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RECENSIONI

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RECENSIONI

Coarelli, F., 2019. *Statio. I luoghi dell'amministrazione nell'antica Roma*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, Pp. 494, ISBN: 978-88-7140-941-2; Coarelli, F., 2020. *Il Foro romano III. Da Augusto al tardo impero*, Roma: Edizioni Quasar, Pp. 326, ISBN: 978-88-5491-023-2.

The two books under consideration represent two different ways of organizing similar kinds of argumentation; and the argumentation is classic Coarelli. For decades now, C. has made his own the study of the location of buildings in the landscape of Rome. The method is well established; all the texts, inscriptions and numismatic evidence are brought to bear (and here, and helpfully, translated into Italian); abundant illustrations from previous publications are deployed; alternative interpretations are countenanced only to be dismissed; the style is one of unshakeable certainty.

What differs between the two volumes is that *Il foro Romano* is geographically defined, whereas *Statio* presents a class of buildings, those related to administration. The first sits in that long line of grey volumes which Quasar has published since the 1980s, a shelf in itself of scholarship. We shall wait a long time to see a comparable enterprise. With this volume C. takes the story of the forum into late antiquity. The second is a slightly more unusual kind of argument. Of the two, *Statio* is the more intriguing, challenging and problematic.

Il foro romano is, perhaps inevitably, really a series of articles, and it is also an extended and not entirely positive review of Giuliano and Verduchi's work on the pavement of the forum. The first volume in the set, published in 1983, could be construed as an oblique but powerful argument for the sophistication of early Rome, and the second, from 1985, by virtue of the choice of emphasis, was a rather subtle text on the transformation of power and authority from Republic to empire, as visible in the monuments of the forum. This volume struggles a little to find its focus. To some extent also, it is characterized by a return to some old themes, a re-visitation of the backlist of C.'s greatest hits. The first chapter starts with

the Via Sacra, a kind of signature tune of Roman topographic debate, and inevitably revisits the route of the triumph; and the longest section is on the Augustan arches, a key theme of the second volume. If there is a unifying theme, it might be found somewhere around the notion of places of memory, the title of the fifth chapter.

A brief summary of the contents shows both the range and limitations. After discussion of the imperial Via Sacra, and an argument for its long term consistent orientation, C. turns to the pavement and then to the fragments of the *Forma Urbis*, with a concentration on the monuments at the foot of the Capitol, including the temple of Concordia, a newly discovered fragment revealing a Graecostadium and a proposed temple of Deified Augustus. We move on to the Volcanal (which Coarelli has always maintained is under the Lapis Niger) and the development of this area in the imperial period. The lengthy discussion of the arches of Augustus and the position of the Fasti arrives finally at the conclusion that they were first put on the arch commemorating the victory at Naupactus, which replaced the *fornix Fabianus*, and was in turn replaced by the Parthian arch. A short chapter follows on equestrian statues.

The next chapter on memoryplaces, which strays backwards into the Republic, considers the Comitium (accepting the location of statues of Pythagoras and Alcibiades in the Republic as a result of a Delphic oracle); moves on to the Trajanic Anaglypha and their relationship to the statue of Marsyas in the forum and the long lasting fig tree, the *figus Ruminalis*. There is a section on the representation on a famous relief of the Lacus Curtius and also the suggestion that a gold *nummus* of the late third century BCE represents a statue group showing the oath between Romulus and Titus Tatius, itself commemorating the treaties struck with Rome in the face of the late third century Gallic and Hannibalic threats. This section concludes with an account of the Doliola (identified as a large sacellum near the so-called Equus Domitiani), the busta Gallica and the pila

Horatia. Taken together, these monuments attest to a degree of continuity of memory and preservation of architectural monuments. And this is of course a critical argument in itself – none of Coarelli's arguments work if in fact the Romans operated without strong and reliable memories of where monuments were, and what they were.

The next chapter on temples which commemorate the deification of emperors comes closest to an explicit argument. Focusing at the end on the altar of the temple of Antoninus and Faustina, attested by Ligorio, the surviving fragments of which were studied in the 1950s by Lissi, C. asserts that its model was the sixth century BCE Attic Dodekatheon, but translated through Hellenistic kingship. The imperial temples therefore constitute a restatement of this old idea, and those who know C.'s work will be able to think back to the extraordinarily exciting arguments in *Il foro Boario* (1988) for the parallels between the statue of Herakles and Minerva at S. Omobono and the story of Pisistratus.

