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**Kathryn Lomas, *The Rise of Rome: From the Iron Age to the Punic Wars*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. Pp. xxii + 405. Cloth (ISBN 978-0-674-65965-0) \$35.00.**

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phy (to the exclusion of a comprehensive one) with end-of-volume endnotes might strike some as insufficiently user-friendly. Nevertheless, the volume offers a centralized resource for scholars of imperial literature and culture with chapters by many of the most respected scholars in the field. Moreover, it succeeds in illustrating that many aspects of the Second Sophistic are apparent and relevant across boundaries of time, space, ethnicity, and culture.

*NECJ* 45.2

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Kathryn Lomas,  
*The Rise of Rome: From the Iron Age to the Punic Wars.*

Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2018. Pp. xxii + 405. Cloth  
(ISBN 978-0-674-65965-0) \$35.00.

Was there something exceptional about Rome from its very origins that positioned the city to dominate Italy and, eventually, the Mediterranean? In this volume written for a general audience, Kathryn Lomas sets out to answer this question by tracing Rome's rise to power from the Iron Age to the eve of the First Punic War. The result is a comprehensive, readable, and up-to-date synthesis of the archaeological and historical evidence for this integral period in Roman history.

Lomas' goals in this volume are twofold: first, to explore how Rome, one of many settlements in central Italy in the Iron Age, became the dominant power on the Italian peninsula by the First Punic War; and second, to situate Rome's growth within its broader Italian context. Lomas suggests Rome's rise cannot be understood without an awareness of the Italian world in which the city developed and which it would eventually come to dominate (3-4). She argues that Rome's success was, at no point, a given, but that specific aspects of Roman society and its interactions with its neighbors, allies and enemies alike, ultimately set the stage for Roman domination of the Italian peninsula.

The book is divided into fifteen chapters arranged chronologically. Part I (chapters 1-5) examines the development of Rome and Italy, particularly Etruria and Latium, from the Iron Age through the Orientalizing period. Lomas surveys the

archaeological and historical evidence for the origins of the city and traces Rome's development and that of its neighbors. Part II (chapters 6-10) covers Rome and Italy between 600 and 400 BCE, exploring the end of the monarchy, the nature of the fifth-century "crisis," and the beginning of Roman expansion in Latium. Part III (chapters 11-13) discusses the Latin War and its consequences, Roman interaction with allies and enemies, especially the Samnites, and Roman colonization. Finally, in Part IV (chapters 14-15), Lomas assesses the impact of Roman expansion on Rome itself in the mid-Republic and sets the stage for Rome's later imperial and Mediterranean dominance (and for the subsequent volume in this series).

In order to situate Rome within its broader Italian context, Lomas alternates chapters on Rome with chapters on Italy, beginning close to Rome, with Latium and Etruria, and eventually, as Rome's domination grows, incorporating Campania, northern Italy, and the Apennines. As Roman influence expands, the lines between these alternating chapters (naturally) blur. This arrangement of alternating chapters does introduce some redundancy, particularly across early chapters, but it also means that each chapter can be fruitfully read (or assigned) on its own or with its companion chapter.

Lomas synthesizes an extensive corpus of archaeological and historical material, much of which has only been published in Italian. Chapters dealing with the Iron Age and Archaic periods are particularly welcome, as they offer a straightforward account of the development of city-states in central Italy through the lens of material culture, which is accessible even to a general audience. Lomas deftly incorporates a wide range of archaeological material in her narrative and demonstrates that this evidence (even given its limitations, which she acknowledges) paints a picture of increasing socio-political complexity in central Italy through the Iron Age and Archaic periods. Lomas is more skeptical of the literary sources than the material culture related to Rome's foundation and early growth, which may cause some to object to her account. She is, however, clear that this is *her* view, and makes her reader aware of other perspectives on the foundation myths and early history of Rome, such as Carandini or Wiseman (35-37). Indeed, throughout the book, Lomas is careful to present differing views on the material and historical evidence, and to explain many of the complex debates in Roman history and archaeology in a straightforward, accessible way.

