Review of Roman questions, by J. Linderski

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One rough-and-ready way to judge whether a new book on the later Roman Republic is worth reading is to check its bibliography for works by Jerzy Linderski, the Paddison Professor of Latin at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. If the book touches on Republican politics, institutions or aspects of state or private religion, and Linderski is not to be found, you are advised to proceed, if at all, with extreme caution. (In the event that your author tries to talk about auspices or augurs without Linderski, immediately place the book in the nearest recycling bin.) But if Linderski is cited, try to ascertain whether indeed he has been read and understood. Should your author pass that test, you may be reasonably confident that the new book is at least safe to handle.

The *mira sapientia* of L[inderski] has produced what now must be close to 100 separate publications (mostly articles in major journals) with no sign of flagging. All the ones I have seen -- and I now have seen most -- show unusually deep learning, indefatigable curiosity, and (especially in problem solving) an insight that is sometime startling. L. has given us disquisitions of the highest scholarly quality on the various *collegia*, elections (all imaginable aspects), legislation, trials, and prosopography of the Ciceronian era. His work is absolutely fundamental on a variety of religious rituals of the state and private spheres, from modes of divination to marriage. The legal aspects of military service have no better authority. L. has also illuminated a host of issues relating to antiquarianism in the Roman period, particularly Varro as an author. But L. indulges in little antiquarianism for its own sake: technical discussions are almost invariably tethered to issues central to the politics and society of the Republic and early Empire. Then there is L.'s style -- a model of scholarly *akribeia*, and often witty to boot. And L. really has no peer when it comes to amassing bibliography -- often arcane, in any number of languages -- relevant to his arguments, routinely tracing the vicissitudes of a historical question back to the seventeenth century (or beyond). In sum, for a quick indication of L.'s *auctoritas* as it stood even a decade ago, skim Broughton's *Magistrates of the Roman Republic* III (1986). There L. emerges as one of the eight or nine authorities Broughton cites most (as recognized by E. Champlin in his important review of MRR III at *CPh* 84 [1989] 51).

Many scholars, some quite eminent, are obviously reading Linderski, to judge from the spirited polemics that permeates the pages of *R[oman] Q[uestions]*. But some who need to are not (see e.g. L.'s remarks at *RQ* p. 679 or in *AJPh* 116 (1995) 154-156), despite the fact that most of L.'s output has been in English. The trouble seems twofold. First, the cult of the book. Until the appearance of the present volume in late 1995 and the Broughton Festschrift *Imperium sine fine* that L. edited (published also by Steiner Verlag) in 1996, only a handful of American libraries had an actual book bearing L.'s name on the shelves -- in this case one or both of his two Polish language monographs (1961 and 1966). There is "The Augural Law", a monograph-length study which in fact
is one of the most important modern contributions to the study of Roman religion. But that lies buried in a particularly obese installment of the still-sprawling *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (II 16.3, at pp. 2146-2312). Which brings us to the second part of the trouble: the articles themselves, which are often intricate and always challenging. "They make very difficult reading, and many scholars prefer to disregard them. They run the risk of having their own articles consigned to the waste-basket." Thus L., on the augural writings of I.M.J. Valeton (ANRW II 16.3 p. 2311), who wrote a century ago. Now that L. has superseded his predecessor in this field (and eclipsed those in many others), his words have an obvious applicability to his own output.

The present collection makes reading L. as easy as it can get. Produced to exemplary standards by Steiner Verlag, *RQ* is an alternately inspiring and daunting retrospective, consisting of 64 (or 65, depending on how one counts) of L.'s papers, all superbly indexed (by modern authors, ancient authors, inscriptions, in addition to a subject index -- amounting to almost 70 pages in all). I should note that if one excepts the two Polish monographs and "The Augural Law", pretty much all of L.'s more substantial works for the relevant period (1958-1993) seem to be here. The only additional article that comes to mind is "Partus ancillae", *Labeo* 33 (1987) 192-198, but there indeed may be more. It is hard to tell, since *RQ* does not offer a complete bibliography of L.'s work, and *L'Année philologique* is not completely reliable (e.g. it never reported *RQ* nos. 4, 25, 49 and 59 when they first appeared.) The choice of L.'s reviews is demonstrably selective, for I can think of almost two dozen that did not make it into *RQ*. Here one real desideratum for this reviewer is L.'s frank assessment in *AJPh* 113 (1992) 125-128 of a tome which (perhaps thanks to its very size) has rapidly established itself for many as a definitive study of the Republican Senate.

