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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

What "new and true" can possibly still be said about Gaius Julius Caesar? A fair question. Even if one were to take a parochial view of the scholarship (for much of the most important work has been published in German), no fewer than four full-scale English-language biographies were published by top-rank scholars between 2006 and 2009, not to mention a weighty (and worthy) *Companion to Julius Caesar* also published in 2009, two interesting introductions pitched mainly to undergraduates and the general reader in 2015 and 2016, and now two book-length studies that emerged in 2017 and 2019 on the coming of the civil war.[1] A "companion" to the writings of Julius Caesar and a new compendium of his works with contextual essays covering a wide range of issues, historical, biographical, and historiographical, have recently appeared as well as an entire book devoted to Caesar's first consulship.[2] Caesar's own account of "his" civil war has recently become an especially fertile field for scholarly activity with the appearance of a new critical edition of the text together with its companion volume and a handful of monographs in English.[3] Since 2006 at least three important books have appeared on the reception of Caesar from the Augustan Principate to his status as a cultural icon today, while his assassination remains an ever-popular subject of books intended for a wider, nonspecialist readership.[4] We now even have a book that contests the traditional diagnosis of Caesar's illness as epilepsy, opting instead for

[1] Goldsworthy 2006; Canfora 2007 (original Italian edition published in 1999); Tatum 2008; Billows 2009; Griffin (ed.) 2009; Stevenson 2015; Wiseman 2016; Fezzi 2019. A new German edition of Gelzer's venerable biography has also recently appeared: Gelzer 2008. Because these volumes generally focus on a nonspecialist readership (not to mention their daunting rate of publication) they do not receive much attention in this book. For their merits and some criticisms see the following reviews: Osgood 2007; Santangelo 2010; Racine 2012; Zampieri 2016; Cornwell 2018.

[2] Grillo and Krebs (eds.) 2017, Raaflaub (ed.) 2017, and Chrissanthos 2019.

[3] Damon's OCT (2015) with Damon 2018 and Grillo 2012; Peer 2015; Westall 2018.

[4] Wyke (ed.) 2006, 2008; Devillers and Sion-Jenkins (eds.) 2012; Woolf 2007; Strauss 2015.

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a series of small strokes.[5] The cascade of publications is overwhelming, impossible for any one scholar to master in full. Our culture's appetite for the story of the Roman dictator ensures that it will ever be fed, and doubtless never sated. This bodes well in general for another Caesarian project, but makes it difficult to stand out in such an eye-catching crowd.

This is not yet another biography of Julius Caesar. We have enough of them already, and anyway, if biography is a narrative of character, I doubt whether we have the necessary material to write one.[6] My interest here is not biographical but historical. What is distinctive about this book, I hope, is that it is founded on a combination of two crucial underlying premises, each of them the result of the development of historical scholarship on the late Roman Republic over the past half-century or so (although this analytic work has not always been well represented in the synthetic narratives that continue to be produced), and each of them still somewhat controversial. These are, in brief, the following: (1) that the Roman Republic was not an "oligarchy," as was so long supposed as a matter of course, but a participatory republican political order in which the People were partners with the aristocracy not only in steering political events but, more fundamentally, in determining what the Republic was and should be (which entails further that Cicero, whose voice has tended to shape not only our views of the dominant narrative of the Late Republic but even of the nature of the Republic itself, can hardly be taken to speak for the Roman People, or even for senators as a whole); and (2) that the teleological perspective that (often insidiously) dominates our narratives of both the "fall of the Republic" and that of Julius Caesar's political career is deceptive, and should be consciously challenged at every step. My hope and expectation in undertaking this project, which has proven so much more time-consuming than I originally imagined, is that a careful review of a selection of the key moments in Caesar's political career – many of which have become so encrusted by the standard teleologies and traditional interpretations of the late-republican crisis that it is difficult to see them in a new light – will yield a substantially new picture of this most controversial of ancient Roman historical figures. It should also cast light on the crises of his day, and on the beginning of the series of civil wars that would eventually transform the "Republic" into the "Empire."

