

A. M. ECKSTEIN, *MEDITERRANEAN ANARCHY, INTERSTATE WAR, AND THE RISE OF ROME* (Hellenistic Culture and Society 48). Berkeley and London: University of California Press, 2006. Pp. xvii + 370. ISBN 978-0-52024-618-8. £32.50/US\$49.95.

Arthur Eckstein here offers a new and provocative look at ancient imperialism and warfare. What is novel is his sustained application of arguments from political science to an understanding of ancient interstate relations. In particular, the book is underpinned by modern 'realist' theories of international relations. The goal is not merely to demonstrate to narrowly-focused ancient historians how realist theory might be useful to them but more specifically, E. is concerned to contest widely-held views about the nature of Roman imperialism.

E. takes three fundamental arguments from the realist approach; first, that interstate relations are essentially anarchic; second, that all states are out for themselves; and, third, that balances of power act as an albeit fragile way of regulating interstate relations. For E. the ancient Mediterranean offers one of 'the grimmest and most unforgiving of Realist paradigms' (10). E.'s book is aimed especially at those scholars who seek to explain Roman expansion by Rome's aggressive and militaristic character. He argues that any explanation must consider two levels, first the system in which states operated and second the characteristics of the states in question (unit attributes). He argues that in interstate anarchy all states are warlike and bellicose; that is a consequence of the system. In this, therefore, Rome is no different from any other ancient state so these characteristics cannot be invoked, as they so often are, to explain Roman success. What is unique about Rome is its capacity to assimilate others. Modern scholars, he argues, fail to understand Roman imperialism because they focus on factors internal to Roman society and not on the system of which Rome was a part.

Much of the book is devoted to showing that the ancient Mediterranean was indeed an anarchic system, where violence and war were endemic, and that Roman behaviour, far from being exceptional, was the norm. Chs 3 and 4 explore interstate relations in Classical Greece and the Hellenistic Age and seek to demonstrate that aggressive, militarized, self-interested, and often brutal competition governed relations between states. There is some danger of circularity here; the prime evidence in support of a realist approach is supplied for Classical Greece by Thucydides, acknowledged by E. to be the founding figure of realist thought (48–9), and for the Hellenistic period by Polybius, a historian who shared Thucydides' pragmatic outlook (117). It is noticeable that realist analysis is less to the fore in ch. 5 on the West, where it is writers such as Livy who provide much of the material. E. then moves on to examine Rome itself, placing it within this broader context. In conclusion, he argues that it was the virtual collapse of the Ptolemaic kingdom in the late third century (cf. Soviet Union?) that precipitated a crisis across the system that led to Roman intervention in the East against Philip V and Antiochus III (fully developed in A. Eckstein, *Rome Enters the Greek East* (2008)). E.'s interpretation of events in 201 B.C. may be similar to that of Maurice Holleaux but the theoretical framework is rather different.

The realist position presents an inherently bleak vision of international relations and its very bleakness may lead it to underestimate or even to overlook international co-operation. This can be more pronounced when looking at antiquity as the application of modern political science can have the effect of encouraging us to judge antiquity in relation to the present. They did not have what we have, no wonder they had problems. E. emphasizes that the ancient world had no formal international law, no system of resident diplomats, and no institutionalized channels for regular communication between states, all of which would go some way towards reducing interstate conflict. It might, however, be more productive to see the ancients as having a different way of doing things and then try to make sense of how they did it (or indeed how they failed to). The Greeks, for example, may have lacked all these modern institutions but they did perceive themselves to be Greek (whatever that might be) and this entailed, however loosely, shared practices and values in interstate relations, such as common religious customs, panhellenic festivals, foreign arbitration, and the inviolability of ambassadors. They were aware too that other peoples might not subscribe to their way of thinking. Thus Polybius notes a number of occasions where the rules that governed Greek interstate relations were simply alien to the Romans. When the Romans capture Aegina, the prisoners' request that they might send ambassadors to kindred states to raise ransom money is met with incomprehension from the Roman commander (9.42). Similarly, the confused Aetolians, after discovering what surrender to Roman *fides* means, are left saying that it is neither just nor Greek (20.10). The prevalence of warfare in antiquity is something that few would deny (cf. Finley, *Ancient History: Evidence and*

Models (1985), 67–87) and realist theory does offer a plausible account, but to be effective as a model it needs also to explain the evident and extensive co-operation that existed among Greek states (cf. A. Giovannini, ‘Greek cities and Greek commonwealth’, in A. Bulloch *et al.*, *Images and Ideologies: Self-definition in the Hellenistic World* (1993), 265–86, and J. Ma, ‘Peer polity interaction in the Hellenistic Age’, *Past and Present* 180 (2003), 9–39). This latter is something that E. tends to sideline rather than incorporate into his picture.

