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**Harriet I. Flower: Roman Republics**

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## INTRODUCTION

### Periodization and the End of the Roman Republic

By the mid-first century BC, the republican form of government at Rome had effectively collapsed. Out of this collapse there emerged, in the aftermath of civil war, first the dictatorship of Caesar and then the principate of Augustus. In a swift and striking transformation, a political system founded upon principles fundamentally opposed to monarchy was replaced by a system monarchical in all but name.

So far, the narrative is simple—and would not be questioned by any historian ancient or modern.

Mary Beard and Michael Crawford (1999)

The entire discussion that follows is based on the fundamental idea that periodization is essential to historical thinking and writing. In other words, it is periodization that makes an account of the past “history,” as opposed to some other form of description, narrative, or commemoration. Periodization is, therefore, the most basic tool of the historian and must inevitably serve as the first premise from which any further analysis of a series of events will proceed.<sup>1</sup> Dividing past time into

<sup>1</sup>Morris 1997, 131: “We cannot get by without periodization: it is a fundamental part of the job of doing history. But if we are to avoid fetishization of the period into something which really does resist, deflect, and disturb clear thought, our periodization must be a reflexive exercise. And the only way to make it such is through historical analysis of the processes of writing history.” Strauss 1997, 165: “Periodization is both the requisite framework and the false friend of all history-writing.” See Gehrke 1999 for an overview of antiquity and its periodization.

historically meaningful segments serves the same function as the punctuation in a sentence and the paragraphing on a page. We no longer write the way the ancient Romans and Greeks did, often without punctuation marks and sometimes even without any breaks between words. Just as punctuation articulates sentences, so too does periodization shape meaning even as it builds the foundation and framework of the critical message that is being communicated. Hence this study will argue, albeit often implicitly, that periodization is of vital importance to the historian and can too easily be taken for granted. We have chosen to think of history in terms of chronological periods, whether large or small, but we must delineate these with care and deliberation, for they will inevitably determine much that follows from the basic framework for interpretation that they propose.

It would be possible to keep a yearly chronicle of the community's past events, in the same way that the Roman *pontifex maximus* had his annual bulletin of community happenings published on whitened boards outside his house near the Forum, at the center of community life.<sup>2</sup> Such a record of annual magistrates, floods, famines, eclipses, food prices, and local happenings would not, however, be a history in the modern sense. By its very nature it could not trace patterns across years or discuss more than the events of a single year or season at a time. Even when these pontifical records were eventually published (whether around 120 or not until the time of Augustus), in the eighty books known as the *Annales Maximi*, they would have provided what amounted to no more than the raw material for subsequent writers of history. Their spare record, limited focus, and lack of analysis made them little more than chronologically ordered lists of the types of events that were of traditional concern to successive Roman high priests and their communities.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup>See Frier 1999, v–xix, for an outline of the debate and a full bibliography. For the bulletins posted by the *pontifex maximus*, see Cato F 77 = Gellius 2.28.4–7; Cicero *De orat.* 2.12.51–53; and Servius ad *Aen.* 1.373 with Oakley 1997, 24–27.

<sup>3</sup>Beck (2007) argues for the symbolic importance of this chronological format for Roman historiography.

By contrast, the characteristic funerals of the office-holding families in Rome brought past magistrates and their achievements to life in the political space of the Forum in the middle of the city.<sup>4</sup> When a Roman magistrate who had held high office (as aedile, praetor, consul, or censor) died, he and all of his office-holding ancestors were represented in the funeral procession by actors wearing wax masks and the garb denoting the highest office held by each man. This parade of ancestors preceded the body of the deceased to the Forum, where the members of that venerable procession sat once more on their ivory chairs of office to listen to the funeral oration (*laudatio*) celebrating the life of the man to be buried that day. The speech also celebrated the political careers and achievements of all of the earlier office-holding family members, who were now represented and commemorated anew. This pageant of Rome's past—a vital element in republican political culture, as Polybius attests in the mid-second century—created a timeless memory world in which deceased relatives from every previous age processed and spoke and sat together.<sup>5</sup> Yet the spectacle of Rome's political funerals, with the accompanying rhetoric of the funeral oration that was delivered from the speaker's platform (*rostra*) in the Forum, failed to create an “historical” account of the kind that the modern historian writes.<sup>6</sup>

A truly “historical” account needs to move beyond an annual community chronicle or a lively pageant of a family's famous names, to consider how subsequent generations can best understand and describe the past in its complex patterns of stability and change. To designate something as “history” is to transcend its particular contemporary concerns and the immediacy of its everyday politics. History takes the longer view. This is obviously relatively easy for us to do with republican Rome, a lost world that now lies more than two thousand years behind us. However, our impressions are influenced, inspired,

<sup>4</sup>Flaig 1995; Flower 1996.

