Review of Space, geography, and politics in the early Roman Empire, by C. Nicolet

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Some of the readers of *BMCR* already will be acquainted with the contents of Professor Nicolet's book. *Space, Geography, and Politics* is a translation (by Hélène Leclerc) of *L'Inventaire du Monde: Géographie et Politique aux Origines de L'Empire Romain* (Fayard 1988); an Italian edition appeared three years ago (Laterza 1989). The French version has received several full reviews, e.g. in *RPh* LXI (1988) 309-314 (J. Desanges) and *JRS* LXXX (1990) 178-182 (N. Purcell). I therefore will not attempt to summarize in detail all of N.'s main arguments: the *RPh* review does that quite well.

N.'s main subjects in this book are the state of geographical knowledge in the early Principate, the use of geography for Imperial propaganda, and Augustus' methods of territorial organization. I had the good fortune to be present when N. offered his five Jerome Lectures at the American Academy in Rome in October 1987, and I was able to discuss with the author some of the issues which came up at these talks. Like this book, Nicolet's lectures were dense and stimulating. N. presented to his audience a sometimes daunting array of texts and iconographic representations for consideration, ranging from the familiar (the *Res Gestae*, Pliny's description of the Map of Agrippa) to passages from late treatises such as the *Cosmographia* of Pseudo-Aethicus. My thought at the time was that the subject matter of N.'s lectures was not uniformly conducive to oral presentation (e.g. Eratosthenes' measurement of the world by cylindrical projection). Nevertheless, N.'s introduction of complex side-issues never obscured the main lines of his argument (on which, see below). *Space, Geography, and Politics* reproduces rather closely the Jerome Lectures as they were delivered (or at least as I remember them being delivered). N. has added numerous detailed notes (some of which might have been appendices, e.g. p. 91 n. 17), and -- one of his trademarks -- a very full bibliography (here, consisting of over 500 items). N. also thoughtfully has translated almost all the Greek and Latin passages he discusses, which makes his work accessible to scholars in fields other than Classics.

I do not think that I am the only person who will find *Space, Geography, and Politics* a difficult book to study. The main shortcoming is that neither *L'Inventaire du Monde* nor this volume has an *Index Locorum*, severely limiting its accessibility and usefulness. A few problems however are specific to the English version. The present volume unfortunately has omitted the (almost necessary) 'Table des Matières' to each densely-packed chapter. The translation is sometimes over-literal, especially in the (extensive) footnotes: in several places (e.g. p. 52 n. 37) it is hard to understand N.'s point without looking at the French. The Index we do get is much less satisfactory than in the original. Only the most well-known ancient authors have been retained: to take a random example, we are on our own to find the three places where the geographer Alexander Lychnos of Ephesus comes up (pp. 64, 66, 80). Many important subject-headings also have fallen out, especially those discussed mostly in the Notes. This is a pity: to find N.'s (excellent) discussion of sun-dials, one must know enough to look under Facundus Novius (the astrologer who designed Augustus' horologium). The fifty-odd illustrations
This is not to denigrate the actual content of *Space, Geography, and Politics*, which asks many important questions. N. justifiably complains that previous work in Roman administrative history has done little to delineate "the real administrative workings of so vast a territorial empire; that is, how the contacts between the administrators and the administered were organized and handled; how information necessary for decision making was gathered and circulated, and how commands or instructions reached their destination" (p. 10). N. himself does not fully address all these questions: indeed, that would be too much to expect from a book which ostensibly is the publication of a series of lectures. Nevertheless, what N. does offer in *Space, Geography, and Politics* is a detailed exposition of some suggestions offered nine years ago in a short article, "L'Empire romain: espace, temps et politique" (*Ktèma* 8 (1983) 163-173). In this piece, N. argued that the text of the *Res Gestae* justifies Augustus' boast in the preface, 'orbem terrarum imperio Romano subiecit'. The catalogue of Augustus' military and diplomatic successes, coupled with the list of his geographical explorations, substantiates the claim that he had extended the influence of the *imperium p.R.* over the known limits of the inhabited world. N. also suggested that with Augustus we can trace the emergence of "une saisie nouvelle et un contrôle statistique de l'espace physique et