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Maria Caldelli, Cecilia Ricci, *City of encounters: public spaces and social Interaction in ancient Rome*. RomeScapes. Rome: Edizioni Quasar, 2020. Pp. 279. ISBN 9788854910577. €35,00.

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Combining material and written sources provides an epistemological frame essential for grasping the constantly transforming social interactions as well as the historical significances of spaces within ancient cities, and this observation is especially true for the Eternal City. This recent volume edited by Maria Letizia Caldelli and Cecilia Ricci is dedicated to the public spaces of Rome as the mechanism that encouraged social interactions in the first three centuries of the Principate. The volume is the first of the newly established series "*RomeScapes. Social and Cultural Topographies of the City of Rome*" (Edizioni Quasar), which is aimed at promoting studies on peripheral and heterogenous aspects of city culture that have so far received limited scholarly attention (p. 7).

The editors' introduction to the volume begins with a brief overview on theoretical stimuli in previous research before very clearly defining the space (Rome), the timeframe (the first three centuries of the Principate), the protagonists (the inhabitants of Rome), and the places (public places of political and economic exchange, of personal and physical care, of entertainment and worship) under investigation in this volume. [1] The short introduction could have been more detailed about the specific approach chosen and the sources—namely epigraphic and literary sources from the capital—prioritized in this volume and why they were selected.

The first chapter, by A. Angius, provides an overview of literary sources that refer to places where political interactions took place in Republican and early Imperial Rome. The chapter distinguishes between formal (where *contiones* and *comitia* were held) and informal (such as porticoes, taverns, and entertainment structures) political meeting places for the *plebs urbana*. For a face-to-face society like ancient Rome, political meeting places were a crucial element. Their broad variety produced a hyper-politicized urban *plebs*, not only in Republican but also in early Imperial Rome (p. 61). Nonetheless, it can be observed that, during the Principate, spaces and monuments associated with political interactions were progressively adapted in favor of the emperor's own mechanism of power (p. 64). [2]

In ancient Rome, economic exchanges could take place practically anywhere. The second chapter by M. Andrews and S. Bernard thus focuses on the development and

environment of specific economic spaces such as *fora*, *macella* and *tabernae*. Consulting literary, legal as well as archaeological sources spanning the Republican to the Late Antique periods, the chapter emphasizes the degree to which social interactions and broader economic trends affected the locations and architectural designs of economic buildings (especially in the case of *macella*). In the last section dedicated to "the end of the ancient topography of sale," the dates and reasons mentioned (early fifth century due to the sack of Alaric) for the abandonment of commercial spaces are somewhat too generalized.^[3]

The third chapter by C. Bruun looks at spaces related to personal care (i.e. *thermae* and *balnea*) and physical exercise (the *palaestra*, the *gymnasia* and the public *horti*). The first part discusses a broad spectrum of literary sources (including several late antique sources concerning other parts of the Empire), which inform us about the bathing routines and the variety of other activities in which bath visitors were engaged. These include encounters of emperors bathing with the population, the questions of entrance hours and fees, as well as the status and gender of bathers. The second part of the chapter is dedicated to the *horti* as places for strolls and physical exercise.^[4]

J. Edmondson's chapter on public spectacles in Rome is dedicated to the changing landscapes of public entertainment in Rome during the first three centuries of the Empire. This chapter, which is the best illustrated of the volume, discusses literary, epigraphic, legal as well as archaeological sources. After a chronological discussion of the development of public entertainment structures in Rome, the chapter turns to the important question of how crowds experienced public spectacles and the degree to which hierarchical seating within theaters (e.g. the Flavian amphitheater, fig. 3) resembled a template of the Roman social order (particularly following Augustus's *lex Iulia theatralis*). Furthermore, the aspects of communal emotion within entertainment structures, especially during encounters between plebs and princeps (frequently used as a platform for grievance or as an opportunity for anti-imperial conspiracies), are examined.

N. Tran's chapter is dedicated to Roman associations and their meeting places in Rome. The discussion is chiefly based on the very rich epigraphical finds from Rome (most of which were not found *in situ*). In addition, Tran discusses a few controversial archaeological remains of so-called association seats from Rome, such as the seat of the *collegium dendrophorum* at the Basilica Hilariana and the seat of the *collegium salutare* near the Horrea Galbana.^[5] Of interest is the author's note on how many collegial seats were built within preexisting public structures, such as *horrea*, theatres (within the arcades) or within substructures of temples (p. 204-206).^[6]

The sixth and final chapter of the volume by F. van Haeperen explores the degree to which temples and other places of worship were used for various, non-devotional encounters. Several literary sources are discussed, which confirm that, especially in Rome, temples and their large courtyards were used for other activities in addition to religious ones: e.g. for judicial purposes (the conducting of trials) as well as romantic encounters. Moreover, temples hosted encounters of different social groups throughout the year, mainly during important religious festivals (e.g. Lupercalia or during the feast of Anna Perenna).

