bestows joy and derives joy from the bestowal of it, and is inclined to do what he does from the prompting of his own will” (*benevola actio tribuens gaudium capiensque tribuendo in id, quod facit, prona et sponte sua parata, On Benefactions* 1.6.1, translated by Basore 1935). He is thinking not of an object transferred, or even a service performed, but rather of an interaction between human beings aimed at making them happy. Seneca’s definition of *beneficium* stems from his philosophical outlook. Stoics believed that everyone had the potential to act virtuously and be happy in any circumstance. By making intention the defining feature of gift giving, Seneca can claim that wealthy and poor alike are capable of giving fully satisfying gifts. “A benefit,” he says, “can’t be touched; it’s a matter of the mind” (*non potest beneficium manu tangi: res animo geritur, On Benefactions* 1.1.5). At the same time, he also captures the broader conception of the Roman gift that includes services and relationships. See further on Seneca in chapter 13.

42. On the superiority of services, see Cicero *On Duties* 2.52–3. Cicero seems to have followed his own advice. He apparently did not construct public buildings (a lesser form of giving, *On Duties* 2.61; Lomas and Cornell 2002, 3), but he did help settle legal problems such as the collection of rents owed to Atella and Arpinum (*Letters to Friends* 13.7, 13.11). In *On Benefactions*, Seneca emphasizes services when he encourages his friend Aebutius Liberalis, to “help one person with cash, another with credit, another with influence, another with advice, another with helpful lessons” (*alium re, alium fide, alium gratia, alium consilio, alium praeceptis salubribus adiuva, 1.2.4*), where the possibility of giving goods and money is balanced by the possibility of a range of services.

43. Whether a giver is prodigal or liberal is a matter of interpretation: Seneca describes extravagant prodigality as bordering on generous liberality (*Letters* 120.8). On positive and negative types of the same basic exchange behavior see Coffee 2009, 23.

44. On the continuity of Roman socioeconomic thought, Vivenza 2012, 30 writes that “in general terms, attitudes towards the economic foundations of existence, like attitudes towards work and the professions, did not change with the transition from Republic to Empire.” Manning 1985 traces the varied meanings of *liberalitas*. See chapter 5 for the analysis of *lucrum* and *liberalitas*. My approach to the changing vocabulary for exchange follows the spirit of Moussy 1966 and extends his general approach back to the Republic.

45. Searches of Packard Humanities Institute (PHI) website (<http://latin.packhum.org/> search), the most extensive currently available for classical Latin, were conducted summer 2014 to summer 2015. Each data point represents the percentage of all the author’s words constituted by the search word. Fragmentary texts are excluded because the appearance of a word in a fragment may overstate the frequency it had in the whole work. Technical works are generally excluded because they employ specialized definitions not necessarily reflective of exchange culture.

46. Nicols 2014, 128 on the common conception of private and public patronage, *contra* Veyne 1990 [1969], 17, 70. More generally, Veyne 1969, 788–789 has observed that “there is no general model at the level of actual living” for gift exchange. Noreña 2011, 84 writes that *liberalitas* and related value terms “were rather vague . . . and . . . often required actions in order to give them shape and meaning.” Griffin 2013, 23, 37 observes the lack of consistent

distinction between *beneficium* and *officium*, citing at p. 37 n. 32 Saller 1982, 17–20 on this point. Habinek 2014, 25 n. 25, writing about how Griffin 2003 “makes much of the difference between patronage and gift-exchange,” observes that for his study of Seneca, “the distinction is immaterial: both patronage and gift-exchange are expressions of an embedded economy (i.e., one in which exchange is ‘embedded’ in social structure) in contrast to the disembedded nature of a market economy.”

47. Referring to the discussion of Brunt 1988, 144–193, Millar 1988, 46 writes that “there was no social barrier between equestrian families and senatorial ones; indeed, even to put it like that is misleading, since what we are concerned with is a single social class, people of sufficient landed wealth to live off their income.” I generally follow the admonition of Millar, p. 47, that “elite” rather than “noble” is the preferred term for analysis, since the latter refers specifically to anyone who could claim an ancestor who had held public office.