Let us briefly review these premises.

[5] Ashrafian and Galassi 2016.

[6] Peter Brunt, whose undergraduate lectures I was lucky to attend in the early 1980s, was fond of pointing out that Cicero was the only Classical figure whose biography, in its full sense, could be written: Brunt 1988: 89.

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The so-called democracy debate sparked by Fergus Millar's provocative articles of the 1980s is still percolating through scholarship and has not reached a definitive new orthodoxy.[7] Few have been convinced by Millar's classification of the Roman Republic as "a form of democracy," though of course the argument is bedeviled by the difficulty of defining this procrustean concept in a way that is acceptable to all. However, prevailing opinion among scholars over the past couple of decades generally acknowledges that popular participation in deliberation, decision-making, and ideology construction exerted a far more important influence on political events than had been accepted when we ourselves were students and giants such as Ronald Syme and Ernst Badian presided over what J. North facetiously called the "frozen waste theory of Roman politics." According to that conception, which had a stranglehold over the field at least in the Anglophone world until the revolution prompted by Millar, the People, not only in their deliberative function as participants in public assemblies (*contiones*) but also as *voters* who passed all legislation, elected all magistrates, and delivered a verdict in some trials, could safely be left out of the analysis of republican political life because these were regarded essentially as meaningless formalities (not unlike the lopsided and often near-unanimous "votes" that occur in many authoritarian and totalitarian regimes) whose outcome was determined elsewhere by coalitions of nobles and other powerful senators.[8]

It can fairly be said that this "theory" is dead, but consensus has not settled upon a replacement. On one hand Karl-Joachim Hölkeskamp accepts the broad freedom of Roman voters from formal relationships of dependency (e.g. the famous patron-client system) but still sees politics as dominated by the aristocracy, and therefore fruitfully explores *how* the Roman nobility won the "willing obedience" of the citizenry by projecting an image of meritocracy, wisdom, and success that produced a general consensus in favor of noble, even

[7] Millar's classic articles are now collected in Millar 2002, esp. 109–182; his Jerome Lectures (Millar 2002) offer something of a synthesis. The strongest reactions have been those of Hölkeskamp 2010 (although as noted in the text that follows he too shaped an important strand of contemporary scholarship on the Republic, giving special impetus to the swing toward "political culture") and Mouritsen 2017, defending and elaborating on his objections presented in Mouritsen 2001. For the main elements of the view presented here see Morstein-Marx 2004, with further development in 2013, 2015; also see the important, largely complementary work of Yakobson 1999, 2006, 2010, 2014, as well as Wiseman 2009. This is not of course a bibliography of the "democracy debate" as such, which has continued to generate contributions from leading scholars to the present.

[8] North 1990: 278: "Its implication was that voting behavior in the assemblies could be regarded as completely divorced from the opinions, interests, and prejudices of the voters themselves. In form, the popular assemblies still existed, but at least by the second century B.C., when we begin to have some limited grasp of the social conditions within which it was operating, power had been wholly taken over by an all-powerful oligarchic elite."

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"oligarchic" domination of the Republic.[9] Henrik Mouritsen, however, minimizes the political role of the citizenry, interpreting the popular assemblies not as actual decision-making bodies but as smallish groups of "Roman gentlemen" enjoying the perks of their leisure by listening to speeches and voting, and predisposed to ratify whatever the promulgator of a bill put in front of them in "a highly formalised and carefully choreographed ritual."[10] This is not the place to engage in detailed rebuttal; for my purpose here, it will suffice to point out that if the senatorial elite enjoyed the kind of "domination" that Hölkeskamp supposes, or had the kind of stranglehold on voting assemblies that Mouritsen believes it did, then we should not be able to count more than thirty occasions between 140 and 50 BC on which voting assemblies forced through "popular" legislation in the teeth of a strong senatorial consensus.[11] Clearly, the People in their constitutional aspect were hardly so deferential and submissive as many scholars have supposed. "Fear of the

[9] Hölkeskamp 2010 is a good entry point in English to that scholar's body of important work on Roman political culture, which may be explored further in Hölkeskamp 2004 and 2017 (summarized in English by Elkins 2007 and Eberle 2018).

