construction of Messenian history and ethnic identity. Cohesion came to be the problem for the new polity of Messene: the way that the Messenian past was articulated during the late Classical and early Hellenistic periods clearly reflected the attempt of the *polis* of Ithome/Messene to express its dominance in the area. The opposition to Sparta remained the main characteristic of the Messenian identity for centuries. However, Roman rule slowly changed the function of Messenian identity. During the Imperial period, linking themselves to the tradition of Messenian *epos* was just one of the ways for the powerful families to claim social superiority in the community and in the empire.

The book is divided into eleven chapters. In the introduction, Luraghi gives the theoretical and methodological background to his study. Chapter 2 outlines the historical timespan of the work, focussing on the political and ethnic separation between Messenia and Sparta. Chapters 3 to 10 discuss in chronological order the history of the Messenians. In the conclusion, the author draws the different aspects of his study together by offering a tentative history of the Messenian identity and its main structural elements. By way of examining archaeological, epigraphic and literary sources, Luraghi draws an interesting and detailed picture of the construction of the ethnic identity of the ancient Messenians throughout the centuries from the Bronze Age to the Imperial era. The number of sources for this kind of comprehensive study naturally is abundant, but the writer handles it with neat accuracy, discussing all the various aspects with careful scrutiny, covering multiple fields of studies related to ancient history. Conclusions at the end of every chapter, as well as short introductions to the questions to be discussed at the beginnings of chapters, make the reading experience enjoyable, as they lead the reader on as well as help to keep track of the large amount of historical data received. An extensive bibliography and detailed indices complete this study, which is of importance to every scholar interested in the history of the Messenians, or more generally, in the notion of ethnic identity in antiquity.

Sanna-Ilaria Kittelä

GARY D. FARNEY: *Ethnic Identity and Aristocratic Competition in Republican Rome*. Cambridge University Press, New York 2007. ISBN 978-0-521-86331-5. XVI, 337 pp. GBP 52, USD 95.

Though questions pertaining to ethnicity have always received their due share of attention among classical scholars, it can be noted that the underlying ideologies for such research have undergone profound changes over the decades. There is a tradition going back to a dark age when racial prejudice held sway, not only in war-torn, militaristic societies with poor democratic traditions, but also in the United States; it is less than one hundred years since Bryn Mawr College professor Tenney Frank infamously identified the influx of foreign (that is, eastern) ethnic elements into Italy as a principal cause for the decline of the Roman civilization ("Race Mixture in the Roman Empire", *AHR* 21 [1915–16] 689–708). Subsequent developments have been affected by colonialism, post-colonialism and, increasingly, by recent experiences of multiculturalism and plurality as well as by current identity issues. As for the main areas of focus, in Greek studies there has been a prominent preoccupation with the cultural demarcation lines between a more or less monolithically perceived Hellenicity and an equally

non-diversified "otherness" (there are many examples of this before more recent works such as Edith Hall, *Inventing the Barbarian. Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*, Oxford 1991). More recently, ethnical identities within the Hellenic World have been raised as issues (see, for instance, Jonathan M. Hall's studies *Ethnic Identity in Greek Antiquity*, Cambridge 1997 and *Hellenicity. Between Ethnicity and Culture*, Chicago 2002). In Roman studies, much of the attention has been directed towards the romanization of subdued peoples outside of Italy whereas comparatively little has been written on the privileged groups in the geographical and historical core of the Empire, that is, the Italic peoples who had already received Roman citizenship in the republican period.

In this book, Gary D. Farney explores some very interesting aspects of the fact that the Romans descended from different ethnic groups, such as Latins, Sabines and Etruscans, each of which retained a strong cultural identity. These groups made up a single united community, but this was actually a pluralistic construction. This very aspect of ancient Roman society was one of its chief characteristics; the Romans always retained a remarkable receptivity when it came to embracing foreign elements. Few societies in western history can equal Rome's capacity for absorbing diverse ethnic and linguistic groups and forging them into a new superordinate identity. Not only did the Romans continuously subdue new peoples, but the Roman Senate also opened its ranks to the foremost groups within these peoples and made them partners in its imperial ambitions. This meant that the aristocracy of Rome was continually evolving, gradually incorporating the local elites.

Farney shows how the issue of ethnic identity is prominently present in the political culture of the Roman Republic. Focusing on aristocrats with two homelands – "*Duae Patriae*" is the title of the introductory chapter (pp. 1–38, providing the background) – that is, Rome along with a native town (or a town where the family originated), he examines how such individuals related publicly to their specific ethnicity in order to make advancements in the continuous competition for public recognition, important priesthoods and – above all – the political magistracies. This kind of publicized association with a certain ethnic group was, according to Farney, a genuine necessity in the fiercely contested Roman elections. The masses voting in the electoral assemblies would, at least to some extent, have based their judgments of the *candidati* on their group identity, always entailing notions of ethnically imparted virtues and inherited qualities. Much of the discussion is concerned with aristocratic self-representation and family identity advertisement, which are key concepts throughout the study. Identifying ethnic identity as an important element of family identity, and demonstrating how aspiring politicians publicized certain qualities associated with their ethnicity by means of unique advertising schemes (sometimes entailing elaborate manipulation of existing stereotypes), Farney clearly breaks new ground in the study of Roman politics in the republican period.

Following the introductory chapter, the book proceeds with a series of studies focusing on specific identities: Romans born in Latium ("2. *Homo Romanus natus in Latio*", pp. 39–77), Romans of Sabine extraction ("3. *Romanus atque Sabinus*", pp. 78–124), and those of Etruscan origin ("4. *Tusci ac barbari*", pp. 125–78); thereafter follows a treatment of other Italic groups ("5. *Municipalia illa prodigia*", pp. 179–228). The whole study is concluded with a discussion of how the diverse Italic identities finally merged into a distinct Italian identity within the context of Rome's Mediterranean Empire, and how the Romans' experience of Italic groups affected their perceptions of and dealings with other ethnic groups, notably Greeks, Gauls and Germans ("6. *Transferendo huc quod usquam egregium fuerit*", pp. 229–46).

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.

Kaj Sandberg

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