

## BOOK REVIEW

*Triumphs in the Age of Civil War. The Late Republic and the Adaptability of Triumphal Tradition.* By CARSTEN HJORT LANGE. Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2016. Pp xiv + 333. Hardcover, \$128.00. ISBN 978-1-47426-784-7.

Lange follows his 2009 book on Augustus' Actium victory with a series of essays devoted to an array of ancillary themes: the breadth and deployment of what he considers "triumphal" honors, the multiple aspects of celebratory forms revealed by our sources, the place of the civil war triumph in Roman tradition, the distinctive character of civil war triumphs in late-republican history, the phenomenon of the "unnamed" enemy in the ancient texts and documents that facilitated such uncanonical victories, the interrelation between the celebration of Augustus' many return to the city and triumphal tradition—as well as a host of other topics variously interwoven.

The author's treatment of the sources is thorough, at times, incisive, and much is marshalled in support of two grand themes: the emergence and eventual conventionalization of the award of the triumph for civil war victory; and an insistence on the late-republican triumph as a "flexible" standard for a variety of attested events and practices—here conceived as "triumph-like," "substitute honors," "almost a triumph," et alia. The first of these will hardly surprise scholars of the period, although it is here probed in detail (although with excessive repetition); the second strikes the present reviewer as both forced and historically unconvincing. For in Lange's view, *triumphus*, *reditus*, *adventus* are all to be conceived as versions or variations of the same phenomenon; many distinguished scholars have long made similar claims, with equally insubstantial arguments. Indeed, one rightly asks if every return to Rome by a victorious military man is in some sense a triumph, why did the Romans so glorify this institution, and so carefully curate its award? Such institutions, so clearly distinguished by the Romans themselves—ritually as well as semantically—surely had social functions and purposes which defined and distinguished them, despite the lacunose character of our sources on these, as on so many other, topics. Few who take seriously the Romans' distinctions between these differing rewards for battlefield success can find such reductionism compelling.

Nevertheless, the learning displayed in the service of Lange's interpretation is impressive; yet the book is less than the sum of its parts. Indeed, this is hardly a "new" book—for five of its seven chapters have already been published, their reappearance here is little marked by rethinking, and the volume, overall, betrays a rush to see print: its chapters suffer from abundant and unnecessary rehearsals of material that reveals their original independence; repetitive and often inelegant prose rewards neither its author nor readers (I am fully aware that Lange is not a native English speaker—but an English press should, one might hope, make more of an effort); the opacity of many references in the notes (and at times, their simple relevance) at times baffles; and the working and reworking of single ideas, often to contradictory formulations, undermines one's sense of confidence in interpretation.

Challenges, corrections, and counterarguments are the stuff of scholarly tradition and form the foundations of evolving interpretations. Yet the all-too-frequent disparagement of other scholars' views, at times without argument, is both intemperate and uncharitable. Lange is entitled to his views—and others will surely weigh them and respond.

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