<sup>5</sup>Polybius' famous description of the aristocratic funeral (6.53–54) is based on his own observations made in the years before 150. Would Polybius himself have felt that the transmission of values from one generation to the next, which he highlights in both the funeral spectacle and the eulogy, had started to erode by the last years of the second century?

<sup>6</sup>See Kierdorf 1980 for the fragments; Flower 1996, 128–50, for discussion.

and sometimes impeded by the chronologies and concerns of the ages and thinkers that lie between us and the Romans. Every generation needs to (re)consider the past in terms of its own perspective, in a way that will make sense to a contemporary audience and advance historical analysis beyond the set of standard questions that every schoolchild must face.

Periodization in historical terms is intrinsically and inevitably anachronistic, and this fact should be openly acknowledged.<sup>7</sup> The Romans in antiquity did not think of their lives in terms of the phases and divisions that modern historians use. Too often, however, a chronological scheme seems to take on a life of its own. Although contemporary events continue to unfold in a pattern that is by definition easier to characterize with hindsight, historians still tend to credit the Romans with more insights than they could reasonably have had at the time. By contrast, my study sets out to construct a periodization that is based entirely on hindsight and that is explicitly characterized as such. It does not aim to address in any detail the Romans' own sense of time (*Zeitbewußtsein*) or the spirit of any given age (*Zeitgeist*).<sup>8</sup> Nor is this discussion intended to be a study of the historiography of the Roman Republic, either in its contemporary authors or during the imperial period.<sup>9</sup> All these fascinating and worthwhile subjects can be pursued elsewhere.

History is not itself a story *about* time but one that is set *in* time. In reconstructing this story, dating schemes are the essential tools of research and analysis. Having a unified dating system that can relate the past experiences of ancient cultures to our own times is as essential as using a map to describe where Rome is in the physical world. In this way, chronology has been appropriately characterized as a "time map."<sup>10</sup> Yet the dating

<sup>7</sup>See Hinds 1998 for the impact of this idea on the study of Roman poetry. Zerubavel 2003, 97: "Indeed, with the possible exception of the Big Bang, at what point any given stretch of history actually 'begins' is never quite self-evident, and there is always more than just a single point that might possibly constitute the formal beginning of a particular historical narrative."

<sup>8</sup>For the Romans' sense of time and history, see Feeney 2007.

<sup>9</sup>For the historical writing of the republican period, see Beck and Walter 2001 and 2004, for the fragments; Eigler et al. 2003, 9–38; and Walter 2004, for discussion and bibliography.

<sup>10</sup>Zerubavel 2003; see 82–100, for a discussion of historical discontinuity. Zerubavel notes (100) that "offering a fair historical account may very well

system we now use was not invented until the sixth century AD, and thus does not belong to classical antiquity at all.<sup>11</sup> It is the product of another world and of a mentality not based on the heritage and identity of the individual city-state as expressed by its own local calendar. Despite the fact that our dating system fails in its original aim to identify the exact time when Jesus was born, our unified chronology is undoubtedly highly useful and has become indispensable. Its importance is reflected in the choice by many to relabel this same system of dating as BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era) instead of BC and AD, as if it could indeed have a universal application outside the history of Christianity. Nevertheless, the system remains in many ways an arbitrary one, however useful and ubiquitous it has become. Historians need to make use of it, while being aware of its consequences and limitations.

