

arguably had the result that the modern city now reflects, in a living sense, the ancient' (313). Inevitably framed through a series of artificial categories, R.'s fine study richly achieves his aim, illustrating 'how a variety of cultural property was expressive of Roman values and identity' (313).

University of Birmingham

D.J.Spencer@bham.ac.uk

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DIANA SPENCER

C. VOUT, *THE HILLS OF ROME: SIGNATURE OF AN ETERNAL CITY*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. Pp. xvii + 284, illus. ISBN 9781107025974. £60.00/US \$99.00.

Just like the seven colours of the rainbow, the proverbial seven hills of Rome present an iconic, but essentially fictive, view of a collective whole. The idea of seven hills has become a sales-pitch for a welter of modern western cities (including the author's native city, Durham), and there is a long tradition of describing symbolic phenomena such as deadly sins, pilgrim churches, gates of Thebes, wonders of the world and so on, in heptads. And from the earliest documented stages of Rome's history, the city's inhabitants transformed their proverbial seven hills (or 'mountains', as they were often described) into central hubs of social, political and religious activity, and this evocative landscape fed the imagination of writers, tourists and artists alike. The high points and low points of the urban landscape presented a geographic template for the high points and low points of Roman life and Roman history, and Vout's book is a veritable *tour de force* of this enduring tradition from early Rome through to the twentieth century.

V. is an established scholar of Roman visual culture with a penchant for integrating art and text, as well as material ancient and modern, to produce stimulating approaches to Roman cultural history. This book is no exception and demonstrates the sheer range of V.'s erudition, which is equally at home with classical archaeology and literature, as well as classical reception from the Renaissance onwards. It has, appropriately, seven chapters (including the introduction and conclusion), which are structured thematically. Chapter titles are sometimes cryptic ('The Lie of the Land', 'Painting by Numbers', 'On Top of the World' etc.), and the introduction, while talking of an 'itinerary', does not signpost very clearly where this journey will take us. But once we get going, things fall into place: ch. 2 discusses what counts as a hill, from early Rome through to the twentieth century; ch. 3 examines the invention and development of the tradition of *seven hills*; ch. 4 makes a very simple point about the enduring permanence and continuity of this tradition; ch. 5 explores visual representations of the hills, moving quickly from ancient visualizations through to Renaissance and early modern paintings and drawings; ch. 6 discusses (largely ancient) views, panoramas and vantage points *from* the hills and the empowerment this affords the viewer; and ch. 7 summarizes the main themes and underwrites the central point that 'the seven hills are Rome's signature'. The book is finely presented, with twenty-six colour illustrations, a comprehensive multi-lingual bibliography, an index locorum (which includes modern material) and a judiciously compiled index.

It is impossible to point to a predecessor to this book: its approach, methodology and argument are similar to those adopted in studies of Rome by C. Edwards, A. Grandazzi, N. Purcell and T. P. Wiseman, but by taking a single iconic element of the Roman landscape it forges new academic territory and provides a level of detail and sustained analysis of cultural geography that should serve as a model for future scholars of topography. V. synthesizes material in an original and stimulating way, and makes a persuasive statement about the enduring rôle of the seven hills in the history of the city. Throughout, the author demonstrates a skilled and sensitive analysis of both literary and visual material, and there are some truly eye-opening interpretations in the context of politics, religion and visual culture, both in the classical and post-classical city. V.'s discussion of the Villa Giulia frescoes and nineteenth-century engravings of the 'Sette colli' in ch. 5 is particularly effective at exposing the sophistication and subtlety of modern refashionings of the ancient city.

