The Romance of the Republic: Class Conflict and the Problem of Progress in Thomas Arnold's *History of Rome* (1838-1842).

I

This article seeks to reposition Thomas Arnold (1795-1842) as a major nineteenth-century historian through an analysis of his most important work, the *History of Rome* (three vols, 1838, 1840, 1842).[1] Arnold's achievements as a historian have long been over-shadowed by his role as Headmaster of Rugby School and leading Liberal Anglican theologian. His first biographer A. P. Stanley explained, for example, that in compiling his *Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* (two vols, 1844), he had simply omitted the "numerous body of letters […] connected with [Arnold's] History" because they were "too minute to occupy space wanted for subjects of more general importance."[2] This pattern continued with Emma Jane Worboise's *Life and Times of Thomas Arnold* (1859), which was a paean to Arnold's "devotional, poetic, and lofty tendencies" and a celebration of him as one of the "real soldiers of the Heavenly King" who fought "for the interests, and for the extension, of Christ's Church."[3] Fictionalized in Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days* (1857) and satirized in Lytton Strachey's *Eminent Victorians* (1918), Arnold's reputation was established as an "earnest enthusiast who strove to make his pupils

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[1] Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome,* three vols (London: B. Fellowes, 1838, 1840, and 1842).

[2] Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold* [1844] New York edition, two volumes in one (New York: Charles Scribener's Sons, 1903), v.

[3] Emma Jane Worboise, *The Life and Times of Thomas Arnold* (London: Hamilton, Adams & Co., 1859), 87 and 1.

Christian gentlemen and who governed his school according to the principles of the Old Testament."[4] In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, numerous books reinforced the centrality of Arnold's educational and religious activities, from R. J. Campbell's *Thomas Arnold* (1927) to Terence Copley's *Black Tom: Arnold of Rugby* (2002).[5]

There has been no engagement with Arnold as a historian since the publication of Duncan Forbes' essay *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (1952).[6] Arnold is overlooked, I think, because his *magnum-opus* does not fit with current understandings of historiography. It is generally agreed that the Roman Republic was at the height of its significance as a historical subject before Arnold was born, when Enlightenment writers approached the past in an abstract and philosophical way, assuming that man was everywhere the same and that events repeated themselves. Particularly following the Glorious Revolution (1688), it was fashionable to draw analogies between the constitution of the Roman Republic and the English state, as each balanced power between Consul/King, Patricians/Lords, and Plebeians/Commons.[7] It is assumed, however, that historians turned away from the Roman Republic during the Romantic period, just as Arnold was reaching maturity.

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[4] Thomas Hughes, *Tom Brown's School Days* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1857). Lytton Strachey, *Eminent Victorians* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1918). Strachey, 213.

[5] See R. J. Campbell, *Thomas Arnold* (London: Macmillan and Co., 1927); Arnold Whitridge, *Dr Arnold of Rugby* (London: Constable and Co., 1928); Norman Wymer, *Dr Arnold of Rugby* (London: Robert Hale Limited, 1953); T. W. Bamford, *Thomas Arnold* (London: The Cressent Press, 1960); Michael McCrum, *Thomas Arnold, Head Master: A Reassessment* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1989); and Terence Copley, *Black Tom: Arnold of Rugby, The Myth and the Man* (London: Continuum, 2002).

[6] Duncan Forbes, *The Liberal Anglican Idea of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1952).

[7] Philip Ayres, *Classical Culture and the Idea of Rome in Eighteenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

Between 1789 and 1832, Rome was tarnished by its association with the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic regimes, while the debate on the Great Reform Act meant that the democracy of ancient Greece seemed more relevant.[8] The Romantic interest in the primitive and particular produced, moreover, an intense preoccupation with a past that was national and not classical, as seen in the Scottish novels of Sir Walter Scott or the Anglo-Saxonism of Sharon Turner.[9] Finally, it is believed that the confidence of the High Victorian period resulted in a self-congratulatory "Whig" interpretation of history, which left an ever-decreasing space for the Romans, whose achievements had been surpassed by the British Empire.[10]

These features in the study of historiography have led to the erasure of Arnold, with Frank Turner claiming that "there were no significant historical studies of the Roman republic between 1799 and 1902."[11] Jonathan Sachs has since acknowledged that "[t]here is a vast, important field of Romantic writing on Roman history […] that remains largely untouched", but he focuses on poetry, plays, and novels, and does not mention Arnold.[12] Using previously unpublished letters, I draw out the ways in which the *History of Rome* was shaped by Arnold's participation in the Romantic

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[8] *Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789-1945* ed. Catherine Edwards (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999). Richard Jenkyns, *The Victorians and Ancient Greece* (Oxford, Basil Blackwell Publisher Ltd., 1980) and Frank Turner, *The Greek Heritage in Victorian Britain* (Yale: Yale University Press, 1981)

[9] Reginald Horsman, "Origins of Racial Anglo-Saxonism in Great Britain Before 1850", *Journal of the History of Ideas* 37, 3 (1976): 387-410. https://doi.org/10.2307/2708805

[10] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (London: G. Bell, 1931). On the British Empire in relation to the Roman Empire see Duncan Bell, *The Idea of Greater Britain: Empire and the Future of World Order, 1860-1900* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 2011).

[11] Frank Turner, "Why the Greeks and Not the Romans in Victorian Britain?" in *Rediscovering Hellenism* ed. G. W. Clarke (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 61-81, 62.

[12] Jonathan Sachs, *Romantic Antiquity: Rome in the British Imagination, 1789-1832* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 28.

movement. Arnold was friends with S. T. Coleridge, William Wordsworth, and Robert Southey, and spent as much time as possible at his estate, Fox How, in the Lake District. It was in connection with this intellectual circle that Arnold constructed his vision of the past, first by building on the critical methodology of the German scholar B. G. Niebuhr (1776-1831), and then by combining it with the universalism of the eighteenth-century Italian philosopher Giambattista Vico (1668-1744). In doing so, Arnold became a pioneer of historicism in England, as John Stuart Mill recognised. Writing in 1844, Mill noted that the practice of history on the Continent was "destined to assume a new aspect from the genius and labours of the minds now devoted to its improvement" while regretting that there were still "[n]o signs of a new school" in England, "save that the 'shadow of its coming' rested for an instant on […] Dr Arnold, at the close of his career."[13]

For Arnold, "the history of Rome must be in some sort the history of the world."[14] Arnold's treatment of Rome differed from his Enlightenment predecessors because he had the Romantic sense of specificity and, while he still saw the past and present as being bound together, he did not draw simple analogies but emphasised deep and living organic ties. In recounting the legends of Rome's foundation, the contests of the Gracchi, and the Civil War between Pompey the Great and Julius Caesar, I show that Arnold was also reaching beyond these events and viewing them as part of the singular current of history. The class conflict between the patricians and plebeians at Rome was, in this analysis, just one vivid manifestation of the central fact revealed

