

BOOK REVIEW

The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome. Edited By IDA ÖSTENBERG, SIMON MALBERG, and JONAS BJØRNEBYE. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016. Pp. xiv + 361. Paperback, \$39.95. ISBN 978-1-350-00586-0.

This edited collection is part of the wider “spatial turn” in the study of classical antiquity, seen especially by a number of recent studies on Rome, Ostia, and Pompeii. As such, this collection seeks to “promote the study of interaction and communication between peoples and places within the field of Roman studies” (2). Because it originates from two conferences and because the participants/contributors are drawn from a range of different fields (ancient history, literature, art history/archaeology) and collectively cover an extensive timeframe (late Republic to late Antiquity), the volume represents a broad sampling of research approaches and periods. As goes (nearly) without saying about such conference-born collections, the various contributions will attract different levels of interest from the reader. However, the quality of the chapters is consistently strong overall and there is a surprisingly high degree of cross-fertilization and dialogue between them that makes for a more cohesive edited collection than most.

The book consists of four parts, which are preceded by the introduction: (1) elite movement (chapters 1–5); (2) literary movement (chapters 6–9); (3) processional movement (chapters 10–14); and (4) movement and urban form (chaps. 15–18). The separation of the papers into these categories at times seems artificial, given that the themes themselves are so diffuse and that many of the papers intersect with multiple themes (as the editors themselves acknowledge). That said, the editors’ desire to give the book itself a sense of structure is understandable, which they unpack in their brief introduction (1–9). As they note, monuments and roads were not solely fixed points with the Roman urban fabric, but were “bearers of meanings, and Rome’s past, manifest in monuments and rituals, took an active part in the construction of the moving city” (4). The question, then, is: how do we actively repopulate the ancient city?

Three chapters illustrate the kind of interdisciplinary approaches adopted and the broad temporal coverage achieved by their project. In “Urban Flux: Varro’s Rome-in-progress,” Diana Spencer uses the late Republican grammarian’s *De lingua latina* to recuperate “the Roman experience of reality” at a critical moment of political momentum and concomitant urban transition (99). As she notes, “Cities, like citizens, are intrinsically on the move” (100). By both surveying the structure of Varro’s work and subjecting parts of it to close readings, Spencer positions it both historically and culturally as an “urban semiotic archaeology” (102), one that sits at the cusp “between a personalized imaginary Rome and the real-world city” (110).

In “Monuments and Images of the Moving City,” Anne-Marie Leander Touati seeks to understand the iconography of many well-known state reliefs in Rome (from Augustus to the Severans) in the relation to their original locations (where known or, in the case of the Great Trajanic frieze, as reconstructed by her) and the flow of viewer traffic around them. As she argues, “the choice to depict movement or static postures in these media was not just a stylistic preference, or a means to build a pictorial narrative, but was also an actual invitation or guidance to the passer-by” (203). Her essential argument—that the monuments’ meaning was constituted by human movement—is an important caveat for all art historians who teach the works that she discusses, as they often appear framed in textbooks as if they floated in antiseptic isolation from their actual urban surrounds.

Finally, in “Towards a History of Mobility in Ancient Rome (300 BCE to 100 CE),” Ray Laurence thinks about movement from multiple registers: from the theoretical (territory and space, place, scale, networks) to the evidence-based, from the macroscopic to wheel ruts, from literary representations to material culture. His contribution engages with and ties together many of the volume’s major themes to an extent that this chapter can be productively read as a response to its contents as well as a sketch of directions for future research. Indeed, it will be particularly interesting to see how research on Roman mobility develops from here, especially the “sensory and emotional aspects of movement” alluded to by both Laurence and the editors (4) and highlighted by several recent publications within the last year.¹

¹ A. Haug and P.-A. Kreuz (eds.), *Stadterfahrung als Sinneserfahrung in der römischen Kaiserzeit* (Studies in classical archaeology 2). Turnhout: Brepols Publishers, 2016; E. Betts (ed.), *Senses of The Empire: Multisensory Approaches to Roman Culture*. New York, NY: Routledge, 2017.

In summary, this thoughtful, well-edited, and well-illustrated collection goes a long ways toward reanimating “the actual lived experience of movement” (176). Anyone interested in the subject of mobility, especially within the ancient Mediterranean world, will find much to think with in this volume, from its engagement with theoretical constructs to literary accounts and constructions to art historical and archaeological analyses. Like a walk around the City of Rome itself, *The Moving City* provides the reader with many enlightening and often unexpected new vistas on seemingly well-trodden ground.

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