

Welcome

Ben Gwilym James Salisbury

PhD: Classics & Ancient History

Thesis Title: Before Public Opinion: The Role of Tribunes of the Plebs in Creating, Manipulating, and Responding to Popular Sentiment, c. 70 - 49 BC.

Supervisors:

Primary Supervisor: Dr Henriette van der Blom (University of Birmingham)

Secondary Supervisor: Dr Hannah Cornwell (University of Birmingham)

Bio:

I began an undergraduate degree in Ancient History at the University of Manchester in 2013 and graduated (First Class) in 2016. I remained at the University of Manchester for my Masters degree in Classics & Ancient History (Distinction), which I began in 2016 and finished in 2017. From September 2017 - January 2018, I worked as a Graduate Teaching Assistant at the same institution, teaching on the level 3 module: The Early Roman Republic, alongside my supervisor Dr Peter Morton. I received my Midlands3Cities DTP award in the summer of 2018 and have now taken up my place at the University of Birmingham on a PhD Classics, Ancient History & Archaeology FT course.

I am also the Special Editions Editor for the [New Classicists](#) postgraduate journal.

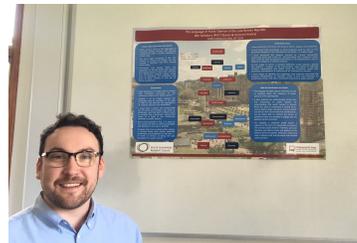
Thesis Description:

My project examines the political dialogue between the Roman electorate and the socio-political elite (tribunes of the plebs), who were elected to act in accordance with their will. Throughout the late Roman Republic (70-49 BC), legislative activity at Rome was remarkably frequent and, due to the political climate, usually intensely contested. These facts are reflected in our primary sources, so it is possible to study closely the wants, needs, and emotions of the Roman electorate, who were, by this time, capable of directly influencing legislation. A comprehensive collation of instances in which such desires were followed, or caused, by tribunician action, will produce several case studies, dealing with modes of mass-elite interaction. These case studies will consider uses of political rhetoric, the manipulation of the non-elite electorate, and public oratory. To understand the environs in which mass-elite interactions took place, the project also considers early on the practical and conceptual issues inherent to studying the political usages of public spaces.

My research focuses on the basic wants, needs, and emotions of the masses at Rome in order to identify and trace the process through which shared or 'public' opinions may have developed, and thus meaningfully contribute to the debate. The principal aim is to further the idea that the populace at Rome, both as a whole and as subsections, held common desires, and that these people sought to engage with their 'representatives', the tribunes of the plebs, to attain a legislative response. The objective of this approach is to determine the nature of any elite contribution, because tribunes of the plebs were, by all means, elite, to the development of these shared wants, needs, and emotions. To assess the nature and categorise the modes of response and contribution demonstrated by the elite within this study, particular attention will be given to political rhetoric, oratorical techniques, levels of participation, and means of manipulating the electorate.

Publications:

Salisbury, B. (2019), 'The Status of Plebiscita 494-287', *New Classicists*, 1, pp. 41-58.



University email address: BXS834
@student.bham.ac.uk

Twitter: @BenGJSalisbury

Academia: <https://birmingham.academia.edu/BenSalisbury>

Papers:

(2019), 'Defining a Public Sphere at Rome in the Late Roman Republic', Spaces of Roman Constitutionalism, University of Helsinki, (26th-28th September 2019), Part of the ERC funded 'Law, Governance, and Space: Questioning the Foundations of the Republican Tradition' project.

(2019), 'Public Opinion in the Late Roman Republic: Public Spirit, Emotional Appeals, and Collective Decision Making', Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History, Cambridge.

(2019), 'Reconsidering the Language of Popular Public Opinion in the Late Roman Republic', The Popular in Classical Antiquity, University of Pennsylvania.

(2018), 'For the Many (and the Few): The place of the *lex Gabinia de bello piratico* and the *lex Manilia* in studying popular sentiment', Annual Meeting of Postgraduates in Ancient History, Birkbeck University of London.

Teaching

Seminar Leader in the Department of Classics, Ancient History and Archaeology (University of Birmingham) on the Level 2 Module, *Age of Cicero*.

Employment

Assistant on the AHRC funded project *Crisis of Rhetoric*, led by Dr Henriette van der Blom and Prof. Alan Finlayson (

Other Research Interests:

- Roman Republican history, Roman Imperial history, Classical historiography, Classical Latin, Political Science.

University of Birmingham Researcher Profile:

<https://www.birmingham.ac.uk/schools/historycultures/departments/caha/research/postgraduateresearch/profiles/salisbury-ben.aspx>

New Classicists Twitter: <https://twitter.com/NewClassicists>

New Classicists Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/newclassicists/>