Introduction

In the fall of 43 BCE, Antony, Octavian, and Lepidus met on a small island near Bononia, Italy, to formalize an alliance that became known as the second triumvirate.[1] Among the provisions of their agreement was the implementation of a new round of proscriptions to fund their armies in the wars to come. After marching to Rome, they ensured their extraordinary commission was invested with the force of law through the passage of the *Lex Titia*. The next night, the first names of the proscribed were publicly posted. The triumvirs had already sent execution squads ahead to eliminate the most prominent of their enemies, foremost among them Cicero. Fleeing down the coast of Italy with hopes of reaching Brutus in Macedonia, Cicero was apprehended near his villa at Formiae. According to Livy, his assassins caught him as he was being carried on a litter to the sea. Declaring his intention to die in the country he had often saved, he thrust his head forth to be severed.[2] The soldiers also removed the hands with which he had penned the *Philippics*, a series of speeches that portrayed Antony as a rotting limb in need of surgical removal: *in rei publicae corpore, ut totum salvum sit, quicquid est pestiferum amputetur* ("In the body of the *res publica*, in order that the whole is safe, whatever is pestilential must be cut out," Cic. *Phil.* 8.15). As Antony displayed the severed *membra* of his adversary on the speaker's platform, he offered a symbolic rejoinder to the rhetoric of the *Philippics*. It was not he but Cicero, it seemed, who required amputation from the body of Rome.

All translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. I have used *Oxford Classical Texts* when available; most other quotations follow the texts used by the *Packard Humanities Institute (PHI)*. Exceptions are acknowledged in the notes and bibliography. Greek quotations of Appian, Dio, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, and Plutarch follow standard Loeb editions. Primary source abbreviations accord with the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*.

[1] See App. *B Civ.* 4.2–6; Cass. Dio 46.54–6, 47.1–2; Plut. *Cic.* 46, *Ant.* 18–19 alongside Richardson 2012: 34–8.

[2] *prominenti ex lectica praebentique inmotam cervicem caput praecisum est* ("Leaning out of the litter and offering his steady neck, he was beheaded," Sen. *Suas.* 6.17). Osgood 2006: 78–9 discusses the difficulty of separating fact from fiction in the tales of Cicero and other proscribed men.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

In the years after Cicero's death, his severed head became an object of fascination to his fellow Romans.[3] Stories fueled by the declamatory schools began circulating that Antony dined with his head on the table and that his wife Fulvia stuck her hair pins in his tongue.[4] Much of what we know of this tradition comes from the Elder Seneca's *Suasoriae*, which preserves several accounts of Cicero's death. It also includes a eulogy composed by the late Augustan poet Cornelius Severus, from whose epic *Res Romanae* twenty-five lines are excerpted.[5] The verses open with the jarring image of the *rostra* piled high with the heads of great men. Despite the horror of their nearly still breathing visages (*oraque . . . spirantia paene*), Severus' imagined viewers do not linger upon them.[6] They are instead seized by the *imago* of Cicero, so extraordinary that it seems to stand alone: *sed enim abstulit omnis, | tamquam sola foret, rapti Ciceronis imago* ("but the face of slaughtered Cicero pushed them all aside, as if his were there alone," Sen. *Suas.* 6.26). Treating his decapitated head as if it were an ancestor mask, Severus draws out its symbolic significance: *egregium semper patriae caput, ille senatus | vindex, ille fori, legum ritusque togaeque, | publica vox saevis aeternum obmutuit armis* ("The eternally extraordinary head of his country, that champion of the senate, of the forum, of laws and customs and civic life, a public voice forever silenced by savage weapons," Sen. *Suas.* 6.26).[7] Despite writing half a century after the fall of the Republic, Severus is fluent in the elements of its political language: the foundational institutions of the senate and the courts, the civic markers of the forum and the toga, and the role of the statesman in religious rites and public speech. Yet there is one element of his eulogy that reveals him as a thinker of the late Augustan age: his celebration of Cicero as a head of state.

At first glance, Severus' description of Cicero as a head of state might seem like little more than a rhetorical cliché. Yet in the political discourse of the early-to-mid first century BCE, this metaphor was laden with regal connotations that made it inappropriate as a term of praise. Late Republican thinkers instead envisioned the *res publica* as an autonomous organism composed of interdependent parts. This tradition was primarily oriented towards the relationship between the senate and people. When a statesman was incorporated into it, he typically played the role of

[3] Richlin 1999 addresses the symbolism surrounding Cicero's head. [4] Roller 1997.
[5] Quintilian calls Severus a better *versificator* than *poeta* (*Inst.* 10.1.89). Conte 1994: 430 suggests that his works represent the extreme convergence of epic, oratory, and historiography.
[6] The use of *ora* rather than *capita* foregrounds the theme of eloquence (von Albrecht 1999: 218).
[7] Dahlmann 1975: 101 interprets *patriae caput* as a variation on *pater patriae*, an idea developed by Feddern 2013: *ad loc.* Lobur 2008: 150 argues that these lines equate the death of Cicero with "the death of the republic."

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

a protector or healer. On the rare occasions when capital symbolism did appear, it was used to criticize those whose ambitions posed a threat to collegial governance. Over Severus' lifespan, however, the *caput* reversed its signifying force. It was not only Cicero who came to be celebrated in this manner, but also Pompey, Caesar, and the *princeps* himself. By the end of the Julio-Claudian era, the *res publica* had been radically reimagined as a collection of limbs and organs unable to survive without a head to command it. Its transformation, I argue, illuminates how Roman writers responded to the establishment of sole rule without acknowledging it as such. The metaphor of the body politic therefore offers a new perspective on the constitutional transformation of the late first century BCE and its representation in Latin literature.

Defining the Roman Republic

My book takes a historicizing approach to figurative speech to explore the paradoxical persistence of Roman Republicanism under the Principate.[8] Roman thinkers famously declined to acknowledge the arrival of sole rule for nearly a century after the Battle of Actium, producing a disjuncture between constitutional form and political language that has invited divergent modes of explanation. Ronald Syme influentially argued that Romans were aware of the changes wrought by Augustus but were unwilling to address them directly. "Contemporaries," as he succinctly put it, "were not deceived."[9] Those who share his perspective explain this unwillingness in different ways: as a product of the Roman elite's own value system,[10] a collective act of self-censorship,[11] and the occasional result of direct pressure from above.[12] Others have since questioned Syme's consciously

[8] I employ an upper-case R when referring to the Roman Republic or the political thought that arose in relation to it (Roman Republicanism). I use a lower-case R to refer to the classical republican tradition that I will go on to discuss.

[9] Syme 1939: 2.

[10] Kennedy 1992: 42–8 and Feeney 1992: 3 argue against a top-down approach to "Augustanism," emphasizing contestation and dialogue instead.

[11] The concept of self-censorship is exemplified in Asinius Pollio's well-known witticism, *non est enim facile in eum scribere qui potest proscribere* ("It is no easy thing to write against the one who can proscribe," Macrob. *Sat.* 2.4.21). Griffin 1984 engages with this theme in his discussion of Hor. *Sat.* 1.3.4 (*Caesar, qui cogere posset*), while Ziogas 2015 addresses self-censorship as a literary trope.

[12] Evidence for direct pressure only emerges in the late Augustan era, when the *princeps* reportedly ordered the burning of defamatory books (Cass. Dio 56.27.1). The Elder Seneca writes that Labienus avoided reciting certain parts of his history due to fears of retribution and that his books were burnt by his enemies (Sen. *Controv.* 10 *praef.* 5–8). One of those enemies, Cassius Severus, was charged with *maiestas* for writings that offended Augustus (Tac. *Ann.* 1.72.3). See Howley 2017: 217–18 on the uncertainties surrounding the practice, which was almost certainly not formalized during this

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

Tacitean approach to the Principate.[13] Rather than viewing Augustan writers as "mere mouthpieces of the political regime" or trying to find hidden moments of subversion in their texts, they invite us to take claims of Republican restoration seriously.[14] At the very least, Karl Galinsky argues, we should recognize that witnesses to this era "saw a sea of flux without a big marker that shouted 'Actium!'"[15] To insist that Romans not only perceived, but also understood the significance of, a constitutional change for which they provide no evidence might say more about our own political attachments than theirs.[16] Both approaches carry potential pitfalls; the former risks imposing our own conceptual categories onto people who did not experience their world in these terms, while the latter risks internalizing an ideology that benefited the consolidation of power into the hands of the few.

