

*Remembering the Roman People: Essays on Late-Republican Politics and Literature.* By T.P. WISEMAN. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009. Pp. 271. Cloth, \$110.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-923976-4.

Wiseman's (W.) latest book consists of ten essays (only one previously published, "Roman History and the Ideological Vacuum"), which aim to explore the interests, outlook and self-image of the Roman People in the late Republic. The subject has been ignored, W. argues (pp. 5–32), essentially because Cicero, chief witness for the age, ignored it; and 20<sup>th</sup>-century historians, even when unsympathetic to Cicero, often were content to follow Syme's lead and had no time for ideology. (A fascinating chapter on Macaulay shows how a politician of an earlier age could read every word of Cicero's writings and find numerous traces of ideological warfare—and compromise.) While many Senators clearly saw the Republic as theirs, W. argues that there was a longstanding idea, still cherished by the People, of something else: a Republic of equals.

As with all W.'s work, the essays are compulsively readable—novelistic in their sequence and freshness despite tackling a range of subjects, and formidably learned. To name just a few topics that receive substantial discussion: the historian Licinius Macer; the origin of the "constitution of Romulus" in Dionysius of Halicarnassus (likely Varro); Varro's political sympathies, his Menippean satires and their possible public performance; the overlapping venues and practices of theater and politics; justifications of political murder developed in the late Republic; and the assassination of Caesar and its immediate aftermath. A wide array of evidence and methodologies is brought in—including the study of fragmentary authors, topographical research and *Quellenforschung*. Even when much speculation is involved (as in "The Fall and Rise of Gaius Geta," discussing the obscure consul of 116 BC), the solutions proposed are of larger value because they bring in out-of-the-way evidence or fresh approaches potentially useful for tackling related problems.

So it is that any student of the Roman Republic must read this book, and will do so with profit, even if further questions should be asked. It would, for instance, be valuable to have more discussion of who the "Roman People" really were, and who they thought they were. Strictly speaking, they were all the citizens of Rome, spreading from the City through Italy and across the empire. But did members of the urban *plebs* see their interests as identical to those of distant Italians, perhaps only recently enfranchised, or of citizens abroad? What did citizens abroad actually seek from the government in Rome? And why were at least some of the People willing to pick up arms and kill

## BOOK REVIEW

one another in civil war? That goes unexplained here. Also, it must be remembered that Cicero, loud as he was, did not speak for all the so-called *optimates*. Cato the Younger's distinctive voice, for instance, is largely elided in this account—but it deserves a hearing too, and to do so with sympathy takes some effort.

But to signal further just how stimulating this work is, especially on points of detail, I would like to offer reflections on a few of W.'s more specific ideas. First, W. argues that the satires of Lucilius were written "for performance, before a popular audience" (p. 136). This is an intriguing idea, but I am not sure that the evidence for it holds up. W. relies primarily on Hor. *Sat.* 2.1.68–74, interpreting the passage to mean that "Scipio and Laelius were by the stage among the crowd as Lucilius, or the actor performing his work, satirized the audience." But surely Horace's point is that the aristocratic Lucilius—the first major Latin poet of Senatorial stock—attacked the People and their leaders, and consorted with Aemilianus and Laelius only when they had withdrawn from the general public and the public's stage (*ubi se a vulgo et scaena in secreta remorant*, line 71). Further, W. does not note the passages where Lucilius discussed his ideal reader (particularly 592–3 Marx = Cic. *De Or.* 2.25, and 595–6 Marx = Plin. *NH praef.* 7; cf. Marx 594 = Cic. *Fin.* 1.7)—not decisive evidence but surely relevant to the question. I would be inclined to see at least some of Lucilius' poetry as composed for a more intimate audience, perhaps like certain poems of Catullus, for whom Lucilius was an important precursor. One might think too of the witty verse epistles sent from Corinth by Spurius Mummius, brother of the conqueror, to friends in Rome (mentioned by Cicero, *Att.* 13.6.4—reading *facetis*).

A few pages later, W. points out that seven of Varro's Menippean satires are known to have "canine titles" (e.g., "Beware of the Dog") and suggests that they allude to the ethical criticism associated with the "cynic dog" (p. 142). Lucilius, W. writes, took on that *persona*, "and though there is no sign of it in the few surviving Ennian fragments, it is possible that Roman *satura* exploited it from the start." It is worth remembering too the earlier Greek background, in which the wolf represented the "Outsider," a figure destructive to the community, while the poet could serve as a canine counterpart that staved off such threats (e.g., Pi. *P.* 2.83–5, and cf. more generally Archilochus and the significantly named "Lycambes"). Lucilius was obviously playing on this in the great *concilium deorum* that became the first book of his collected works by taking on L. Cornelius Lentulus "Lupus." The incorporation into satire of personal invective (as opposed to simple moralizing) does seem to me likely to be a Lucilian innovation, as the grammarian Diomedes maintained (*Gramm.*

## BOOK REVIEW

*Lat.* I p. 485 Keil, discussed by Gordon Williams, *Tradition and Originality in Roman Poetry* (Oxford, 1968) 445–7). Perhaps then Ennius fr. 63 Vahlen (*meum non est, ac si me canis memorderit*) actually refers to the poet's self-imposed "muzzling".

Finally, to touch on an altogether different matter, I turn to W.'s comment: "It may seem frivolous to suggest that Caesar was killed because the *optimates* liked things to be at their own convenience, but something like that must be near the truth" (p. 203). Here I think W. is very much onto something (and hope to strengthen and refine this suggestion in a book I am working on, *The Last Days of Caesar*). It is all too easy even for classicists to fall under Shakespeare's spell and turn the Ides of March into the great drama of Marcus Brutus. But recent work by Mark Toher (e.g., in M. Wyke, ed., *Julius Caesar in Western Culture* (Malden, MA, 2006) 29–44) suggests how Nicolaus of Damascus offers a different version of events, in which Decimus Brutus, Caesar's own favorite, is listed first among the conspirators. And the fact was that a number of the conspirators were not vanquished Republicans or optimates to the core. If, following the lead of Peter White (in F. Cairns and E. Fantham, eds., *Caesar against Liberty? Perspectives on His Autocracy* (Cambridge, 2003) 68–95), we delve more fully into Cicero's correspondence, we can see that Caesar lost his grip on relations with a number of his fellow Senators. He was inaccessible to them, shielded by his subordinates (especially Oppius and Balbus), grew out of touch with Senators' views and became ever more absorbed in his own literary endeavors. A sense emerges that even those within Caesar's own entourage might have been less than pleased.

Caesar had long found it difficult to maintain good relations with his colleagues in the Senate and had always had an arrogant streak. Power did not corrupt him, nor did he entirely dislike his position at the top of society. But it was not one he could handle. Caesar's failure, ultimately, was a prosaic one—a failure of leadership. And while he might have been the Roman People's favorite, that failure cost them dear when a terrible civil war erupted after the assassination he could have prevented.

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