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Ida Östenberg, Simon Malmberg, Jonas Bjørnebye (ed.), *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome*. London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015. Pp. xiv, 361. ISBN 9781472528001. \$138.00.

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Preview

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Consciously reflecting the so-called ‘spatial turn’, the papers collected in this book address the city of Rome by shifting from a traditional ‘static’ study of ancient topography to a new focus on the dynamic interaction between monuments and people.

Part 1 concerns ‘elite movement’. The five papers elucidate different facets of the Roman representation and negotiation of power through the use of the city, which is something more than a simple backdrop for the various actors: in Saussurian terms we could say that the topography of the city is the *langue* and the single cases are utterances of the *parole*. Ida Östenberg examines the political system of republican Rome in the wake of the ‘performative turn’. Individuals cross Rome in the company of their clients and friends according to an honorific and functional hierarchy. The paths are predictable, as they always have in common some socially relevant destinations such as the gates of the city, the *domus* and the *celeberrimi loci*: the Forum and the Capitolium. Richard Westall focuses on the movement of foreign embassies in Rome and reconstructs admission and registration of the delegations, demonstrating how the more or less polite way of housing and dismissing the ambassadors was governed by traditional customs and subtle diplomatic language. Lovisa Brännstedt deals with the first empress’s movement. The imperial family became a public institution, and Augustus’ office of Pontifex Maximus brought the sacred hearth of Roman society into the imperial home, equating Livia to the Vestals. After her death, in 42, she was proclaimed *diva* and her image was carried on a chariot drawn by elephants in the Circus Maximus. Brännstedt recognizes this procession on the so-called Vicomagistri Altar, but the hypothesis by Ittai Gradel¹ cannot be accepted because the second victim in the procession is not a *bos mas* (an adult ox) but a *vitulus* (steer), an offer that was inappropriate for Divus Augustus. Monica Hellström studies the literary *topos* of movement through the city in Cassius Dio and Herodian and later writers. These historians express suspicion of the dynamism of autocrats, which they contrast to the republican ‘static’ ideal of philosophical calmness. In the changed social and historical conditions of the fourth century, however, the interest in this form of

representation of power disappeared. Sissel Undheim takes up the least mobile of all figures, the 'zero degree' of the moving city: the Christian consecrated virgins. Their virtue is expressed by staying at home; on the other hand, their total lack of social contact can also be viewed in a negative light because it means that the virgins escape social control. What is at stake is a delicate balance between visibility and invisibility, public appearance and seclusion.

Part 2 is devoted to 'literary movement'. The connection among its four chapters seems not always self-evident, due to the nature itself of the literary approach which potentially includes very disparate examples, reflecting with various degrees of pertinence the physical movement in the city.

Isak Hammar analyses the sources about the outbreak of political violence in the late Republic. The study is not completely satisfying in that it is not focused on the movements of the crowd or revolts in the city, but rather concerns the 'start, motion and stop' of violence. The discussion depends more on a purely linguistic choice of the author and a modern metaphor than on the ancient sources: the same essay could have been equally well written about the 'beginning, development, and ending' of the cycle of political violence without any mention of movement. Anthony Corbeill examines some sources related to judicial processes. His discussion centers on a series of micro-movements in the Forum and in its immediate vicinity. A close analysis of the texts against the backdrop of the ancient topography lets us understand in a much better way the behaviour of the various actors. Diana Spencer targets the fifth book of *De Lingua Latina*. Varro's etymologies try to give historical depth to the various places in the city of Rome and are interesting traces of how the late republican elite conceptualized space and the city, building a historical and spatial semantic (a better term than 'semiotic', which the author prefers to use). Timothy M. O'Sullivan explores the literary metaphor of the movement through the city in the Augustan age. The topography of Rome combines the values of the mythical past with the splendor of the Augustan city, in different variations of tone. Literary changes go hand in hand with topographic ones and with the evolution of the social meaning implied by movement through the city by the elite.

Part 3 addresses the 'processional movement'. The five chapters give a good idea of the ritual movement of the people through the city, mostly for religious purposes. In all these cases the implicit purpose is to reinforce social cohesion: the whole population or a representative part of it walks across the city far and wide, ritually reunifying its different social and topographical articulations. Kristine Iara investigates the relationship between cults, urban area and *ager* in three cases, giving different importance to the location of the sanctuaries and the path of the processions. Unfortunately the study fails to go much beyond these basic conclusions. Carsten Hjort Lange treats the returns of Augustus to Rome. After the triple triumph of the year 29 BC, the emperor avoided celebrating additional triumphal processions in order to preserve the memory of this extraordinary event without obscuring it with minor celebrations. As alternative honours, he accepted the Senate's dedication of an altar to Fortuna Redux outside the Porta Capena in 19 BC and a second altar to Pax on the via Flaminia/Lata in 13 BC. The author raises the interesting problem of the route Augustus followed in 29 BC, arriving from the south: how could he reach the Circus Flaminius without crossing the pomerial line? Notwithstanding Lange's hesitations, we must underscore that the Aventine remained outside the pomerial limits until Claudius. The line of the walls ran parallel

to the river through the Forum Boarium,² and there is good evidence demonstrating that the Forum Boarium remained outside the pomerium³: we could add the attestations about two couples of Greeks and Gauls buried alive in that area in 228, 216 and 113 BC,⁴ evidence clearly implying the area remained outside the city proper. As regards later periods, Gitte Lønstrup Dal Santo considers how Pope Damasus exploited popular frequentation of the catacombs and the commemoration of the martyrs buried there in order to develop a common memory and identity of the Roman community. Margaret M. Andrews deals with the seven-form Litany organized by Pope Gregory in 590 and 603. These consisted of a procession starting from seven different churches and gathering the whole people into S. Maria Maggiore on the Esquiline with a clear penitential connotation. Michael Mulryan hypothesizes that several churches dedicated to St Lawrence (but S. Lorenzo in Formoso, not 'Formonso') were placed along a route followed by pilgrims. One can raise several objections: it is not clear why the author does not consider the two important basilicas of S. Lorenzo in Damaso and S. Lorenzo in Lucina, and there is no trace of a similar procession for any saint in Rome. There is the need to hypothesize rather a reciprocal adaptation of the places to the tradition (a phenomenon the anthropologists call 'iconatropy'⁵) and vice versa. Finally the parallel proposed between Christian saints and pagan heroes has been much debated and, in the end, is not convincing.⁶