Central to this debate are divergent perspectives on what we mean by "Roman Republic" in the first place. Latin famously lacked a word – whether *res publica* or something else – to specify the political system that evolved after the mythologized expulsion of the kings. As Claudia Moatti writes, "the Romans could not say in Latin that they lived in a Republic."[17] *Res publica* only came to signify non-monarchical governance in the Italian Renaissance, when thinkers like Leonardo Bruni reworked it in service of their own political preoccupations.[18] Prior to this point, Latin writers could speak comfortably of the *res publica* that existed under Romulus or that over which Augustus presided.[19] When seeking to distinguish between different regimes or constitutions, they

period. Syme 1939: 486 argues that there were "stern measures of repression against noxious literature," but Raaflaub and Samons 1990: 439–47 advocate a more moderate approach.

[13] On Tacitus as a model for Syme, see Toher 2009b. [14] Galinsky 2005: 2.

[15] Galinsky 2005: 8. Eder 2005: 13–18 emphasizes that the "monarchical" perspective derives from High Imperial rather than contemporary literature.

[16] Roller 2015: 11–15. [17] Moatti 2020: 118.

[18] Hankins 2010 persuasively illustrates the origins of this tradition in the fifteenth century and considers its impact on "exclusivist republicanism," which holds that a republic is the only legitimate form of government.

[19] As Béranger 1953: 219 long ago observed, "La monarchie est compatible avec la *res publica*." Latin writers provide ample proof of this point; when Cicero's Scipio discusses Romulus' regal foundation of Rome, he asks, *quod habemus igitur institutae rei publicae tam clarum ac tam omnibus notum exordium, quam huius urbis condendae principium profectum a Romulo?* ("Therefore, what origin of a *res publica*'s creation do we consider as famous and well-known to all as the beginning of this city's foundation accomplished by Romulus?" Cic. *Rep.* 2.4). On the "Augustan restoration," Velleius famously writes, *prisca illa et antiqua rei publicae forma revocata* ("That old and ancestral form of *res publica* was revived," Vell. Pat. 2.89.3). *Res publica* is often construed as "Republic" in this passage (e.g. Gowing 2005: 40), but as Millar 1973: 64 writes, "We could reasonably paraphrase this passage as 'Augustus restored the *res publica*', but not as 'Augustus restored the Republic'."

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

used words like *forma*, *status*, and *species*.[20] The three standard *formae rei publicae* were rule by the many (*populus*), few (*pauci*), and one (*una potestas*).[21] It was not the distribution of power within them that mattered, but rather their orientation towards the best interest of their citizens. This idea underpins Scipio's famously vague definition of *res publica* as *res populi*, "the property of the people," in *De Republica*.[22] Any form of unjust rule, whether that practiced by Greek tyrants or Roman decemvirs, could serve as its lexical opposite.[23] To declare the end of the *res publica*, as Cicero and his contemporaries often did, was to make a point about political legitimacy rather than constitutional form.[24] The usage of this term is therefore not the best place to look for evidence of the "Roman Republic" or its demise.

If it is clear that *res publica* did not mean "republic" in the modern sense, however, its semantic range in Latin remains to be more fully explicated. Louise Hodgson argues that this term did not designate a political system, but rather the civic affairs and property over which a political community (*civitas*) presided.[25] She describes it as both the communal space within which public administrators moved and the sphere of action created by their movements. Although this concept remained stable for several centuries, it saw increasing manipulation in the first century BCE. As Roman statesmen appealed to the *res publica* in the service of increasingly tendentious ends, they politicized what had once been neutral. This breakdown of linguistic consensus mirrored and contributed to the disintegration of the political system we call the Roman Republic. The eventual hollowness of the term finds expression in Caesar's famous quip, *nihil esse rem publicam, appellationem modo sine corpore ac specie* ("There is no *res publica*, only

[20] On these terms, see Moatti 2017: 37–40; Atkins 2013b: 18–19.

[21] Quintilian cites Cicero for this classificatory system (*Inst.* 5.10.63–4), which appears in similar form in Tacitus (*nam cunctas nationes et urbes populus aut primores aut singuli regunt*, "For either the people or leading men or individuals rule all peoples and cities," Tac. *Ann.* 4.33.1). This model was, of course, indebted to the typologies of regimes elaborated in Greek political philosophy.

[22] The bibliography on this topic is immense, but see Atkins 2013a: 128–38, who stresses the importance of the property metaphor, which points towards the world of Roman law; Schofield 1995, who argues that Scipio's definition operates as a criterion of political legitimacy within the text; Asmis 2004, who stresses Scipio's portrayal of the *res publica* as a partnership between citizens.

[23] *nam si nobis non placebat Syracusis fuisse rem publicam neque Agrigenti, neque Athenis cum essent tyranni neque hic cum decemviri* ("For if we have agreed that there was no *res publica* at Syracuse nor Agrigentum nor Athens, when there were tyrants, nor here, when there were *decemvirs*," Cic. *Rep.* 3.45).

[24] See Bringmann 2002 on the *res publica amissa* trope. To deny the existence of the *res publica* was to dispute that governance served shared public interests and conformed to customary rules and procedures (Mouritsen 2017: 3).

[25] My discussion summarizes Hodgson 2017: 1–20.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

a name without body or form," Suet. *Iul.* 77). Rather than take Caesar's words as an anachronistic declaration of the end of the Republic, Hodgson sees them as an acknowledgment that *res publica* had lost any agreed upon definition.[26] This loss ultimately helped enable the sustained usage of the term under the Principate, where it could be redefined in new ways.[27]

Moatti addresses the indeterminacy of *res publica* from a broader historical perspective.[28] Beginning her analysis in the fourth century BCE, she argues that this term designated nothing more than that which was shared between and debated by citizens. Never a locus of stable signification, its meaning was determined by context on a case-by-case basis. The linguistic conflict that Hodgson ascribes to the last decades of the Republic, in other words, was there all along. Its resistance to definition, embodied in the ambiguity of the word *res*, was precisely the point.[29] It conveyed a totality composed of plural elements but did not specify what those elements were or how they ought to interact.[30] Such questions were negotiated through the interactions of citizens themselves, who had competing perspectives, concerns, and voices. Embodying the manifold tensions that structured Roman society, *res publica* served as a conceptual nexus around which politics revolved. Whereas Hodgson sees this concept becoming more malleable in the post-Gracchan era, Moatti suggests that it became less so.[31] As members of the elite sought to stabilize and control an increasingly turbulent political process, they began to formalize and delimit the definition of *res publica* in the service of their own interests. They gradually replaced the old idea of "a community of affairs" with a new idea of a unified and unalterable entity separate from and above the citizenry. They used this idea to establish the legitimacy of the *senatus consultum ultimum* and other extralegal interventions on behalf of the *res publica*, which came to function as a normative public authority. It was this public authority, not a "republic," that became the object of the Augustan restoration.

Despite the departure in their conclusions, Hodgson and Moatti agree that the meaning of *res publica* was highly contested in the first century

[26] Translations of this quote tend to render *res publica* as "republic" (Carter 2008: xlix; Edwards 2000: 35; Graves 2007: 37), which is potentially misleading.
[27] Hodgson 2017: 261–76. [28] Moatti 2018 synthesizes her work on this topic.
[29] Drawing on Claude Lévi-Strauss, Moatti 2018: 30 describes *res* as "une sorte de 'signifiant flottant'".
[30] Moatti 2018: 55–7 discusses the impossibility of breaking the *res publica* down into *partes* with clearly delineated functions. While we might identify the senate, people, magistrates, priests, army, allies, and treasury as elements of the *res publica*, such a list varied according to context and was never exhaustive.
[31] Moatti 2020: 125–36 lays out the argument paraphrased here.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

BCE. The metaphor of the body politic served as one avenue through which Roman thinkers debated its signifying force. The parts of the civic body were never standardized in the political discourse of the Late Republic; one writer might see the senate and people as its core components, while another might focus on physical spaces like the Capitoline or Cloaca Maxima. A speaker might praise a consul as a healer or criticize him as a cancerous growth. These divergent figurations of the *res publica* gave concrete expression to competing visions of the political and social order. They reflected different conceptions of social structures, public institutions, statesmanship, imperial geography, civic values, and the interconnections between them.[32] Crafted in dialogue with and in response to each other, they created a rhetorical battlefield marked by experimentation, contradiction, and disagreement. My aim is not to impose order upon this tradition, but instead ask what its disorder reveals about Roman political thought. In prioritizing indeterminacy over constancy, I draw inspiration from Hodgson and Moatti even as I diverge at points from their conclusions.