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[13] John Stuart Mill, "French Historians", *Edinburgh Review* 79 (January, 1844): 1- 39, 1.
[14] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:149.

by history: that there was always a dialectal struggle between the forces of conservatism and progress, the rich and the poor, the few and the many. Failure to reach a compromise between the two polarities led, invariably, to destruction. It was this philosophy of the unity of history, infused with urgency and pessimism, that Arnold presented in the lectures he delivered in his final appointment as Regius Professor of Modern History at Oxford in 1841 and 1842.[15] Arnold's influence was such that it can account for some of the anxiety about progress which was a persistent, but overlooked, strain in the work of even the most "Whiggish" historians of the later nineteenth century.[16]

II

Arnold first began thinking about writing a history of Rome in 1820 when he complained, in a letter to his friend John Taylor Coleridge (nephew of S. T. Coleridge), that there was no good textbook for beginner students. Lamenting the "excessive folly of the school History of Greece and Rome which we put into Boys hands", Arnold felt this work could be "executed very swiftly" and "without any great labour."[17] An interval of several years then passed, during which he produced a number of articles on Rome for the *Quarterly Review* and the *Encyclopaedia Metropolitana.* In April 1824, he once again turned to the idea of a book, proposing

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[15] Thomas Arnold, *Introductory Lectures on Modern History* (Oxford: J. H. Parker, 1842).

[16] Footnote intentionally left blank for peer review purposes – reference is to the author's previously published work.

[17] Thomas Arnold to John Taylor Coleridge, February 8 1820, MS Eng Lett., d (27) Bodleian Library, Special Collections, University of Oxford.

to a publisher named Mawmann a single volume on "Roman History from the earliest times to the end of the Republic."[18] He was aware that "What I have written [for the *Encyclopaedia*] would require to be remoulded and to receive many additions", yet he was sure that "the main part of the labour is achieved."[19] That September, however, the project was abandoned as he began to learn German in order to read a book Julius Hare had given him.[20] This was B. G. Niebuhr's *Römische Geschichte* published in 1811 and 1812 (and re-written and re-issued between 1826 and 1828), and it changed Arnold's course as a historian. As he wrote to Coleridge, this was a "work of such extraordinary learning and ability that it opened wide before my eyes the extent of my own ignorance, and I have told Mawmann that it is out of the question that I can publish in the next winter."[21]

At this time Niebuhr was largely unknown to English readers. As Norman Vance explains, "[t]he first German edition of the *Römische Geschichte* […] was hardly noticed in Britain, partly because from the point of view of most Oxford and Cambridge ancient historians it was veiled in the decent obscurity of a learned language which they did not know or even want to know."[22] In the early nineteenth century German scholarship was regarded with suspicion as pioneering a sceptical and critical approach to source materials which could, and did, lead to unorthodox

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[18] Presumably the London-based Joseph Mawmann. Arnold to Mawman, April 22 1824, MS Eng Lett, d (74) Bodleian Library.

[19] Arnold to Mawman, April 22 1824, MS Eng Lett, d (74) Bodleian Library.

[20] Arnold to Coleridge, September 17 1824, MS Eng Lett., d (79), Bodleian Library.

[21] Arnold to Coleridge, September 17 1824, MS Eng Lett., d (79), Bodleian Library.

[22] Norman Vance, "Niebuhr in England: History, Faith, and Order" in *British and German Historiography, 1750-1950* ed. Benedikt Stuchtey and Peter Wende (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 83-98, 85.

interpretations of the Bible. Niebuhr himself openly doubted aspects of both Livy's *History* and the Genesis story. Added to this, he was a Prussian liberal who, in tracing the contest between the patricians and plebeians in the Roman Republic, expressed enthusiasm for the people.[23] In the conservative atmosphere of Britain in the period following the French Revolution, the *Römische Geschichte* was considered, in the words of one commentator, to be "pregnant with crude and dangerous speculations."[24] For Arnold and his Liberal Anglican friends, however, these features of Niebuhr's work were precisely what appealed. Committed to improvements in scholarship and reform in religion and politics, Arnold was an early advocate for Niebuhr, while Hare and Connop Thirlwall translated the new edition of the German text between 1828 and 1832.

Arnold was among the first to introduce Niebuhr to English readers in an essay for the *Quarterly Review* in June 1825.[25] Arnold began by rejecting Dr Johnson's claim that there was nothing new to say about Roman history, as any scholar could draw only "from writings that have long been known."[26] For Arnold, on the contrary, Niebuhr was an "original genius […] the first modern discoverer [in] Roman history" and his work had "thrown new light upon our knowledge of Roman affairs, to a degree, of which those, who are unacquainted with it, can scarcely form

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[23] See Vance, "Niebuhr in England", 85.

[24] *The Quarterly Review* 39 (January-April 1829), 9.

[25] "Early Roman History," *Quarterly Review* 32, 63 (June-Oct, 1825): 67-92. Arnold is identified as the author in *The Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals, 1824-1900, Volume V,* ed. Jean Harris Slingerland (London: Routledge, 1988), 32.

[26] Samuel Johnson, "Review of Memoirs of the Court of Augustus" in *The Works of Samuel Johnson.* Arnold quotes from volume 2 of the 1806 edition, 325.

n adequate notion."[27] Arnold pointed out that Niebuhr had developed a new methodology based on his expertise in a wide range of disciplines including philology, law, geography, and politics. As he "luxuriate[d] in an abundance of learning" the Prussian historian could take a more comprehensive approach to his source materials which yielded important insights.[28] Not only had Niebuhr discovered some lost documents and mastered known manuscripts but he had adopted an analogical approach by comparing what was (or was not) said about Rome with evidence from other states in the ancient world. As such, Niebuhr was better able to judge the accuracy of Roman writers and to address any gaps in the historical record.[29]

In addition to the "complete critical analysis" of his sources, Niebuhr had proceeded to arrange his information along idealist lines in an effort to reveal something about human development.[30] For Niebuhr, there were three major divisions in the history of a nation – the "poetic" age; the "mythic-historical" age; and the "historical" age. Influenced by Herder, Niebuhr also understood the external institutions of a nation to reflect the *Volksgeist*, and he interpreted Roman documents as a reflection of the process by which the plebeians attained a greater degree of equality with the patricians. As an example of this approach, Arnold described Niebuhr's treatment of the Roman army. In its earliest phase, the army consisted principally of cavalry and chariots and was merely supplemented by an infantry

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[27] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 72 and 67.
[28] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 84.
[29] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 70-71.
[30] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 85.

which was little better than a "disorderly crowd."[31] The horsemen were the wealthiest in the community and, by extension, political power was held by the king and richest citizens alone. Over time, however, some of the commons accumulated more money and leisure, so those fighting on foot became better equipped and disciplined. As they grew more important as soldiers, so they rose in "political consideration and weight."[32]

