THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

H. I. Flower (ed.): *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*. Pp. xvi + 405, ills, maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004. Paper, £19.99, US$29 (Cased, £55, US$80). ISBN: 0-521-00390-3 (0-521-80794-8 hbk).

It is not difficult to deduce the audience at which this multi-authored volume is aimed. The editor herself (pp. 10–11) describes the book as an introduction to the republic which, it is hoped, will encourage the reader to pursue the subject further. The work is divided into four broad sections: political and military history, Roman society, Rome's empire, and Roman culture. Each section contains three separate essays and the whole is rounded off with a piece on the influence of the Roman republic on the American and French revolutions. With such an intended readership and such an arrangement of material I doubt if anybody will want to read the book straight through, and the editor seems to acknowledge this. Therefore I propose to examine a representative sample of what is on offer.

To begin with, some questions of style and presentation. As might be expected, Oakley's discussion (pp. 115–30) of the early republic is very able, but in a couple of places he degenerates into the making of lists so that we think more of Eutropius than Livy. Von Ungern-Sternberg's treatment (pp. 89–109) of the crisis of the republic suffers from a slightly stilted translation from the German. Culham (pp. 139–59), who deals with Roman women, overworks the word 'elite', while Rüpke (pp. 179–95), on Roman religion, is marred by extreme turgidity. I must admit I did not get much out of a statement like this:

> It is the methodological option of any nontheological approach towards religion to 'explain' religious practices as social practices without any reference to the existence of superhuman beings (gods) and without any judgement on their existence. Hence, the reconstruction of social functions is not a surprising disclosure but rather the consequence of this methodological option.

For Flower, in her essay on spectacle and political culture (pp.3 22–43), the Roman 'self' conquers a barbarian 'other', which prompts the observation that it is perhaps time to abandon this unhelpful donnish convention.

Now to the matter. Culham is a trifle disappointing. Her contribution read to me more like a series of mini-essays than a coherent whole. In the essay on Latin literature (pp. 271–93), Fantham mistakenly says Sulla wrote in Greek. Her championing of the longer poems of Catullus reveals, I suspect, her academic taste, while her eulogy of Lucretius does not persuade me that he was anything but the dreariest poet in Latin literature. Flower is distinguished by care and good sense, as, for instance, in her remarks on the theatre (p. 326), which avoid the more bizarre views currently being promulgated in certain quarters. It may very well be, as she says (p. 342), that when Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus, went abroad clad in finery she was reflecting the glory of the Scipios, but maybe she just wanted to look good at the *passeggiata*?

The political and military history of the republic is well represented by a number of papers, by von Ungern-Sternberg and Corey Brennan ('Power and Process under the Republican Constitution', pp. 31–65), Lazenby ('Rome and Carthage', pp. 225–41), and Gruen ('Rome and the Greek World', pp. 242–67). Here too belongs Lomas's lucid and helpful exposition of Rome's relations with Italy which shows a proper

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appreciation (p. 201) of the limitations of archaeological evidence. Potter's discussion of army and navy (pp. 66–88) shows an uncertain grasp of the period of crisis. The dismissal of Tiberius Gracchus' claims of depopulation (p. 79) is a trifle glib. He was in a better position to see what was going on than we are. Land hunger is exaggerated (p. 82), while the political consciousness of the Roman soldiers is downplayed (p. 84)—partly, I suspect, because of a failure to recognize that Sulla was a champion of the republic (p. 84). The bracketing with Caesar is false in that it fails to recognize the generational difference.

This, then, is what a trawl of a large part of this book yields. The verdict must be favourable. For someone approaching the topic for the first time there is a good deal of information here presented, for the most part in accessible form. A fairly generous bibliography should ensure, as the editor wishes, further exploration. This may allow readers to solve what I could not. Who has got it right about the quinquereme, Potter (p. 77) or Lazenby (p. 228)?

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PRISONERS OF WAR

K.-W. Welwei: Sub Corona Vendere. *Quellenkritische Studien zu Kriegsgefangenschaft und Sklaverei in Rom bis zum Ende des Hannibalkrieges*. (Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei 34.) Pp. viii + 181. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2000. Paper, DM 48. ISBN: 3-515-07845-2.

This meticulous study brings to fruition a project originally undertaken by the late Gottfried Prachner. The monograph is, however, wholly W.'s work, with citation of Prachner's drafts in some footnotes.

The bulk of the work assembles and critically analyses the evidence for prisoners of war taken in Roman wars down to 201 B.C., focusing particularly on texts reporting numbers captured. In collecting and evaluating this material W. has performed a valuable service, providing a more complete presentation of the evidence than was previously available and bringing out clearly the problems which it poses. The results are to a considerable extent negative. Many of the reported numbers of captives are unreliable (like the associated numbers of killed), and even the more reliable figures often pose problems of interpretation. There is sometimes a lack of clarity about whether some or all of the victims were already slaves at capture, and it is not always certain that enslavement was their ultimate fate: ransoming is only occasionally attested, but is likely to have occurred more often. We can never be sure what proportion of those sold as slaves ended up working for Roman owners: the merchants who bought them may have disposed of many in other markets. W. prudently eschews any attempt to estimate the total number of those captured or of those serving as Roman slaves.

W.'s circumspect approach is particularly apt in the case of the Third Samnite War. Livy recounts this war in much greater detail than earlier conflicts, and includes frequent reports of numbers killed and captured (only sparingly recorded in his earlier narrative). W. V. Harris (*War and Imperialism in Republican Roman 327–70 B.C.* [Oxford, 1979], p. 59) tabulated the notices of captives, and several subsequent writers

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