E. is surely right to stress Rome’s capacity to assimilate others as a significant factor in its success, in particular the sharing of rights and even citizenship with other Italians; in spite of its importance, this section is surprisingly brief and it would be good if it were to be expanded in a future publication. At times E. seems overly schematic. Militarism may be a feature of all ancient states but it does not follow from this that it is largely irrelevant as an explanation for Roman success (236–7). Rome’s success may be as much to do with a distinctive form of bellicosity as an ability to assimilate. Nor should we ignore Rome’s determination to control. Its ultimate victory in both the Hannibalic War and the Social War may have been as much the result of strategically-placed Latin colonies securing the territory of Italy as assimilated Italians (S. Oakley, ‘The Roman conquest of Italy’, in J. Rich and G. Shipley (eds), *War and Society in the Roman World* (1993), 19).

Studies of Roman expansion have often become stuck in a rather sterile debate about whether Rome should be interpreted as defensive or aggressive in outlook, a debate that has tended to move in tandem with modern international developments. Is it a coincidence, for instance, that in Anglophone scholarship the defensive Rome gave way to an aggressive Rome around the time that the Vietnam War was ending? Now in an increasingly anarchic post-Soviet world E. has produced a clear and forcefully-argued book that breaks away from this debate and challenges scholars to look at Roman imperialism afresh.

University of Edinburgh

ANDREW ERSKINE

M. HUMM, *APPIUS CLAUDIUS CAECUS. LA RÉPUBLIQUE ACCOMPLIE* (BEFAR 322).

Rome: École Française de Rome, 2005. Pp. x + 779, 10 pls, 14 illus, 2 tables. ISBN 978-2-72830-682-4. €112.00.

Appius Claudius Caecus is the earliest Roman statesman whom we might know in some meaningful sense. As censor in 312 B.C. (his first major magistracy, which also saw a plethora of other initiatives, some obscure and controversial) he started the Aqua and Via Appia. He went on to hold two consulships, remaining a significant figure until his seminal speech in the Senate, when, blind and infirm, he succeeded in having Pyrrhos’ peace terms rejected. Caecus, who also wrote poems, *sententiae* and a juristic work (late sources credit him with introducing rhotacism into Latin, and banishing the letter ‘z’ from the alphabet), has some claim to be Rome’s first literary figure (521–39). Cicero mentions him more than a dozen times, and it is clear that by then his *exemplum* had a life, or lives, of its own: a distasteful radical to Livy, he nevertheless made it into the ranks of the Augustan *summi uiri*.

As Humm makes clear in this monograph, any scholar trying to do Caecus justice faces serious source problems; the evidence is not sparse, but infuriatingly contradictory, a trait which has led moderns to wildly differing interpretations. H., over some 600 pages, gives Caecus a sweeping, indeed dazzling, reassessment. One of its merits is its grounding in the political, social, and cultural developments of the age: H. exploits an impressive range of literary and material evidence from across Italy and beyond. The only disappointment is the treatment of the sources (35–97). H. knows the material well, and makes some important points, as on Claudian monuments, public and private (42–6). Elsewhere rather heavy weather is made of the obvious point, already noted by De Sanctis, that the multi-faceted presentation in the sources connotes contemporary and ongoing controversy about the man and his work, not an enigmatic individual. There is also more than a whiff of very old-fashioned *Quellenforschung*; repeated recourse to Walsh, *Livy. His Historical Aims and Methods*² (1989), and Mazzarino, *Il pensiero storico classico* (1965–6), is not matched by equal attention to more modern studies. H., rightly, does not seek a single author as the fountainhead of the ‘anti-Claudian strand’ in the sources; but even to talk of such a strand, or a ‘Fabian’ one, without some qualification, is problematic. Elsewhere, H. manifests an untoward concern with the sources of our sources, which leads him to overplay similarities between the texts of the *de uiris illustribus* and Appius’ *elogium* in the Forum Augustum, with Hyginus over-optimistically identified as the ultimate source for both; and to an over-speculative reconstruction