[10] Mouritsen 2017: 61, 72, 68, and see the whole discussion of the assemblies as "consensus rituals" (following E. Flaig) at 58–72. Cf. p 72: "Most likely, comitial participation was considered a natural part of the lifestyle of the Roman gentlemen who frequented the Forum on a regular basis. When a bill was to be ratified, they probably obligingly performed their civic duty and spent some hours in the voting pens, conversing with their *tribules*." Mouritsen's views about the "elite" character of the audiences of *contiones* and *comitia* were originally proposed in Mouritsen 2001, esp. 38–62. For criticism see Morstein-Marx 2004: 11–12, 128–136; Yakobson 2004: 203–206; Jehne 2006: 229–232.

[11] Morstein-Marx 2013: 39–42. Obviously I do not accept Flaig's and Mouritsen's interpretation of the voting assemblies as mere "consensus rituals" (see already Morstein-Marx 2004: 124). This fails to take into account that although the final vote on legislation was probably quite predictable come voting day, this was only because a bill that failed to win strong support in the crucible of numerous *contiones* over the three preceding weeks was thereby proven to be very likely to fail at the polls (or to be withdrawn beforehand). While this in a sense transfers the moment of decision to prior *contiones* rather than the actual vote, without the expectation of an upcoming decisive vote those *contiones* would not have the significance that they often did. Similarly, the presidential veto in the United States – also the final stage of the legislative process but one whose influence hangs over the congressional deliberations that precede it – is rarely used: only 3 percent of bills passed by Congress are vetoed even when the body is controlled by the opposing party. This is obviously not because the president's signature is automatic, ritualized, and therefore unimportant, but because the likelihood of a presidential veto has shaped Congress's deliberations all along, and there is usually little point in the cumbersome process of shepherding a bill through both houses if it is known in advance that the president will veto it. The lopsided proportion of signed versus vetoed bills would, taken in isolation, be utterly misleading evidence of the relative (un)importance of the presidential veto. Returning to Rome, while it is evidently true that a Roman bill was unlikely to survive long enough to be voted down by the assembly if it was not backed by the kind of overwhelming popular support that would predictably result in a favorable vote, this was not exactly unheard of: see the four known examples from the latter half of the second century listed by Mouritsen 2017: 59, plus Plin. *HN* 7.117 for another possible case in 63 (but cf. Cic. *Sull.* 65). Given the scarcity of detailed evidence about failed bills specifically (presumably less likely to be reported) and more generally about the fate of bills between promulgation and voting day, this does not seem to be a negligible number.

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People" was a well-known and quite effective phenomenon in the Late Republic, not infrequently prompting the Senate despite its own objections to take action in the People's interest, or preventing it from opposing their will.[12] It was in fact long-established practice, validated by historical traditions such as the fifth-century Secessions of the Plebs, that the Senate ultimately had to yield to a sufficiently strong expression of the will of the sovereign People.[13]

I argue therefore for a nuanced conception of popular engagement in which senators were largely deferred to as experts in the running of the state (what one might call passive acquiescence by the plebs) but, when senatorial and noble failure became salient (e.g. during the Jugurthine and Cimbric Wars of the end of the second century, or again, during the rise of piracy and resurgence of Mithridates in the 70s and 60s), the voting citizenry was often aroused to action, checking (perceived) senatorial incompetence and arrogance and imposing its will on fundamental decisions of war-making as well as legislative remedies for (perceived) domestic problems.[14] Moreover, entirely in keeping with Polybius's tripartite model of this fundamentally divided political system, members of the political elite elected to executive magistracies might themselves break ranks with their social peers in the Senate and turn to the power of the popular assemblies when it seemed expedient, or right and just, for them to do so.[15] These observations suggest a complex model of popular participation in the Roman Republic in which periods of relative quiescence, during which the popular assemblies largely deferred to the superior political wisdom (as it seemed) of their senatorial leaders, might be promptly succeeded by others of "insubordination" and "course corrections" imposed by the voting assemblies, led and often prompted by individual members of the political elite who, usually only temporarily, dissented on

[12] Morstein-Marx 2019.