The book's emphasis on the 'academic' rather than real character of the seven hills ('the written-ness of urban geography') can sometimes seem laboured, and readers may wish that it had included a more straightforward outline of the archaeology of the hills under scrutiny: received wisdom about the geology, scale and extent of the hills; the history of hilltop settlements and

fortifications; the exploitation of intervening valleys; flooding and drainage and so on — some of which is explored in G. Heiken *et al.*, *The Seven Hills of Rome* (2007). Furthermore, by meandering so freely between Republican, Imperial, Renaissance and modern material as it does and by weaving together unrelated fragments to form a sustained fabric (or ‘palimpsest’, as V. sometimes describes it), the book runs the risk of appearing totemic and ahistorical: ancient and modern interpretations of the hills are frequently set side-by-side in order to establish an argument about thematic continuity, but this exercise can sometimes seem a little artificial.

One point on which V. might have pushed herself harder is the question in ch. 3 of how and when the elusive concept of the seven hills emerged: V. rightly rejects the view that Varro was the first to extend the concept of the seven hills from the festival of the Septimontium because of its prior appearance at Cic., *Att.* 6.5.11, but then assumes (69) that it was familiar in Rome long before Cicero and Varro. However, Cicero’s use of coded Greek in this letter of 50 B.C. to evade prying spies, and his elaborate allusions, may suggest that the concept of *astu heptalophon* was established in Greek long before it was in Rome. The cult of Dea Roma was widespread in the Greek East from at least the start of the second century B.C., and although there are no extant representations of Roma with seven hills before the late first century A.D. (129–33), it is not unlikely that the iconography was familiar in Greek cult long before that: this might explain the appearance of the seven-hilled city in the Sibylline Oracles and in Revelations, and why Virgil (referring to the personified Roma at *Aen.* 6.783, quoting *verbatim* his words at *Georg.* 2.535) was the first to establish it as a poetic commonplace. V. might also have profited from exploring, as well as perspectives of and from the hills, the dynamics of moving up and down them: triumphal processions up to the Capitoline that elevated the victorious Roman general, for example, or the significance of high-profile executions that toppled tyrants, treacherous slaves, false witnesses and the like from the Tarpeian rock or down the Gemonian Steps. At least in antiquity, this symbolically charged landscape was frequently imagined as the site where heaven and hell intersected with Roman life, and the relationship between hills and valleys was pivotal to this cosmic imagery.

But the book is purposefully wide-ranging and ambitious in its scope, and it may be disingenuous to gesture towards the inevitable gaps. *The Hills of Rome* is an original, intelligent and long-overdue study of an aspect of the city of Rome which will be of interest to classicists and modernists working in a number of different areas. It sets a new benchmark for the discussion of Roman cultural history and its reception, and demonstrates the importance and potential of cross-disciplinary and trans-historical methodologies. It is a rich tapestry of ideas, sophisticated and elegantly written, and makes a persuasive and compelling case that the seven hills are indeed the signature of the eternal city.

University of Nottingham
mark.bradley@nottingham.ac.uk

MARK BRADLEY

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J. SCHEID, *PLUTARCH, RÖMISCHE FRAGEN: EIN VIRTUELLER SPAZIERGANG IM HERZEN DES ALTEN ROM* (Texte zur Forschung 103). Darmstadt: WBG, Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 2012. Pp. 268, plans. ISBN 9783534213122 (bound); 9783534734993 (e-book). €49.90.

Of note in John Scheid’s edition, translation, commentary and analysis of Plutarch’s *Roman Questions* (*Aitia Romaiika*) is S.’s interpretative final section (Aufbau und literarische Einordnung, 175–228). There, S. details his idea that the topography of an area in the centre of the city of Rome serves as an underlying organizing principle of Plutarch’s *Roman Questions*. This section is preceded by the Greek text with facing German translation and a crisply executed and informative commentary.

S. sees a coherent topographical underpinning to Plutarch’s work. This topography corresponds to an area bounded by four stopping points: (1) by the Forum Boarium and the Circus Maximus, (2) in the Forum Romanum, (3) near the south-west foot of the Capitoline, and (4) on the Capitoline. S. reconstructs a ‘walking tour’ around these points, arguing that Plutarch’s 113 questions can be more or less divided into eight unevenly distributed sets that refer directly or indirectly to places located in, or viewable from, these points. Consequently, multiple