

V. E. PAGÁN, *CONSPIRACY THEORY IN LATIN LITERATURE* (Ashley and Peter Larkin Series in Greek and Roman Culture). Austin: University of Texas Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 182. ISBN 9780292739727. £37.00/US\$55.00.

A. QUEYREL-BOTTINEAU, J.-C. COUVENHES and A. VIGOURT (EDS), *TRAHISON ET TRAITRES DANS L'ANTIQUITÉ: ACTES DU COLLOQUE INTERNATIONAL (PARIS, 21–22 SEPTEMBRE 2011)*. Paris: de Boccard, 2012. Pp. 416. ISBN 9782701803333. €35.00.

In her *Conspiracy Narratives in Roman History* (2004), Victoria Pagán concerned herself with how Roman historical writers constructed their accounts of real (or alleged) conspiracies and the difficulties they faced in achieving narrative continuity when firm knowledge about secret events was at best patchy, at worst non-existent. In the current book, P. takes matters farther into the realm of the abstract. ‘Conspiracy theory’ (or ‘conspiracism’) is a more nebulous entity to chase down than concrete narratives about historical conspiracies. The first question to be addressed is, ‘What is a conspiracy theory?’ P. contends that it is an attempt to make sense of why bad things happen to good people when a straightforward answer is not evident. Conspiracism has particular characteristics. ‘The key component of conspiracy theory is conjecture, the attempt at explanation ... It rushes in, so to speak, to fill the vacuum left by a lack of knowledge about an event, its causes, and the motivation of its agents ... Conspiracy theory meets the challenge of the lack of knowledge with a preponderance of explanation’ (3, 5). It nearly always scapegoats some individual or group as the source of the misfortune. The intent of P.’s book is to explore what this phenomenon can tell us about Roman culture and how, indeed, conspiracism organized Roman worldviews. The book, as P. has it, ‘attempts to excavate the ways the Romans explained misfortunes to themselves by blaming others and how these latent, often negligible, seemingly harmless explanations can exert social control and construct social forms’ (16).

These are interesting and provocative goals, but the definitional vagueness at the outset about what constitutes conspiracy theory dogs the rest of the text. Quite aside from the fact that the most (in)famous cases of conspiracy theory today appear far removed from what P. presents as the phenomenon — there is no real ‘epistemological gap’ (5) about the moon landings, 9/11 or the President’s birth certificate — P. retains a healthy regard for its utility as a heuristic tool. ‘In what follows, I would rather risk the charge of being overly eager than overly reluctant to perceive conspiracy in the Roman literary imagination’ (16). And so it proves. In the first chapter (‘Conspiracy Theory in Action’) ‘conspiracy theory’ is deployed to describe literary, rhetorical and historical phenomena as diverse as Cicero insinuating deeper currents of skullduggery flowing under the documented deeds of C. Verres; Cato’s fearmongering when he invokes the mythological ‘conspiracy’ of Lemnian women to dispose of all their menfolk as a way to critique contemporary Roman women’s opposition to a law restricting their ownership of gold and expensive clothing; the comedic domestic deceptions and concealment of key facts from some characters in Terence’s play *Hecyra*; the genuine conspiracy, or fear of it, in the Bacchanalian affair of 186 B.C.E. and the slave revolts in Sicily (135–133 B.C.E.) and Italy (73–71 B.C.E.); and conspiracies allegedly foiled — by luck or divine intervention — recorded by Livy and Tacitus. The line of analysis continues in succeeding chapters on Juvenal, Tacitus and Suetonius. ‘Conspiracy theory’ embraces all manner of rhetorical and narratological turn, from the suspicion of arson behind a fire (Juv., *Sat.* 3.222), to a daughter facilitating her mother’s adultery (ibid. 14.28–9), to the xenophobic rantings of Umbricius in *Satire* 3 (to take examples just from the Juvenal chapter). Juvenal, concludes P., adheres to a paranoid vision, ‘the hallmark of the conspiratorial mindset’ (49). Loose connections like these characterize the general argument, allow P. to see conspiracy theory almost everywhere, and, in an epilogue (119–24), serve to identify a ‘golden age of conspiracy theory’ around the accession of Hadrian in 117 C.E.