Finally, Part 4 concerns 'movement and urban form', considering the movement embedded in the city itself, in the civic mechanism, in the signs of its monuments, in the social behaviour of the civic community or of significant parts of it. Ray Laurence discusses space as created by movement and usage. Sometimes, however, the author seems to be too theoretical: he considers the peripheral location of the Pretorian camp to have the goal of giving greater visibility to soldiers crossing the city while escorting the emperor. On the contrary, the reasons seem to be legal and practical: it was impossible to find a property large enough in the central area of the city, and the military barracks needed to remain outside the pomerial limits. The importance of the movement rightly implies a focus on the history of road surfaces, but there are some unclear points concerning the chronology of the paving of the Roman Forum, which is more complex and ancient than assumed by Laurence.⁷ The general proposal is right but needs much in-depth analysis and a stronger accent on urban evolution.⁸ One of the best papers is that by Simon Malmberg: a careful analysis of the ports on the Tiber, navigation along the river, and the logistics of the *Annona*. The result is a periodization into five key moments of the city's evolution. The framework is solid and convincing and the study is open to more detailed analysis in the future: it could be interesting to consider the role of the port built under Tiberius at the river's mouth,⁹ or the evolution of the late antique *Annona*. Anne-Marie Leander Touati raises the question of the meaning of the direction and movement portrayed on Roman official reliefs. They suggested to the beholder how to direct his gaze and steps. The idea is intriguing but needs to be used cautiously: not all the examples are reflective exclusively of this intention. The direction of the friezes on the two columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius, or that of the procession on the Ara Pacis, are anticlockwise because this is the usual direction for the circular processions and, at the same time, a standard option like the modern western use to read a page from left to right. The Roman world has a number of examples: the *lustrum*, the triumph around the Palatine, the circus race, the Argei procession and the Ambarvalia, but also the order of the Augustan *Regiones* of Rome and of the pomerial boundary stones. Finally, Jonas Bjørnebye examines the mithraea of Rome

in terms of their topographical distribution and function. Cautiously, the author limits his consideration to the twenty mithraea attested, and plots only 16 on the map. Among them, however, the evidence of the cult of Mithras in the Vatican Phrygianum seems too weak and that beneath the Ospedale di S. Giovanni is very doubtful. The author identifies two types of mithraea, the larger ones—semi-public, located in public buildings, near important crossroads—and the smaller, placed in the middle of neighborhoods and away from traffic nodes. Only the first type could be used by worshipers from different communities.

Summing up, the volume is consistent and well organized: it is surely an important step forward in exploring a more integrated study of the cityscape in the light of the spatial and the performative turns, combining topography, architecture, epigraphy, philology, history and semiotics. It is easy to prophesy that the book will encourage many other scholars to pursue work along these lines, since it clearly shows how fruitful and productive this approach can be.

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Notes:

- [1.](#) I. Gradel, *Emperor Worship and Roman Religion*, Oxford 2002, 165-186.
- [2.](#) A.M. Colini, G. Pisani Sartorio and C. Buzzetti, "Portus Tiberinus", in S. Quilici Gigli (ed.), *Il Tevere e le altre vie d'acqua del Lazio antico*. Quaderni di archeologia etrusco-italica 12, Rome 1986, 157-197.
- [3.](#) M. Sofia, "Il pomerio di Roma lungo la fascia tiberina", *Orizzonti* 13, 2012, 113-117; L.M. Mignone, "Rome's Pomerium and the Aventine Hill: from auguraculum to imperium sine fine", *Historia* 65, 2016, 442.
- [4.](#) 228 BC: Plut., *Marc.* 3, 6; Cass. Dio, *Exc. de sent.* 128 B = fr. 50 B; Oros. IV 13, 3. 216 BC: Liv. XXII 57, 4 and 6. 113 BC: Plut., *Quaest. Rom.* 83 (284 B). A. Frascchetti, "Le sepolture rituali del Foro Boario", in *Le délit religieux dans la cité antique*. Rome 1981, 51-115.
- [5.](#) J. Vansina, *Oral Tradition as History*, Madison 1985, 10, 44-45, 157-158 and 187-188.
- [6.](#) S. Heid in Chr. Gnllka, S. Heid and R. Riesner, *Blutzeuge. Tod und Grab des Petrus in Rom*, Regensburg 2010, 111-145.
- [7.](#) C.F. Giuliani and P. Verduchi, *L'area centrale del Foro Romano*, Florence 1987, 52-66.
- [8.](#) P. Liverani, "Interventi urbani a Roma tra il IV e il VI secolo", *Cristianesimo nella storia* 29.1, 2008, 1-31; Id., "Roma nel panorama delle città tardoantiche", *JAT* 19, 2009, 41-58.
- [9.](#) M. Heinzelmänn and A. Martin, "River port, navalia and harbour temple at Ostia. New results of a DAI-AAR project", *JRA* 15, 2002, 5-19.

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