48. Scheidel 2006, 48–51, referring to Rathbone 1993.

49. The estimate of the population capable of participating in gift giving is from Scheidel 2006, 50–51. Verboven 2014, 150 draws from testimony like that of Plautus and Publilius a stark, Foucauldian portrait of the Roman gift system: “Although to some extent, gift exchange allowed resources to circulate, it primarily served as a stabilizer for non-reciprocity based institutional arrangements. Prime among these were property, prestige and dominance based capabilities that greatly favored small segments of the population. In this way, gift-exchange was a core element in a system of symbolic violence. It provided a powerful support for social and political institutions that were structurally unequal, disadvantageous to the majority of the people and deeply opposed to the principles of reciprocal altruism underlying gift exchange, yet that at the same time relied on the instincts for strong reciprocity and tit-for-tat exchange to uphold social norms.” Modern parallels give some reason for believing there was a strong impulse to reciprocity among impoverished Romans. In her account of the marginal existence of the American working poor, Tirado 2014, 24 describes the “mutual covering of asses . . . in the lower classes.” As a low-level manager of a service business, she helped find a babysitter for an employee who lost child care, and who otherwise might have to miss work and get fired. For her, “poor people are, as a rule, more generous” because “we understand what it might be like to have to beg even if we have never done it ourselves,” referring not only to her own experience but also to their higher rates of charitable contribution (p. 166). Few of the modern American poor have farms to supply their own food, and so in this sense are more vulnerable than some among the ancient Roman lower classes. But they generally have access to minimal state and community aid and resources that amount to more than the Roman grain dole. For Martial’s complaints, see chapter 13.

50. Seneca *On Benefactions* 4.29.2–3, cited by Parkin 2006, 66. She writes (p. 61) that “such organised material aid and services as the elite were prepared to extend to their social and economic inferiors were not directed at the poorest of Graeco-Roman society in the early imperial period.” Garnsey and Saller 1987, 101, cited by Osborne 2006, 6, write that “very few euergetists would have described what they were doing as poor relief.” Veyne 1990 [1969], 94–97 had likewise stressed that the giving of public benefactions was not a form of redistribution. Morley 2006b, 34 remarks on the exclusion of the poor from patronage with their social superiors (with note 48 citing Saller 1982 and Garnsey and Saller 1987, 151–152, 156). He further observes of new immigrants to Rome: “the problem was not simply



that [they] were cut off from their old social networks, but that the traditional networks of patronage within the city were ceasing to operate effectively, as the ties of dependence and civic patriotism were replaced with relationships based on the cash nexus” (Morley 2006b, 38, citing for comparison Whittaker 1993, 17). On p. 34 Morley contrasts his interpretation with that of Purcell 1994, 667, who, he says, “offers the optimistic view that even the poorer *plebs* would have been integrated into Roman society through their involvement with the social exchanges of the *insula* [essentially large apartment blocks], something which remains entirely invisible to us.”

51. Taussig 1980, 13.

52. Quotation from Taussig 1980, 101.

53. Andreau 1999, 153–154. In a comparative survey including China, Russia, and Japan, Kautsky 1982, 39 writes that Greece and Rome were “commercial rather than traditional aristocratic” empires. A closer look requires consideration of both aspects.

54. One example will suffice. In the year 287 BCE, during the so-called Conflict of the Orders of the fifth to third centuries, which involved repeated clashes between the plebs and elite, two laws favored by the plebs were passed. The *lex Hortensia* made the resolutions of the plebeian assembly binding on the whole Roman people, initially to enforce a remission of debt. Another law permitted the conduct of business on market days, or *nundinae*, so that peasants could travel to the city to conduct their affairs (Ungern-Sternberg 2005, 320). The Roman plebs thus rejected some market practices (burdensome debt) and supported others (markets where they sold their goods). This account may well be a retrojection from later eras (Lintott 1990), but it is consistent with the archaeological record of early Rome, on which see chapter 2.