A word about how the book looks. Almost all the papers included in *RQ* are photographed straight from the original publications. Not to fear: the technical standards of reproduction are much better than what one has come to expect from similar enterprises (only no. 23 disappoints), and even offerings culled from large-format, densely-printed journals such as *JRS* fit easily on the page and are fully legible. L.'s papers here range in length from laconic (1 p.) to substantial (32 pp.), but most are brief (more than three-quarters of the total are less than a dozen pages). Thirteen of the 64 items are -- or started off as -- book reviews, at least six of which clearly qualify as "review-articles". All but seven of the 64 pieces are in English: there is one short Latin note, and the rest are written in clear German. (I should note however that quotes in Greek and Latin are hardly ever translated.) The volume contains no new or unpublished works, and L. has revised the actual text of only two early pieces (nos. 31 and 36). Yet L. (most impressively) has updated all the papers collected here in 47 pages of 'Addenda and Corrigenda', composed in 1994. These notes -- in most cases going far beyond the simple collection of subsequent bibliography, with further discussion and renewed polemic -- are keyed to the pagination of this volume and the original (the printed text has both numbers). I find it absolutely remarkable that L. has retained an interest in and continued to think about almost every major problem he has treated in 35 years of publication. This feature continues beyond the pages of this collection: for example, see "Games in Patavium", *Ktema* 17 (1992) [1996], a sequel to *RQ* no. 38 (1983), "Natalis Patavii". Now that L. has started using tools such as the PHI Latin CD-ROM in his work (see *Gnomon* 68 [1996] 560) we may reasonably expect more of this type of reexploration.

The papers in *RQ* have been arranged by L. himself thematically in eight categories: 'Historia' (nos. 1-4, a division that includes modern intellectual history), 'Ius Publicum' (5-14), 'Collegia' (15-17), 'Prosopographica' (18-30), 'Auctores' (31-35), 'Epigraphica' (36-41), and 'Religio' (47-64). (The second and last categories take up
almost half the volume.) One slight disadvantage of a non-chronological arrangement is that it is not all that easy from this collection to trace L.'s scholarly development. A brief biographical 'Vorwort' by Géza Alföldy, however, does help one navigate around this massive volume. Ten of these papers (in chronological order, nos. 36, 42, 16, 31, 17, 18, 35, 5, 6 and 19 -- three in German, the rest in English) L. wrote during his years at Cracow (1958-1966), a period punctuated, I am delighted to note, by a spell at Bryn Mawr (see no. 18, published in 1963). Alongside these articles are those two substantial works in Polish from the Cracow years not reprinted here: *Panstwo a kolegia = Staat und Vereine* from 1961 (German summary at pp. 115-116 in that monograph) and *Rzymskie zgromadzenie wyborcze od Sulli do Cezara = The Roman Electoral Assembly from Sulla to Caesar* (English summary at pp. 171-173). Though this can serve only as the roughest of guides, it is interesting to observe that in *RQ* only two of L.'s eight thematic divisions do not contain something from the Cracow period - - 'Historia' and (somewhat surprisingly) 'Religio'. And of the six categories where L. did start his writing in Poland, in all but one ('Collegia') he continued to publish into the 1980s and (often) 1990s. Of course, one must allow for the vagueness of some of the categories (e.g. 'Auctores') and the fact that L. obviously chose these divisions precisely to impose order on his own *opus*. But even so, there appears to be a real continuity and intellectual coherence to the topics L. has singled out for study.

