

## BOOK REVIEW

*Magnus Pius: Sextus Pompeius and the Transformation of the Roman Republic.* By KATHRYN WELCH. Swansea and London: Classical Press of Wales, 2012. Pp. 350. Hardcover, £50.00/\$100.00. ISBN 978-1-905-12544-9.

The triumviral period necessarily figures in grand narratives, but is less popular as a subject for research, in spite of the fact that there is plenty of source-material, even if little is contemporary. The danger is that we see the Principate as the inevitable consequence of Julius Caesar's murder and his testamentary arrangements. The Muse of History, of course, tends to be hard on losers: a minor humiliation is that they rarely appear in exam questions and, even when they do, they are ignored by candidates. As the introductory chapter, "The Lost Republic," makes clear, this book is a protest against this neglect, where it joins recent contributions to the period by Josiah Osgood's *Caesar's Legacy* (2006) and Annie Allély's *Lepide le triumvir* (2004).

The problem with the subject is simple: we know little about Sextus Pompeius, except for the time between the battle of Philippi and his death, and what we are told is mediated by sources which, whether sympathetic to Caesar Octavianus or Antonius, would have reason to downplay his importance. If for Augustus Livy was a "*Pompeianus*," this support does not seem to have been extended to his younger son (p. 21). Welch's solution is to extend the topic so as to be a study of the Pompeian cause from the civil war of 49 BC onwards. After the introduction, chapters are devoted to the Pompeian naval strategy and Pompeian naval power, the pursuit of this policy by his sons after his death, and the attempt to resuscitate the Republic after Caesar's murder. Chapter 5, entitled "A Republican Triumvirate?," sets Sextus Pompeius beside Brutus and Cassius as the opposition to the triumvirs. In Chapter 6 Sextus comes at last fully into view in the struggles between Philippi and the treaty at Misenum; Chapter 7 follows Sextus down to his death. The last chapter discusses how Sextus' exploitation of *pietas*, as slogan and value, may be regarded as a precedent for its exploitation by Augustus later.

Welch succeeds in restoring Sextus' importance, if not in making us believe in his Republicanism. Her stress on the significance of naval power in the civil

wars is a helpful corrective to any over-emphasis on the Caesarian legions. There is also much useful discussion on the in-and-outs of diplomacy and campaigning. Important questions, however, remain unanswered and perhaps unanswerable. The members of the elite who fled from the Triumvirate to Sicily were of necessity anti-Caesarian, but were they genuinely Republican? How far did Sextus' more junior officers and men have political sentiments, apart from personal loyalty to him? What was the attitude of leading Romans with property in Sicily? Here we may suspect that many actively supported Sextus and paid for it, to judge from Agrippa's possession of major estates there (see Horace, *Ep.* 1.12). Above all, where did his money (generously illustrated in a number of plates) come from? Did he still have access to Spanish metal, when in Sicily? His funding no doubt relied a great deal on the diversion of provincial revenues, as did that of Brutus and Cassius, but he was probably also a plunderer by necessity, while his enemies used extremes of taxation.

Some further issues may be noted by the way. Decimus Brutus' legions were, surely, already in Cisalpina when he went out in 44 (p. 129). Calenus' speech in Dio Cassius (p. 128) is poor evidence for anything except the anti-Ciceronian rhetoric of the period, both before and after the latter's death, and Dio's ability to stage a Demosthenic debate. Hence we should not assume that the argument in the senate in the first days of January 43 (p. 145) was essentially between Calenus and Cicero. The consular called first might have been Servilius Isauricus or Lucius Piso; Lucius Caesar certainly spoke after Cicero (*Phil.* 5.5–6). Historians, misled by Antonius' rhetoric and the survival of Cicero's speeches, ascribe to him a greater influence in the senate in this year than the Caesarians surrounding him had. Note for example that it was a motion of Cassius' relative, Servilius Isauricus, that finally granted him the official command in Syria with the injunction to attack Dolabella (*Ad. Brut.* 15.3), not one of Cicero's (p. 163).

Nevertheless, Welch has provided us with a good read, which succeeds in conveying the excitement of the period to those who can now watch the gladiatorial contest from safe seats.

ANDREW LINTOTT

*Worcester College Oxford*, andrew.lintott@worc.ox.ac.uk