The unique and essentially eccentric nature of this dating system emerges in relation to the BC (BCE) period, the time frame that includes the whole span of the Roman Republic under discussion here. No other dating system has a scheme of classifying time as simply “before” a central event or zero hour, a method that consequently involves counting down toward the moment when the actual period under discussion (the Christian era) is said to start. It goes without saying that no ancient Roman could have imagined such a description of time. Moreover, our dating system takes no account of the irregularities and eventual breakdown in the Romans’ own calendar, especially by the mid-40s, when Julius Caesar saw calendar reform as a matter of immediate concern even amid the many other political and military issues that he faced.<sup>12</sup>

Given the completely “anachronistic” way in which we now describe Roman time, it is surprising how well our dating

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require some willingness to actually consider multiple narratives with *multiple beginnings*.”

<sup>11</sup>For the BC/AD dating system, see Blackburn and Holford-Strevens 1999; Holford-Strevens 2005; Rüpke 2006; and Feeney 2007, 7–16.

<sup>12</sup>The last day of the old republican calendar came at the end of December 46, which represented for Romans the end of republican time. Michels (1967) explains the republican (pre-Julian) calendar. For Caesar’s calendar reform, see Yavetz 1979, 112–15; Feeney 2007, esp. 151–56, 193–201. On the calendar in general, see Rüpke 1995 and 2006.

system works, in terms of both centuries and decades, the units that we use to classify our own history. The centennial years that stand out according to this system—such as 500, 400, 300, 200, 100 (BC)—are useful in considering change in Roman politics and culture. Similarly, the lifetime of Cicero, which falls in the era best documented by far, can even be divided up for discussion into decades, as it is in the insightful chapters in the second edition of *The Cambridge Ancient History*.<sup>13</sup> Consequently, it makes sense for us to use our own dating system to give shape to past time, even as we must always acknowledge that the picture we are creating is our own, not a Roman one.

The shaping of time naturally corresponds to the scale of periodization that is envisaged. Long, sweeping periods of history may seem impressive and monumental at a distance, but they tend to distort and mislead by associating a variety of times with each other in schemes that are essentially not accurate or even plausible. According to this type of very generalized periodization scheme, to use a modern example, the history of the American republic since 1776 would constitute a single historical era. In recognition of the inaccuracy of such broad definitions, the label “Late Antiquity” has recently been criticized as being subject to an unwarranted extension in both directions.<sup>14</sup> Eventually the definition of such a period risks

<sup>13</sup>Chapters by decade in *CAH<sup>2</sup>*, vol. 9: the 60s (chap. 9 = Wiseman 1994b), the 50s (chap. 10 = Wiseman 1994a), the 40s (chap. 11 = Rawson 1994b), the 30s (chap. 11 = Rawson 1994a). The best-documented years in antiquity are 63 (Cicero’s consulship), 59 (Caesar’s consulship), 50/49 (the outbreak of civil war and Caesar’s invasion), and 44/43 (the Ides of March and the following eighteen months).

<sup>14</sup>Giardina offers a trenchant critique of “Late Antiquity” as a period (1999, 29): “Le esigenze immediate sono dunque due: individuare i caratteri di una società tardoantica in quanto distinta in modo autonomo da quella antica e da quella medievale (oppure, in alternativa, delineare in modo coerente il suo carattere di società di transizione); fare discendere da questa analisi morfologica le periodizzazioni non sovrapponibili delle singole strutture” (“There are, therefore, two things that are immediately necessary: to identify the individual characteristics of a society we can call “late antique” and consequently distinct in its own autonomous way both from antiquity and from the middle ages [or, alternatively, to delineate in a coherent way its character as a society in transition]; and next to deduce from this morphological analysis non-overlapping periodizations of the individual structures”).

becoming virtually meaningless, if it is not based on well-articulated and accepted criteria. Similarly, the Greek “Dark Age” of about five hundred years between about 1200 and 700 has come under increasing scrutiny as regards its origins and development in scholarly discourse.<sup>15</sup> As a category, it may tell us more about the history of classical scholarship than it does about life in Greece. The designation of a time in ancient history as “Classical” continues to raise issues, even as it asserts the enduring value of tradition in scholarship.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, any study of republican Rome should really start from the realization that the traditional span of the Republic (509 to 49, or 43, or 27), covering 450 years or more, is ultimately unwieldy and uninformative when treated as a single time period. No one would deny that the city of Rome, together with its government and its presence abroad, changed beyond recognition within this period, much more so even than in the half-millennia that preceded and followed it.<sup>17</sup> In this sense the “Republic,” whether as a time period or a form of government, created the Rome that we study as a subject in world history. Although most other towns in central Italy did not differ much from Rome around the year 500, they have become obscure and insignificant, subjects of interest only to local historians.