L.'s exemplary method (on which see the remarks of Alföldy at pp. xiii-xiv) seems also quite developed even in his earliest works. Already in *Panstwo a kolegia* we find L. tracking the treatment of individual problems back to authorities as early as Sigonius and Brissonius (p. 7 n. 3). Or consider his 1964 article (*RQ* no. 35) "Alfred the Great and the Tradition of Ancient Geography", which shows nicely some basics of L.'s general approach. By way of reaction to a prevailing view in the scholarly literature, L. lucidly reanalyzes the text of a problematic passage (this one in Old English). He then builds a complex interpretation based on wide reading in sources both ancient (here, including some difficult late Roman geographical descriptions) and modern (the bibliography collected in p. 360 n. 24 must be seen to be believed). At the appropriate rhetorical point, the reader is hit with a striking conclusion -- in this case (*RQ* p. 361) that Alfred's description of the Danubian region is based ultimately on the Map of Agrippa. "Classical elements are presumably still to be discovered in many places", L. suggests, "in Alfred and elsewhere, where nobody suspects their presence."

Unfortunately, Alfred himself is still to be discovered even in recent discussions of the Map of Agrippa that seem otherwise well-informed (see L.'s remarks in the 'Addenda' to this article at *RQ* p. 680). It is a pity that L. himself never published further on this particular subject.

The period 1966-1970 found L. involved in the intricacies of emigrating from Poland (see Alföldy at pp. xi-xii). These years are represented principally by nos. 15 and 47. The latter of these -- "Römischer Staat und die Götterzeichen: zum Problem der obnuntiatio", the earliest piece in the 'Religio' section of *RQ* -- is an important transitional article, for it builds on previous work on *obnuntiatio* in the *Electoral Assembly* book (see pp. 74-103 in that volume), and presages L.'s later in-depth investigation of the augural law. The other fifty-odd papers in *RQ* (1971-1993) date from L.'s time in the United States, first at the University of Oregon and its Department of History, and then the Classics Department at Chapel Hill.

The record of L.'s American years is one of steady growth, drastically increasing in the first half of the early 1980s. For instance, in 1990 alone L. managed to publish seven substantial pieces, each quite different from the others. A list is instructive. First, the articles: a penetrating study on the tension between modern institutional and narrative approaches to Roman history (*RQ* no. 2, "Mommsen and Syme"), a detailed
reconstruction of the compromise which allowed the admission of plebeians into the
consulship (no. 56), and discussions of military tribunes and (alleged) legati in the
mid-Republic (no. 29), the granting of triumphal agnomina by the Senate (no. 46), and
the proper explication of a misunderstood anecdote 'de pudicitia' in Valerius Maximus
(no. 30). I might mention that in that last item L. traces the erroneous interpretation of
Valerius' story back to the 1487 commentary by Oliverius Arziganensis, and the
correct one to a 1513 commentary of Iodocus Badius Ascenius (pp. 320 n. 2, 321 n. 7),
filling in some of the intervening stages as well. Indeed, throughout his work L. amply
documents his conviction that in most questions of classical philology there is 'nihil
novi sub sole' (see e.g. pp. 345f, 351f, 590f, or for that matter, the 'Index of Modern
Authors', where one finds scores of pre-1850 scholars). And if anything, L.'s efforts to
rescue the more deserving erudites from oblivion seem in more recent years to be
rising in intensity (for a representative example, see Ktema 17 (1992) [1996] 60 n. 27).
But we are not yet finished with that list for 1990. Rounding off L.'s work for the year
are two impressive review-articles. One (no. 61) treats a publication of the bronze
(haruspical) liver from Piacenza, but turns out to be a superb jumping-off point for
anyone seeking a guide to scholarship on the disciplina Etrusca in general. The other
(no. 41) is a detailed survey of the first three volumes in the rejuvenated Supplementa
Italicica epigraphic series. Many of L.'s comments here could form the basis for a
separate article, as p. 411 with its 11 page expansion in no. 40 ("Certis Calendis", from
1991) goes to show.