Arnold was deeply impressed by Niebuhr (a scholarly admiration which turned to personal veneration when they met at Bonn in 1830).[33] Nevertheless, he perceived something lacking in the *Römische Geschichte,* which consisted of a series of unconnected dissertations on discrete minutiae. What Arnold was seeking was a means of connecting particular facts about Rome to a broader pattern of universal history. He wanted to show that the revolutions experienced at Rome were repeated "under similar circumstances in different ages and countries" in order "to bring ancient and modern history together, and make them each reflect upon the other."[34] In this endeavour, and in investigating charges against Niebuhr's scholarship, Arnold was led to the eighteenth-century Neapolitan philosopher Vico and his then obscure work, the *Scienza Nuova* (*New Science*)*,* which appeared in three separate editions between 1725 and 1744.[35]

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[31] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 78.
[32] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 79.
[33] Thomas to Mary Arnold, August 12 1830. Brotherton Library, Special Collections, Leeds.
[34] Arnold, "Early Roman History", 77.
[35] The version used here is: *The New Science of Giambattista Vico*, trans. from the third edition (1744) by Thomas Goddard Bergin and Max Harold Fisch (New York: Cornell University Press, 1948).

Attention had first been drawn to the similarities between the ideas of Niebuhr and Vico by the Swiss philologist J. K. Orelli, in an 1816 review of the first version of the *Römische Geschichte*.[36] While it is impossible to substantiate the suspicion of plagiarism, it seems likely that Niebuhr had imbued something of Vico's philosophy. Niebuhr was well-versed in the major currents of German Romantic thought, and Goethe and Herder had both visited Naples (in 1787 and 1789 respectively) and were familiar with Vico's "sacred treasure", the *Scienza Nuova,* before publishing their most important texts.[37] Likewise, Niebuhr was an associate of Johann Heinrich Voss and Friedrich Augustus Wolf, who knew Vico's work even before it was translated into German by W. E. Weber in 1822.[38] By the time Niebuhr was preparing the second edition of the *Römische Geschichte* it becomes even less likely that he had not read Vico. He was at least aware of the *Scienza Nuova* through his discussions with two Italian scholars, Giacomo Leopardi and Antonio Ranieri, who he visited in Rome in the early 1820s. Ranieri later recalled a conversation in which he suggested to Niebuhr that the latter's key insights had been anticipated by Vico, and Niebuhr had responded with "unhappy silence."[39] The Prussian historian never publicly commented on the issue.

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[36] J. K. Orelli, "*Römische Geschichte* von B. G. Niebuhr", *Ergänzungsblätter zur Jenaischen allgemeinen Literatur-Zeitung* (1816) Band II, No. 91-2, 337-346.

[37] *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico* trans. by Max Harold Fisch and Thomas Goddard Bergin (London: Cornell University Press, 1944), 67-8.

[38] See Renate Bridenthal, "Was There a Roman Homer? Niebuhr's thesis and Its Critics", *History and Theory* 11, 2 (1972): 193-213, 206. Stable URL: https://www.jstor/org/stable/2504586. Niebuhr acknowledges his debt to Voss in his *History of Rome*. See *The History of Rome* by B. G. Niebuhr, trans. by Julius Charles Hare and Connop Thirlwall (London: Taylor, Walton, and Maberly, 1851), three vols, 1: viii.

[39] *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico* trans. by Fisch and Bergin, 70.

The first notice of Arnold's own awareness of Vico comes in a letter to Coleridge dated 18 August 1825. "I regret extremely," Arnold wrote, "that I did not receive your message about […] Vico while I was in Italy [...] Will you give me all the information you can about the age of this Vico, and the name of his Book, that I may satisfy myself about the truth of the story of Niebuhr's plagiarism without delay."[40] Arnold was unable to locate a copy of Vico's work for several years. On July 15th 1826 he commented in a letter to Edward Hawkins that "I should like to see Vico's book and I have tried to get it to no purpose both in London and at several places in Italy."[41] Finally, on a visit to Rome in the summer of 1827, Arnold was successful and reported back to Coleridge: "Just before I set out from Rome I got hold of the book of Giovanni Battista Vico, of which you formally spoke to me. It is entitled 'principi di Scienza Nuova', and is an astonishing mixture of ability and wildness. He draws a sort of History of the progress of human society and human knowledge."[42] "I do not think", he continued, that "Niebuhr has ever seen the Book, for his conclusions, even where they are the same as Vico's, are framed on very different grounds."[43] This was a judgement later shared by Friedrich Karl von Savigny in his memoirs of Niebuhr in 1839. "It is true", admitted Savigny, "that one finds in [Vico] scattered thoughts on Roman history resembling Niebuhr's. But these

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[40] Thomas Arnold to Justice Coleridge, August 18, 1825. Bodleian Library, University of Oxford, Western Manuscripts, MS ENG LETT. D. 130 (88).

[41] Thomas Arnold to Edward Hawkins, July 15 1826. Brotherton Library. Letters, Series 1, D-J, G 94-8

[42] Thomas Arnold to Justice Coleridge, June 8 1827, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS ENG LETT. D. 130 (90).

[43] Thomas Arnold to Justice Coleridge, June 8 1827, Bodleian Library, Western Manuscripts, MS ENG LETT. D. 130 (90).

ideas are like flashes of lightening in a dark night, by which the traveler is led further astray rather than back to his path. *No one could profit from them who had not already found the truth in his own way.* Niebuhr in particular learned to know him only late and through others."[44]

Whatever the facts of the matter, there are clear commonalities which allow us to suggest some form of intellectual lineage connecting Vico, Niebuhr, and Arnold. The clearest exposition of Arnold's direct debt to Vico comes in an essay he wrote in 1830 titled "On the Social Progress of States."[45] Here Arnold was concerned to outline what he perceived as "the transition of every country from what I may call a state of childhood to manhood" and to demonstrate that "states, like individuals, go through certain changes in a certain order, and are subject at different stages of their course to certain peculiar disorders."[46] He acknowledged at the outset that this process had already been traced "and its phenomena most successfully investigated by Giovanni Battista Vico in his *Principi di Scienza nuova*."[47] The *Scienza Nuova*, he continued, was a study:

> disfigured indeed by some strange extravagances, but in its substance so profound and so striking, that the little celebrity which it has obtained out of Italy is one of the most remarkable facts of literary history. Vico's work was published in 1725,

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[44] Savigny quoted in *The Autobiography of Giambattista Vico,* trans. by Fisch and Bergin, 70.
[45] Thomas Arnold, "On the Social Progress of States" [1830] in *The Miscellaneous Works of Thomas Arnold* (New York: D Appleton and Co., 1845), 306-327.
[46] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 306.
[47] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 307.