[13] In pursuit of this end even "sedition" was defensible: Cic. *De or.* 2.199 (M. Antonius speaking): *neque reges ex hac civitate exigi neque tribunos plebis creari neque plebiscitis totiens consularem potestatem minui neque provocationem, patronam illam civitatis ac vindicem libertatis, populo Romano dari sine nobilium dissensione potuisse.* Cicero himself had echoed Antonius's validation of popular "sedition" by reference to the Secessions: Cic. *Corn.* I frs. 48–49. In a famous chapter of the *Discorsi* [I.4] Machiavelli picked up on the idea from a different source: Livy, like Cicero, hardly a revolutionary firebrand. On the People's sovereignty, see n. 23.

[14] See Morstein-Marx 2015: 303–307, where I adjust my earlier emphasis on the ideological domination of the Roman aristocracy through its control of political speech (idem 2004: esp. 279–287) – no doubt a key reason for the usual quiescence of the Roman People during routine times – in order to accommodate the not uncommon instances in which the People, though typically rather deferential to aristocratic leadership, were roused to force major "course corrections" by means of their votes.

[15] This is of course the great truth expressed by Polybius's much-criticized tripartite model of the Roman "constitution," which otherwise tends to be represented in our sources (e.g. Sall. *Cat.* 38–39, *Jug.* 40–42) as a bipolar system consisting of Senate and People.

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an ad hoc basis from the majority of their peers and superiors in the Senate. This dynamic bears more than a passing resemblance to the role of voters in today's relatively passive indirect (representative) democracies and republics, and some of the crises the Late Republic underwent therefore bear more than occasional similarities to some of the crises of "democracy" in our own age, making the Roman Republic arguably a more fruitful model for study by modern theorists than the "glories" of ancient Athens.[16]

Along with the thawing of the "frozen waste theory" and the new emphasis now put on the interventions of the popular assemblies in republican politics has come renewed attention to its ideological content, especially the speeches by which political leaders mobilized popular support and the values, principles, and goals that animated such speeches and therefore, presumably, at least in part motivated their audiences to act. T. P. Wiseman has rightly lamented a long, twentieth-century tradition of suppressing "the ideological content of republican politics," though in fact this way of thinking was largely spent by that century's end.[17] In this book I treat ideological issues both at the level of the individual bill or decree (Should there be an agrarian distribution? Should Caesar be recalled from Gaul?) and at the level of higher "constitutional" norm or principle (e.g. Where is the ultimate locus of decision, Senate or People? Must powerful senators be brought down to preserve "the Republic" and defend against *dominatio*?) to be central to the crises of the Caesarian age.

Since I have gone on record diagnosing an "ideological monotony" in the Late Republic this may seem to call for some clarification. The phrase "ideological monotony" was meant to express the demonstrable fact that "a nakedly 'optimate' stance was in straightforward contradiction with the *contio* as a rhetorical setting" but "*not* that all speakers sounded and behaved interchangeably when they climbed onto the rostra."[18] It emphasizes the narrowness of the range of ideological positions that was brought specifically *before the People* and characterizes somewhat negatively the

[16] According to Flower's disarticulation of "the Roman Republic" into six republics, the last of which (in her scheme) *ended* in 60 BC, the Roman Republic was not actually a republic any longer by the 50s (2010: 149), which also happens to be the only period for which we have copious contemporary evidence for the actual workings of the Roman Republic. I do not think this view is defensible on a normal conception of a "republic." On Flower's experiment in periodization see esp. Yakobson 2011: 155–156, and North 2010: 472.

[17] Wiseman 2009: 32. See (along with Millar's seminal works cited in n. 7) already Beard and Crawford 1985: 68: "Roman accounts of politics in all periods, but particularly the age of revolution . . . systematically present political conflict as being about 'real issues,' about access by the people to the rewards of conquest and the creating of the political means to achieve this end."