The linguistic history of *res publica* underscores the extent to which our own categories of "Republic" and "Principate" are a product of modern scholarship rather than ancient perception.[33] Just because Romans never employed these conceptual categories, however, does not mean they lack value. "Roman Republic" remains a useful descriptor of a civic community predicated upon the self-governance of a (male) citizen body that expressed its will through voting and regulated its civic affairs through law and custom.[34] Most scholars would agree upon the existence of such a community between the fifth and first centuries BCE, though key elements of its political form, as well as the dates of their instantiation and demise, remain open to debate. Referring to it as the "Roman Republic" is not to deny its evolution over the span of several centuries; innovations in officeholding, legislation, and voting, as well as shifts in citizenship, social identity, and wealth distribution, produced a governing system in constant flux.[35] Such changes were compounded and intensified

[32] I spell imperial with a lower-case i when referring to the concept of empire, but an upper-case I when referring to the chronological era that postdated the Republic.

[33] See Ando 2011a: 39 on the "profound and unwise fetishization of constitution arrangements" implicit in this periodization, ancient attitudes towards which are examined by Sion-Jenkis 2000: 19–53.

[34] Flower 2010: 11 enumerates these key components of a Republic, which she uses as a metric for evaluating the "Roman Republics" operating at different points in Roman history.

[35] On "institutional fluidity" as "the true hallmark of Roman republican government," see Ando 2013: 935.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

by the acquisition of an empire that stretched across much of the Mediterranean world.[36] Yet whether we stress continuity or change in our analysis, it is still useful to distinguish between a *res publica* predicated upon the participation of citizens – even if a narrower swath of citizens than Republican political ideology would suggest – from one in which powers of decision-making were consolidated into the hands of a single individual.[37] I therefore continue to employ the traditional categories of "Republic" and "Principate," even as I remain on guard against their distortion of key elements of Roman political culture.

Asserting the existence of the Roman Republic raises the question of its constitutional basis. Just as Romans shied away from adopting an agreed upon definition of *res publica*, they also avoided formalizing their customs, traditions, institutions, and laws into a single, prescriptive document. Many scholars have nevertheless followed Polybius in describing a Republican constitution based upon three pillars: the senate, magistracies, and popular assemblies.[38] These institutions were flexible yet also regulated by a complex combination of unwritten customs and written statutes.[39] Underpinning them, Benjamin Straumann argues, was "the fundamental constitutional principle of the sovereignty of the Roman people," which took precedence over other political rules and was not open to revision.[40] He suggests that a conceptual apparatus began to arise in relation to this principle in the Late Republic, when emergency politics and extraordinary powers prompted Cicero, in particular, to identify a set of higher order norms to guide political life.[41] The failure of the Republic nevertheless underscores the insufficiency of Cicero's "inchoate constitutionalism" as a regulatory force. An important theme of my study is how Cicero and his contemporaries used figurative speech to circumvent the judicial norms to which they proclaimed allegiance. Asserting the need for "civic amputations" when public law fell short, they ultimately undermined their own constitutional arguments.

[36] Millar 1984 considers the evolution of the Roman constitution in relation to the demands of external expansion. For the impact of war-making on Republican society more broadly, see Rosenstein 2004.

[37] On the reality of this change, see Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx 2006: 626.

[38] Pina Polo 2016: 85; North 2006: 260; Lintott 1999: 16–26.

[39] Lintott 1999: 4 describes a constitutional tradition that operated on a spectrum ranging from *mos* to *ius*.

[40] Straumann 2016: 37. He proposes the existence of a constitution if a set of political rules meets the following criteria: they are entrenched (harder to change than other rules), politically important (they govern the institutions through which power is exercised), normatively important (they reveal the political theory that undergirds a political system), and assigned a juridical quality (they are used as part of legal arguments) (18).

[41] Straumann 2016: 149–90.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

In describing the authority of the Roman people as a form of popular sovereignty, Straumann wades into contested interpretive waters. Many have found the concept of sovereignty useful in conveying the wide-ranging powers of the *populus Romanus*, which was responsible for electing magistrates and conferring the right of command (*imperium*) upon them, voting on public laws, ratifying foreign treaties, serving on criminal juries, distributing public honors, and fulfilling countless other functions in the *res publica*.[42] A constitutive body that represented more than the sum of its parts, its acclamatory consent was necessary for the legitimation of electoral, judicial, and legislative outcomes.[43] More than that, it was regarded as "the sole source of legitimate public opinion" in the Republic, so that its will became the nexus around which public discourse revolved.[44] Every speaker in the *contio* competed to be seen as the truest representative of the people, as Robert Morstein-Marx has shown, and every piece of legislation had to be publicly construed in its favor.[45] While the actions that supported or undermined its interests were open to debate, the primacy of those interests was not.[46] The conceptual and practical power of the Roman people was encapsulated by the term *maiestas populi Romani*, a legal formula that arose in the context of external relations but that came to operate internally as well.[47] Embedded within this concept was the "greater-ness" of the Roman people as the organizing principle of civic and foreign affairs. Invocations of the *maiestas populi Romani* have therefore often been interpreted as ancient expressions of a doctrine which later came to be known as popular sovereignty.[48]

Many political theorists nevertheless argue against the operation of popular sovereignty in ancient contexts. They stress the inseparability of

[42] Millar 1984: 19 articulates the full spectrum of the Roman people's powers to argue in favor of popular sovereignty; Brunt 1988: 19–23 addresses the practical application of these powers to arrive at a more measured assessment. Schofield 2021: 46 asserts the sovereignty of the Roman citizen body, though acknowledges there is no "expression in Latin that actually means 'sovereignty' (or anything at all close to it)." Mouritsen 2017: 16 and Ando 2011b: 69–70 suggest that modern definitions of sovereignty do not map perfectly onto the Roman Republic, but that ancient approximations of this concept can be discerned.

[43] Hammer 2014: 10. [44] Russell 2019: 42.

[45] Morstein-Marx 2004: 230–40 influentially describes this phenomenon as "ideological monotony."

[46] To borrow the language of Hölkeskamp 2010: 40, the supremacy of the *populus Romanus* was not in "the range of 'politicizable' issues" in the Roman Republic.

[47] Davies 2020: 80 argues that Roman relations of empire "revolved around a core belief in the *maiestas*, or 'greater-ness,' of Rome." The redirection of this principle inwardly, Williamson 2016: 335 argues, was a product of the destabilization of politics in the last century of the Republic. On the importance of Saturninus' *Lex Appuleia* in prompting the shift, see Ferrary 1983.

[48] Hammer 2022: 59 confirms the centrality of the *maiestas populi Romani* to Roman Republicanism but argues against its co-equivalence with popular sovereignty.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

this concept from that of the state, which did not exist in the pre-modern world due to the fragmented nature of public authority, the sources of which were neither singular nor stable.[49] The powers of the *populus Romanus*, for example, were exercised within a political system that also granted authoritative functions to the senate, priestly colleges, courts, and other institutions. Political life, as Luigi Capogrossi Colognesi argues, was characterized by the overlap and competition between these institutions, which operated within a tense and unstable equilibrium.[50] Because this equilibrium was regulated largely by custom, it produced a more complicated field of power relations than public law might suggest. Daniel Lee argues that the doctrine of popular sovereignty was invented in the early modern period to resolve the problem of plural authority; it designated the people as a single, indivisible source of public power conferred upon an inseparable entity called the "state."[51] Imperial Roman jurists helped lay the groundwork for this innovation through their citation of the *lex regia*, a statute by which they claimed the Roman people had yielded its governing power to the *princeps*.[52] As Clifford Ando has shown, however, this legal fiction had no basis in the historical Republic. Like many other elements of Roman constitutionalism, it was invented after the fact to justify the political transition it purports to describe.[53] This reality is reflected in the body politic tradition, which betrays no evidence of a single, agreed upon source of public authority. When Latin writers sought to identify the institution that best approximated the command of mind over body, for example, they arrived at a variety of conclusions. Because the "normative suppositions and metahistorical assumptions"

[49] See Skinner 1978: x on the "distinctively modern" concept of the state as "the sole source of law and legitimate force within its own territory, and as the sole appropriate object of its citizens' allegiances." Cornell 1991: 63 argues that the Romans had "no concept of the state in the modern abstract sense . . . as an impersonal entity that stood apart from the individuals who composed it." For recent scholarly debate on this question, see Lundgreen 2014.

[50] Capogrossi Colognesi 2014: xxiv. He stresses "the remoteness of the Roman model from our own paradigms, which since the Middle Ages have tended to define political systems in terms of a unitary hierarchical order."

[51] Lee 2016: 10.

[52] Lee 2016: 25–50. Johnston 2000: 633 notes that while the jurists founded the authority of the emperor on a statute that transferred the sovereignty of the people to him, they did not explain the nature of that sovereignty or of the statute that transferred it to him. Their efforts are therefore "not analytically profound."