The history of modern thinking about Roman republicanism is a huge topic in its own right that is not essential to the purposes of this essay.<sup>18</sup> The study of republican Rome was put on a new footing by Niccolò Machiavelli with his book (published in 1531) about the first decade of Livy. Like many other political theorists, Machiavelli looked to the Romans for advice on politics in his own time and did not attempt to distinguish different phases of republican history in antiquity. The influence of Polybius’ history (especially Book 6), which was in circulation again in Europe from around 1415, was important

<sup>15</sup>Morris 1997 outlines a history of scholarship on the Greek “Dark Age.”

<sup>16</sup>See Gehrke 2004; Porter 2006; and Walter 2006, for a variety of concepts of the “classical” in antiquity.

<sup>17</sup>Kolb (2002, 115–329) gives an historical account of the city in the Republic. For other introductions, see the first chapter of Zanker 1988; the essays in Gardina 2000; Patterson 2006a; Torelli 2006; and Welch 2006.

<sup>18</sup>See Lintott 1999a, 233–55; and Millar 2002 for discussion and bibliography.



in shaping political thought about a single Republic and was supported by the monumental lists of republican consuls found in Rome in 1546 (the *Fasti Capitolini* from the Augustan age). From the point of view of periodization, however, the most influential figure seems to have been the Italian humanist Carlo Sigonio (ca. 1524–84), who thought of republican history in terms of cycles of growth and decay.<sup>19</sup>

The monolithic republican chronology is especially misleading for beginners and other nonspecialists with an interest in the history of Rome. In English, “republic” can and does refer both to a political system and to the time period it occupies, in a way that can produce a somewhat circular argument and is inaccurate, given that several episodes within this period—such as the decemvirate in the fifth century, or Sulla’s dictatorship in the first—are distinctly “unrepublican” in tone and feel. A simplified chronology does not, in other words, make Rome a more accessible object for a history lesson in the modern world. A useful analogy is provided by the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (431–404), which Thucydides strongly and persuasively argues was a single war lasting twenty-seven years. Most have accepted his reasoning, and this has led to standard essay questions on the causes of “the war.” The conflict, however, can just as usefully be seen as several shorter wars, and this is certainly how many Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries would have understood their political history.<sup>20</sup>

But how can we assign a chronological span to the Roman Republic without first knowing how to describe it? In other words, which comes first, the political analysis or the time map? In fact, the Romans themselves did not really have a vocabulary of political terms to analyze their changing civic landscape: it is this situation that has shaped subsequent, modern ways of talking about Rome. The Latin term *res publica*, from which we derive our word “republic,” can mean both

<sup>19</sup>Lintott 1999a, 245–46: “In this way Sigonio has helped to create the standard modern periodization, whereby the Conflict of the Orders ends in 287 and the decline of the Republic begins in 133, the intervening period displaying the constitution at its best.”

<sup>20</sup>Strauss 1997 offers an insightful analysis of Thucydides and his periodization of a single Peloponnesian War.

the political community (*politeia*) itself *and* its increasingly characteristic system of government.<sup>21</sup> On a basic level, *res publica* simply means “government with participation of the governed” rather than anarchy or tyranny, both understood as forms of lawlessness. With these words Romans who came after the end of the hereditary monarchy defined the new government as the “public matter.” In modern terms, the phrase may seem vague, but it does contain the seeds of the political ideas that developed in Rome after the expulsion of the kings.

