
One of the most fruitful ways of approaching Roman historiography in recent times has been through exemplarity, the sense that Roman historians influenced and educated their contemporaries through stories about the past. It is also the case that one of the most controversial areas of recent study is magistracy and the exercise of power, whether in terms of the mechanisms of power or the sequence of events around elections or the interactions between magistrates. This volume brilliantly joins the two debates. Lushkov argues that magistracy could be used even in its banal regularity as a sort of exemplum, a moral reflection on the culture of the Republic and its capacity to resolve tensions and problems.

L. begins with a thoughtful and sharp introduction which provides a nuanced account of exemplarity, both as a discourse in itself, and in relation to history. The suggestion of a culture of exemplarity strikes me as very helpful in indicating that there was a more dynamic relation between the written text and the audience in defining the exemplary, though this argument is always necessarily limited by questions of who actually absorbed historical literature. The real step forward is to go beyond the single exemplum to the concept of behaviour stretching across five centuries as being in some way exemplary, or at least being a vehicle of competing exemplarities, and here L. opens up the really important idea of the way that the electoral process shows Roman ingenuity at avoiding and overcoming conflict, even in the context of a conflictual and competitive activity.

The first main chapter on magistracy and the politics of affection addresses the tensions caused when magistracy should supervene over family bonds. Brutus’ execution of his sons, Manlius’ stern command, or the way Fabius Cunctator dismounts before his son who was consul are examples which L. explores through *vereundia*, a reverence in which one has to gauge one’s own position in relation to others, and understand the necessary social behaviour. For L., the combination of reluctance, emotion and embarrassment found in these episodes is what differentiates the Republican magistracy from tyranny, which shows no such refinement. The demands of the state can outweigh the bonds of family when those bonds are not being set at nought, but rather contextualised within an authority which arguably is there to defend the rights of the individual in ordinary circumstances.

L. might have done more here to point up the difference between this and the behaviour of tyrants, but instead focuses rather cleverly on the fear inspired by Brutus’ acts. The potential for construing the new Republic as inflexible and harsh is well noted. It finds another reflection in the assumption by the friends of Valerius Publicola that the false announcement of the death of Horatius’ son while he was dedicating the temple of Jupiter Optimus would force him to desist. Livy emphasises the emotional blackmail element of this more than any potential sacrilege.

The next chapter offers a detailed account of the battle of the Caudine Forks, showing how it impacted on the perception of the consulship. The recovery of respect for the office is as important as the loss of respect incurred by the catastrophic failure of the consuls. This neat mirroring is a key part of the way Livy structures the episode, and quite possibly was there before Livy. However there
is a key problem which lies with the praise of Papirius Cursor, which Livy undercuts with one of his awkward historiographical digressions, noting the uncertainty over who should rightly receive the credit. L. argues that this can be understood to indicate that the episode has more general application. The broader point about the pressure which the consulship could come under is perhaps more persuasive. However the sense of exemplarity is at its most stretched here. The extremities of the situation would tend to suggest that we have to read this episode as extraordinary in almost all respects. Should we read this as an illustration of the resilience of the magistracy, or a massively overdetermined account of the necessity of respecting the consulship, however ineffectual its representatives?

L. then moves on to magistrates in electoral situations, which was clearly a key moment when the candidate needed to show all their best qualities, and the state needed to manage process. L. chooses the election of 215 BC to begin with, when Fabius Cunctator stops the vote and tells the people to rethink. L. is interested in the tension between war and magistracy, and the way war shapes magistracy. Marius is a particularly interesting example of someone who leaves behind the proper respect owed to a commander in order to campaign for the better conduct of war. Candidates needed to find mechanisms to adapt some basic messages which were relatively standard to the exigencies of the campaign and their own record. Borrowing Morstein-Marx’s brilliant concept, we can even think of a sort of electioneering monotony, in which for the most part we see a consensus around the goal (the continuing success of Rome), divergences about the qualities needed to achieve that, and with occasional moments which shift the discourse, perhaps for good and always to the extreme. The success or failure of this rhetoric is first tested in the vote of the centuria praerogativa and L. analyses how Fabius Cunctator engages with the process to ensure the right result in the time of war, using the duel as an exemplum of the necessity to find a leader who is a match for Hannibal. Yet leadership and magistracy are not the same thing, as is shown by the senate’s criticism of the magisterial pretensions of L. Marcius, who had saved the army in Spain in 212 BC, but who was not therefore a magistrate — only citizens, not soldiers, could choose a leader.

Elections in exceptional wartime situations offer examples of the difficulties of sustaining the civic mode, but many electoral narratives also address the challenges of managing the transition of power. L. uses Cicero’s Pro Murena as a way into the dilemmas raised by choice, and Sulpicius is a good example of breaking the electioneering monotony with his claim to merit through jurisprudence, which Cicero (somewhat ironically) rejects. Yet to behave consulariter (Livy 4.10.9) was not only about being a military leader; it was a more subtle amalgam of qualities. What L. brings out very well, for instance in the account of the failed election of Fulvius Flaccus, is that every election was an opportunity to refine and rethink this combination of qualities, to assess what the state needed. The contest of individuals and ideas was a public one and there is a recursive relationship between the way the values of the Republic shaped the contest and the rhetoric of the candidates restated those values. Scipio Africanus and Titus Quinctius Flamininus are examples of how elections negotiate between the will of the people and the procedural regularities themselves approved by the people. Should a magistrate be elected ahead of his time? What are the grounds for set-
ting aside due process? L. ends with the case of Fabius Rullianus, who is elected against his wishes. His anxiety over being a bad example itself demonstrates magisterial exemplarity – he is an embodiment of the paradoxes of choice and power, and one which historiography brings out both through the narration of his own example, and though its place within the continuum of electoral narratives.

