

BOOK REVIEW

Slaves to Rome: Paradigms of Empire in Roman Culture. By MYLES LAVAN. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013. Pp. xii + 288. \$99.00. ISBN 978-1-107-02601-8.

What did Roman authors who usually held positions of authority in the provinces call provincials? What do the words and metaphors those authors chose say about how they wished to view themselves? These are the questions Myles Lavan takes up in this book, a mix of philological interpretation and broad cultural analysis that aims to do for Rome what Edward Said and others have done in their exploration of literature's role in supporting modern imperialism. The strengths of the book, whose theme is of interest to a wide range of scholars and students of Roman culture, lie in its perceptive readings of individual passages but its conclusions are predictable and not always persuasive.

Beginning with the basic terms for provincials (e.g. *socius*), and moving onto metaphors of slavery, benefaction, and patronage Lavan covers a range of expressions for non-Italian subjects of Roman rule. The common thread he finds is the assertion of elite Roman superiority to provincials. From the third century BC to the third AD, the authors' insistence on the exclusivity of Roman rule changes little. The change from republic to principate during this long period of time, Lavan argues, made little impact on Roman discourse about the relationship between center and periphery.

Lavan surveys the vocabulary for provincials in the first chapter. Though distinctions between the words can be determined in certain contexts, *peregrinus*, *socius*, and *provincialis* elude precise definition. Lavan suggests that the exact meaning of each word is secondary to what they do: they separate the Empire into two parts, Roman ruler and provincial subject. Even though this binary does not accurately characterize the experience of inhabitants of the Empire, Roman discourse insisted on it.

The second and third chapters focus on slavery as a metaphor for the relationship between Rome and the provinces. Lavan first argues that metaphors of slavery in Latin literature are common not only in the mouths of provincial rebels but

even in the voices of narrators. He concludes that Roman authors were comfortable with slavery and its coercive and violent aspects as a model for their rule of provinces. According to Lavan, the persistence of metaphors of slavery into the second century AD was in part an elite reaction to the growing use of *dominus* for the emperor in Rome.

Acknowledging that the second chapter's general examination of metaphors of slavery might miss some nuance, in the third chapter Lavan zeroes in on three episodes in the historical works of Tacitus that feature metaphors of slavery. Unsurprisingly, he concludes that in the *Agricola*, the *Histories'* description of the Batavian revolt, and the revolt of Boudicca in the *Annals*, the language of slavery is woven into the themes of the works more generally and generalizing about their meaning is not possible.

The fourth and fifth chapters examine benefaction and *clientela* as the more benevolent counterpoint to the paradigm of slavery for provincial rule. While these metaphors do suggest a Roman obligation to provincials, Lavan emphasizes the assertion of hierarchy underlying them. He sketches out the ideology of exchange to show how giving favors establishes one's superiority in Roman culture and how receiving favors establishes one's dependency.

In the sixth and final chapter of the book (a brief conclusion ties together the main threads one last time), Lavan pulls away from literary discourse and examines various official forms of address to provincial communities. Imperial and other official edicts, letters, and speeches provide direct evidence for the ways the relationship between the Roman center and provincial periphery were presented. Here, unlike in the literature surveyed in previous chapters, Lavan finds a leveling rhetoric. Every member of the Empire, wherever he lives and whatever office he does or does not hold, is presented as a grateful subject of the emperor.

Lavan succeeds in his aim to show that in addition to a narrative that celebrated integration of former subjects, there was a dark side in Roman discourse that insisted upon Roman superiority and provincial exclusion. The significance of this language, however, is not clear, as Lavan himself admits. The chapter on Tacitus effectively warns readers off forming conclusions too casually based on existence of this language. Lavan nevertheless presses on to suggest that metaphors of slavery offer a "hidden transcript," a revelation of elite thinking that was otherwise not publicly proclaimed. The example of Tacitus should give us pause before accepting the use of the paradigm of slavery as a form of elite self-esteem building. The historian was likely of provincial origin and a creator of episodes such as Petil-

ius Cerialis' speech on the benefits of Roman rule (*Hist.* 4.74, which Lavan discusses) and the senatorial opposition to enfranchising Gallia Comata (*Ann.* 11.23-24), where the text undermines the elite voices that proclaim Roman superiority by among other things showing them to be out of step with previous Roman history.

My disagreement with the conclusions however should not take away from the quality of book. It carefully engages with a broad range of Classical scholarship and its readings are consistently insightful. Cicero's use of *socius* (with its attendant sense of responsibility on the Romans' part) only in prosecutorial speeches in the extortion court and Pliny's aim to reverse the suggestion that Rome is dependent on Egypt for grain in the *Panegyricus* are my two favorite. This is a book all those interested in the presentation of provincials in the Roman Empire will want to read.

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