55. As Morris 1999, xxviii observes, some factors seem to justify a Marxist critique. The gift gestures of the elite can be read as an instance of false consciousness, a social rhetoric justifying their superior position and obscuring the fundamental inequity of economic arrangements (see also Saller 1982, 38). Elite accounts do diverge from economic realities, as in the romanticization of the small independent farmer in an age of large estates worked by slaves and the poor (Reay 2005 on Cato’s *On Agriculture*; Thibodeau 2011 on Vergil’s *Georgics*). Yet Marxist interpretations of classical Greece and Rome have not found favor among ancient historians. Finley 1999 [1973], 35–61 denies that class consciousness existed in classical antiquity. Veyne 1976, 726–727 rejects the notion that the Roman populace was politically neutralized by bread and circuses to the point of complacency. Gruen 1974, 365 sums up the situation: “one cannot speak of the *plebs* as if it were a separate bloc operating in unison and motivated by class consciousness. A large percentage of its number comprised clients and dependents of Rome’s aristocratic families. For most, their welfare was tied more closely to relations with powerful patrons than to members of their own class. The result was an enduring fragmentation. Without means, influence, or solidarity, the proletariat was in no position to create real difficulty for the government. And, more importantly, it possessed little inclination to upset the social structure.” In the first major Marxist interpretation of ancient Greece, De Ste. Croix 1981 consequently abandons the core notions of class consciousness and class-conscious political conflict. He concedes (p. 57) that the concept of class struggle must be loosely expanded to fit a set of constituents, from slaves to serfs, wage-laborers, clients, and other workers in various states of dependence and exploitation who did not view themselves as members of one group (Green 1989, 122–123). On Rome see also Yavetz 1988, 149–153 and Osborne 2006, 6. For a recent Marxist reading of ancient Greece see Rose 2012.

56. Labate and Narducci 1981, 165 remark, “Often [in Roman sources] money (*pecunia*) . . . is taken as a factor that disrupts the system of values on which the criteria of social valuation lie. The principal danger is found in the substitution of the abstract bond of money for that, otherwise firm, of the personal relationship. Money, finding its way into the latter, reduces it to mere counting, and allows for the ending and dissolution of relationships essential to the maintenance of society. It disrupts the equilibrium of social obligations and frees the individual to become a potential tyrant. It is in Verres, the prototype of asocial egoism, that the protection of money (*praesidium pecuniae*) wins out over the protection of friends (*praesidium amicorum*)” (my translation). The reflection on status shows one of the benefits of developing their observation into a large-scale inquiry. For, as Labate and Narducci allow, there were naturally moments where commerce and money were valorized in Roman society, not only by those of lower status but also among the elite.

57. Caesar *Civil War* 1.7. On the competition for Roman honor, see Lendon 1997.

58. “We are by nature . . .”: *Tusculan Disputations* 2.58, translated by Lendon 2009, 394. For the costs of seeking political office, see Lendon 2009, 395, referring to Lendon 1997, 78–89, 176–194.

59. Tiberius on *gratia* and *merita*: Tacitus *Annals* 1.81. Cicero refers to *merita* as bringing renown at *In Defense of Milo* 2.6. The term *merita* can also be used to refer to the *beneficia* of gift exchange. Seneca writes, “for although it is just to repay one good deed with another in the exchange of benefits, it is not just to repay one injury with another” (*non enim ut in beneficiis, honestum est merita meritis repensare, ita iniurias iniuriis, On Anger* 2.31.1).

60. See Beard, North, and Price 1998a, 34 on the reciprocal and contractual sides of Roman ritual. Roman religion was often political. Magistrates used their latitude in interpreting signs from the gods to affect whether a battle should be fought or a legislative session should be held, they were using a religious ritual for political purposes. These power dynamics are not properly part of the exchange with the divine, however, but constitute an interpersonal use of that exchange.

61. See Flower 2010, 1–17 on the hazards and necessity of periodization, as well as Morley 2006a, 36–38. In her brief treatment of the subject, Griffin 2013, 54–61 expresses a balanced view that nevertheless inclines against the possibility of substantial change in Roman gift culture (compare p. 60 with p. 61).

62. This study complements MacMullen 1988, which describes the change in socio-economic culture from early to late Empire, by showing its earlier roots. See further in chapter 13. It also takes as a premise his observation that “it is a very primitive and now old-fashioned historiography that would treat habits and values and glimpses of ‘Daily Life in Ancient Rome’ as mere decorative background, to the neglect of their causal connection with the flow of events” (p. ix).

## Chapter 2

1. Viglietti 2011, 97–98 discusses this episode of Macrobius. This chapter draws on and extends some of the arguments of his book.

2. *hic igitur Ianus, cum Saturnum classe pervectum excepisset hospitio et ab eo edoctus peritiam ruris ferum illum et rudem ante fruges cognitum victum in melius redegisset, regni eum societate muneravit. cum primus quoque aera signaret, servavit et in hoc Saturni reverentiam, ut, quoniam ille navi fuerat advectus, ex una quidem parte sui capitis effigies, ex altera vero*