L. concludes by emphasising the drama of political activity, and as often in this subtle and beautifully written account, she means this both literally and allusively – there is a real vividness to political action but literature finds ways of reflecting that through texts. The book is, as L. says, about the intersection of politics and literature (177), and that encourages some further thoughts. One challenge is the extent to which this intersection, visible to us, was actually performed in antiquity. Although L. is excellent on the relationship between history and historiography in theory, Livy’s textual drama was not likely to have been deployed in actual electioneering. Reading through the examples, I was struck inevitably by what would have been contemporary memories – how did the examples here encourage thoughts about Sulla, who could not abolish his example, or the abomination of the triumvirate, or Caesar’s awkward rejection of the title king, or for that matter Augustus’ peculiar deformations of the consulship? Did the reader of Livy find the beautiful narrative of the balance of power, choice and procedure exemplary or ironic?

L. is not a constitutional historian, and so the debates over imperium are passed over here. However, I did wonder how the account would cope with Fred Drogula’s fascinating attempt to rethink imperium as a solely military command (‘Commanders and Command in the Roman Republic and Early Empire’, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015). How might we nuance Livy’s fastidious narratives of election through a recognition of the equally complex legal definitions which abounded, and which Christoph Lundgreen has examined (‘Regelkonflikte in der römischen Republik. Geltung und Gewichtung von Normen in politischen Entscheidungsprozessen’, Historia Einzelschriften 221, Stuttgart 2011)? Is historiography not only mirroring the drama of the campaign, but also finding a way to explore almost by analogy the problem of power which always threatened to burst the bonds that were supposed to curtail it?

Livy is so often regarded as politically somewhat naïve that he is an unlikely candidate to be a forerunner of political ontology, but L.’s account made me think about how Livy defines the grounds of politics – indeed how the Roman obsession with exemplarity is somehow or another not far from the question of what there has to be for there to be politics. It is no wonder that Machiavelli (one of the greatest students of political ontology), thought Livy was worth a hard look. Another way of reading L. is to see it as an explication of Livy’s examination of motivation, and also of contingency. Throughout both Livy and L. we see questions around the relationship between individuals and collectives, between structure and agency, and about the role of ideas, however banal. Livy’s politics is raw, it is a drama of often competing motivations all driving towards power within the embrace of structures which are always on the point of failing. It is a narrative of persistent critique, illustrating by its sheer apparent unendingness the absence of effective closure.
Lastly, and continuing on this theme, should we be looking in Livy for a deep thread of dismay, that the civic exemplarity, his long run of magisterial elections that had debated and refined every more precisely, had, to all intents and purposes, come to an end; or did he perhaps hint that the highly contingent and sometimes difficult choices were signs of instability? Was Rome’s fate too important to be left to an annual election, with all the possibilities that it might go wrong? One might wonder whether L. has or has not successfully argued for the separation of the magistracy from its holder. The exemplarity argument suggests that the magistracy survived even Caudine Forks, but the debates which Livy reveals suggest that he at least was acutely aware that office-holders defined their offices.

This is a book which in the end probably tells us more about Roman literature than about Roman politics. Yet the argument is profoundly political. Ultimately, the reader will take away from L.’s account a sense of the interplay between magisterial rhetoric and constitutional form, between individual virtue and collective responsibility. Romans worried about this, and if Livy is at all representative of a more widespread historiographical concern, they worried about it productively and in sophisticated ways. This review was written during a bitter US election campaign in which the rhetoric has been wound to a pitch we have seldom seen. The questioning of what constitutes civic virtue, eligibility, and the very nature of the state the candidates wish to lead has become acute, and if the concepts are to some extent shared to the point of tedium, there is no doubt that the language of argument has moved to the extreme, which indicates sharply divergent ontological assumptions. If states produce the candidates they deserve, and are defined by their elected representatives, then we should all be reading L. and Livy with increased attention.

Rome / St Andrews

Christopher Smith


The business of studying ‘Greek artists’ is once again booming. Of course, artists have always been central to the disciplinary workings of classical archaeology – from Adolf Furtwängler’s landmark studies of Kopienkritik and Meisterforschung in Germany, to Sir John Beazley’s wholly more British connoisseurial attempts to attribute Greek vases to named or unnamed painters. If the flurry of books dedicated to individual ‘artists’ is anything to go by – following a long-standing precedent, not least Vasari’s 1550 ‘Le vite de’ più eccellenti pittori, scultori, e architettori’ – our scholarly commitment to the lives and works of Greek ‘masters’ shows little sign of abating.¹

¹ Among countless other recent examples, see e.g. C. Davison – G. Waywell, ‘Phidias: the sculptures and ancient sources’ (London 2009); C. Roscino, ‘Polignoto di Taso’ (Rome 2010); E. Moignard, ‘Master of Attic black figure painting: the art and legacy of Exekias’ (London 2015). This has not just been an academic concern, as reflected in the numerous exhibitions and accompanying catalogues centred on single Greek sculptural ‘masters’: e.g. H. Beck – P. Bol (Edd.), ‘Polyklet: Der Bildhauer der griechischen Klassik’ (Frankfurt 1999); P. Moreno (Edd.), ‘Lisippo: l’arte e la fortuna’ (Rome 1995); N. Kaltsas – G.