> yet I scarcely remember ever to have seen it noticed in any subsequent writers who have touched upon the same subject.[48]

Arnold shared a number of fundamental presuppositions with Vico who (like Niebuhr) made a tripartite division of history, categorized in the *Scienza* as the age of gods, the age of heroes, and the age of men. These commonalities include the beliefs that: (a) Rome could be studied as an exemplar of development repeated universally by all nations across space and time; (b) the mythologies of Rome were not fanciful stories but could be interrogated as expressions of real experiences produced in an earlier "poetic" stage of human society; (c) the political arrangements of Rome (and any country) reflected the level of "maturity" attained by the people; (d) the course of change always ran from monarchy/aristocracy to democracy; (e) a nation was propelled through each successive phase by class conflict; (f) change was always initiated by the people and resisted by the elite; and (g) that every stage involved a contest, and so progress could be terminated at any time and a country returned to an earlier point in the sequence.

Summarizing the shape of his "Ideal Eternal History" Vico identified a process that he believed had taken place once in the ancient world, and which had then "recurred" from the medieval period onwards.[49] Vico explained the stages of this History as follows:

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[48] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 307.

[49] *The New Science,* Book V, 'The Recurrence of Human Things in the Resurgence of Nations', 357-373.

> At first men desire to be free of subjection and attain equality; witness the plebs in the aristocratic commonwealths, which finally turn popular. Then they attempt to surpass their equals; witness the plebs in the popular commonwealths, later corrupted into commonwealths of the powerful. Finally they wish to put themselves above the laws; witness the anarchies or unlimited popular commonwealths, [in] which there is no greater tyranny, for in them there are as many tyrants as there are bold and dissolute men in the cities. At this juncture the plebs, warned by the ills they suffer, and casting about for a remedy, seek shelter under monarchies [once again].[50]

All of Vico's premises can be found in Arnold's essay "On the Social Progress of States" and they are worked out in much greater detail in the *History of Rome,* which finally began to appear in 1838.

III

The first two volumes of Arnold's *History of Rome* cover the period of the city's existence during its "childhood" stage of development. As he explained in the "Social Progress of States", this time was characterised by the "ascendancy of the nobility, when all power and distinction were confined to the class of nobles, whether

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[50] *The New Science,* Book I, Section II, axiom XCV, 78

there was one individual elevated above the rest of his class with still higher power and distinction, or whether the members of it exercised the sovereignty jointly and alternately."[51] In Volume One Arnold focuses on the earliest part of this "infancy" when the elite rightly rule over the masses.[52] Here, Arnold is concerned with the legendary foundation of Rome by Romulus, its quasi-historical Regal phase, and the patrician dominance over the Republic from its beginning in 509 BC down to the invasion of the Gauls in 386 BC. In Volume Two Arnold moves on to the later part of this "infancy", when the elite gradually begin to share power with the people who have become more capable of holding it. In this section of the work Arnold outlines the constitutional amendments which were passed, allowing plebeians access to the most important offices of the Commonwealth, between the passage of the Licinian and Hortensian Laws (c. 365-287 BC).

At the outset of Volume One, Arnold admitted that he was on shaky ground, as there was a "veil not to be removed" regarding the primitive history of the Roman people.[53] Next to no material remained from the time of the kings, and for the first two centuries of the Republic there were only scattered remnants – such as census returns and yearly-lists of the names of the consuls. All other information was contained in the work of later Roman and Greek historiographers, such as Livy and Dionysius who had, for the most part, simply accepted as true the fabulous stories of early Rome as they had been passed on to them. Over the centuries these traditional

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[51] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 307-308.
[52] Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome, Vol. 1* [1838], third edition (London: B. Fellowes et. al, 1844), 1: ix.
[53] Arnold, *History of Rome*, 1:99 and 1:ix.

accounts had been repeated without any significant degree of scholarly criticism. Vico had explained this kind of credulity as a natural product of the human mind which was intolerant of uncertainty and preferred exaggerations and rumours to gaps in knowledge.[54] For Niebuhr, on the other hand, it was an intellectual "fearfulness" that led to the reluctance to "examine into the credibility of the ancient writers, and the value of their testimony."[55] This meant that for successive historians "[t]he object aimed at was, in spite of everything like internal evidence, to combine what they related. At the utmost one authority was made in some one particular instance to give way to another; and this was done as mildly as possible, and without leading to any further results."[56]

Arnold shared the view of Vico and Niebuhr that most accounts of early Rome, down to his own day, had been naive and fanciful. He pointed out that:

> Men love to complete what is imperfect, and to realize what is imaginary […] to make much out of little, to labour after a full idea of those who are only known to us by one particular action of their lives. So it has fared with the early history of Rome: Romulus and Numa […] Servius Tullius, and Brutus, and Poplicola. Their names were known, and their works were living; and men, longing to image them to their minds more completely, made up by invention for the want of knowledge, and composed [...] a pretended portrait [...] a pretended history.[57]

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[54] *The New Science,* Book I, Section II, axioms 120-128, 54-55.
[55] *The History of Rome by B. G. Niebuhr* (London: Taylor, Walton, and Maberly, 1851), 1:v.
[56] *The History of Rome by B. G. Niebuhr,* 1: v.
[57] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:123-4.

He felt, however, that from the turn of the nineteenth century the standards had been changing. "The great advances made within the last thirty years in historical knowledge", Arnold wrote:

> have taught us to appreciate the amount of our actual ignorance. As we have better understood what history ought to be, we are become ashamed of that scanty information which might once have passed for learning; and our discovery of the questions which need to be solved has so outrun our powers of solving them, that we stand humiliated rather than encouraged, and almost inclined to envy the condition of our fathers, whose maps, so to speak, appeared to them complete and satisfactory, because they never suspected the existence of a world beyond their range.[58]

As a consequence of such difficulties, Arnold observed that some modern scholars, such as Adam Ferguson, had chosen to abandon the task of writing Rome's early history entirely.[59] In his *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (3 vols., 1783) Ferguson had passed "hastily" over the subject.[60] Dismissing all commentaries on the matter as simply the "conjecture of ingenious men, or the embellishments of a mere tradition", Ferguson dealt with this history in just 18 pages.[61]

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[58] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:v-vii.
[59] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:220.
[60] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:220.
[61] Adam Ferguson, *The History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* [1783], complete in one volume (London: Jones & Company, 1834), 2.

For Arnold, however, there was a middle ground between total belief and total scepticism that was based on a methodology drawn from Vico and Niebuhr, and it sustained his first volume for 568 pages. The research of Vico and Niebuhr had opened-up a vast new range of material and shown Arnold that it was possible to achieve an understanding of the most distant, even pre-literate, past.[62] The key to this was in the treatment of myth. Beneath the later interpolation of myths into writing, Vico and Niebuhr discerned the outlines of an oral tradition that had been sung by ancient bards. Once identified, these fragments were not taken at face-value but analysed as tales about events and persons who – while they may never have existed in actuality - must have had real meaning for the public. Vico concluded, for example, that the earliest Roman kings were "inventions" or "poetic characters" that were the "necessary modes of expression" among a rudimentary people.[63] In Vico's analysis, the Romans had attributed to each regal founder a certain class of accomplishments, so they became archetypes: all laws concerning the orders of society were ascribed to Romulus; all those relating to religion to Numa; all those dealing with military affairs to Tullius Hostilius, and so on.[64] Niebuhr, similarly, believed that the "shroud" of Livy could be lifted to reveal older "Lays" – accounts of the Roman kings that contained a kind of "distorted memory, honored and preserved in republican Rome."[65] In this way, his *Römische Geschichte,* too,

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[62] Thomas Arnold to John Taylor Coleridge, December 30, 1837, MS ENG LETT. d. (160), Bodleian Library.

