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Barbara Levick is best known for her wide-ranging work on topics and individuals from the Roman Empire, particularly her biographies of emperors in the Julio-Claudian period, but here she turns her attention to the last decades of the Republic in her study of the Catilinarian Conspiracy and its aftermath. Appearing in Bloomsbury's *Ancients in Action* series, this volume aptly fulfills the series' mandate to provide "short and accessible introductions to major figures of the ancient world, depicting the essentials of each subject's life and significance for later western civilization" (back cover). Indeed, it does more than that: rather than being merely a biography of Catiline himself, the book considers the socio-political and economic context of late Republican Rome which produced Catiline and other men who played a part in the dramatic decades that ended in Civil War and a new political regime.

After a brief preface in which Levick draws a parallel (admittedly inexact) between the Catilinarian Conspiracy and the plot of Guy Fawkes to overthrow the British Parliament many centuries later, and goes on to discuss briefly the difficulties involved in assessing the conspiracy and interpreting the character of Catiline, the book takes its start from the siege of Asculum during the Social War, and the epigraphic presence of Catiline, Cicero and Pompey together in the *consilium* of Pompey's father (*ILS* 8888) in 89 BCE.

Chapter 1 is perhaps the only chapter which fulfills a reader's expectation of a book entitled simply *Catiline*, for it alone most directly focuses on Catiline's family history and character. Even here, however, Levick discusses Cicero's origins too. The two men are inextricably linked throughout the book, joined in varying degrees with the careers of Pompey, Crassus and Caesar. In Chapter 2, Levick provides a condensed background to the socio-political and economic issues that plagued Rome and Italy more generally. There is some insightful analysis here, as, for example, when she writes that the Senate lacked the collective will to act to initiate reforms that would ease social and economic problems, but likewise refused to allow any individual to gain credit for taking such steps to alleviate the pressure (10). Chapter 3 describes the early stages of the political careers of Cicero, Pompey, Catiline and Caesar, leading up to the central years of Catiline's political ascendancy in 65-63. After an excellent treatment of the so-called 'First Conspiracy' which rejects its

existence outright (Chapter 4), Levick rightly devotes the majority of the book's pages (Chapter 5, 41-85) to a detailed discussion of the conspiracy of 63. Chapter 6 takes the narrative down to the rise of the so-called First Triumvirate and links its formation to Cicero's suppression of the conspiracy (103-6), while Chapter 7 assesses the available source material and the *Nachleben* of Catiline in later literature and scholarship. A brief section for 'Further Reading' and an Index complete the book.

This book is aimed at the non-specialist reader, and it is likely that it will be used by undergraduates in Roman history courses, or those focusing on Sallust's monograph or Cicero's *Catilinarians*. For these purposes, it offers a wealth of information for its readership, especially in the long discussion of the events of 63. Levick rightly identifies two strands of political unrest that came together imperfectly in the last months of the year. On the one hand, she argues that the uprising led by C. Manlius in Etruria is symptomatic of more widespread potential for unrest throughout Italy in the wake of the Social War and Sulla's settlements (47-9); at about the same time, disaffected and disappointed aristocratic politicians involved in the urban conspiracy saw an opportunity to improve their political fortunes if they could wrest control of the *res publica* away from the senatorial oligarchy. Levick deftly weaves together these two strands over the course of Chapter 5. Cicero's actions during his consulship are contextualized through the lens of the larger political milieu: the senatorial oligarchy needed someone to repress radical legislation aimed at easing the economic pressures faced by the rural landowners or colonists, and Cicero was found to be this man: "a bargain, tacit or explicit, was struck between Cicero and a section of the nobles. In return for the longed-for consulship, he was to take on supremely dangerous tasks: thwarting the reformers and the populace, repressing any consequent violence" (39). Thus Cicero took a stand against the Rullan bill early in the year, and thus his all-out efforts to provoke Catiline into open rebellion as his consulship came to a close. According to Levick, Cicero's hands were tied to the optimum cause: through this deal he had been "bought" by the senatorial oligarchs, and he "stayed bought" (40), despite great personal cost to him in the aftermath.

In many ways, Levick's *Catiline* is a welcome addition to the literature on the conspiracy and the last decades of the Republic; it offers a balanced view of the period as a whole, and emphasizes the complex web of political associations among the major characters involved in insurrection or suppression. It is not without problems, however. There are some odd speculations: that Sempronia and Fulvia may have taken up their shared Gracchan past in their roles in the conspiracy of 63 (57), or that Catiline and Pompey may have corresponded while Pompey was in the East (91-2). Most troubling, however, is Levick's contention that the conspiracy "led to"

the formation of the ‘First Triumvirate’ (xi; cf. 105-6). This statement is only true in the sense that Pompey’s return after its suppression meant that he was in a weaker position politically in 62 than he might have been if he had arrived in time to save the day, as he had so often earlier in his career.

On less significant points, as well, there are some slightly misleading turns of phrase or outright errors: Gracchan legislation provided *subsidized* grain, not free grain (10); Caesar’s aunt Julia was not “long-dead” in 69 (she died in that year), and Caesar did not put on games in her memory but delivered a funeral oration (23). Other errors have slipped through the editorial process: Cicero’s consular colleague is misidentified throughout as *Marcus* Antonius, not Gaius (cf. M. Laeca [36], but P. Laeca [64]); Cicero’s letter to Luceius (*Fam.* 5.12) is misdated to 56 (110). The choice of nomenclature is at times obscure, especially for general readers, such as “Q. Caepio Brutus” (39) to refer to the more familiar M. Iunius Brutus, or “Gabinus” to refer to the conspirator P. Gabinus Capito (73) in a context in which such a reference might more naturally be taken to mean the tribune A. Gabinus. Finally, while the lack of footnotes or other citations renders the text more readable, it creates difficulty for the reader to follow up references to the work of scholars identified by name only; the most common examples being references to the works of A. W. Lintott (19, 109, 110, 111). The astute reader who scans the Further Reading section (125-130) finds recommendations for Lintott’s book *Cicero as Evidence: A Historian’s Companion* (Oxford 2008), but also his 1967 article “Felix Catilina” (*Greece & Rome* n.s. 14: 157-69), with no guidance as to which was intended in the references in the main part of the book. These flaws are not fatal, but they do distract from an otherwise valuable book.

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