*Res publica* makes perfect sense in terms of Roman political culture and the gradual evolution of a civic community that was based on the equality of adult male citizens within an established system of law and on the ability of each citizen to participate in person in the various voting units, whether the units were based on tribes or on army divisions. Closely related to the concept of this shared political space was the very Roman idea of the citizen’s stake in the community, represented by private land ownership guaranteed by the state and by the citizen landowner’s corresponding service in the community’s army. Equally significant was the drafting of a written law code that was publicly displayed and available to every citizen, originally in the form of the Twelve Tables of the mid-fifth century. Hence *res publica* also implies transparency, openness, and due process, rather than secrecy and individual power used behind closed doors for personal goals.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup>The definitions of *respublica* offered by the *OLD* (1982) appear in the following order: “1. Activities affecting the whole people, affairs of state, an item of public business; 2. The welfare of the state, the public good, the national interest, the resources of the state; 3. The body politic, the or a constitution; 4. A free state in which all citizens participate.” Tacitus uses the term to refer specifically to the pre-imperial state (*Hist.* 1.50; *Ann.* 1.3 and 7).

<sup>22</sup>Suetonius (*Claud.* 10.3) refers to *communem libertatem* (shared political freedom) in reference to a republican form of government in the context of a debate in the senate in AD 41. Walter (2004, 328) gives an insightful description of how politics appeared to Cicero: “einem stets prekären System, in dem es keine wirksamen institutionellen Sicherungen gegen das Versagen von Institutionen und Personen und damit auch keine wirkliche Sicherheit durch Verfaßtheit gab, in dem aber zugleich das immer neue Knüpfen von Bindungen und Ausgleichen von Interessen Auswege versprach” (“a constantly precarious system, which did not have any effective institutional safeguards against failures of institutions or of individuals; consequently a system without

The term *res publica* also suggests the unity of all citizens in a shared civic community that transcends the social divisions of class, neighborhood, or family. Such a community is fundamentally at odds with the whole concept of political parties that divide citizens into permanent factions or allegiance groups. In practice, however, the system that expressed these ideas developed slowly after the end of the monarchy. It is characteristic of Roman politics that it did not produce either individual lawgivers or prophets who implemented republican revolutions at specific times, as so often happened in Greek cities and other ancient Mediterranean communities.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, Rome's founding fathers—such as Romulus, Numa, or Servius Tullius, to whom so much is attributed—all lived before a republican system was instituted. Political development tended to come slowly and as a result of complex, now mostly obscure, negotiations of power between different groups in society. All of the above considerations are vital to an understanding of Roman political life; they do not, however, help us with the immediate issue of delineating a time map. If it is a delicate matter to define the Roman Republic in precise political terms, its periodization is equally fraught with difficulty, and in closely related ways.

Thus chronological articulation is the first order of the day, and the only way toward a more accurate and less superficial way of talking about Rome after the end of the monarchy. In other words, even if the Romans did not have a generally accepted and detailed chronological scheme for these five hundred years, we need one for our own use. This issue is of a very different nature from the chronology of the “imperial” period, which is naturally articulated by the reigns of emperors and of their families or rivals. According to a recent and very effective argument, the “triumviral period,” the years between the death of Julius Caesar on the Ides of March 44 and the Battle of Actium in 31, which made Octavian sole ruler of the Roman world, should be seen as a separate period in its own

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any real security created by constitutional means. Yet it was at the same time a system that always held out the promise of escape routes through new allegiances and balances between different interests”).

<sup>23</sup>See Gotter 1996, 233–66, esp. 246–50.

right.<sup>24</sup> Recognizing the political and social factors that made these “triumviral” years a time of transition between Caesar’s dictatorship and the emergence of a more formalized system of one-man rule designed by the man who took the name of Augustus is a real step forward in terms of historical analysis. Too often “the Republic” has been defined simply as “not a system of one-man rule.” This may have made some sense for Romans who could not predict how events would unfold, but it does not meet the criteria of modern historical research or political analysis.

Within any periodization of republican Rome, the final phase, or “Late Republic,” is particularly important, and consequently received special attention from later writers, notably Plutarch and Appian, both writing in the second century AD. Needless to say, the loss of Livy has forced us to rely on later writers. Everyone who looks back to republican Rome is influenced by the knowledge that this political community did not survive and was replaced by its antithesis, an emperor, and, therefore, by an “imperial period,” a new time that was permanently marked by the divisions of individual reigns and dynasties. Our whole picture of what republican politics in Rome consisted of is shaped by when and how we think it came to an end, by our sense of its failure (whether deserved or tragic, overdue or sudden and unexpected). Its ending contributes to a definition of its essential characteristics, as they had evolved over so many generations.

