

Farney's main problem in dealing with the earlier centuries of the Republic is that the evidence for ethnic self-promotion is both subtle and ambiguous. Moreover, in many cases, the individual family histories extend into a past where tales and legends reign supreme. Often there is not much more to go on than onomastic evidence (ethnic *praenomina* and *cognomina*) or, sometimes very vague, allusions on coins. An important material is constituted by coins struck between the early second century BC and the reign of Augustus which advertise the ethnic identity of the moneyer by means of private types. Such coins provide the name of a moneyer of a known origin along with types or legends referring to that particular origin; typically, this reference was to a famous cult (such as that of Juno Sospita at Lanuvium or that of the Dioscuri at Tusculum) or to a mythical founder or event associated with the moneyer's hometown. This material is presented and discussed at length at the end of the book ("Appendix: Catalog of Coins Advertising the Ethnic Identity of Republican and Augustan Moneyers", pp. 247–95).

At the very end, there is a bibliography (pp. 297–322) and a general index (pp. 323–37).

Farney's effort is a fine work of scholarship constituting stimulating reading with many novel ideas and points of view. It is a most important contribution to our understanding of the history and society of the Roman Republic.

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LUCIANO CANFORA: *Julius Caesar. The People's Dictator*. Translated by MARIAN HILL – KEVIN WINDLE. Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh 2007. ISBN 978-0-7486-1936-8. XVI, 392 pp. GBP 24.99.

About eight years after its first appearance – originally published in Italian by Laterza (title: *Giulio Cesare. Il Dittatore Democratico*) in 1999 – comes the English translation of Luciano Canfora's biography of Julius Caesar (note that the edition in North America by the University of California Press has a slightly different title). During these years, this work has not only been translated into various languages but has also established itself in Italy as a popular biography on Caesar, especially outside the academic and scholarly world. For instance, I remember this book being available in 2005 as a supplement to *Il Corriere della Sera*, Italy's most prominent and best-selling newspaper, to which Canfora is a regular contributor. Before starting reading this monograph, one would therefore expect to have in one's hands a biography of Caesar with a chronologically organized account of the events of the most crucial period of Roman history, whose target should not be mainly classicists or scholars but rather readers who are not so familiar with the topic. This impression is also strengthened by the scant references to modern literature in the notes, which one notices after a quick look. This is not the case. After some pages, one rapidly realizes that reading *The People's Dictator* implies deep knowledge, not merely of the basic developments of Roman history but especially of ancient literature and historiography.

The main *fil rouge* in Canfora's interpretation of Caesar's life and political career (and, even though not explicitly stated, perhaps the reason for the paradox in the subtitle) is the sliding from a political line in harmony with the traditional experience of the *populares* during the

main part of his rise to power, based on seeking general consensus (see ch. 1 about the hostility of Sulla at the beginning of his career and ch. 13 about the significance of the assignation of Gaul and the restoration of Marius' trophies or ch. 19 about the first phase of the civil war), to a sudden change towards solutions more inspired by Sullan remembrances after the dictatorship in 49 (esp. ch. 32, pp. 293–4).

The book is divided into 42 chapters, apparently disposed in chronological order. However, the whole structure of the argumentation follows much more thematic patterns, rather than chronological ones. We find some chapters of historical analysis, where the author anticipates events whose historical account comes later. This happens, for example, in chs. 19 and 20, where one reads about crucial episodes like the surrendering of Corfinium, the battle of Thapsus and the events of Utica, which are mentioned in the main account of the historical events only some chapters later. The effect is that the reader without previous knowledge of the developments in question may be disoriented.

The key for a most fruitful reading of this book is, in my opinion, to consider it more a collection of short essays on different aspects of Caesar's life than a real biography. Moreover, the author's expertise emerges much more in discussing and interpreting various historiography-related issues than depicting a unitary and coherent picture of Caesar's rise to the *de facto* absolute power in Rome. Canfora displays a skillful and competent use of the literary sources and always argues clearly and convincingly on the reliability of the ancient authors, as he wisely guides the reader through their political orientations and interdependences. This is the case of ch. 27 with an interesting report of the different versions given by Dio, Suetonius, Velleius and Nicolaus of Damascus of Octavian's intervention in the campaign in Spain straight after Munda. I especially appreciated chs. 1 and 3 with a useful contextualization of Caesar's first political steps in the ongoing conflict between *populares* and *optimates*, ch. 19 with Caesar's way of relating to the Sullan experience, ch. 24 with the role played by the Jews in the Egyptian campaign and the different accounts of those events given by Josephus and the author of the *Alexandrian War*. Some other interlocutory chapters appear, on the other hand, quite unnecessary for the development of the whole argumentation in the economy of the work. It is the case, for example, with ch. 4, where I do not find any connection between Caesar's acceptance of the pontificate and his deep religious beliefs, or ch. 33 on Cassius' conversion to Epicurean doctrines.