[63] *The New Science,* Book II, Section II, Chapter II, axiom 409, 118.

[64] *The New Science*, axioms 417-421, 130-1.

[65] Bridenthal, "Was There a Roman Homer?" 193.

suggested that it was possible to "save early Roman history from the great void into which many [scholars] were relegating it."[66]

Arnold believed that it would be "unpardonable to sacrifice [the legends] altogether to the spirit of inquiry and of fact, and to exclude them from the place which they have so long held in Roman history."[67] In a letter to Coleridge he rejected the earlier attempts in Charles Rollin's *Roman History from the Foundation of Rome* (1739-1768) and Oliver Goldsmith's *History of Rome from the Earliest Times* (2 vols, 1769) to render the tales in the plain prose of the eighteenth century while making "grave remark[s] as to their fabulousness."[68] For Arnold, the stories of early Rome were "neither historical nor yet coeval with the subjects which they celebrate", and yet they still "retained a beauty and interest so surpassing" that it was worth trying to capture something of their "proper charm."[69] As Arnold explained, to a dubious Coleridge, he was convinced that "the Legends ought to be told as Legends, and not in the style of real history."[70] This was because, he continued, "I wish to give, not the supposed facts of the stories, but the stories themselves, in their oldest traceable form; I regard them as poetry, in which the form is quite as essential as the

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[66] Bridenthal, "Was There a Roman Homer?" 194.

[67] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:100.

[68] Arnold is referring to: Oliver Goldsmith, *The Roman History, from the Foundation of the City of Rome to the Destruction of the Western Empire,* two vols (London: S. Baker and G. Leigh, 1769); Charles Rollin's work appeared first in two volumes in 1739. Following his death in 1741 at least two further editions were produced, a sixteen volume edition in 1754, and ten volumes in 1768. Arnold to Coleridge, December 20, 1837, in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence*, 2:99.

[69] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:100 and "proper charm" – Arnold to Coleridge, December 20, 1837, reproduced in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* 2:99.

[70] Arnold, letter to Coleridge, December 8 1837 reproduced in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* 2:98.

substance of the story."[71] While Arnold was concerned that his use of "antiquated and simple language" might be interpreted as "affectation" he decided it was worth the risk.[72] At any rate, Arnold felt reassured that he had shown this section of his draft to Wordsworth, and he had "approved of it."[73]

Following Niebuhr's lesson on "doubting rightly and believing rightly", then, Arnold began to relate the "long admired" stories of Aeneas and the kings of Rome.[74] Bracketing the first four of the seven traditional kings together as completely legendary, Arnold marked their reigns using the "common chronology" not because he considered these dates to be true but simply because it was convenient. [75] In this way he dealt with the tales of Romulus ("753-716 BC"), Numa Pompilius ("715-673 BC"), Tullus Hostilius ("673-642 BC"), and Ancus Marcius ("642-617 BC"). Aside from the kings, however, Arnold traced the development of the people from their basis in the "houses" of three original tribes: the Ramnenses, Titienses, and Luceres. As Arnold explained, those who were members of one of these families belonged to a *curiae* and were therefore fully part of the state and enjoyed a portion of the *Ager Romanus* or territory of Rome. Beyond the members of the houses there was another distinct and growing group of individuals who had either settled on Roman lands, or who lived in neighbouring areas which had been conquered. This "inferior

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[71] Arnold, letter to Coleridge, December 20 1837 reproduced in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* 2: 99.

[72] Arnold used the phrase "antiquated and simple language" in the letter to Coleridge dated 8 December 1837, reproduced in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* 2:98. The remaining quotes are from Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:x.

[73] Arnold letter to Coleridge, 20 December 1837, reproduced in Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* 2: 99.

[74] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:20.

[75] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:x and 1: xii.

population" was "free personally, but subject politically."[76] In this basic arrangement lay the origins of the famous distinction between patricians and plebeians at Rome. As Arnold summarised, "the patricians and plebeians were two separate estates between which insurmountable barriers existed. No wealth, nor talents, nor virtues, could raise a plebeian to the rank and privileges of a patrician; and as all intermarriages between the classes was unlawful, the government was an hereditary oligarchy, from which the bulk of the nation, with their posterity for ever, were by law utterly excluded."[77] In Arnold's analysis, the inequality was "neither unnatural nor unjust."[78] The founders of the city were rightfully the only citizens; there was no reason for them to allow strangers into their ranks.[79]

Moving on from the time of the legendary early kings, Arnold felt he was on surer ground in recounting the events of the reigns of the last three monarchs: Lucius Tarquinius Priscus (616-579 BC), Servius Tullius (575-535 BC), and Lucius Tarquinius Superbus (535-509 BC).[80] Admitting that uncertainty remained around chronology and that in many instances "the unreal and the real are strangely mixed together", it was Arnold's opinion that the events of this period "require to be treated historically."[81] Arnold outlines how, during the reign of Lucius Tarquinius Priscus, the original distinction between the descendants of the men who had first established

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[76] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:28.
[77] Thomas Arnold, *History of the Later Roman Commonwealth, from the end of the second Punic War to the death of Julius Caesar: and of the reign of Augustus: with a life of Trajan* (London: B Fellowes, 1845), two vols, 1: 60.
[78] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:229.
[79] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:229.
[80] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:49.
[81] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:49-51.

Rome and those who were designated as outsiders began to lose its meaning as the two groups lived side-by-side for a long period of time. These developments were then given practical shape by Servius Tullius who decreed that all Romans who were not members of a house would be incorporated into the state through the creation of thirty new tribes. There were consequently now two bodies operating independently of each other with their own assemblies and civic magistrates – one based on heredity and the other on property. Unfortunately, in Arnold's analysis, the constitution of Servius represents a "false spring", when the gains made by the plebeians were quickly reversed. The old patricians, enraged by the challenge to their status, plotted the assassination of Tullius with the help of his own daughter and son-in-law, and the bloody tyranny of Lucius Tarquinius Superbus ensued.