The following dates have been suggested as being most significant in defining a decisive political watershed and the end of the Republic. The year 49 is the earliest that has been widely discussed, the year that marks Caesar’s invasion of Italy when he crossed the Rubicon River and started a civil war against the armies of Pompey and of his enemies in the senate. If we accept this date, then we must argue that there was a functioning republic in place immediately before, and that Caesar appears to bear a large responsibility for its fall and especially for his own subsequent failure to restore any type of republican government after the end of the war.<sup>25</sup> By contrast, other

<sup>24</sup>Osgood 2006 (cf. Syme 1939 and Sumi 2005).

<sup>25</sup>Jehne (2005) discusses the importance of Caesar’s crossing of the Rubicon. Mackay (2004, 154) describes Pharsalus on August 9, 48, as the “death blow of the Republic,” but also says (176) that “[t]he outbreak of the civil

historians would choose Caesar's assassination in 44 as the turning point, as if his dictatorship was still part of "republican" politics.<sup>26</sup> Such a choice presumes that Caesar's ultimate political intentions remain unclear and that he did not establish a new system. By choosing the death of Caesar as the end of the republican period, however, we would seem to make the same mistake that the "Liberators" made. They thought that Caesar's death would see the immediate and spontaneous reemergence of a republic, which in the event did not happen. Somewhat more logical is the choice of the end of the year 43, when a triumvirate had emerged after Caesar's death and Brutus and Cassius' cause, if we can indeed identify it as "republican," had been defeated.<sup>27</sup> Again, we seem to be accepting the propaganda of the Liberators, men who behaved more like warlords than like republicans, old or new. Alternatively, the Republic is sometimes extended to the Battle of Actium in 31 (when Antony was finally defeated and Octavian was left with sole power), or even to 27 (when Octavian took the name of Augustus and established a new system with himself as leading man, or *princeps*, within a restored *res publica*).<sup>28</sup>

What should be clear from the start is that any periodization that extends the Republic to the moment when a new system of government seems to emerge is a scheme more descriptive of what comes next rather than of what came before. A period of transition between a functioning republic and a new system with a single ruler is strongly suggested by the bulk of the ancient evidence and can be helpful in appreciating some of the difficulties of that transition for those who

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war in 49 BC marked the demise of the dysfunctional political system of the Republic."

<sup>26</sup>Gotter (2000) has the Republic begin and end with a Brutus, the later one being the first man to put his head on a Roman coin during his own lifetime. Jehne (2001, 114) associates the end of the Republic with Caesar's adoption of the title of perpetual dictator on February 2, 44. At 119 he has Caesar end the Republic, but the Liberators give it no chance to be restored.

<sup>27</sup>Gotter (1996, 241) puts the end of the Republic at Philippi.

<sup>28</sup>For a concise overview of the settlement of 27, see Eck 2007, 46–58. Zanker entitles the third chapter of his 1988 book "The Great Turning Point" and starts it with the honors for Octavian after Actium, but with most emphasis on 27. The whole question is reexamined in an interesting way by Morstein-Marx and Rosenstein (2006, 625–26).

lived through it. Roman history has not been well served by a simplistic and sharply drawn dichotomy between “republic” and “empire” as chronological terms.

Meanwhile, the sometimes-tortuous details of the lengthy debate over the various merits of different end dates for the Republic should not cause us to lose sight of what is at stake, a choice that goes well beyond the minutiae of scholarly quibbling. We need to define a shape and dimension for Roman history, if we are to be able to move on to further discussion of matters of substance and meaning. Our whole picture of what republican politics consisted of in Rome depends on when and how we think it came to an end. The parameters that we choose in our definition of republican failure inevitably determine which actors take part in the drama and under which varied historical conditions. The end of the Republic has cast a long shadow over what came before, and has encouraged various teleological ways of talking about earlier Roman politics. This study sets out to address the disintegration of republican politics and practices as a topic of special importance in any overall consideration of republican political culture.