The main problem of the book – assuming that this is not a book for non-specialists – is instead the prevailing lack of quotations from modern literature and the scantiness of scholarly discussion. The only modern scholar whom Canfora regularly and massively quotes (see introduction, p. XII), seems to be Napoleon Bonaparte (*Précis des guerres de César*, Paris 1836). This too often repeated choice of such a prestigious interlocutor sounds a bit suspicious when reading. In the bibliography, one gets to know of Canfora's somewhat negative opinion of Chr. Meier's *Caesar*. It would be interesting to know on which particular issues his view differs from that of Canfora, and this is the case with all the literature quoted in the bibliography at the end. Scholarly debate is mostly missing in both the main body of the text and in the footnotes.

Instead of that, Canfora sometimes seems to prefer some less successful parallels with Italy's contemporary history. On p. 37, at the end of a chapter on the significance of the trade of votes and on the political system of the Roman oligarchic republic, Canfora (without quoting any other modern work on this subject) cites an article by Norberto Bobbio from the Italian newspaper *La Stampa*. As Bobbio is (it seems at least to me) expounding a general theory

or rather referring to modern politics in Italy, I do not see any direct relationship between his words and the important topic of the role of the *nobilitas* and the way those families secured control of the political life of the Republic. Moreover, the same sensation is produced in the reader by a too facile comparison, without further explanations or references to such an important topic, between Augustus' and Mussolini's rhetoric in ch. 27 (the blacksmith of Predappio), otherwise one of the most illuminating in the whole book. Similarly inappropriate seemed to me the tone used in describing Caesar's war crimes during the Gallic campaigns in ch. 15.

Some observations on the appendices. At the end of the book there is a very useful and detailed chronological table of the events related to Caesar's life from his birth up to the Ides of March: a practical and easy-to-browse tool, which provides quotations of the ancient sources on each fact. Surprisingly, some of the appendices originally in the Italian version are missing. In the edition by Laterza, one finds five short digressions on specific arguments (most interesting are no. 1 on Caesar as a writer and no. 2 on Pollio's historical work). Additionally, there is a short glossary and a section called "Biografie" with basic facts on some of the persons named in the book. Those appendices would have been of some use for readers unfamiliar with the field of Roman history. Furthermore, I would have left the footnotes as footnotes, as in the Italian edition, instead of placing all the quotations as endnotes after every chapter.

As for the translation, the translators provide an always readable and flowing text and, as said before, the choice of the title (*The People's Dictator*) is much more suitable than the original paradox (*Il dittatore democratico*), whose meaning remains otherwise almost obscure. To conclude, *The People's Dictator* is a series of interesting and well-written essays, rich with sharp intuitions and based on a solid command of the ancient sources. Rather than being a definitive biography of Caesar, this book is, however, a very stimulating interpretation of some aspects of the most famous life in Roman history.

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*The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Augustus*. Edited by KARL GALINSKY. Cambridge University Press, New York 2005. ISBN 978-0-521-80796-8 (hb), 978-0-521-80796-8 (pb). XVII, 407 pp. GBP 48, USD 90 (hb), GBP 18.99, USD 34.99 (pb).

Periodization, though clearly indispensable for the orderly study of history, is never easy, always arbitrary and often contestable. However, there are certain periods which virtually stand out in splendid relief. Few eras in western history appear as distinct and self-contained as that of the ascendancy of Octavian/Augustus. As one of the contributors to the volume under review here notes (A. Barchiesi, p. 281), "[t]he Augustan Age ... has achieved unparalleled stability among the many constructs of historicism." This is true not merely in political chronology, but also in artistic history. Only rarely does an epoch distinguished by so much momentous change, in terms of administrative and organizational reform, coincide so conspicuously with the *floruit* of so many important names in literature and with such a flowering in monumental architecture and the other arts. Hardly anyone could be better qualified to conceive an overview of those pivotal decades than Karl Galinsky, author of a host of significant studies on Augustan themes, including the acclaimed synthesis *Augustan Culture* (Princeton 1996).