[53] According to Ando 2013: 935, "Constitutionalism as discourse thus emerges as an important theme of republican life in retrospective efforts by Romans to explain to themselves, within a single framework and using a single language, both the failure of democratic republicanism and its resolution in the pernicious façade of republican monarchy."

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

associated with sovereignty risk effacing the nature of their disagreement, I avoid its invocation in this study.[54]

Whatever one's stance on the concept of popular sovereignty, few would deny the ideological and practical importance of the *populus Romanus* in the Republic. Whether its importance ought to be understood as a genuinely democratic element in the political process, however, is less clear. Challenging the traditional idea that civic affairs were controlled by a narrow senatorial faction, Fergus Millar has made an influential case for the political efficacy of the crowd gathered in the *comitia* or *contio*.[55] "Far from being a tightly controlled, 'top-down' system," he argues, "the late Republic was on the contrary a very striking example of a political system in which rival conceptions of state and society . . . were openly debated before the crowd in the Forum."[56] His argument has received significant pushback, however, from those who doubt the efficacy of the assemblies as a venue for the expression of popular power. Henrik Mouritsen underscores the extent to which the popular will was suppressed at every stage of the political process.[57] Only magistrates could convene assemblies and only they could propose the legislation upon which the people voted.[58] Voting itself was conducted in blocks to advantage members of the elite, who employed a variety of strategies to discourage turnout.[59] Those of lower classes who did manage to attend assemblies had the option of voting yes or no, but not of making more substantive contributions to legislation.[60] Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp argues that their acclamatory consent ultimately served to reaffirm, reproduce, and renew the political class.[61] The distinction can be summed up as one between ideals and practice. Understood as a political concept, the authority of the *populus Romanus* was paramount. When viewed in relation to the actual composition of the citizen body, it

[54] Hölkeskamp 2010: 68.

[55] Millar 1998 synthesizes over a decade of work on this topic. Yakobson 1999 pursues a similar approach in an effort to correct the elite focus of the prosopographical school, on which see Cornell 2022: 220.

[56] Millar 1998: 6–7. [57] Mouritsen 2001: 16–17.

[58] Lintott 1999: 40 notes that such constraints complicate any simple equation between the assembly and popular sovereignty.

[59] These strategies included keeping venues small, implementing time-consuming legislative procedures, and banning *comitia* on market days to prevent the participation of the rural citizenry (Mouritsen 2017: 27–8).

[60] Brunt 1988: 26 acknowledges such limitations but suggests that the assemblies could still express the will of sections of the citizen body whose interests diverged from those of the senatorial oligarchy.

[61] Hölkeskamp 2010: 103.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

was restricted – though not negated – by an essentially aristocratic political culture.[62]

I have thus far described the Roman Republic as a political community that evolved between the fifth and first centuries BCE in relation to the ideal of a self-governing citizen body. Because the Romans did not describe their *res publica* in these terms, however, they also did not identify a moment at which this system ceased to exist. The question is nevertheless an important one. As Harriet Flower writes, "Our whole picture of what republican politics consisted of in Rome depends on when and how we think it came to an end."[63] Commonly cited endpoints include Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon in 49 BCE, Caesar's assassination in 44 BCE, the formation of the second triumvirate in 43 BCE, the Battle of Actium in 31 BCE, or the Augustan Settlement in 27 BCE.[64] According to the definition of the Republic offered earlier, the outbreak of civil war between Caesar and Pompey in 49 BCE serves as the most fitting endpoint. From this date forward, public institutions no longer served as the primary avenue through which politics was conducted. One could argue that similar conditions prevailed under the so-called First Triumvirate or amid the chaotic episodes of street violence during the late 50s BCE. In my view, however, such events signified the faltering but not ultimate failure of the Republic. To identify 49 BCE as a pivot point is not to date the beginning of sole rule from this moment. The years between 49–27 BCE represent an important period of transition that should not be subsumed under the labels of "Republic" and "Empire."[65] Nor did the Augustan Settlement mark the definitive instantiation of a new political system called "the Principate." It represented an initial attempt at explaining the position of a single individual whose authority eventually came to supersede that of other institutions.[66] It took much longer for the fundamentals of this new constitutional order to be worked out and appreciated for what they were. That Romans had begun to recognize a shift in the operation of political power by the late first century BCE is nevertheless a central claim of this book.

[62] Mouritsen 2001: 16 writes, "There were two 'peoples' in Roman politics: the ideal and the actual. The people as a political concept were distinct from the people as physical reality, and the direct nature of participation meant that the two were effectively separated."

[63] Flower 2010: 15.

[64] For the methodological challenges inherent in identifying an endpoint, as well as an overview of the vast bibliography on this question, see Rosenstein and Morstein-Marx 2006.

[65] See Osgood 2006: 4 on the importance of recognizing a "triumviral period" of literature, in particular.

[66] Ando 2011a: 37. See Ferrary 2001 on the nature of the powers established via the settlement.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

One argument against equating the rise of Augustus with a significant constitutional shift is that elements of monarchy had long been woven into Republican politics. The regal nature of consular power was fundamental to the theory of the mixed constitution and a recurrent theme of exemplary tales.[67] That an even stronger, singular form of authority was beneficial during emergencies was a principle enshrined in the office of the dictatorship.[68] Antipathy to kingship was also likely not as deeply rooted as was once assumed. Andrew Erskine suggests that such hostility only arose out of encounters with Hellenistic kings during the second century BCE.[69] Late Republican thinkers retrojected this sentiment onto their narratives of Archaic Rome, using the expulsion of the Tarquins to mark the beginning of the Roman people's *odium regalis nominis* (Cic. *Rep.* 2.52).[70] Even in the Late Republic, it was often tyrants rather than kings who served as the villains of political discourse.[71] It must therefore be proven rather than simply assumed that the position of Augustus was regarded as an aberration in need of conceptual justification. I argue that we find such proof in the figurative language that Latin writers used to represent the *res publica*. In reimagining the shape of the body politic in response to sole rule between the 20s BCE and 60s CE, they implicitly acknowledged and confronted a shift in Rome's governing form. Their imagery allows us to engage with fundamental questions about historical periodization, the nature of Roman Republicanism, and the transformation of politics under the Principate.

Approaching Roman Republicanism

In examining the political thought of the Roman Republic and its Imperial reception, my work draws on, yet also diverges from, the revival

[67] See Zetzel 1995: *ad loc. Rep*. 2.56, where Cicero explains, *consules potestatem haberent tempore dumtaxat annuam, genere ipso ac iure regiam* ("The consuls exercised a power that, although annual in length, was regal in nature and legal basis," Cic. *Rep.* 2.56). Livy endorses this idea in his portrayal of the Republic's foundation, writing, *libertatis autem originem inde magis quia annuum imperium consulare factum est quam quod deminutum quicquam sit ex regia potestate numeres* ("Moreover, you may reckon the beginning of liberty more from the fact that consular authority was made annual than because anything was diminished from kingly power," Liv. 2.1.7). Haimson Lushkov 2015: 4 identifies the nature of consular power as a key theme in Livian *exempla*.

[68] Although the dictatorship originated and operated primarily as a military office (see Lintott 1999: 109–10), Cicero's Scipio uses it to make more generalized statements about the necessity of sole rule during crises (*Rep.* 1.63).

[69] Erskine 1991: 106.

[70] The question is controversial and speaks to a broader debate over the historicity of Archaic Rome; Smith 2006: 61, for example, speculates that tales of the *adfectores regni* were an "original feature" of Archaic political discourse.

