

## BOOK REVIEW

*Ushering in a New Republic: Theologies of Arrival at Rome in the First Century BCE.*  
By TREVOR S. LUKE. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2014. Pp. xii + 328. Paper, \$50.00. ISBN 978-0-472-05222-6.

The scholarship on the late Roman Republic and Early Roman Empire has acquired new directions in recent years. The dichotomy between Republic and Principate is being thoroughly revised and now there is a trend to pay more attention to the disruptions and continuities between these two political systems. Republic and Principate are no more taken as homogenous periods. There were several Republics and Principates, with distinct chronologies. This historiographical turn was possible because it chose to highlight not only the constitutional issues of these regimes, but also the large field of culture, especially the behavior of the Roman elite, and its respective political, moral and religious values.

Following this path, Luke's book addresses the religious performances of leading figures in the late Roman Republic on the occasion of their departures and returns to the city of Rome. His main argument is that the political theology of these performances influenced the evolution of the Republic, from Sulla to Augustus. In an aristocratic milieu, marked by a level of competition even more pronounced in a time of political crisis, religion has become a means of projecting personal power as well as the notion that the safeguard of the State rested on specific individuals who had competence in dealing with the gods.

The book is divided in three parts — "The Sullan Republic", "The Civil War", and "The *Res Gestae* and the Advent of the Princeps". Luke begins his study analyzing Marius' self-presentation as the savior of Rome and Italy, thus fixing a theological model that subsequent leaders would have to emulate or surpass. Sulla, who was lieutenant of Marius in Africa, followed this pattern since he "learned from his former commanders to fashion a portrait of himself as the savior of Rome in a time of national crisis" (41). He established a theology with the objective of encompassing the diversity of the Mediterranean world with Rome at the center. Pompey, with his performance in the *recognitio equitum* of 70 BC,

dialogued with the Sullan legacy, but emphasizing the incorporation of large numbers of Italians under the hegemony of Rome.

Such an emphasis on the combination of the interests of Italy with those of the aristocracy would pave the way for Cicero's political theology performed in his departure for exile and return to Rome. According to Luke, the Ciceronian theology, a more civic one since based on the notion of *pater patriae*, would have important ramifications in the future ideology of the Principate. Caesar's *ovatio* of 44 BC is interpreted by Luke in relation to Cicero's thought. In his words, "Caesar's response to Cicero was to return to a gentilician theology rooted in the regal period and to assert that Cicero's vision of the Republic as a gathering of senators, while compelling, had a history that allowed him to propose for himself a continuing role in that senatorial gathering, as an officiator in Rome" (138). But, if, on the one hand, Caesar's performance has been associated with monarchy, on the other hand, Augustus has succeeded in mobilizing the precedent theological tradition to present himself as the true savior of the Republic. To make this point clear, Luke offers an illuminating reading of the *Res Gestae* as an "arrival text", in the sense that it "implicates its reader into a cultural process that unfolds in a series of arrivals culminating in the full restoration of the Republic, the birth of a new age, and the apex of Augustus' personal career" (197). Augustus' self-presentation emerges as a new Numa, a monarch, but an elected one.

Luke's book deserves to be read for its detailed narrative of the interconnections between the theologies of arrival performed from Marius to Augustus. He convincingly shows how each one has appropriated and reframed the previous ones to build the public image of important members of the elite. Luke thus approaches a subject only briefly treated, for example, by Geoffrey Sumi in his *Ceremony and power: performing politics in Rome between Republic and Empire* (2005). Finally, the book will also interest those who study the political culture of the Principate. Emperors after Augustus also sought to forge imperial theologies to justify their rising to supreme power, and, in doing so, they maintained alive the competitive political environment of the Republic.

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