That conspiracies and conspiratorial thinking existed in the Roman world is hardly to be doubted, and P. is at her best elucidating passages when her chosen authors deal directly with such matters: for example, the Pedanius Secundus affair in Tacitus (76–87), or the pervasive theme of suspicion in Suetonius (89–117). In other ways too, P.’s treatment of individual passages or topics is enlightening and insightful, such as the reasons why Egypt, a fully integrated part of the Empire by Hadrian’s day, was judged so alien as to be considered home to cannibals by Suetonius and Juvenal (59–66), or her overview of Roman concepts of punishment (68–76). Sad to say, deceiving others, withholding information, stereotyping, prejudice and xenophobia are all widespread

phenomena — if not universal human traits. How exactly Roman authors recounting these everyday behaviours and attitudes constitute ‘conspiracy theory’ remains unclear to me, even after two readings of the book. For its existence to be asserted, it suffices for P. to detect a whiff of paranoia in a writer’s words (see above on Juvenal) or to find elements that ‘lend the passage[s] an air of conspiracism’ (64). In general, P. stands on firmer ground when dealing with historical writers like Tacitus or Suetonius, and with historical conspiracies such as that of Catiline, than when she asserts ‘conspiracism’ in the likes of Cato or Juvenal or Terence. And so, rather like a conspiracy theory, the book makes thought-provoking points on specific matters, but the overall analysis lacks cogency.

Collections of conference papers are often criticized for their lack of coherence and uneven quality. Such is the case with *Trahison et traîtres dans l'antiquité* which, despite the carefully considered ordering of the papers and their generally high quality, falls into the habitual trap. The length of the papers and the depth of coverage varies from A. Queyrel-Bottineau’s sixty-five-page (93–157) detailed analysis of the cultural construction of betrayal in Classical Athens (especially in myth and tragedy) to A. Fouchard’s eleven pages (243–53) recapping Aeneas the Tactician’s recommendations for preventing betrayal from within a besieged city. After a concise introduction (9–16) that surveys the multifaceted and complex nature of traitors and treason/betrayal — one person’s traitor is another’s hero (see Edward Snowden or Julian Assange) — the twenty-two papers are presented under six rubrics: the vocabulary of betrayal; betrayal, real and imaginary; the ambiguity of betrayal; betrayal in a military context; institutions and betrayal; and betrayal and hierarchical authority. The chronological scope of the papers is broad, from Pharaonic Egypt to Late Antiquity. It would be impossible to survey all the papers here, so I comment only on those I found particularly stimulating or noteworthy.

E. Lévy (33–52) and C. Bearzot (162–71) survey betrayal (*prodosia*) in Thucydides. Lévy demonstrates that Thucydides regards *prodosia* as a standard facet of war, shows little interest in the identity of traitors (they are rarely named) and does not include in their ranks Alcibiades, whose going over to the enemy from a city that had rejected him is presented by Alcibiades himself (at 6.92.2–4) as a form of patriotism. Bearzot builds on this latter theme by reviewing four passages where *prodosia* is justified in speeches made by Alcibiades, Phrynichus, the Mytilenians and Brasidas, who deploy arguments about patriotism, hurting an enemy, self-defence and freedom respectively. M. Hadas-Lebel (63–72) defends the reputation of the much-maligned Flavius Josephus, on the grounds that he was more an opportunist than a traitor, while W. Pillot (75–91) does much the same for the Phoenicians and Carthaginians, both of whom are routinely condemned by Greek authors as inherently deceitful and treacherous. The origins of such prejudice likely lie in the deep past, when the Greeks and Phoenicians were maritime and colonial rivals. F.-X. Romanacce (199–226) traces the continuity between the pagan judicial practice of forcing Christians to sacrifice to the gods and the later Christian insistence that heretics renounce their beliefs. In both cases, the goal was to encourage the wayward back into the fold and thereby erase the very existence of the crime. A. Allély (311–21) examines the process of declaring political enemies *hostes* (external enemies) in the first century B.C.E. by looking in detail at three cases: L. Magius, L. Fannius (c. 79 B.C.E.), and Q. Salvidienus Rufus (40 B.C.E.). She concludes that the designation *hostis* was preferred over the more technically correct *proditor* (traitor) for reasons of immediate political expedience. F. Joannès (355–67) examines the system of sworn agreements (*adê*) that held the political world together under the Assyrian Empire. But in times of internal unrest, *adê* placed governors of cities in an impossible bind: their oaths both to the king and to the provincial authority that was challenging the royal power ensured that the governors would be judged traitors by one or the other party. Thus *adê* failed to prevent betrayal and assured that the protection afforded by the king was accompanied by a permanent suspicion. E. Flaig (379–93) expands on themes raised in some of his previous publications and offers a theoretical ‘explanation’ for how the Roman Principate operated: it was a ‘monarchy of acceptance’ rather than a ‘legitimate monarchy’. As the case of Galba shows, once acceptance dissipated, usurpation was the inevitable result. One could quibble with the premises — is not ‘legitimacy’ just a brand of ‘acceptance’? Was not the army’s support of an emperor always the decisive factor? — but the paper makes for stimulating reading. The volume closes with concluding remarks by J.-P. Martin (409–13).