[71] On Cicero's vilification of Caesar as a Greek tyrant, see Gildenhard 2006 and Erskine 1991: 119–20.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

of interest in classical republicanism associated with what has been termed the Cambridge School of intellectual history. This movement is closely tied to Quentin Skinner, who began pioneering the methodology of "linguistic contextualism" alongside J. G. A. Pocock and John Dunn in the late 1960s.[72] Skinner argues that the essential question we confront in the study of a text is what its author, writing at a specific time and place for a specific audience, meant to communicate. The aim of the intellectual historian is "to delineate the whole range of communications which could have been conventionally performed on the given occasion by the utterance of the given utterance, and, next, to trace the relations between the given utterance and this wider *linguistic* context as a means of decoding the actual intention of the given writer."[73] Skinner uses the concept of "intended illocutionary force," borrowed from J. L. Austin, to situate ideas within the historical and ideological contexts that enabled their expression.[74] Only by considering the discourse communities within which authors operated, as well as how political problems were formulated within those communities, is it possible to ascertain the purpose and significance of their works.[75] Skinner is especially critical of the assumption that canonical texts engage with perennial questions that transcend the historical and cultural particulars of their composition.[76] Contextualizing such texts rather than treating them in isolation is one of the operative principles of his work.[77] That this idea might seem obvious today speaks to the success of the Cambridge School, which has transformed the field of intellectual history over the past half century.[78]

The now dominant model of linguistic contextualism is not without its critics. Many have expressed skepticism towards the feasibility of Skinner's methodology, which requires one to know what an author "was doing" (a phrase that encapsulates both what the author intended to do and

[72] Skinner 1969; Dunn 1968; Pocock 1962. [73] Skinner 1969: 49. Emphasis original.
[74] Austin 1962: 94–107 theorizes the illocutionary act.
[75] Skinner 1972: 406 argues that one must "focus not just on the text to be interpreted, but on the prevailing conventions governing the treatment of the issues or themes with which the text is concerned." He draws inspiration in part from Collingwood 1939: 31, who writes, "you cannot find out what a man means by simply studying his spoken or written statements . . . you must also know what the question was . . . to which the thing he has said or written was meant as an answer."
[76] As Hamilton-Bleakley 2006: 23 puts it, texts are as particular and contingent as the problems they answer.
[77] Exemplified in his work on Thomas Hobbes, much of which has been collected in Skinner 2002.
[78] See Whatmore 2016: 99 on the success of Skinner's project within the history of ideas. For the compatibility of historical contextualism and New Historicism, which has risen to similar dominance in literary studies, see Coiro and Fulton 2012: 5.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

succeeded in doing) at any given moment.[79] They doubt whether the intention of a writer can ever be conclusively ascertained, let alone independently verified.[80] Pocock distances himself from this critique by focusing on performance rather than intention.[81] What matters to him is not what an author meant to say, but how the modes of discourse available to them delimited the range of speech acts they could perform. Pocock's focus is therefore on the "political languages" operative at a certain time and place. Such languages provide the "categories, grammar, and mentality" that speakers use to formulate political questions and problems.[82] Because their norms and conventions set limits on what individuals can say or be understood to have said, they exert a powerful influence over the discourse communities in which they operate. At the same time, they do not exist independently of their speakers. Every act of communication represents "a moment in a process of transformation of that [linguistic] system and of the interacting worlds which both system and act help to constitute and are constituted by."[83] These "paradigms," as Pocock terms them, are in constant flux, acquiring new idioms and foregoing old ones in response to diverse cultural forces. When they no longer provide a sufficient description of lived experience, they are set aside in favor of alternatives.[84] Delineating their development, operation, transformation, and abandonment over time is the essence of Pocock's approach to the history of ideas.[85]

The methodologies developed by Skinner and Pocock have had a particularly pronounced impact on the study of classical republicanism. In perhaps his most influential work, Pocock identifies a political language called "Florentine republicanism," which arose in the works of Niccolò Machiavelli and his contemporaries in the Italian Renaissance.[86] This paradigm was later coopted by thinkers during the English Civil War and American Revolution, who sought a new vocabulary through which to criticize the monarchies against which they rebelled. By tracing the operation of this language across pivotal intellectual and historical

[79] On this famous formulation, see Whatmore 2016: 99 and Lewis 2010: 371.
[80] This critique is particularly prominent among postmodernist critics, who argue that authorial intention is irrecoverable or unimportant (see Hamilton-Bleakley 2006: 23, fn. 20). Skinner 2001 discusses the barriers to yet ultimate value in recovering authorial intention.
[81] Sheppard 2016: 114 stresses the differences between the work of Pocock and Skinner. For Pocock's own reflection on his relationship to the Cambridge School, see Pocock 2009: vii-ix.
[82] Pocock 1985: 28. [83] Pocock 1989: 15.
[84] Pocock 1989: 14–15 draws inspiration from the model of scientific paradigm shifts theorized in Kuhn 1962.
[85] Pocock 2009: viii envisions a plurality of languages, consisting of a plurality of language acts, coming together to constitute the history of political thought.
[86] Pocock 1975.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

junctures, Pocock helped spark what has been called "the republican revival."[87] His theoretical framework has since been applied to the study of concepts like liberty, constitutionalism, and civic virtue. A subset of scholars within this movement sees classical republicanism as a solution to some of the problems that beset contemporary liberal democracies, including political apathy, disparities in wealth and power, and infringement upon civil liberties.[88] These "neo-republicans" often trace the origins of their conceptual project back to the Roman Republic, where texts like *De Republica* and events like the Conflict of the Orders prove useful to think with.[89] Insofar as they use the example of Rome to develop a political philosophy with contemporary relevance, however, they employ an interpretive lens that differs from my own. It is therefore worthwhile to distinguish between their "republicanism," which refers to a specific intellectual tradition, and my "Roman Republicanism," which denotes a mode of political discourse operative under certain historical and cultural conditions.

Neo-republicanism is perhaps most closely associated with Philip Pettit, who has drawn inspiration from the Roman world to theorize the idea of liberty as non-domination.[90] Critiquing the negative conception of liberty as the absence of interference and the positive conception of liberty as the right to democratic participation, he argues that republican freedom requires individuals to be in a position where no one can arbitrarily interfere in their affairs.[91] At stake is not whether anyone actually does interfere, only whether they could. Liberty is hence unrealizable under kings regardless of their character; in Cicero's words, *desunt omnino ei populo multa, qui sub rege est, in primisque libertas; quae non in eo est ut iusto utamur domino, sed ut nul[lo]* ("There are certainly many things lacking to that populace which lives under a king; first and foremost is freedom, which does not lie in having a just master, but in having none," Cic. *Rep.* 2.43).[92] Pettit's inclination to

[87] For the intellectual origins of the "republican revival," in which Bernard Bailyn, Gordon Wood, and Quentin Skinner also play prominent roles, see Rosati 2000: 83–4.

[88] Key works include Maynor 2006; Maynor 2003; Honohan 2002; Viroli 2002; Skinner 1998; Pettit 1997. See Kimpell 2009: 375 on the orientation of their thought towards "present-day commercial, representative democracies."

[89] Pettit 1997: 19 writes that "the long republican tradition . . . had its origins in classical Rome, being associated in particular with the name of Cicero." Skinner 1998: 44 identifies Livy as "perhaps the most important conduit" for the transmission of the idea of the *civitas libera* to early modern Europe.

[90] Pettit 1997: 20.

[91] Pettit 1997: 17–50 positions his work in relation to the duality of positive and negative liberty influentially theorized by Berlin 1958.

[92] On freedom as an ideal formulated in opposition to slavery in Roman discourse, see Wirszubski 1950: 1–2. Kennedy 2014: 493 argues that Cicero's view of *libertas* is far more ambiguous than this quote suggests.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

locate the origins of liberty as non-domination in the Roman Republic receives historical grounding from Valentina Arena, who traces this concept through the political discourse of the first century BCE.[93] Neo-republicans see liberty as non-domination as the organizing principle of an intellectual tradition unified across time and space by a shared set of texts, values, and ideals.[94] Using the label "republican" to denote ideas in accordance with it, they are primarily interested in the development of a normative system able to inform the practice of politics in the present.[95]

It is perhaps unsurprising that scholars have identified a variety of disjunctures between the forward-looking ideals of neo-republicanism and the historical particularities of the Roman Republic.[96] Janet Coleman stresses the extent to which Medieval and Renaissance thinkers created rather than rediscovered the republican tradition, piecing together "from disparate and fragmentary sources what they thought the Roman republic to have been."[97] Clifford Ando underscores the ease with which the ideals of the Roman Republic proved amenable to monarchical cooptation under the Principate, a lesson that cautions against the uncritical reception of this tradition in the present.[98] They are joined by many others in drawing attention to the deep inequities of the Roman world, which took slavery, patriarchy, imperialism, poverty, and countless other injustices for granted.[99] Why should those invested in contemporary democratic ideals, they ask, look back to a political system organized around and in service to the interests of an elite interested primarily in its own self-perpetuation? "To those who have observed in the Roman republic the

[93] Arena 2012: 14–72.

[94] Pettit 1997: 20 writes, "The republican tradition was unified across time, partly by a deference to the same textual authorities, partly by a shared enthusiasm for the ideals and the lessons of republican Rome . . . The most important unifier of the tradition, in the end, may be the habit of conceptualizing liberty in a distinctive fashion."

[95] Springborg 2001: 851–2 distinguishes Skinner's and Pocock's "careful historiographical accounts of republicanism," on the one hand, and Pettit's "republicanism as a normative system," on the other. Because normative theorists are focused on the definition of values, Kimpell 2009: 377 notes, they necessarily "gloss over some of the complexities found in historiography." For the tension between historical and normative analyses of the Roman Republic, see Kapust 2004: 377–80.