The volume concludes with some thoughts on the tetrarchic forum, and especially the developments of the rostra and around the Curia. The theme of continuity is present if somewhat implicit. And indeed that seems to me to be what this book is really about. C. caps his forum trilogy with a reminder that his method rests on a degree of stable knowledge in antiquity, and that stable knowledge itself resided in the perpetuation of memory through buildings and other interventions in the Rome urban landscape.

Statio takes a different route through the Roman topographic landscape. Across nine chapters, C. seeks to identify an administrative topography within the city, a map of offices, the architecture of bureaucracy. His methodological ire is directed at Christer Bruun who claimed that *statio* did not refer to a place but to a function or the abstract notion of administration.

Some of the material is familiar because C. is rehearsing old arguments. The Aerarium Saturni, the Tabularium publicum, the Aerarium militare and the Tabularium principis give us the topography of part of the Capitoline Hill overlooking the Forum. We move then to the mint, first on the Arx, then moved near the Ludus Magnus around the area of San Clemente. The Atrium Libertatis, with its archival function, changed location from the Republican to the late imperial period, and C. suggests that at one stage it was in Trajan's libraries.

The discussion of the Statio Annonae includes a powerful account of the Minucian column, defending its antiquity and comparing it to the col-

umn and statue proposed for the Lapis Niger. The imperial location is near the Circus Maximus by S. Maria in Cosmedin. There is a long and combative defence of C.'s arguments about the location of the Statio aquarum and of the regular corn doles in a massive complex including the Porticus Minucia Vetus in the Largo Argentina. This chapter is in part then about food distribution but it focuses rather more on the identification of the buildings than on the distribution itself.

We move on the other urban prefecture and the legal infrastructure of imperial Rome, and again C. argues for a series of locations, the basilica Paulli, the Templum Pacis and then the Basilica of Maxentius. The last chapters consider the *vigiles* or the combined police and fire authorities, and the *cursus publicus*, or the postal service, which C. places near S. Marcello al Corso on the via Lata (not a million miles from the post office at Piazza San Silvestro!)

This substantial publication has at the outset a quote from Nicholas Purcell: 'no ancient office building and no ancient desk will ever be discovered', and the implication is that the book disproves the claim. But this is a conversation at cross purposes.

Statio never really defines what administration entailed in the Roman empire, and this is the point of Purcell's argument. Purcell was not arguing that there were no functional administrative spaces, but that we have to ask what the function was. There were archives, but to what extent was document retrieval possible? There were records, but how good were they, or better, what were they good for?

What weakens C.'s account is that he does not ask this question, and so we have a fascinating account of particular buildings and spaces but very little idea of what they were for. The rather undifferentiated account of *amministrazione* then leaves the notion of a quasi-modern bureaucracy, which is precisely what needs to be examined.

Purcell's argument was that it was the keeping of records that mattered more than what was in the records – their future utility was less significant than the fact of their existence. The great archive buildings projected the notion of stability and control as a backdrop to individual actions and decisions, informed by a set of assumptions about the world and behaviours within it, which could find ready reinforcement from the art and architecture of empire.

The utility of C.'s account therefore is not that it proves anything about ancient administration that Bruun or Purcell would deny, but that it offers

some mapping of the system they describe. The next question is what we do with the map.

In his brilliant account of mid-Republican Rome, *Divine Institutions: Religions and Community in the Middle Roman Republic*, Princeton 2020, Daniel Padilla Peralta argued that we have systematically underestimated the role religion played in the economy and the attention span of Romans (and C.'s topographic work plays no small part in the elaboration of the case). Using Hölkeskamp's notion of government by ritual, Padilla Peralta stresses the trinity of temples, theatres and festivals: 'the value and enduring rewards of the Republic's promotion of a cultural space, defined above all by the channelling of resources to monumentality and the restructuring of civic time, through which religious experience became an indispensable foundation for the consolidation and regeneration of the Roman state' (246).

Now one kind of story that one could tell of Rome is that 'religious' Rome becomes 'bureaucratic' Rome. This quasi-Weberian argument however might be turned on its head. If that trinity of temples, festivals and theatres is allowed to include the recurring spectacles of food and water distribution, law and the appearance of a busy, stable city, preserving its historical and archival memories, one might argue that *I luoghi dell'amministrazione* are part of the same process of consolidating and regenerating the Roman state, at Rome, and for the Roman empire.

To conclude, C. here, and across the long range of his work, has immeasurably enriched the physical map we can construct of Rome. What it meant, conceptually, for the inhabitants of the city, and its visitors, rests on this foundation, and will animate and bring life to its topographic contours.

Christopher Smith

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