

H.I. Flower (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Roman Republic*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 405, ISBN 0-521-80794-8, (hb), ISBN 0-521-00390-3, (pb).

This handbook is a useful addition to the secondary literature dealing with the Roman republic. It is designed as an introduction to the period and is a helpful textbook for students, providing a general survey of, and clear introduction to, many of the central issues of this period. Favouring a thematic approach rather than a chronological one, the collection of fifteen essays is divided into five parts: the first on political and military History, the second on Roman society, the third concerning Rome as an imperial power, the fourth focusing on Roman culture and the fifth, an epilogue on the influence of the Roman republic on the French and American revolutions. Each of the first four parts contains a number of chapters, each covering a different aspect of the sub-topic, while the fifth part consists of a single chapter. There is naturally an element of overlap between the various papers, but this is less problematic in a mixed volume, which is unlikely to be read straight through. As a whole, the volume covers a broad range of topics and is a comprehensive guide to the period. More problematic is the inconsistent nature of the contributions, some of which are elementary in their approach, while others - those on the constitution, army and economy in particular - require a substantial amount of background knowledge.

Let us turn to an examination of the four parts of the book, the first of which consists of four chapters. The first is on the early republic, by Stephen Oakley, and provides a concise summary of the major stages in the transformation of Rome from a small Latin city to a nation ready to flex imperial muscles, focusing on the conflict of the orders and the Roman conquest of Italy and Greece. T. Corey Brennan's chapter on power and process under the Republican 'constitution' is a guide to the nature of *imperium* and the informal wielding of its influence. It includes a useful appendix describing the various magistracies of the *cursus honorum* that students will find invaluable, but his description of individual laws will be too detailed for many students without sufficient background. The chapter on the Roman army and navy by David Potter highlights the importance of the military to Roman life, and illustrates his view of the developments that transformed the Roman army into a military superpower, although he downplays important strains such as the political awareness of republican soldiers, and the importance of their personal attachment to their commander. Finally, Jürgen von Ungern-Sternberg's chapter on the crisis of the Republic chronicles the major stages leading to the downfall of the Republic. There are no surprises here, nor new readings, but it is a lucid and brief account of the subject, an approach however, which seems to contradict the principle set down in the introduction, of avoiding a narrative of the main events.

The second part on Roman society opens with a lucid chapter on the Roman family, house, and household by Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp. This is a guide to the Roman *familia* for the novice reader, although it is somewhat limited in that the picture is entirely urban, ignoring the housing conditions of rural peasants, or indeed aristocratic villas. Nor does it give more than a glimpse of the slave members of the *familia*. Phyllis Culham's chapter on women in the Roman Republic, going beyond the usual well-trod turf of upper class women, offers an eye-opening insight to the world of women. Although chapter seven by Jean-Jacques Aubert is entitled, 'The Republican economy and Roman law', it actually focuses almost entirely on legal perspectives, and says little about economy save a summary of various laws that deal with trade and commerce. Jörg Rüpke's chapter on Roman religion is a clear synopsis of the range of religious practices and of the organization of state religion in the city of Rome. Unfortunately, this brief report does little justice to this important issue, and the chapter fails to demonstrate in any depth the role and importance of religion for the citizens of Republican Rome.

Part III, entitled 'Rome's Empire' contains three chapters arranged chronologically and geographically. The first, by Kathryn Lomas, deals with Italy and provides a concise and reliable description of the Romanisation of Italy, drawing on archeological and literary evidence. John F. Lazenby's chapter on Rome and Carthage briefly summarises the events around the three Punic Wars and then focuses on the two main literary sources, Livy and Polybius, whose narratives serve as a basis for his analysis of the motives for these wars. The final chapter in the section, Rome and the Greek World, by Erich S. Gruen, outlines the Macedonian and Mithridatic wars and illustrates how Roman expansionism and aggression, according to the author's view, contributed towards the conquest of the East. Although each chapter deals thoroughly with its own subject matter, the section as a whole treats the three great wars of conquest as independent phenomena isolated from each other. Thus there is no sense of a gradually expanding empire, and the subsequent problems and developments engendered by such growth. Here, too, there is a great deal of straightforward narration of events, despite the rejection of such an approach in the introduction.

Roman culture, the subject of the fourth part, is covered by chapters on literature, art, and public spectacles. The first of these, by Elaine Fantham is a chronological survey of Republican literature from Livius Andronicus to Sallust, including Ennius, Naevius, Plautus, Terence, Cato, Lucilius, Lucretius, Catullus and Cicero (but, curiously, not Caesar or Varro). Her restriction to Latin writers, and rejection of anything Greek limits this survey. Fantham also indicates trends in modern scholarship, as she races through this survey, which leaves the reader feeling rather breathless at its close. Ann L. Kuttner's chapter on Republican art is broader. Considering 'any and all artwork that the peoples of the developed Republic made and displayed at home and abroad' (320), she covers a wide range of artefacts, including coins, statues, sculpture, portraits and trophies, as well as the architecture of republican Rome. The final chapter in the section, 'Spectacle and political culture in the Roman Republic', written by the editor, focuses on triumphs and funerary ceremonies, and shows the vital role played by public spectacles in the self-definition of the Roman elite.

The epilogue, written by Mortimer N.S. Sellers, expounds the influence of the Roman Republic on the French and American revolutions, and provides an original ending to the book. Sellers presents a perspective that is rarely covered in undergraduate courses. He shows how both the French and the Americans used the Roman Republic as a model and points to the consequences and problems of such a model, allowing the reader to examine the period from a fresh perspective.

Overall, this book provides a thorough introduction to the Roman Republic, covering a wide range of topics. According to the introduction, the volume's aim is to 'suggest the richness of the ancient sources and the debates they are currently raising'. The first of these aims is accomplished well enough, with a wide variety of sources cited and explained; the second is not as satisfactory, since the book often seems to shy away from debate, presenting controversial points as if they were facts. Clearly, the emphasis is on imparting information rather than encouraging readers to draw conclusions from the texts themselves; in a book aimed at giving a general overview this is perhaps not unreasonable, especially since the bibliography for each section allows readers to pursue matters further. The book also contains a range of illustrations and several maps, as well as a timeline of events. One criticism: since the end notes are found at the end of each chapter, while the bibliography is at the end of the volume, the reader is somewhat inconvenienced by having to look in two different places, while attempting to follow an argument fully. Nonetheless, this book is a useful addition to undergraduate students and I feel sure that many students and their teachers will find individual chapters in this volume a good starting point for the study of specific topics. All in all, this is a welcome addition to introductory literature on the period.