[96] As Maddox 2002: 425 argues, "Neither Pettit's nor Skinner's account takes note of the actual context of the original [Roman] republic," which was markedly hostile to popular participation in governance. Yet Schofield 2021: 3, fn. 12 points out that criticisms of neo-republicanism are often equally reflective of "contemporary concerns."

[97] Coleman 2002: 297.

[98] Ando 2010: 184. In a similar vein, Atkins 2020 shows how Tertullian reconciled liberty as non-domination with autocracy. "Tertullian," he writes, "shows that non-domination is a highly flexible idea that does not necessarily entail the participatory 'free state' of republicanism," (145).

[99] Connolly 2018: 94 argues that neo-republicans construct a "new liberal philosophy as heir to the Roman tradition, while staying at a careful distance from Roman practices like slavery . . . "

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

rule of an enduring senatorial oligarchy," Graham Maddox notes, "the choice of Rome as the fount of liberty for the subsequent history of the West may seem curious."[100] Liberty as non-domination might have resonated with Cicero and his contemporaries, but it was an ideal that could only be realized at the expense of most Roman citizens, provincial subjects, and slaves. In failing to emphasize this fact, neo-republicans risk replicating the inequities they seek to remediate.

Critics of neo-republicanism also question the extent to which contestability and consensus, two prerequisites for the achievement of liberty as non-domination, can be traced back to the Roman Republic. In Pettit's view, citizens can only achieve freedom if they are able to effectively contest the arbitrary interference of individuals and laws.[101] Public institutions like courts and assemblies serve as the primary avenues through which such contestation takes place. The decisions rendered by those institutions, which should be made on the basis of "reasoned deliberation," allow for the effective resolution of conflicts and the realization of consensus.[102] Consensus, in turn, enables the successful repetition of this process over time. Joy Connolly argues that Pettit's model of deliberative democracy rings hollow in the context of the Roman Republic, which prioritized more aggressive forms of conflict and confrontation.[103] She characterizes Republican politics as a field of antagonism between the overreach of the senatorial elite and the resistance of the people. Freedom was rooted in the capacity of individuals to fight back against inevitable incursions by the more powerful. Their resistance might find institutional expression but might also manifest in "the relatively unpoliced territory of protest or mass action."[104] Neo-republicans, she points out, are often reluctant to consider such forms of popular resistance, which can disrupt the nexus of civic norms and virtues that Pettit terms "civility."[105] Those who see civility as the foundation of deliberative democracy ignore a key strand of confrontational populism within Roman Republicanism.

For scholars interested in developing a more agonistic model of Roman Republicanism, the tribunate plays a key role. Citing Cicero's description of the tribunate as "born for sedition" (*ad seditionem nata sit*, Cic. *Leg.* 3.19), Maddox underscores the revolutionary possibilities of this office and the vociferous resistance of the senatorial elite to their realization.[106] John

[100] Maddox 2002: 418. [101] Pettit 1997: 61–3. [102] Pettit 1997: 190.
[103] Connolly 2015: 27–34. [104] Connolly 2015: 33.
[105] "One of the recurrent themes in the tradition," Pettit 1997: 245 writes, "is that the republic requires a basis in widespread civility; it cannot live by law alone."
[106] Maddox 2002: 424.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

McCormick makes a similar point in his reading of Machiavelli's *Discorsi*, the text that made Livy's portrayal of the Conflict of the Orders central to classical republicanism. He argues that members of the Cambridge School "seriously distort Machiavelli's thought and the republican tradition itself" through their de-emphasis on class conflict as a constitutive element of his political vision.[107] He underscores Machiavelli's appreciation of the tribunate as an office that arose out of discord and embodied the resistance of the many to the few. Praising tribunes for encouraging public shouting, street demonstrations, and popular withdrawals from the city, Machiavelli correlates their confrontational actions with the realization of freedom. The value that he places on "public tumult," McCormick suggests, confirms the insufficiency of rational deliberation and public institutions as checks on elite oppression.[108] His reading of Livy shows instead "the necessity of properly institutionalized class conflict for healthy domestic politics within popular governments."[109] In tracing this strand of Machiavelli's thought, McCormick joins Connolly in reorienting the republican tradition away from consensus and towards conflict.

The productive, generative nature of class-based struggles has been a central focus of recent scholarship on Roman Republicanism. Equally important to confront, however, is the ease with which such struggles could become destructive and deadly. Daniel Kapust centers this problem in his interpretation of Sallust's "antagonistic republicanism," which revolved around conflicts between and within social classes.[110] Sallust viewed these conflicts positively insofar as they encouraged citizens to achieve rights and rewards compatible with the public good, including liberty, virtue, honor, and glory. When pursued in the name of selfish aims like wealth and domination, however, they turned toxic. It was therefore necessary to implement societal mechanisms that could effectively channel individual ambitions towards collective ends. Kapust focuses on fear of a foreign enemy (*metus hostilis*) as one such mechanism within Sallust's texts.[111] Other Roman writers were interested in alternative mechanisms; Cicero stressed the role of oratory in communicating and reinforcing shared civic values, while Livy endorsed the didactic function of *exempla* in achieving goodwill among citizens.[112] While Cicero and Livy tended to

[107] McCormick 2011: 8. For pushback against McCormick's argument, see Hörnqvist 2011.
[108] For the importance of "tumult" to Machiavelli's political vision, as well as Pocock and Skinner's avoidance of the issue, see also Pedullà 2018: 1–4.
[109] McCormick 2011: viii.
[110] Kapust 2011: 31. Fontana 2003 discusses Machiavelli's reception of Sallust's vision.
[111] Kapust 2011: 27–80. [112] Alongside Kapust, see Connolly 2007 and Vasaly 2015.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

prioritize consensus over conflict, they joined Sallust in identifying the boundary between productive and destructive conflict as a key problem of political thought. Their works gesture towards a model of Roman Republicanism that is more conflictual, yet perhaps also more fragile, than that theorized by neo-republicans.

My own approach to Roman Republicanism takes methodological inspiration from the Cambridge School while also shying away from the normative political vision associated with neo-republicanism. Drawing on the studies of Skinner and Pocock, I define Roman Republicanism as a linguistic paradigm used to think and talk about the system of governance operative in the *res publica* between the fifth and first centuries BCE. Its boundaries were not coextensive with the dates of the historical Republic, a prerequisite that would exclude Tacitus, Livy, and even Sallust from consideration as Republican thinkers.[113] Nor were they defined by the values that later came to dominate the classical republican tradition, an approach that risks overemphasizing those elements of Roman Republicanism with contemporary relevance.[114] I instead use this term descriptively to denote the questions, problems, and concepts that Romans themselves regarded as politically important. Although such an inclusive definition might risk interpretive dilution, it conveys the fluidity of a discourse community that largely avoided systematizing its terminology, formalizing its constitution, or extrapolating abstract principles from norms and customs. This paradigm originated in a specific time and place, but it ultimately outlasted the downfall of the system that it arose to describe. What enabled the survival of Roman Republicanism under the Principate is a guiding question of my study. I use the metaphor of the body politic to show how its persistence was paradoxically enabled by its transformation.

Metaphor as a Source of Political Thought

The republican revival and the critiques formulated in response to it have transformed the study of Roman political thought, a field that used to be regarded as theoretically impoverished. As the political theorist Sheldon Wolin once wrote, "Although there is no dearth of material for the student of Roman political practices, the student of political ideas must deal with

[113] See Atkins 2018b: 2–3, whose definition of Roman Republicanism influences my own.
[114] See Hankins 2019: xii on how the persistent scholarly focus on republican liberty has left other elements of political thought in the shadows.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

a period notoriously lacking in great political thinkers."[115] This attitude can be traced back to the Romans themselves, who often positioned their culture in opposition to the Greek philosophical tradition.[116] Styling themselves as doers rather than thinkers, they largely resisted the conceptual abstraction favored by Plato and Aristotle.[117] Those who did make forays into political philosophy, Cicero foremost among them, were later dismissed as derivative translators of Greek originals.[118] As a result, Roman politics was long understood as a set of practices rarely subjected to critical analysis.[119] If we set aside the presumption of theoretical abstraction, however, we can find evidence of political thought throughout Latin literature. Romans examined the nature of the *res publica* across generic boundaries, putting historiography, rhetoric, epic, satire, and other genres in the service of political questions.[120] They implanted lessons about virtue, justice, civic duty, and legitimacy in historically specific yet constantly evolving *exempla*.[121] They communicated their values in public speeches, ritual performances, and religious practices.[122] While they sometimes distilled their ideas into treatises like *De Republica* and *De Clementia*, these texts represent the exception rather than norm. They are important but not exclusive contributions to a conversation conducted across countless genres by thinkers of varying backgrounds, intellect, and prestige.

