If poor individuals have always been with us, societies have not always seen the poor as a distinct social group. But within the Roman world, from at least the late Republic onwards, the poor were an important force in social and political life and how to treat the poor was a topic of philosophical as well as political discussion. This book explains what poverty meant in antiquity, and why the poor came to be an important group in the Roman world, and it explores the issues which poverty and the poor raised for Roman society and for Roman writers. In essays which range widely in space and time across the whole Roman empire, the contributors address both the reality and the representation of poverty, and examine the impact which Christianity had upon attitudes towards and treatment of the poor.

Margaret Atkins is a Senior Research Fellow at Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. She was previously Senior Lecturer in Theology at Trinity and All Saints College, Leeds. She has published with Cambridge University Press translations of Cicero’s De Officiis, Augustine’s political writings and Aquinas’ Disputed Questions on the Virtues.

Robin Osborne is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cambridge and a Fellow of King’s College. His numerous publications include Greece in the Making (1996), Archaic and Classical Greek Art (1998), Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy (1999, edited with Simon Goldhill) and Greek Historical Inscriptions from the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Death of Alexander (2003, edited with P. J. Rhodes).
POVERTY IN THE
ROMAN WORLD

EDITED BY
MARGARET ATKINS AND ROBIN OSBORNE
for Peter Garnsey
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Contributors

Margaret Atkins has taught Classics and Theology in Cambridge and Leeds and is currently a Senior Research Fellow of Blackfriars Hall, Oxford. She is the editor, with R. J. Dodaro, of Augustine: Political Writings (2001).

Richard Finn OP is a Dominican friar and Regent of Studies at Blackfriars Hall in the University of Oxford. He was a doctoral student of Peter Garnsey and Averil Cameron. He is the author of Almsgiving in the Later Roman Empire (2006).

Cam Grey is Assistant Professor of Roman History in the Department of Classical Studies at the University of Pennsylvania. He has spent many hours discussing the merits and weaknesses of the Australian cricket team with Peter Garnsey. He also wrote a doctoral dissertation on rural communities in late antiquity under Peter’s guidance.

Lucy Grig is Lecturer in Classics at the University of Edinburgh and was a PhD student of Peter Garnsey. Her published work includes a monograph, Making Martyrs in Late Antiquity (2004), and articles on subjects ranging from late antique gold glass to the representation of female saints.

Caroline Humfress is a Lecturer in Late Antique History at Birkbeck College, University of London and was both an undergraduate and graduate student of Peter Garnsey. Her published work includes ‘Law and Legal Practice in the Age of Justinian’, in Maas, M. (ed.) Cambridge Companion to the Age of Justinian (2005) and The Evolution of Late Antiquity (with Peter Garnsey, 2001).

Sophie Lunn-Rockliffe is Harris Fellow in History and College Lecturer at Peterhouse, Cambridge. She was supervised for her MPhil and PhD by Peter Garnsey.
List of contributors

Neville Morley is Reader in Ancient Economic History and Historical Theory at the University of Bristol. His PhD thesis on Rome and Italy, published by Cambridge University Press in 1996 as Metropolis and Hinterland, was supervised by Peter Garnsey. He has subsequently published books on historical theory, and has just completed a work on trade in classical antiquity.

Robin Osborne is Professor of Ancient History at the University of Cambridge and was an undergraduate pupil of Peter Garnsey. His books include Classical Landscape with Figures: The Ancient Greek City and its Countryside (1987), Greece in the Making c.1200–479 B.C. (1996) and Greek History (2004).

Anneliese Parkin is a Senior Analyst at New Zealand’s Department of Labour. She was a doctoral student of Peter Garnsey.

Dominic Rathbone was an undergraduate pupil of Peter Garnsey and is now Professor of Ancient History at King’s College London. His published work includes Economic Rationalism and Rural Society in Third-Century AD Egypt (1991); ed. with R. S. Bagnall, Egypt from Alexander to the Copts: An Archaeological and Historical Guide (2004).

Walter Scheidel is Professor of Classics at Stanford University. As a research fellow at Cambridge, he edited a collection of Peter Garnsey’s papers as Cities, Peasants and Food in Classical Antiquity (1998).

Greg Woolf is Professor of Ancient History at the University of St Andrews. Peter Garnsey was one of the supervisors of his PhD thesis, and despite that experience has continued to offer advice and criticism whenever asked. Greg Woolf’s first publication was a collaborative piece with Peter, appropriately enough dealing with the patronage of the poor. Greg Woolf’s other publications include Becoming Roman: The Origins of Provincial Civilization in Gaul (1998).
Preface

The papers collected here were given at a conference in Cambridge in 2003 in honour of Professor Peter Garnsey. All those contributing are in one sense or another pupils of Peter, and most of them had their doctoral studies supervised by him, at least in part.

The conference was held not to mark any particular anniversary or event, but to signal the enormous contribution that Peter Garnsey has made to our understanding of the social and economic history of the Graeco-Roman world, and to the way in which we do ancient history. All Peter’s publications have been directed at explaining the social dynamics of the Greek and Roman worlds, and in particular explaining how social status is established and marked, how it interacts with political power, and how the structures of society impact back upon the life of the individual. Peter has repeatedly insisted on the importance of understanding the basic questions of how individuals and communities survive, what they eat and where they live. He has directed attention at social groups neglected by our main literary sources, and has shown how judicious reading of texts of all sorts against the knowledge that we have of the constants of human physiological and ecological realities can enable bright light to be thrown on even the most intractable of problems. In this volume his pupils try to emulate his example as they explore a facet of the Roman world peculiarly liable to neglect and distortion.

The conference was crucially shaped by Gillian Clark, Dominic Rathbone and Greg Woolf. It was enabled by the generosity of the Faculty of Classics, the Faculty of History, and Jesus College, Cambridge. For the lively and productive conference discussions we are particularly indebted to the skills of Gillian Clark, Christopher Kelly and Richard Saller as chairmen. In turning the papers from the conference into a book we have been much assisted by Gillian Clark, Emily Gowers, Jill Harries, John Henderson, Brent Shaw and an anonymous reader for Cambridge University Press.
regret that Pasquale Rosafio was unable to contribute to the volume the paper he delivered at the conference.

MARGARET ATKINS AND ROBIN OSBORNE  September 2005
Abbreviations

CJ Codex Justinianus, ed. Paul Krüger, Corpus Iuris Civilis II (Berlin, 1877).

Other ancient authors and works are abbreviated as in the Oxford Classical Dictionary (3rd edn).