One could focus on pretty much any other year of the 1980s or 1990s and be similarly
impressed by L.'s breadth and (of course) depth. That is why it is hard to come up with
a reasonable shortlist of the most important contributions from this large group of
"American" papers. Two that must be mentioned from L.'s first years outside Poland
are nos. 10 ("Three Trials in 54 BC" [1971]) and 20 ("The aedileship of Favonius,
Curio the Younger and Cicero's Augurate" [1972]). These articles, along with no. 8
("The Dramatic Date of Varro, De Re Rustica, Book III", from 1985), are absolutely
crucial for establishing the chronology of political events in Rome during the latter half
of the 50s -- and as such are frequently cited in MRR III. Of these, "Favonius" -- like
many other pieces in RQ -- offers much more than the title suggests. We get a salutary
demonstration (RQ pp. 238-240) of why a serious prosopographer needs to check old
editions of texts, the best discussion I know (pp. 241f) of the nature of the lex Domitia
(104 BC) on election to major priesthoods, and even an erudite discussion of the speed
of travel in antiquity (p. 244 n. 54), with some precious bibliography. And when L.
gets to the end of his involved argument (p. 250), a lesson in methodology. "The
results achieved are purely conditional: but we should not convert possibilities into
facts and pretend to know more than we do." Now, L. has a real flair for coming up
with a neat and convincing solution to a seemingly intractable problem (for a good
early [1966] example, see no. 6). But "Favonius" amply shows that L. possesses a
particularly keen sense of the limits of his evidence (see also no. 23, with its negative
conclusion at p. 283). One article (no. 22, at p. 279) even concludes with the
pronouncement that "every author should at times act as his own advocatus diaboli and
try to destroy his own thesis; it is therefore our duty to point out possible ways of
attacking our line of defence...". And that is precisely what L. then goes on to do. I
wonder how often journal editors in any academic field see submissions that approach
this standard of intellectual honesty.

To return to that shortlist. L. wrote the bulk of his masterpiece "The Augural Law" in
1977-1978 (see his introductory note at ANRW II 16.3 p. 2146) and apparently -- to
judge from that massive article's bibliography -- completed it two or three years before
the 1986 publication date. That partly explains how already in 1983 L. could launch a
series of confident, clear essays on the arcana of the augurs and their doctrines,
namely *RQ* no. 48, "Cicero and Roman Divination", then no. 50 "The *Libri Reconditi*" (1985) and the especially lucid "Watching the Birds" (no. 49, from 1986). These three pieces are essential reading, not least because they disengage some of the most important general points on the *collegium augurum* and the public auspices that reside in "The Augural Law". That monograph-length study is not just large, but extremely involved and (as I write this) has no index, and so poses a challenge over and above the notoriously vexing subject matter.

There is another insight that comes from reading L.'s shorter items on the augurs. From "The *Libri Reconditi*" article in particular one suspects L. is fully capable of writing an equally learned monograph on the pontifical law (see pp. 499-504). The same goes for the technical aspects of Roman marriage, as other items from this general period of L.'s development show. L. naturally is an expert on the *privata auspicia* as they relate to the marriage ceremony (see no. 14, "*Usu, farre, coemptione*" [1984], no. 55, "Religious Aspects of the Conflict of the Orders" [1986], and later no. 57 "Heliogabalus, Alexander Severus and the *ius confarreationis*, and most recently *AJPh* 116 [1995] 154-156). But he also is indispensible on the bride's position in civil law and Roman rights of succession, topics that come into one of the best essays in *RQ*, "Julia in Regium" (no. 39 [1988]), which explores the legal status of Augustus' daughter. Yet simultaneous with those authoritative discussions of auspices private and public in the mid-1980s, L. was publishing major articles on modern interpretations of Rome's imperialism (no. 1 [1984], particularly worth reading on Bryn Mawr's Tenney Frank), the military oath down to the triumviral period (no. 13, also 1984), and electoral corruption in the late Republic (no. 9 [1985]). Works of synthesis of this type are L.'s most accessible, and in some respects his most illuminating. I am glad to see that they have increased as a proportion of L.'s output in more recent years (see my remarks above on L.'s publications of 1990). Indeed, one of the most valuable passages in all of *RQ* can be found in L.'s final (and chronologically latest) essay for this collection, the excellent "Roman Religion in Livy" (no. 64 [1993]), where he demonstrates (pp. 613f) that Livy never gives us in any one passage the full procedure for expiation of omens and prodigies. But L. pieces it together all the same, discovering six stages in all.