While the Tarquins were expelled from Rome by Brutus and Publicola, and the monarchy was abolished, the beginnings of the Republic in 509 BC were not auspicious. The people had become impoverished and were driven to occupy the Sacred Hill during the First Plebeian Secession in 494 BC. This confrontation resulted in the passage of some debt-relief measures and the granting to the plebeians of two tribunes who would guard them against patrician abuses in the future. When it was subsequently agreed that a new constitution should be drawn up by ten commissioners, however, the burghers ensured that all the commissioners came from their own order. While the First Decemvirate of 451 BC was fair in its framing of the Law of the Ten Tables, the Second Decemvirate, led by Appius Claudius the following year, became tyrannical and added two extremely discriminatory Laws. Even when Appius was overcome, the plebeians asked for nothing more than the re-

instatement of their tribunes. For Arnold this history evidenced universal truths. It showed "the inherent strength of an aristocracy in possession of the government, and under what manifold disadvantages a popular party ordinarily contends against it."[82] It also showed that "[t]he commons obtained those reforms which they desired, and they desired such only as their state was ripe for."[83] At this point the plebeians sought security, not power:

> The possible admission of a few distinguished members of their body to the highest offices of state concerned the mass of the commons but little. They had their own tribunes for their personal protection; but curale magistracies, and the government of the commonwealth, seemed to belong to the patricians […] So it is that all things come best in their season; that political power is then most happily exercised by a people, when it has not been given to them prematurely, that is, before in the natural progress of things they feel the want of it.[84]

In beginning Volume Two of his *History of Rome,* Arnold acknowledged that "[i]t may be thought by some that this volume is written at too great length."[85] Over the course of the next 676 pages, Arnold describes the process by which the plebeians "became gradually more and more fitted for a higher condition, to become citizens and burghers of Rome in the fullest sense, sharing equally with the old burghers in all the benefits and honours of their common country."[86] Arnold analyses the content

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[82] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:252.
[83] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:342.
[84] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1:343.
[85] Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome vol. II: From the Gaulish Invasion to the End of the First Punic War* [1840] third edition (London: B. Fellowes et al, 1845), 2: vi.
[86] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1: 150.

and impact of four successive laws. First, the Licinian Law (368-367 BC) reduced the debts of the poor and restricted private ownership of land to 500 jugera per person, to restrain the greed of the rich. Most importantly, it also allowed that a plebeian could be appointed to the highest public position in the Commonwealth by becoming a consul. Second, the Publilian Law (339 BC) decreed that the patrician *comitia curiata* could no longer originate laws or veto those passed by the plebeian *comitia centuriata*. Third, the Ogulnian Law (300 BC) opened-up additional positions of religious status to the lower orders. Finally, the Hortensian Law (287 BC) established that any resolution passed by the plebeians would be binding on the whole community and did not require Senate ratification.

In Arnold's analysis, these changes were neither "mischievous or revolutionary" but reflected a natural change in the relationship between the two classes of people as Rome transitioned out of the "childhood" stage of its existence.[87] From this point forward there was "no longer a struggle between an aristocracy in the exclusive possession of the government, and a people impatient of their own exclusion from it. It was no longer a struggle between the whole patrician order on one side, and the whole body of the commons on the other."[88] For the time being, power within the Republic was distributed and balanced in a way that satisfied both parties:

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[87] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 2:388.
[88] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 2:268.

> A considerable portion of the patricians and a majority of the senate were well reconciled to the altered state of things, and cordially received the distinguished commoners, who had made their way to the highest offices in the Commonwealth, and composed a new nobility fully worthy to stand on equal terms by the side of the old. Thus, the moderate patricians, the new nobility of the commons, and the mass of the old plebeians were now closely linked together; and their union gave that energy to the Roman councils and arms which marks in so eminent a manner the middle of the fifth century.[89]

While the "internal dissensions" of the Romans now came to an end and there was peace for 150 years, Arnold nevertheless forewarns that the contests of "manhood" are still to come and that these will not be as amicable as the contests of "childhood."[90]

IV

The third volume of the *History of Rome* deals exclusively with external military affairs as the Republic fought the Second Punic War against the "genius" of Hannibal's Carthage (218-201 BC).[91] While Arnold intended to continue the work it was never completed, as he died of a heart attack on Monday 13th June 1842 – the morning of his 47th birthday.[92] Still, it is possible to reconstruct Arnold's

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[89] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 2:268.
[90] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 2:388.
[91] Thomas Arnold, *History of Rome, Vol. III., From the End of the First to the End of the Second Punic War* [1842] third edition (London: B. Fellowes et al., 1846), 3:24.
[92] Arnold, *History of Rome,* 1: viii. On Arnold's death see Stanley, *Life and Correspondence,* tenth edition (London: John Murray, 1877), 2:282-287.

interpretation of Roman history in the subsequent period of internal turmoil which marked the last 100 years of the Republic (c. 133-27 BC). Through a reading of his scattered comments in the "Social Progress of States" and the collection of his other essays published posthumously as the *History of the Later Roman Commonwealth* (2 vols, 1845), it becomes clear that Arnold sees the events of this century as universally significant.[93] As he put it, "[t]here are few portions of history more deserving attention than that to which we now return, the civil wars of the Romans. The origin of these wars arose from the conflict between the interest of the two great divisions of society – the rich and the poor."[94]

In Arnold's analysis the violence at Rome in these years was symptomatic of the "manhood" stage of a nation's development. As he explained in the "Social Progress of States", the struggle between the nobility and commons in Rome's "childhood" phase had been "harmless" because the people had risen in status and the laws granting them access to power were inevitable and easily accepted.[95] This had been a contest between those with property and birth (the patricians), and those with property and wealth (the plebeians). As such, it was "a contest between men really equal, to do away with a fictitious distinction."[96] The disputes of "manhood", however, represent "a struggle between utter contraries; between parties who have absolutely no point in common."[97] This is a confrontation between the extremely rich and the extremely poor, and it is one which, Arnold observes ominously, "wherever

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[93] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth.*
[94] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:59.
[95] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 323.
[96] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 323.
[97] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 323.

it has come to a crisis, I know not that it has in any instance terminated favourably."[98] As with his treatment of Rome's "childhood" Arnold's narrative on "manhood" can be divided into two parts. First, Arnold deals with the bloody unrest initiated by the Agrarian Law of Tiberius Gracchus in 133 BC. Second, Arnold covers the civil war between Pompey and Caesar, an episode that culminates in the assassination of the Ides of March in 44 BC. With the death of Caesar comes the effective termination of the Republic itself, and Rome returns to a state of monarchy under the Emperor Augustus in 27 BC.

In assessing the Agrarian Law of Tiberius Gracchus, which proposed to redistribute land from the rich to the poor, Arnold was contributing to a debate which had divided ancient and modern writers alike. Judgement on the issue hinged on several considerations: whether economic inequality at Rome had become so bad that Tiberius' measure was necessary; whether Tiberius was re-enforcing an existing law or introducing a radical innovation; whether Tiberius was justified in seeking to depose his fellow tribune, Octavius, and retain the office for an unprecedented second term; and whether the mob violence surrounding his death was provoked by himself or by aristocratic reactionaries in the Senate. Critics of Tiberius Gracchus - from Cicero in *De Re Publica* (51 BC) to Ferguson in his *Roman Republic* (1783) – portrayed the tribune as "nefarious" and "rash" and denounced his actions as an attempt at "dividing one people into two" in order to "stir up revolution."[99] For such

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[98] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 322.