[115] Wolin 1960: 65.

[116] Emblematic was the motion that the Elder Cato put before the senate to expel Greek philosophers from Rome (Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 22). Yet scholars have long viewed his anti-Hellenism as rhetorical self-fashioning rather than straightforward xenophobia, on which see Gruen 1992: 52–83.

[117] As Hammer 2014: 7 writes, "To the contemporary political theorist steeped in abstraction, Roman political thought seems mired in a hopelessly complex array of names, places, laws, and events."

[118] Sedley 2003: 7 notes that while "it is easy to view it [Roman philosophy] as nothing more than Greek philosophy in translation," it "does in certain ways constitute an autonomous tradition, harnessed to an indigenous moral code, to the dynamics of Roman political life, and to home-grown literary genres." On the perception of Cicero as a derivative translator, see Hawley 2022: 4 and Schofield 2021: 7. Both help establish the originality of Ciceronian philosophy, which also emerges in McConnell 2014; Zarecki 2014; Atkins 2013a; Baraz 2012; Gildenhard 2007.

[119] Adcock 1959: 3 suggests that the continuity of the Roman political tradition "is not so much due to logic or political speculation as to the practical adaptation to events of certain ideas which are really ingrained habits of mind and character," while Scullard 1959: 9 describes the Romans as "a practical people who distrusted speculative inquiry unless directed to purely utilitarian ends." In the realm of political theory, Michael Oakeshott treats Rome as an exemplar of "pragmatic politics," on which see Callahan 2012.

[120] For Roman political thought across generic boundaries, see Strunk 2017; Connolly 2015; Haimson Lushkov 2015; McCarter 2015; Nelsestuen 2015; Vasaly 2015; Hammer 2014; Hammer 2008; Kapust 2011; Connolly 2007; Adler 2003.

[121] For the importance of *exempla* in Roman political culture, see Langlands 2018; Roller 2018; van der Blom 2010; Chaplin 2000.

[122] On public speech, see Gildenhard 2011; Morstein-Marx 2004; Steel 2001. On ritual performance, see Sumi 2005; Stewart 1998; Flower 1996. On religious practice, see Cole 2013; Rüpke 2012; Ando 2008.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

Because the methodology of the Cambridge School insists upon viewing political ideas in relation to the linguistic contexts in which they operate, it is well-suited to the exploration of this discourse community. I also draw inspiration from Dean Hammer, who describes Roman political thought as "the assimilation of different practices, interests, and experiences into symbolic systems that orient how one makes sense of and responds to the political world."[123] These symbolic systems go beyond formal institutional arrangements, explicit usages of terms like *res publica* and *princeps*, and legal opinions of jurists under the High Empire.[124] They are not worked out in the mind of the philosopher, but rather in the shared experience of a messy and complicated world. It is in Romans' affective responses to this world, Hammer argues, that the "conceptual core" of their political thought can be found.[125] My work builds on his by identifying figurative speech as an important avenue through which Romans made sense of their shifting political landscape. By tracing their evolving metaphors of the body politic, we can discern a key symbolic system through which they responded to constitutional change. This system sheds new light on an age-old question: how the transition from the Republic to Principate was perceived by those who lived through it.

Central to my study is an understanding of metaphors as historically contingent rather than timeless elements of political discourse. In this respect, I am guided by Hans Blumenberg's theory of metaphorology.[126] Blumenberg argues against the common perception of metaphors as intuitive ways of thinking that eventually yield to the clarity of logic. He describes them more like imaginative reserves that invest concepts with vitality, explaining, "They have a history in a more radical sense than concepts, for the historical transformation of a metaphor brings to light the metakinetics of the historical horizons of meaning and ways of seeing within which concepts undergo their modifications."[127] By tracing the evolution of metaphors across time, we can discern shifts in the mental superstructures that guide the formation of new ideas. Figures of speech can therefore provide access to a more gradual model of conceptual change than the paradigm shifts pioneered by Kuhn and Pocock. In the case of Rome, they provide tangible evidence for the incremental adaptation of an

[123] Hammer 2014: 5.
[124] Johnston 2000: 633 argues that the intellectual contribution of the Roman jurists is to be found in the realm of private law, not in the "classic questions of political thought."
[125] Hammer 2014: 7.
[126] See Blumenberg 2010, as well as the practical application of his methodology in Blumenberg 1997.
[127] Blumenberg 2010: 5.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

old political language to a new constitutional form, one that proceeded so carefully that it never produced a major rupture in discourse. By allowing us to see how Romans responded to a political shift they did not discuss directly, they offer a new perspective on the persistence of Roman Republicanism under the Principate.

Roman writers relied on metaphors of civic organization because they offered a space for exploration and play that was less encumbered by the norms regulating the direct expression of political ideas. As participants in a discourse community that prioritized continuity over change, they discovered that allusive speech facilitated shared conversation. The dynamics of this conversation provide access to the shifting "ways of seeing," to borrow Blumenberg's phrase, that eventually allowed the Younger Seneca to refer to the *mutatio rei publicae* that followed the death of Cato.[128] Seneca does not explain what exactly he means by this phrase, but his willingness to diverge from a normative narrative of political continuity has rightly been identified as a turning point in Roman political discourse.[129] Karin Sion-Jenkis describes it as the first explicit acknowledgment in Latin literature that the Republic had come to an end.[130] My book uses figurative speech to show how earlier thinkers laid the conceptual groundwork for Seneca's claim.

In examining the symbolic resonance of the body politic, I also respond to recent work by Brian Walters and Hunter Gardner. In *The Deaths of the Republic: Imagery of the Body Politic in Ciceronian Rome*, Walters treats organic imagery as a key site of rhetorical conflict in the Late Republic.[131] He illuminates how metaphors of wounding and healing operate in the writings of Cicero, who provides most of our evidence for this tradition during the early-to-mid first century BCE. Walters' comprehensive study establishes an invaluable foundation for my more selective approach. Because I am primarily interested in figurations of political authority, I make no claim to account for all the corporeal metaphors that appear in Cicero's works. I instead approach Cicero as one of many thinkers reexamining the relationship between the statesman and *res publica* at a pivot point of Roman history. Although his outsized influence on the source tradition is unavoidable, it is nevertheless my ambition to foreground the discourse community in which he operated rather than his individual intellectual contribution. Insofar as my focus is on the Julio-Claudian

[128] *Quidni ille mutationem rei publicae forti et aequo pateretur animo?* ("Why should he [Cato] not have tolerated the transformation of the *res publica* with a brave and level spirit?" Sen. *Ep.* 71.12).
[129] Kaldellis 2015: 28, fn. 107; Gowing 2005: 69. [130] Sion-Jenkis 2000: 23. [131] Walters 2020.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

reception of Roman Republicanism, the ramifications my study diverge significantly from those of Walters'.

In *Pestilence and the Body Politic in Latin Literature*, Hunter Gardner considers the role of plague narratives in Latin literature between the Late Republic and Early Empire.[132] She argues that Roman writers exploited the symbolic capacities of pestilence to address the collapse of the social order in the mid-first century BCE and evaluate remedies for its recovery. She draws on the work of René Girard to stress "the homogenizing force of contagious disease," which transforms individual citizens into a heap of corpses.[133] By leveling the status distinctions that give rise to discord, pestilence emerges as a horrifying yet effective tool in reconstructing a more unified civic body. I draw on her persuasive treatment of this material at key points in my study, though there is relatively little overlap in the texts we consider. My interest in political authority steers me instead towards figurations of statesmanship like the healer and the head of state. By asking what these models can tell us about the implementation of sole rule in the *res publica*, I engage with a different set of questions than those posed by Gardner or Walters. Our studies work in complementary fashion, however, to assert the fundamental importance of the body politic metaphor to Roman political culture.

My book further expands our knowledge of Roman political thought by using the evolution of single metaphor to reconstruct a discourse community over the *longue durée*.[134] In an ideal world, this discourse community would encompass every thinker who compared the *res publica* to an organism to make a point about the nature and operation of political power. Of course, most of these thinkers and their works have been lost to the vagaries of time. Yet there remains much to be learned from putting Cicero in conversation with P. Albinovanus, a rival orator in the trial of P. Sestius, treating G. Valgius Rufus alongside Ovid, and rehabilitating the Elder Seneca and Curtius Rufus as political thinkers. Interweaving these voices and others in a chronological narrative that stretches from the 80s BCE to 60s CE, I seek to reconstruct, however imperfectly, a conversation among Latin writers who lived through a transformative period of Roman history and sought to communicate their understanding of it to their peers and posterity. Taken together, they tell the story of how a society deeply committed to Roman Republicanism eventually reconciled itself with the conditions of autocracy.

