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FLORUS' VISION OF ROME*

by

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The main purpose of the doctoral thesis entitled “Florus’ Vision of Rome” is to present the picture of Rome that was described in the *Epitome de Tito Livio* by Lucius Annaeus Florus, a Roman historian active in the second century AD. There are still ongoing disputes concerning the author’s full name, origins, life and literary legacy, which remain unsolved. Furthermore, our evidence shows that in the times of Trajan and Hadrian there were at least three authors named Florus: a historian, a rhetor and a poet. Also disputed is the time of the composition of the work, which has been dated from the Augustan up to Antonine period. However, on the grounds of its literary style and vocabulary, the text is most frequently thought to have been written during the reign of Hadrian.

In the preface to his work, by means of a short *expositio*, Florus reveals his aim:

I intend to follow the example of those who describe the geography of the earth, and include a complete representation of my subject as it were in a small picture. I shall thus, I hope, contribute something to the admiration in which this illustrious people is held by displaying their greatness all at once in a single view.

(Florus, *praeef.* 3, transl. by J. ROLFE [Loeb])

The historiographical task is handled quite differently by Livy in his work *Ab Urbe Condita*, which is the major source for Florus. By undertaking the task of writing down the history of Rome, Livy is especially trying to find hope. His history aims to be a compendium of knowledge for contemporary people as well as for their

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descendants who will be able to find in it patterns to follow and threats to avoid. An analysis of the two texts allows us to notice differences which lead us to question the assessment of Florus as Livy's epitomator. Florus replaces an annalistic order of listing of events with a geographic scheme, presents a different attitude towards Augustus and concentrates on the Roman nation as a whole, while Livy focused on outstanding Roman individuals. It has been proved that there are elements common to both texts, such as the use of the same historiographical concepts taken from Stoic philosophy, the role of supernatural signs and the notion of the moral decline of the Roman nation. However, Florus also based his work on other sources such as the works of Sallust, Caesar and Velleius Paterculus.

The *Epitome de Tito Livio* gives accounts of the most important events in Roman history, from the foundation of the city up until the battle of the Teutoburg Forest. A periodisation of events based on the analogy of human development is also a characteristic feature of this work. Florus distinguishes four stages in the history of Rome: childhood (*infantia*), covering the royal period; youth (*adulescentia*), from the times of Brutus and Collatinus to the conquest of the whole of Italy; adulthood (*iuventas*), from the first Punic War until the Augustan period; and senility (*senectus*). The flow of events is conditioned by numerous factors, such as *virtus Romana* and its various aspects: *fides*, *concordia*, *iustitia*, *felicitas*, *dignitas* and *pietas*. At every stage of the growth of the city there is a visible struggle between *virtus* and *fortuna*. *Virtus*, the reflection of Roman ideals, became the foundation of Roman supremacy over the Mediterranean world. *Fortuna*, competing with *virtus*, was perceived as transcendent power which led to the creation of the common state. The idea of the common state is drawn in the very beginning of Florus' history and seems to constitute its centre and doctrinal core. The author expresses enthusiasm for the epic greatness of Rome on numerous occasions. He remains loyal to the picture of Roman community that was described by Polybius and regards keeping the country at peace as a value and something beneficial for the whole society. Polybius in the *Histories* argued that the core of Roman hegemony consists not in the *tyche* (fortune) but in the *arete* (virtue) of its inhabitants. It is a clearly visible pattern that a gradual decline of *fortuna*'s favour goes along with the decline of morality. The turning point is the *invidia fortunae* – fortune's hatred towards the Roman nation, illustrated by the conflict between Caesar and Pompey.

In the thesis it is maintained that the framework of the *Epitome de Tito Livio* was constructed on the basis of an ethical scheme of dichotomy between external (just) and internal (murderous) wars. *Bella iusta* can include defensive wars, conducted against savage tribes which posed a threat to Rome. They were actions taken both in defence of aliens and aimed at gaining new territories and wealth. Civil wars were disapproved of by the author as they destroyed the peace of the country and led to the collapse of politics, the economy, ethics and morality. After a period that was characterised by devotion, generosity and sanctity, the

nation turned against itself through tremendous and brutal civil wars. The trigger for these negative changes was considered by Florus to be the fall of Carthage after it had been surrounded by the army of Scipio the Younger for three years. Along with the disappearance of *metus hostilis*, there was a gradual decline of Roman morality, which was criticised by the author. His idea of showing the Roman state of affairs in a negative light, highlighting the spreading rottenness of the nation's spirit and indicating economic causes for wars may lead to the conclusion that Florus' beliefs are pragmatic and objective. The historian passes a negative judgement on wars conducted against the code of morals and divine order. It should be mentioned that Florus seems to objectively assess the attitude and behaviour of Rome's enemies – he praises the wives of the barbarians and even compares some enemies to Roman heroes. This occurs in the comparison of Scipio and Hannibal. Florus' honesty is evident in his criticism of the immoral actions of the Romans and his description of their flaws. This honesty gives him credit in the eyes of his readers. Nevertheless, some scholars evaluate Florus' work negatively, accusing him e.g. of ignorance of historical facts and the art of war. The *Epitome* is, on the other hand, highly rated for its style. Chiasm, hyperbole, metaphor, personification and alliteration are only a few examples of the numerous figures and rhetorical devices which can be found in the text. Florus' style is characterised by synonyms added in order to highlight parts of a sentence, the repetition of words, and the use of exclamations or moralistic interjections like *o pudor!*, *nefas!*, *incredibile dictu!* or *mira res dictu!* By means of such exclamations he expresses his opinion and assessment of the events. Florus sympathises with the republican times and his political aim is to calm the society, which was made restless by Hadrian's peace policy, and to convince the citizens of Rome that the reign of indolent rulers finished with the kings' exile. Florus praises the times when there was peace, stability, order and freedom in the country, when religion was preeminent. The Romans believed that if they followed the rules strenuously while conducting religious rituals, their country would gain wealth and expand. All failures and misdeeds led to misfortune and disaster. Florus was sure about divine interference in human affairs, as was Livy. The gods as moral guardians rewarded good deeds and punished misbehaviour. Their will, approving or disapproving, was revealed in extraordinary signs, the weather and behavioural anomalies. It has to be emphasised, though, that Florus did not mention any interpretation of *prodigium*.

The doctoral thesis does not lay claim to a comprehensive treatment of the problem being examined, but rather shows the mentality of Rome on the basis of a comparative analysis of ancient works. The work is a result of the examination of numerous texts, taking into account studies on language, literature, history, culture, religion and moral philosophy.