There is much here of interest, and profit will be gained by reading the papers. Overall the quality of production is fine, though I noted a few misspellings. Given the variety and scope of the material covered, an index would have been useful, but none is provided. English abstracts accompany each

paper, but sadly they are in the mangled language typical of translation software. Surely a native speaker could have been engaged to check these paragraphs before the book went to print?

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T. M. O'SULLIVAN, *WALKING IN ROMAN CULTURE*. Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. xii + 188, illus. ISBN 9781107000964. £55.00.

You can't get more human than walking. We bipeds have presumably been enjoying our flagship mode of locomotion since that freakish simian ancestor did the first 'look mum, no hands' trick — and, surprisingly, got us stuck there forever. O'Sullivan's mission and method is certainly part of the humanities landscape nowadays: take a seemingly boring subject (walking?! come off it!) and show what rich pickings we have forfeited by ignoring it. In some ways, the turf has been well-trodden in preparation. Romanists have looked hard at how élite discourse disciplines the body. In public or private, how you carried yourself was just as important as what you said for nailing the identity ideal. O. slots into this now quite weighty procession of heads of department (for example, Corbeill, Gleason, Gunderson), but focuses on gait ('identity in motion') as opposed to pose, gesture and dress — all of which have now been scrutinized by the sharpest Foucauldian pupils.

Our author does more than mere following in these footsteps. The book broadly takes stock of walking in two guises: walking as a way of performing and shoring up élite identity (cultural, social, political); and walking as a model metaphor for the Roman to set his watch by, a good way to imagine 'the mind in motion'. Though the introduction warms up with more on the former, the focus is fairly distributed throughout — and the two strands of this body-mind dyad are, of course, entangled. Ch. 1 covers walking in the flesh, especially its rôle in gender performance; ch. 2 eyes Seneca's philosophical understanding of the gait as advertisement for the mind; ch. 3 reviews city walking and the politics of the Roman élite's 'entourage' spectacle; ch. 4 sees the body disappear beneath the mental exercise of *ambulatio* culture in the Roman villa; ch. 5 takes this 'intellectual' walking more seriously, and measures the way the walking metaphor holds up in the field of philosophical inquiry; ch. 6 takes us for a walk (not a ride?) past the famous 'Odyssey Landscapes' (first-century B.C. wall-paintings), and shows how they channel the Roman *ambulatio* via their clever framing and storytelling. The conclusion reels off a discussion of Fellini's *Roma* to make the point that there is something inherently 'walkative' about Rome, the eternally palimpsestic city; something which seems always to raise the problem of human mobility. Just how do we wade through its clogged labyrinth of temporalities?

The same could be asked of the mess of texts that bear on the subject of walking, but O. does a top job of navigating them. The discussion is weighted more to Cicero and Seneca (especially chs 2, 4, 5), naturally due to the shape of their self-consciously philosophical walking and talking (about walking). But O. manages to zip through a host of other material too. His climactic reading of the Odyssey Landscapes shows him a skilled (if at times over-imaginative) mediator of the text/image boundary, and really allows him to strut his stuff as a cultural historian proper (not just a philologist awkwardly walking like one). The range of texts surveyed inevitably makes it difficult to go deep, but on the whole O. treads the fine line well; even his quick treatments add value (such as Valerius Maximus inverting male/female versions of the *deductio* (58–9)). Sometimes the nuances fall behind at such pace. For example, O. points out that Vitellius' unripeness for rule in Tacitus, *Histories* 3 is signalled by his walk (48–9); but judging character from such external, bodily signals is often notoriously hollow in Tacitus. Piso, for instance, is way off the pace on Otho's gait (*incessu*, *Hist.* 1.30). When O. handles the Romans appropriation of Greek philosophical *theoria* via their villa strolls, I also found the theorization a little gaunt and simplistic. Moving freely through the Greekish theme park of an aristocratic Roman villa must have been an assertion of power as much as an attempt at walking in the wake of those dead wise men; the villa was the home front of Rome the cosmopolitan *power*, and the place where Greek (and other) culture was, quite literally, domesticated into a blunt object of *otium*. Quibbles aside, O.'s upbeat constitution(al) makes for sensitive reading, and I was only left feeling stranded or underwhelmed in a few isolated places.