

Blood in the Forum: the Struggle for the Roman Republic. By PAMELA MARIN. Cornwall: Continuum Books, 2009. Pp. xix + 198. Cloth, \$29.95. ISBN: 978-1-8472-5167-1.

Pamela Marin's (hereafter M.) book promises to tell "the story of the last decades of Rome—what succeeded, and why the Republic ultimately failed" (p. 3). Springing in the most part from her PhD dissertation on Cato the Younger, M.'s book seeks to provide "a new perspective" on the period from 133–43 BCE (jacket). She follows the standard chronological approach to the late Republic, and works throughout to keep the focus on what she views as Cato's critical role.

Unfortunately, two major problems prevent the book from reaching its goal. First, far from providing a "new" look at the fall of the Republic, there is really nothing new here. M.'s work reads as a standard history, and in places is little more than a summary of names and dates. I am unable to discern how M.'s argument advances the study of the late Republic in general or Cato specifically. This is due in part to the absence of any academic discussion in either the text itself or the notes. M. never engages with current scholarship, beyond quoting scholars such as Millar and Lintott, and the lack of dialogue leaves me wondering where she herself places her book. Second, though perhaps not entirely the fault of the author, the text is plagued by an appalling lack of editing, inconsistencies in citation content and style, and a number of factual errors.

The overall thrust of M.'s argument is that the death of the Republic was not inevitable; rather, Octavian's machinations were the sole cause (p. 175). But Octavian is absent from the text, save in a solitary paragraph at the very end (p. 171), and M. provides no evidence of how he was able to destroy the Republic when Marius, Sulla and Caesar had failed. The omission of any such discussion renders the rest of the text puzzling. If we accept M.'s assertion, despite the lack of supporting evidence, that Octavian was the sole cause, what is the point of such detail about the political alliances and individual accomplishments of the Late Republic? And if the fall of the Republic was "a cumulative process" (p. 175), can we say that Octavian alone was responsible? M. seems torn between these two lines of reasoning, and a definitive statement promoting one or the other would have been a welcome addition, with the added benefit of providing a definitive framework for her discussion.

As for Cato, he is presented throughout as the leader of the *boni*, and his death becomes "a viable political weapon against Caesar" (p. 162). This treatment, however, is imbalanced. Cato's speech concern-

ing the fate of the Catilinarian conspirators, which should offer prime evidence of his position as leader of the *boni*, is given a mere two sentences (p. 103), while M. devotes a full three pages to proving that there was no personal animosity between Clodius and Cato (pp. 123–6). M. also seems to attribute strange motivations to Cato, as when she says that he accepted the mission to Cyprus because “he needed something significant to do” with Caesar gone and the praetorship still several years away (p. 125). Overall, Cato, far from looking like the driving force behind senatorial politics, comes off as a lone voice crying out against the inevitability of the Republic’s demise. His intransigence in the face of Caesar’s demands in the 50s seems more the result of a loathing of Caesar than of a grand devotion to the Republic (a fact M. alludes to several times, as on p. 122). Instead of proving Cato’s importance, she proves his ineffectualness. He is constantly thwarted by the dominant personalities of Pompey and Caesar, despite his leadership of the *boni*, and M.’s assertion that “Cato, in death, would perhaps be even more powerful than in life” (p. 162) highlights his lack of effectiveness while alive.

It might be easier to assess M.’s argument if she made it clear for whom the book is intended. In her acknowledgements she indicates that she is writing for both general readers and scholars. But since all primary sources are cited as translations, usually from the Loeb or Penguin Classics series, and the bibliography, while both relatively current and curiously brief, is entirely in English, a school text or an introductory survey would appear to have been intended. Yet the vast number of names that flit in and out of the narrative may force even a specialist in the field to reach for a favorite reference work.

If M. was hoping to produce a more general survey of the Late Republic accessible to the non-specialist, my second complaint is all the more serious. The text is rife with factual, typographical and syntactic errors, and the rudimentary nature of these mistakes is troubling. I will provide only a few examples, though others could be noted. It is asserted that L. Junius Brutus assassinated Tarquinius Superbus in 509 BCE (pp. ix, 168, 169); that 100 BCE was the last of Marius’ seven consecutive consulships (p. 41); that Cicero, as the successful prosecutor, was able to confiscate Verres’ fortune and assume his rank as ex-praetor in the senate when Verres went into exile (p. 75); that Asconius is a contemporary source for the Catilinarian conspiracy (p. 88); that Clodius’ funeral pyre burned down both the senate-house and the *curia* (p. 140); and that Brutus did not leave Crete between the years 44–42 BCE (p. 171). Furthermore, we read “cursus honorem” for “cursus honorum” twice (pp. 11 and 57); “leges Plotia” for “leges Plotiae” on p. 72; “Allrobrogēs” for “Allobrogēs” on p. 103 (it

is spelled properly five lines later); "C. Crassius" for "C. Cassius" on p. 139; and that the Second Punic War lasted from 218–204 BCE (p. 37). I could go on, but the point is clear. Hyperbole runs throughout the text (e.g. Rome is "the greatest city that has ever existed" on p. 3), and sentence fragments are common (e.g. p. 74: "Cicero, overcoming a challenge from Q. Caecilius, who had been a quaestor under Verres and was appointed a prosecutor."; and p. 103: "The issue of Catiline dominated the rest of the month as the newly elected officials, including Caesar as praetor and Cato, along with Metellus Nepos, as tribune.").

The endnotes are also problematic. They are used merely for citation of sources and contain no discussion, and thus would have been better as in-text citations. Throughout the book M. consistently uses phrases such as "_____ records/notes..." with no citation of the original source; "as Cicero said" on pg. 174, for example, is supported by a television program from 2003. Several items in the endnotes do not appear in the bibliography (Bryant in n. 11 in Ch. 1; Carcopino in n. 11 in Ch. 3; and Bickerman in n. 27 in Ch. 8). More troubling is the fact that the citations provided are sometimes misleading or wrong. For example, on p. 21 M. introduces a block quote by saying "Aristotle's view is particularly astute"; yet the quote is not from Aristotle at all but from Dunn's *Setting the People Free*. The note for M.'s statement that "many modern scholars have put [Cato's] quaestorship in 65, while it is more probable that it was in 62" (p. 89) cites Cicero's *Pro Murena* 38.37 (*sic*), doing little to help settle the debate. Finally, the block quote on p. 92 is attributed to a letter from Cicero to his brother Quintus, yet in fact the citation comes from the *Commentariolum Petitionis* (strangely cited as *Q.F.* 64). The problem with the citation of the *Comm. Pet.* brings me to another concern. M. relies heavily on translations of primary sources, yet nowhere does she indicate whether these are her own or are borrowed from other sources. In most cases, I believe that M. has adapted them from the translations listed in the bibliography, but the Catullus 57 translation on p. 134 comes verbatim from Guy Lee and is unattributed.

Overall, this book fails both in its quest to provide a fresh look at the late Republic and in its presentation. As M. acknowledges, a great deal of scholarship on the Late Republic exists. Because of the undeveloped nature of the argument and the sloppiness of the text, be that the fault of the author or the press, this book will not find a place of prominence within that tradition.

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