By employing several timelines one could avoid the tyranny of any single one of them. Periodization in Roman history could be based on considerations of religion (as in the case of the BC/AD system), of economic and technological change, or of the expansion of Rome’s overseas domination. Many Roman historians have used Rome’s external wars as the basic compass of their study, whether for specific reasons or simply by default.<sup>29</sup> There is much to be gained by looking at the development of Roman republican politics in terms of its overseas ambitions, especially if hegemony and empire are seen as its most defining features. Political change, however, was not necessarily driven exclusively by foreign policy or military concerns. External conflicts provide a convenient set of dates and transitions that are not objects for dispute. Ultimately, the dates of foreign wars are significant, though they are not in

<sup>29</sup>See, e.g., Scullard 1980 (first published in 1935) and, more recently, Bringmann 2007. L. Annaeus Florus (later second century AD) structured his Roman history (based on Livy) around external wars and into four general periods (infancy, youth, manhood, old age). According to Lactantius (*Inst. div.* 7.15.4), the elder Seneca had used these divisions.

themselves political markers, even when internal change did accompany military action.

Similarly, the lives of leading Romans have provided a traditional way of defining different “ages,” not only for historians but also in other areas, such as in constructing a framework for the history of Latin literature.<sup>30</sup> Yet if we define history as a story articulated by the lives of great men, even by their very birth dates, before anyone can have known what roles they would go on to play or what texts they would eventually write, we will have trouble moving beyond history as it was defined and written in the past: a story narrowly focused on famous generals and their great victories. But history is not and should not be the same as biography.<sup>31</sup>

Moreover, how can we write the history of a “republic” simply or principally in terms of the personal biographies of its leading men? This question becomes more urgent when those leading men are openly operating outside republican norms. Are we denying that *res publica* had any meaning in an “Age of Caesar”? If that was indeed the case, the political implications of that assertion need further exploration and qualification. How can the “Age of Caesar” precede the “Fall of the Republic”?<sup>32</sup> A claim has been made that while Caesar was writing his books about the Civil War the Republic, or a republic, (must still have) existed.<sup>33</sup> This argument can easily become circular. Yet the Republic must be more than an idea in Caesar’s or anyone else’s mind.

My study will set out to design a new and different periodization based specifically on the evolving political life of the

<sup>30</sup>Conte 1994 and Suerbaum 2002. Syme 1964, 274: “Periods in the development of literature are a normal device, questionable but not easy to dispense with, useful when not slavishly obeyed. It is expedient to know where to make the cut.”

<sup>31</sup>Plutarch makes the distinction at the beginning of his biography of Alexander the Great.

<sup>32</sup>Ovid’s words *quia res est publica Caesar* (“because Caesar is the *res publica*,” *Tr.* 4.4.15) were written much later, shortly before the death of Augustus.

<sup>33</sup>Raditsa (1973, 434) writes of the *De bello civili*: “as long as Caesar could write this narrative, the Republic still existed.” So also Batstone and Damon 2006, 32: “So the terminal date for its composition is the date after which one considers the republic dead. From Cicero onwards, that has been placed well before the Ides of March in 44.”

Roman community.<sup>34</sup> That is not to say that such a political scheme should necessarily take precedence in some absolute hierarchy of dating systems. Political chronology can and should be useful both in complement and in contrast to other dating schemes and eras. It must, however, address the essential question of how to study what is “republican” about Rome. In addition, the new time map described in this study is designed as an attempt to critique, articulate, and ultimately to dissolve the concept of *a single, monolithic Republic* in Rome, and hence of a long era that had a quasi-biological beginning, middle, and end, according to an Aristotelian pattern of natural growth, maturity, and decay. A republican system of government did come to a final end at Rome, but there is no reason for us to write about it now as if it were the effect of some inevitable fate, or an integral part of the destiny of a great leader, or a mechanical change in a pattern of successive ages.

<sup>34</sup>Martin Jehne has recently suggested that any systematic discussion of the Roman Republic needs a model as its basis; one may equally claim that any analytical study needs a well-articulated time map. See Jehne 2006a, 3–4: “In broad terms a model is the ordering of a series of specific pieces of information by means of a hypothesis about their relationship, ignoring details that may seem as irrelevant from a given perspective.” By contrast, Peter Brunt writes (1988, 89): “In practice no systematic theory can explain without remainder the complex interweaving of human activities, especially if the course of events can be altered by the apparently contingent influence of individuals. And on this premiss the historian can never provide any complete explanation of the past.”