[132] Gardner 2019. [133] Gardner 2019: 4.
[134] For the idea of a cultural *longue durée*, see Skinner 1995.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

Chapter Outlines

The conceptual history of the Roman body politic begins in Chapter 1 with the Fable of the Belly, a foundational myth of social organization that Romans linked to the Conflict of the Orders. Legend held that Menenius Agrippa resolved the First Secession of the Plebs in 494 BCE by comparing the plebeians to a group of limbs that rebelled against the belly, analogous to the patricians, only to end up starving themselves. When the plebeians realized that their survival was intertwined with that of the belly, they abandoned their revolt in the name of organic harmony. Using the fable to naturalize the hierarchical distribution of power between the senate and people, Menenius Agrippa identified concord as the foundation of civic health. Late Republican thinkers drew on this interpretive framework to explain the problem of discord, which seemed akin to the splitting or doubling of the *res publica*. While writers like Cicero and Sallust crafted such imagery to lament the loss of civic unity, Catiline used it to justify the acquisition of personal power. Standing on the senate floor in the summer of 63 BCE, he described the senate and people as separate bodies that should be governed by separate heads. Cicero interpreted Catiline's words as those of a tyrant, confirming the transgression inherent in naming oneself the *caput populi*. Although Catiline's conspiracy would be put down in a matter of months, the language he used to articulate his ambitions proved more difficult to extinguish.

Cicero counteracted the rhetoric of his adversary by proposing a rival model of the body politic in his consular oratory. Chapter 2 shows how he used medical metaphors to assert the need for an exemplary statesman capable of diagnosing and curing the Republic's ills. This idea drew upon a well-established moralizing tradition that identified vice as a contagion that had infected Rome's governing class. Using the corrupted bodies of the Catilinarian conspirators as proof of a figurative civic disease, Cicero framed their deaths as a curative purge. Although he sought to protect a constitutional order that was under threat, he ended up exacerbating the problems he meant to solve. After the conclusion of the Catilinarian Conspiracy, he simply identified new contagions that required expulsion from the body politic. Foremost among them was P. Clodius Pulcher, whose murder on the Via Appia was portrayed as a remedy that the law could not administer. This cycle of violence culminated in Pompey's sole consulship and Caesar's dictatorship, two constitutional innovations that were likewise justified through the language of healing. While Cicero could not have foreseen the transition to autocracy, his descriptions of a body

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

politic in urgent need of a healer proved susceptible to appropriation by those less invested in collegial governance than he.

Both Catiline's model of a head of state and Cicero's model of a healer made their way into the political language of the Principate, but their Republican histories invested them with divergent Imperial trajectories. Chapter 3 examines the role that each played in Augustan political discourse. Because Cicero had already normalized the figure of the healer, it could soon be incorporated into the burgeoning language of Imperial panegyric. An early example comes from G. Valgius Rufus, whose treatise on medicinal botany opens with a prayer for Augustus to heal the ills of humanity. The regal resonance of the head of state metaphor, in contrast, made it inappropriate for describing the position of the "first citizen." It is therefore absent in the works of Vergil, Horace, and Propertius, all of whom were highly attuned to the nuances of political representation. The dichotomy of head and body was nevertheless of obvious utility to thinkers seeking to explain the relationship between the *princeps* and *res publica*. Livy responded to this quandary by incorporating the head of state metaphor into his Archaic history, investing it with the Republican pedigree that it historically lacked. His first pentad stages its adaptation to Republican politics through the figure of Camillus, who cures a body politic sickened by discord and earns the role of *caput rei Romanae*. Suggesting that Rome had always needed a head to thrive, Livy pursued a project of historical revisionism that helped make capital imagery available for contemporary usage. When Cornelius Severus and Ovid began using the *caput* as a term of praise, they confirmed the success of this conceptual rehabilitation.

Although the rise of Augustus prompted the transformation of the body politic metaphor, its figurative potential was only fully realized under Tiberius. Chapter 4 considers the role of Tiberian writers in constructing a normative narrative of civic regeneration under sole rule. Celebrating Augustus for banishing civil war to the distant past, they identified the *princeps* as both a head of state and healer. Despite their best efforts, however, they struggled to incorporate the transfer of power into this imagistic tradition. Velleius Paterculus chose to portray Augustus and Tiberius as the two heads of the body politic, inadvertently importing a signifier of discord into the representation of the Principate. The idea that discord might have found a new home in the House of the Caesars came into clearer view under Caligula. The instability and inefficacy of his rule prompted the Elder and Younger Senecas, as well as Philo of Alexandria and Curtius Rufus, to return to imagery of an aged, sick, and headless body

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

politic. In doing so, they implicitly acknowledged that the establishment of the Principate might not have been the panacea for which they had hoped. As they began to describe a body politic whose health fluctuated in relation to the virtue of its ruler, they anticipated the transformation of political discourse under Nero.

In Seneca's *De Clementia*, the metaphors of the healer and the head of state were finally subjected to critical examination. That their theorization came nearly a century after the transition to sole rule is a testament to the conservative nature of Roman political thought. Chapter 5 puts Seneca in dialogue with his nephew Lucan, both of whom describe a body politic that has changed too drastically to ever regain its earlier form. Seneca portrays Nero and Rome as inextricably intertwined, proclaiming that the former needed strength and the latter a head. Although he frames this arrangement as natural, he elsewhere explores the risks posed by a head that grows sick and surgeon whose scalpel cuts too deeply. The negative manifestations of these increasingly common metaphors of command reappear in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*, which uses historical figures to represent competing models of statesmanship. Through the figures of Sulla and Pompey, Lucan stresses the precarity of a body politic dependent upon a healer or head of state for its survival. Yet his critique of these metaphors need not indicate his Republican sympathies or revolutionary impulses. By expressing skepticism towards the ability of the *res publica* to survive on its own, he joins Seneca in setting aside the fantasy of ancestral refoundation and confronting the ramifications of autocracy in the present.

The Conclusion brings this story up to the so-called Year of the Four Emperors, which served as a practical realization of the fears of civil war latent in Julio-Claudian literature. While the overthrow of Nero exposed the vulnerability of the Imperial body politic, it also confirmed the practical entrenchment of sole rule. For whatever the flaws of the Principate, there was no talk of its abandonment. As Tacitus' Galba puts it, *si immensum imperii corpus stare ac librari sine rectore posset, dignus eram a quo res publica inciperet* ("If the huge body of the empire were able to stand and maintain balance without a guide, I would be worthy to be the one from which the *res publica* began," Tac. *Hist.* 1.16.1). Too much had changed, however, for such a counterfactual to ever be realized. This book helps clarify how such a foreclosure of political alternatives became possible. By using figurative speech to adapt the paradigm of Roman Republicanism to the House of the Caesars, Roman thinkers refashioned the ancestral *res publica* in their own image. Doing so enabled them to respond to the arrival of autocracy without violating the norms of

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001

a discourse community predicated upon its denial. Yet it also made it difficult to recover the conditions under which there had ever been an empire without an emperor. Gradually ceasing to speak a political language rooted in collective governance, Roman thinkers effected a conceptual revolution without ever recognizing it as such.

One reason why the transformation of the Roman body politic has escaped scholarly notice is because Julio-Claudian writers went to such lengths to deny the novelty of their imagery. Repeatedly blurring the boundary between the old and the new, they created fictive precedents for the position that Augustus and his successors occupied in the *res publica*. They thereby avoided the paradigm shift we might expect in the aftermath of Actium. Yet their impulse to incorporate a head of state onto their civic body confirms that they were under no illusions about the constitutional changes wrought in the late first century BCE. This recognition might not have been communicated in juridical or constitutional language, but it was given expression in a shared symbolic system. Even as Roman thinkers participated in a discourse community characterized by extraordinary conservatism, they still found ways of acknowledging the revolution through which they lived. Their efforts confirm that no paradigm is ever so entrenched as to forestall the development of new ideas. Recognizing the articulation of those ideas, however, requires us to rethink what constitutes political thought in the first place. I offer this book as an example of what might be gained by pursuing a more expansive approach to Roman Republicanism and its Imperial reception.

Downloaded from https://www.cambridge.org/core. UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA METROPOLITANA, on 14 Nov 2026 at 21:15:25, subject to the Cambridge Core terms of use, available at https://www.cambridge.org/core/terms. https://doi.org/10.1017/9781009389334.001