I think the method can be extended well beyond *prodigia*. L.'s own work shows that Livy's voluminous history sometimes provides enough pontifical, auspical, or constitutional detail to allow a reliable reconstruction of a complicated ceremony or process. The *locus classicus* is L.'s commentary on the inauguration of Numa at *ANRW* II 16.3 pp. 2256-2297, where forty pages are devoted to elucidating Liv. 1.18.6-10, with some dazzling results (including the observation that Livy has fudged the procedure -- see p. 2279f, on the augur's "prayer"). Scholars simply must be more alert to the hazards of reconstructing such-and-such a process on the basis of one or two isolated items in Livy. As L. shows, the first step must be the hard work of pulling all the relevant notices together and to systematize what Livy mentions at random, and then to see whether there is enough for a generalization. Of course, the same goes for Cicero (in *RQ*, see nos. 6, 21, 29 and 55).

Throughout *RQ* L. has much to say about his philological and historical principles (see e.g. pp. 8, 106, 288, 367, 413). L. is even more explicit about what scholars he has chosen for emulation, and why. In the Preface to *RQ* (p. xv), L. thanks his "first Teacher and Master, Ludwik Piotrowicz" (on whom see L. also in *Imperium sine fine* p. 185 n. 54), since "he taught me to read the sources first. Without him I would not have come to know Mommsen and Syme, [L.R.] Taylor and Broughton. Of the ancients, Marcus Terentius Varro. He was possessed of erudition, curiosity, and wit." Emphasis on the importance of reading these *lumina* runs throughout *RQ* (see pp. 32-
43 [esp. 39], 68 n. 3, 286 n. 7, 289, 593). And one need only glance at the Index of Modern Authors to see how closely L. has read also Drumann-Groebe ("a mine of information" says L. at RQ p. 287, one of his highest forms of praise), Lange, Münzer, A.S. Pease (whose commentaries for L. [ANRW II 16.3 p. 2308] "represent the best tradition of classical philology"), Valeton, Willems and Wissowa -- to name just some of the older scholars cited again and again in RQ. But one of the most valuable features of this collection is that L. singles out a veritable host of less familiar names for praise or blame. Some are entirely obscure, for L. is a great reader of dissertations (published or not) and antiquarian monographs, from all periods through the present moment (see e.g. RQ p. 638). Were it not for L.'s recommendation, how else would the non-specialist know to seek out S.H. Rinkes (1854) on ambitus, or the 1921 dissertation of S.P.C. Tromp De pia culis Romanis? L. scatters literally hundreds of such pointers throughout the papers collected in RQ. If this notion appeals, the place to go for instant gratification is really L.'s annotated bibliography to "The Augural Law" (ANRW II 16.3 pp. 2297-2312). There L. lists well over 400 individual items relevant to his study, offering pithy judgements on most. Some are far from gentle. ("I have not so far succeeded in finding out what the author wished to write about" notes L. on one item.) But L. reserves perhaps what is his sternest censure (p. 2310 top) for someone who has not read Valeton -- nor for that matter Linderski -- and so mistakenly thinks a recent scholarly "demonstration" is indeed truly new.

With some energy and imagination, one could use RQ in a way quite unintended by its author -- as a handbook for philological and historical method. That is how good its constituent essays are. "But admiration", as L. himself notes (ANRW II 16.3 p. 2300), "need not always mean agreement". There is some scope for critiquing L.'s reconstruction of the ius augurale as it played out in public law, particularly in the adventurous "Auspices and the Struggle of the Orders" (no. 56 [1990]), where I think L. tries to wring too much from evidence that comes from a speech Livy has composed for Ap. Claudius. We see a similar (though here more cautious) trust in the factual accuracy of Livy's speeches in "Roman Officers in the Year of Pydna" (no. 29, also 1990) at pp. 318f. More consequentially, in that same article on Pydna (pp. 314-315), on the provision for 168 BC 'creari … neminem eo anno placere, nisi qui honorem gessisset', L. has oddly missed the important precedent of the emergency year 216 BC, as reported by Livy at 22.35.7. Otherwise one is hard pressed to detect another instance in RQ where L. has failed to cite a piece of ancient evidence directly relevant to his argument. There are a few different sorts of controversiae in RQ I could register, but not without seeming like a pedant.

To sum up L.'s achievement in this monumental collection, one could do worse than to turn to a passage from the Octavius of Minucius Felix, as elucidated and translated (RQ p. 533) by L. himself. For we really owe L. thanks for "those famous Roman auspices and auguries" -- and of course much else besides -- "which were collected and explained with such great labor, and which on [his] evidence were neglected with remorseful consequences and observed with success."