[99] Tiberius' "designs" are described as "nefarious" in Cicero's *De Officiis* [44 BC] trans. by Walter Miller (London: Macmillan and Co., 1913), Book I: 109; he is accused of "dividing one people into two" in Cicero *De Re Publica* [51 BC], trans. by G. W. Featherstonhaugh (New York: G & C. Carvill, 1829), Book I: XIX. Cicero says Tiberius aimed to "stir up revolution" in *Laelius De Amicitia,* 11 [44

detractors, his murder was "justifiable", and "probably […] saved the republic."[100] Partisans of Tiberius, on the other hand – from Plutarch in his *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* (first century AD) to Goldsmith in his *Roman History* (1769) – represented him as a man of "noble nature", who had true "compassion for the oppressed" and simply tried to reinstate Licinian property limits because the patricians were "rioting in overgrown wealth, pomp, and luxury."[101] In this analysis, Tiberius appears as the "most accomplished patriot that ever Rome produced", a "hero" who "hazarded and lost his life in the pursuit of [a] glorious […] enterprise."[102]

Arnold's own interpretation was emphatically on the side of Tiberius Gracchus and the people. In describing the economic situation at Rome at this time, Arnold points to the increasing prevalence of slaves, taken during conquests, whose labour drastically undercut the earning potential of the free peasantry. As the poor enlisted in the army as a source of income, they expected land gained during victories to be divided among themselves, while the government preferred to sell new territory to the highest bidder to enrich the treasury. As a consequence, the "grasping and oppressive" rich were able to engross their estates beyond the constitutional limit set by Licinius, and the freemen became increasingly

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BC] Loeb Classical Library online: LacusCurtius • Cicero — De Amicitia (uchicago.edu). Ferguson describes Tiberius as "rash" in *Roman Republic,* 100.

[100] Cicero deems Tiberius' murder "justifiable" in *De Officiis,* Book II, 43, Ferguson writes that it "saved the Republic" in *Roman Republic,* 89.

[101] Plutarch describes Tiberius' "noble nature" in his *Life of Tiberius Gracchus* [end of the first century AD] in *Plutarch's Lives,* trans. by A. H. Clough, five vols. (Philadelphia: John D. Morris & Co., 1860), 4: 263. Goldsmith says Tiberius had a "compassion for the oppressed" in *Roman History,* 1: 313.

[102] Tiberius appears as the "most accomplished patriot" in Nathaniel Hooke, *Roman History, from the Building of Rome to the Ruin of the Commonwealth* [4 vols, 1738–1771], new edition in five volumes (London: Thomas Davison, 1830), 3: 611. He is called a "hero" in Thomas Bever, *The History of the Legal Polity of the Roman State* (1781), 114. 'Lost his life' is Hooke, *Roman History,* 3:611.

impoverished and frustrated.[103] Crucially, then, Arnold impresses his view on the reader that the lower classes were not "an ignorant and profligate rabble" but "consisted of men industrious though poor, of men whose views were directed towards a reasonable and definite object, whose private morals were fair, and who respected law and order."[104] As such, he writes, "we shall not […] brand them with the name of anarchists, merely because the reform which they proposed to effect, could in our days be attempted by none but the most desperate enemies of the peace of society."[105] Following Plutarch, Arnold represents Tiberius Gracchus as an honourable man who tried to stand up for those in need by recovering the public lands which the elite were illegally monopolising. Far from being extreme or "pernicious", Tiberius acted only "to enforce, even in mitigated severity, an actually existing law."[106]

Of course, the aristocracy opposed the initiative to redistribute land held above the allowance of 500 jugera, and they used Tiberius' fellow tribune, Octavius, to block the attempt. As Tiberius and Octavius exercised their powers to hinder one another's actions, government at Rome stalled. In Arnold's account, Tiberius did everything he could to appeal to his rival and only when he found Octavius "immovable" did he announce that the citizens must choose between them.[107] Following the degradation and removal of Octavius, Tiberius sought re-election as tribune for an unconstitutional second year, a move which Arnold, once again, casts

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[103] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:64.
[104] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:64.
[105] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:64-65.
[106] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:74.
[107] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:76.

in a sympathetic light. In Arnold's judgment, "it is impossible to decide whether Gracchus desired a second tribuneship as a defensive or an offensive measure […] But fear has been justly numbered among the causes which led him into injustice."[108] Arnold acknowledges that Tiberius deliberately agitated the populace to press his own agenda, but finds that it was the patricians who were ultimately at fault for the mob violence which resulted in the tribune's murder.[109] As Arnold writes:

> The senators seized the staves which their opponents had dropped in their flight […] With these weapons they attacked […] and Gracchus himself endeavouring to escape, and stumbling over those who had already fallen, was killed by repeated blows on the head. About three hundred of his friends shared his fate […] The bodies of all the slain, including Gracchus himself, were ordered to be thrown into the Tiber, and the senate […] put to death afterwards several of the partisans of the late tribune; some of them, it is said, with circumstances of atrocious cruelty.[110]

While Tiberius Gracchus' populist campaign was continued after his death by his younger brother Caius, Caius himself had an "irresolute" nature and "too much regard for his country", which led him to suicide.[111] When the aristocracy finally triumphed over the Gracchi, their victory was that of an "enraged party" and they persecuted the people with vigour.[112] In this sense, Arnold concluded, "the reforms

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[108] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:81.
[109] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:110.
[110] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:85.
[111] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:108.
[112] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:110.

proposed by the Gracchi were in the issue most injurious to the interest of the common people, for we are told that for some years after the death of C. Gracchus, the oppression and corruption of the aristocracy prevailed to a greater extent than ever, insomuch as the liberties of the people were well nigh extinguished."[113] Driven by their lust for revenge, the aristocracy even allowed one of their own, the cruel and prideful Sulla, to raise himself to the position of dictator (82-79 BC).

Following Sulla's resignation, the tyrant's protégé, the military general Pompey rose to power – initially as consul and then as part of the First Triumvirate (60-53 BC) with Marcus Licinius Crassus and Caesar. It is Arnold's view that Pompey's "virtues have not been transmitted to posterity with their deserved fame" and that his "many and rare merits have been forgotten."[114] As such, Arnold goes to considerable lengths to collect as much information as possible on Pompey from the ancient sources, including the contemporary writings of Cicero and Caesar, together with Plutarch's *Life of Pompey* (early second century A.D.), Appian's *Civil Wars* (mid secondary century A.D.), and Cassius Dio's *Roman History* (c. 200-222 A.D.). Drawing out Pompey's character and career, Arnold's treatment is significantly more positive than portrayals in modern works such as Nathaniel Hooke's *Roman History* (4 vols, 1738-1771); Thomas Bever's *History of the Legal Polity of the Roman State* (1781); or Ferguson's *History of the Progress and Termination of the Roman Republic* (1783).[115]

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[113] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:113.
[114] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:542.
[115] Hooke, *The Roman History* and Bever, *Roman State*.

