

reaction. T. argues that the Gracchi's legislation, by 'redistributing Roman resources through state instead of private networks', constituted a 'threat to the privileged identity of Roman aristocrats' (p. 168).

A concluding chapter reviews the book's arguments while putting them into a broader historical context. T. suggests we need to pay more attention to the economy 'when completing a portrait of Roman political life' (p. 179). T. also provides a brief but interesting comparison with the history of twentieth-century Saudi Arabia, another state transformed by a relatively sudden influx of great wealth. Overall, this is a clearly written and convincingly argued work that offers many insights into Republican politics.

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## THE ROLE OF THE LARES IN ROME

FLOWER (H.I.) *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden. Religion at the Roman Street Corner*. Pp. xvi + 394, ills, maps, colour pls. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2017. Cased, £37.95, US\$45. ISBN: 978-0-691-17500-3.  
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F.'s text is the first full-length English monograph devoted specifically to the cult of the Lares. It is a superb work of research, blending material and textual scholarship on these often-overlooked deities. The book can be divided into four sections: possible origins of the Lares cults, the domestic setting of the cult, rituals centred around civic street cults and the Augustan reforms to the street cults. The text includes three case studies, Rome, Pompeii and Delos, each of which illustrate a functional reason for the installation of the cult. The central goal of the book is to illustrate how the Lares cult was distinctly Roman and a means of reflecting one's Romanness abroad. As such, the Lares cult was not a cult of exclusivity meant only for the elite within Roman society; rather, they were a set of deities whose rites and celebrations were shared equally among all Romans.

F.'s text fills a gap in existing literature on the Lares by addressing the *Lares Compitales* in the bulk of her text. Unlike previous works, the book is not just a catalogue of Lares images found in Pompeii (such as G.K. Boyce, 'Corpus of the Lararia of Pompeii', *MAAR* 14 [1937], 5–112) nor a simple overview of what these gods may be (as in D.G. Orr, 'Roman Domestic Religion: the Evidence of the Household Shrines', *ANRW* II.16.2 [1978], 1557–91). Nor is her text only concerned with the domestic form of the Lares cult, as previously found in T. Fröhlich (*Lararien- und Fassadenbilder in den Vesuvstädten* [1991]). Her text is a deep analysis of the social and religious significance of these gods in all dimensions of Roman life. The treatments of the civic aspect of the street cult and of the reforms Augustus implemented in 7 BCE, which merged the Lares into the *Lares Augusti*, are especially noteworthy. Whilst not intended for a layperson who is not versed in Roman religious culture and language, the book will be an important addition to the library of any scholar of Roman social history and religion.

The section on origins (pp. 18–31), makes an important advance on previous scholarship. Earlier studies have tended to take at face value statements about the Lares in ancient

sources of widely diverse genres and periods. F. questions these sources with due attention to authorship and context. In the case of Cato's evidence from *De agricultura*, for example, she questions whether his descriptions are the result of nostalgia or if they were capturing the reality of rural cultic activity (p. 29). Through careful study, F. establishes that the Lares cult was an enduring feature in the development of Rome, valued during the Republic and into the Imperial era.

As F.'s evidence spans into urban areas, such as Rome and Pompeii, she coherently continues to draw from these sources to form a cogent depiction of a uniquely Roman religious feature. For example, at Rome, the small civic temples dedicated to the Lares are hypothesised as places wherein community news, local and from abroad, was exchanged between people (p. 135). Her thesis is reinforced and solidified in the chapter on Roman Delos, as she argues that, when a relief depicting the Lares was likely destroyed in 88 BCE, allegedly by Mithridates' troops, this was a direct assault on Roman culture, as all other temples and gods were left untouched (pp. 179–80). According to F., the fact that these were the only gods targeted, illustrates how they were exclusively a Roman concept and, by attacking them, Mithridates' troops had targeted Roman culture itself.

One of the more interesting pieces of evidence that F. highlights, not found in other works on Lares, discusses an early phase of Roman religion (third century BCE), when the Lares are found in conjunction with Mars through a hymn of the Arval brothers (pp. 22–3). F. uses such evidence to establish that the Lares were 'consistently portrayed as ancient, familiar, and typically Roman' by the time they begin to appear in our sources (c. later third century BC) (p. 30). By including these types of evidence, F. creates parallels between elite civic activities and those of the broader population, such as the *vilicus/a* in charge of the farm (pp. 40–2) or the *vicomagistri*, who were elected to organise regular street festivals in honour of the *Lares Compitales* (pp. 206–8). F. thereby highlights the religious expression of non-elite classes without setting them apart from the upper echelons of Roman religious society. Rather, the celebration of Lares was a means to express a unity within the classes.

With respect to domestic cult, F. provides an extensive overview both of the physical settings of rituals for the Lares (the focus of Part 2) and the various rituals that addressed them (Part 3). It would have been interesting to see more on the possible associations between Lares and other domestic gods in particular spaces within the house, for example, the possible connection between the Lares and Asclepius and Hygeia in Pompeian kitchen shrines as explored by P. Foss (in 'Watchful *Lares*: Roman Household Organization and the Rituals of Cooking and Dining', in *Domestic Space in the Roman World: Pompeii and Beyond* [1997], pp. 196–219). This would have lent more depth to the dimensions of the Lares as guardian deities of borders, households and civic rites, through their connection to health and well-being. While there are 24 plates with high resolution images on gloss paper of frescoes, house shrines and potential street shrines, there are not many images of the Lares figurines. However, if treated as a companion piece, A. Sofroniew's volume (*Household Gods: Private Devotion in Ancient Greece and Rome* [2015]) could supplement any gaps for readers having difficulties imagining the Lares.

F. has accomplished a great feat by encapsulating in one invaluable text the many facets of the Lares cults and their relationship with Romans as joyous guardians intended for the benefit of all Roman people.

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