This volume illuminates the multiple lives of spaces in Rome during the Principate, and to what extent very different places for public encounters continuously shaped and reshaped the social and political structure of Rome's citizens. The diachronic approach chosen and the literary sources discussed put a strong emphasis on the constantly changing political functions of spaces in the capital and beyond. The broad array of literary and epigraphical sources discussed is notable and can be consulted with the *Index Locorum* (p. 268–276). Since the changing political role of public spaces in Rome is one of the volume's key questions, further references or even a supplementary chapter on the public role of aristocratic houses and their atria in Rome would have been a valuable addition for further comparisons.

What is shocking—especially considering the book's title and focus on public spaces in Rome—is the meager use of maps and illustrations (Chapters 3, 5 and 6 do not contain a single map) as well as the poor quality of images (Chapter 1) and incorrect information provided for the captions.^[7] Since the volume emphasizes epigraphic and literary sources from the capital, a map of Rome's city center illustrating the locations of the main sites discussed, perhaps with color indications of the different uses of these spaces (economic and political exchange, physical care, places of entertainment and worship), would have been of great use. A clear map would have not only helped the reader to follow the occasionally complex topographical discussions of buildings and sites (an attentive reader is forced to have an atlas of ancient Rome at hand^[8]), but it also would have made one of the volume's main results much more apparent to the reader: the multi-functional uses and varied social interactions of public spaces. This point could have been taken further by connecting these very stimulating conclusions to other ongoing discussions that challenge our modern architectural categorizations and understanding of ancient spaces.^[9] In short, this volume by M. L. Caldelli and C. Ricci demonstrates well how literary, legal, and epigraphical sources can reveal important perspectives on the multifunctional uses of and social interactions within public spaces in Rome and other cities of the Roman Empire. However, with a few more illustrations and more extensive commentary in the introduction and a concluding chapter to the volume, these important points would have been all the clearer.

Authors and Titles

M. García Morcillo – C. Ricci – J. H. Richardson – F. Santangelo, *RomeScapes. Social and Cultural Topographies of the City of Rome: A New Book Series*

M. L. Caldelli – C. Ricci, *City of Encounters: Public Spaces and Social Interaction in Ancient Rome*

A. Angius, *Places of Political Interaction and Representation in the City of Rome*

M. Andrews – S. Bernard, *Spaces of Economic Exchange*

C. Bruun, *Places of Personal Care and Physical Exercise*

J. Edmondson, *The Spatial, Social and Political Landscape of Public Spectacle from Augustus to Severus Alexander*

N. Tran, *The Meeting Places of Associations in the City of Rome*

F. Van Haepere, *Roman Places of Collective Worship as Meeting Places*

^[1] For similar approaches, see A. Russell, *The Politics of Public Space in Republican*

Rome (Cambridge 2016).

[2] Some of the references (e.g. Kröss 2017; Hiebel 2009) are not included in the chapter's bibliography.

[3] For a more nuanced review of the actual "impact" of these historic events, see A. Di Bernardino – G. Pilara – L. Spera (ed.), *Roma e il sacco del 410: Realtà, Interpretazione, Mito* (Rome 2012); J. Lipps – C. Machado – P. v. Rummel (ed.), *The Sack of Rome in 410 AD: The Event, its Context and its Impact*, Palilia 28 (Wiesbaden 2013).

[4] K. T. von Stackelberg, *The Roman Garden: Space, Sense, and Society* (London 2009)

[5] For collegial seats outside Rome, see M. L. Laird, *Civic Monuments and the Augustales in Roman Italy* (New York 2015)

[6] Cf. B. Bollmann, *La distribuzione delle scholae delle corporazioni a Roma*, in: *La Rome impériale. Démographie et logistique. Actes de la table ronde, Rome 25 mars 1994*, CEFR 230 (Rome 1997) 209-225.

[7] E.g. fig. 1 does not show the Forum Romanum (as argued on p. 32) but the Saepa Julia.

[8] E.g. A. Carandini – P. Carafa (eds.), *The Atlas of Ancient Rome: Biography and Portraits of the City* (Princeton 2017).

[9] U. Lieberwirth – E. Paliou – S. Polla (eds.), *Spatial Analysis and Social Spaces: Interdisciplinary Approaches to the Interpretation of Prehistoric and Historic Built Environments* (Berlin 2014); I. Östenberg – S. Malmberg – J. Bjørnebye, *The Moving City: Processions, Passages and Promenades in Ancient Rome* (London 2015); M. Flohr (ed.), *Urban Space and Urban History in the Roman World* (London 2020); D. Filippi (ed.), *The Spatial Turn and the Archaeology of Roman Italy : New Perspectives in the Study of Urban Space* (London 2021).