Lomas is less skeptical of the historical sources for the 5th century and beyond, and these sources (used carefully) increasingly dominate her narrative, forming the backbone of her exploration of how Roman socio-political organization changed

in the Early and Mid-Republic. The archaeological evidence for Mid-Republican Rome is woven into this narrative, but material culture becomes less dominant in these chapters, which is not surprising, given the problematic, fragmentary nature of the evidence from Rome during the Mid-Republican period.

It is in these chapters that Lomas articulates most clearly her belief that an important aspect of Roman exceptionalism was the complex system of bilateral alliances between Rome and other Italian states in the post-Latin War period. She argues that this system placed Rome squarely at the center of the Italian political and military landscape, and effectively shut off the ability of any group to form a coherent resistance to Roman power. Such alliances also regularly pulled Rome, willing or unwilling, into conflicts across the Italian peninsula (287), creating more opportunities for the acquisition of booty and land, and promoting a system of aristocratic competition which dominated Rome in the Mid-Republic. Lomas convincingly suggests that these aspects of Roman culture—an emphasis on aristocratic competition, military accomplishment, and the acquisition of booty—fueled Rome’s continued participation in this cycle of conquest. Aristocratic competition, in turn, altered the landscape of Rome itself through the variety of construction projects sponsored by successful aristocrats (324-325).

Lomas also suggests that Rome’s openness to outsiders—built into its very foundation myths—and its ability to expand access to citizenship contributed to Rome’s ability to establish a flexible, stable system of control in Italy (324). Her discussion of the Mid-Republican character of Roman expansionism is especially timely as Mid-Republican colonization is a topic of some scholarly interest at the moment, and she neatly incorporates recent research on the character of the colonies of the Mid-Republic into her narrative (274-280).

Not everyone will agree with Lomas’ presentation of Rome’s rise to power and Roman exceptionalism. She herself admits that it is difficult, given the source material, to tell whether Rome’s development was typical of other Italian city states, or if the settlement was somehow more adept at coping with instability and change than other cities (323). While this is not the book everyone would write about the rise of Rome, especially given Lomas’ particular skepticism towards the literary sources, it is also a book few *could* write. This volume is the direct result of Lomas’ impressive command of the archaeological material and her ability to translate and synthesize the complexity of the archaeological and historical record into a coherent and engaging narrative. She is able to incorporate recent theoretical approaches to material culture through lenses such as mobility, funerary investment, and social complexity, for example, in a way which is clear even to a non-specialist audience. Her account

of Roman exceptionalism is thus a compelling and a welcome addition to current discussions about the character of Rome and its rise to power.

Given her audience and the scope of the book, Lomas sacrifices some depth for the sake of her overall narrative, but offers plenty of additional bibliography and source material to explore. The accessibility of the narrative is complemented by the volume's supplementary material, including images, footnotes, additional sections on ancient sources and Roman chronology, and a guide to relevant museums and sites. While this is an excellent resource for a general audience, this book (or selections from it) would also be a welcome supplement to a survey course in Roman history or archaeology.

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Catalina Balmaceda,  
*Virtus Romana: Politics and Morality in the Roman Historians.*

Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2017. Pp. 312. Cloth  
(ISBN 978-1-4696-3512-5) \$45.00.

In this thoughtful and engaging study, Catalina Balmaceda traces the relationship between *virtus*, Roman historical developments, and historical writing from Sallust to Tacitus. Although *virtus* is not understudied, Balmaceda's contribution stands out from others, for example Sarsila (*Being a Man* [Frankfurt 2006]) and McDonnell (*Roman Manliness* [Cambridge 2006]), in that it is distinctly a concept study rather than a word study. Reflecting on *virtus* as a category of good qualities, Balmaceda illustrates how it developed as a moral and political principle in historical texts. Her strategy is on the whole successful, and the work provides valuable insights into changing conceptions of a man's central virtues in Roman social and political life.

After a brief introduction, Balmaceda devotes Chapter 1 to the definitions and historical development of *virtus*. Her tight analysis demonstrates effectively that *virtus* is a native Roman concept whose development owed relatively little to Greek