It was Arnold's general belief that, "at the distance of eighteen centuries the feeling of [Pompey's] contemporaries may be sanctioned by the judgement of sober history" and that anyone who considered Pompey's life "impartially" would "continually cherish his memory with a warmer regard."[116] Arnold follows the ancients in praising Pompey's early victories in the Sertorian War, the Third Servile War, and the Third Mithridatic War, by which he gained "enormous power both on sea and on land."[117] Unlike Bever and Ferguson, who found Pompey's rapid advancement problematic, Arnold has no issue with the fact that Pompey became consul at the age of only 35, before he was legally eligible for any state preferment. Where Bever attacks "the extraordinary honours, prematurely conferred upon him by a deluded people", Arnold maintains that Pompey simply "received the due reward of his honest patriotism in the unusual honours and trusts that were conferred on him."[118] Again, Bever represents Pompey, once in power, as pampering to the masses through "bribes and promises" and re-instating the tribuneship that had been annulled under Sulla in an "affected act of popularity."[119] In Ferguson's volume Pompey also appears as selfish and ambitious, prone to indulging in excessive displays of pomp and ceremony, while Alexander Adam had critiqued his "criminal vanity."[120] Arnold, on the other hand, commends Pompey for "restoring to the commons of Rome […] the most important of those privileges and liberties which they had lost under the tyranny of their late master", and finds that "[Pompey's] greatness could not corrupt

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[116] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth*, 1:540 and 1:542-543.
[117] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, Book 37. Cassius Dio — Book 37 (uchicago.edu).
[118] Bever, *Roman State,* 139 and Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* vol. 1., 540.
[119] Bever, *Roman State,* 142.
[120] Ferguson, *Roman Republic,* 174. Alexander Adam, *Roman Antiquities, or an account of the manners and customs of the Romans* [1791] (Glasgow: Blackie & Son, 1835), 516.

his virtue" while "the boundless powers with which he was repeatedly invested he wielded with the highest ability and uprightness to the accomplishment of his task."[121]

For Arnold Pompey's greatest mistake was trusting Caesar – with whom he formed a misjudged familial and political alliance before losing his life during the civil war that ensued between them. With the qualified exception of Cicero, most ancient writers – including Plutarch, Sallust, Suetonius, and Cassius Dio – had been admiring of Caesar. Celebrated for his conquests abroad and clemency at home, he was described as one who "gained glory by giving, helping, and forgiving", and praised as the leader of Rome who overcame the factions that were disturbing the body politic.[122] In modern times, however, scholarly judgements had shifted decisively away from Caesar, as Enlightenment culture favoured the learning of Cicero and the liberty of the Republic, while the experience of the French Revolution and Napoleonic Wars meant that the figure of the dictator no longer appealed. Arnold's own view was unequivocal. In his words: "it may be justly doubted whether the life of any individual recorded in history was ever productive of a greater amount of human misery, or has been marked with a deeper stain of wickedness" as "the whole range of history can hardly furnish a picture of greater deformity."[123] Not only was Caesar's character repulsive to Arnold – he was vulgar, profligate, sensuous,

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[121] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:540.
[122] Sallust, *The War with Catiline,* 54, 113. C. 44- 40 BC LacusCurtius • Sallust — The War With Catiline (uchicago.edu)
[123] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:404 and 2:109-110.

prideful – but, unforgivably, "the object of all this profusion was the enslaving of his country."[124]

With Caesar's subsequent assassination and the rise to absolute power of his nephew Octavius, later the Emperor Augustus, the freedom and integrity of Rome was lost. Closing the narrative, Arnold writes in mournful terms that the people were now consigned to "many centuries of helpless weakness" as they were "reduced […] to that state of conscious insignificance in the government of their country, which most surely leads to the degradation of national and individual character."[125] In these conditions, Arnold writes, the people effectively return to their "childhood" phase of political development. While "Literature may flourish […] and the physical comforts of mankind may suffer at times little diminution", still:

> the soul of civilized society, the power and the will to take part in the administration of the great system of national government […] the spirit of real liberty which distinguishes the citizen from the mere subject – this is totally destroyed; and carries away with it that practical vigour of mind which, when diffused amidst the mass of the people, under the guidance of sound principles, is the greatest earthly blessing of which mankind are susceptible.[126]

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[124] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 1:403-404.
[125] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 2:257.
[126] Arnold, *Later Roman Commonwealth,* 2: 257-258.

My objective has been to show that Arnold's *History of Rome* was a significant historical work which has been unduly overlooked. This neglect, I have suggested, is due to the fact that scholars have always been more interested in Arnold's career as Headmaster of Rugby School and leader of the Liberal Anglican movement than in his contribution as a historian. It is also the consequence of the assumption that English intellectuals were not concerned with the Roman Republic during the nineteenth century. What emerges from an in-depth look at Arnold's personal correspondence and research activity is the way he was led, via Niebuhr and Vico, to see the Roman Republic as exemplifying his belief that "states, like individuals, go through certain changes in a certain order, and are subject at different stages of their course to certain peculiar disorders."[127]

In his *magnum-opus* Arnold began by depicting the "childhood" of Rome, when the patricians rightly ruled over the plebeians in the same way as parents naturally govern their immature offspring. At Rome, the transition out of the state of "childhood" was peaceful, as the commons gradually gained in wealth and status and were accordingly granted full rights of citizenship. In the "manhood" phase of development, however, the question was not about which men of property enjoyed which rights. It was, instead, a battle between two polarities, between the extremely rich and the extremely poor, and it was both violent and terminal. As the Gracchi's attempts to alleviate the desperation of the masses failed, so the Civil War later

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[127] Arnold, "Social Progress of States", *Miscellaneous Works,* 306.

destroyed the Republic and led to the infantilization of the people under a new form of despotism.

Arnold's emphasis on class conflict anticipated Marx, and the two thinkers shared a common source in the relatively obscure Vico.[128] Unlike Marx, however, Arnold was not a determinist. Perceiving that England in his own day was experiencing the same convulsions of "manhood" that led to the demise of the Roman Republic, Arnold held out hope that the worst outcomes could be avoided. In response to the Swing Riots, the agitation over the Reform Act, the New Poor Law, and Chartism, Arnold counselled ameliorative action which might ease the tension – including religious instruction, education, and emigration. For Arnold, the lesson of history was that a compromise must be found between the forces of permanence and progression within a state, a position John Stuart Mill once fittingly defined as "the Germano-Coleridgean doctrine."[129]

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[128] See *Vico and Marx: Affinities and Contrasts* ed. Giorgio Tagliacozzo (London: Macmillan Press, 1983).

[129] John Stuart Mill, "Coleridge", *London and Westminster Review* 33,64 (March 1840): 139-163, 142 and 159.