**BOOK REVIEW**

*Greek Political Imagery from Homer to Aristotle*. By Roger Brock. London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013. Pp. xx + 252. Hardcover, $130.00. ISBN 978-1-780-93-206-4.

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here are books aplenty concerning the practice and theory of Greek politics, as well as the politics (in wider or stricter senses) of Greek literature; but in this long-awaited book, Roger Brock offers something completely missing and highly valuable: an overall study of Greek political imagery in the archaic and classical periods. This is a particularly rich book, not only in its detailed treatment of the subject (there are plenty of gems in the copious and often long notes, rather unhelpfully in the form of endnotes), but also in the wider implications of many of its findings.

The book is effectively divided in two parts: the first five chapters take the form of thematic studies of the repertoire of the figurative language of Greek politics, while the last three are devoted to the chronological development of Greek political imagery in the archaic period, the fifth and the fourth centuries respectively. This arrangement illuminates beautifully both structure and change, by enabling Brock to discuss in detail the variety of ways in which a particular figural trope is employed in our sources, before showing how different images have co-existed and how existing images changed and new ones emerged.

If I have any misgiving, this concerns the fact that the titles of the first five chapters— (1) Gods as Kings, Kings as Gods; (2) The State as Household and Family; (3) The Shepherd of the People; (4) The Ship of State; (5) The Body Politic—were not the best way of dividing the repertoire of imagery; in fact, Brock’s discussion in the chronological chapters provides a much better arrangement of themes and the interlinking between related images.

One category of Greek imagery concerns the employment of animals and physical objects, with their peculiar and characteristic features, as metaphors for individuals and groups: lions and dogs, or bulwarks, towers and walls, as metaphors for rulers, politicians and citizens. A second category concerns the employment of relationships between various kinds of individuals as metaphors for political relationships: masters and slaves and fathers and sons constitute prominent examples for understanding the relationship between rulers and subjects, or hegemonic and subjected states.

If the second category focuses on relationships, a third category shifts emphasis to ways of employing power in everyday life as metaphors for rule and authority in politics: the power exercised by the helmsman in running a ship, by a charioteer in driving a chariot or by the farmer as regards the yoke, by a doctor over the ill body of his patients provide apt metaphors for ruling a political community. A fourth category focuses on various fields as metaphors for the field of politics: the household, the ship or the human body, with their complex balance between different elements, provide alternative models for exploring the arrangements of political communities. Perhaps we could define a fifth category, which would examine not how Greeks employed everyday metaphors to conceptualize politics, but rather the reverse process: Brock examines in some detail how Greeks employed political metaphors to understand the community of the gods, or the constitution of the human body.

Brock’s subtle discussion brings out a number of significant wider issues: particularly stimulating is his observation of a general lack of political images that can be characterized as specifically democratic, and the non-democratic implications that most political images easily lend themselves to. Brock argues that the image of the household and of politicians as stewards and watchdogs might be the major contribution of democracy to Greek political imagery, and this is an argument worth further exploration.

But perhaps most significant in this book are the implications of the chronological discussion of Greek political imagery. For what is peculiar to ancient Greece is not political imagery, but the development of a conceptual vocabulary about politics as a discrete field of human action: while all political communities have imagery, the Greeks were peculiar in devising e.g. classifications of political systems in terms of forms of rule (democracy, oligarchy, aristocracy). How was Greek political imagery affected by the emergence of a specifically political vocabulary?

Equally important is the consideration of the nature of our sources for different periods of Greek history. While our archaic sources consist exclusively of diverse genres of poetry, the classical period is characterized by the emergence of various prose genres (historiography, oratory), including treatises and dialogues devoted especially to politics. Can we take the order of appearance of imagery in the sources as evidence for their appearance in history, and draw the relevant conclusions, or, if not, how do we factor in the deflections and illusions created by different genres? These are methodological problems which should be at the centre of our study of Greek politics: while Brock eschews an overall answer, his detailed exploration of particulars will be the foundation of any future discussion of the topic. Overall, this is a book that opens significant new paths for the study of Greek politics, and should be widely and attentively read.

Kostas Vlassopoulos

*University of Nottingham,* konstantinos.vlassopoulos@nottingham.ac.uk