[18] Morstein-Marx 2004: 239; 2013: 42–43. For criticism of the idea, which some others have embraced, see Tan 2008, Arena 2012: 79, and now esp. Rosenblitt 2016. Cf. Tiersch 2018 for another approach.

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quality of public political argument, for an honest critique of *popularis* principles was essentially excluded by the circumstances of public deliberation. It expresses the fact that "popular" political values and principles went largely unchallenged in the public deliberation in the open Forum that led to decisive votes, which on one hand helped to sustain and reinforce *popularis* ideology, but on the other shifted the gravamen of debate from the public good (relatively uncontroversial) to a question of trust.[19] Yet none of this is meant to imply that there was no serious political argument or contestation in the public Forum, much less within the walls of the Senate. On the contrary, when we have evidence that laws were passed by the People, I assume (unless there are good reasons to the contrary) that a vote of the popular assembly does reflect a conscious choice by voters, not determined but at least informed by arguments that had been made to them, although of course voters were subject to all manner of rhetorical manipulation, and furthermore the institutions themselves were far from transparent mediators of the popular will.[20]

Thus I take seriously the popular perspective on the Roman Republic as revealed by their votes and imposed by the People in the form of laws and electoral choices.[21] And it is evident above all from those numerous occasions when a senatorial consensus was *rejected* by voters in the assembly that these "People" mobilized to impose their will not only where their material benefits were at issue (e.g. grain or land distributions) but where the People's political rights (e.g. the rights of tribunes or the citizen's "due process" right of *provocatio*) were at stake, or corresponding constraints on the power of the Senate (e.g. the reassignment of command of major wars). The very fact alone that these latter categories of strongly supported "popular" proposals outnumber that of material benefits by a ratio of about two to one bespeaks a politically conscious voting population rather than an impoverished and easily manipulated proletariat interested only in "handouts."[22] In word certainly, and often

[19] Morstein-Marx 2004: 204–240.

[20] Morstein-Marx 2004, 2015. But scholars have tended to exaggerate the undemocratic features of the popular assemblies themselves: see esp. Yakobson 1999: 20–64; Morstein-Marx 2013: 32, 37–39.

[21] On the many meanings of "the Republic" see Hodgson 2017 (esp. pp. 46–60 on the "popular" perspective) and now Moatti 2018, whose semantic history of the concept reveals how it was co-opted as an anti-popular instrument by Cicero and other members of the elite. (Moatti 2017 gives an English summary.)

[22] Full argument and evidence presented in Morstein-Marx 2013; cf. 2019: 529–532. The very coherence of the principles involved in this body of "popular" legislation further suggests that it was not simply the wholesale creation of elite politicians jockeying for power (2013: 40–41) – that is that assemblies simply voted for whatever was put before them (Mouritsen 2017: 61, 66), as the elitist interpretation would have it.

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in deed, the People were the final arbiters of political decision, using their votes to have the last word on legislation and (almost exclusively) choosing the magistrates and generals to lead them. In this specific sense we may call them "sovereign": even Cicero proclaims before the Senate that the Roman People "held supreme power in all (political) matters."[23] We should finally shed the antiquated notion that a politician's "popular" (*popularis*) stance responding to the interests and needs of the Roman People was in itself fundamentally at variance with the values and traditions of "the Republic."[24]

Something more radical follows from this. Manifestly there are moments in the political narrative of the last two centuries of the Roman Republic when we sense the opening of a yawning gap between what one might loosely call "senatorial" and popular perspectives on the very norms and proper functioning of the Republic: consider, for example, the sharp and fundamental difference between Cicero's oft-expressed view of the Gracchi brothers as subverters of the constitution who were justly struck down without any need for legal authorization and the "popular" one of those voters who flocked from "all Italy" to cast their ballots on the agrarian law, or

[23] Cic. *Har. resp.* 11: *populus Romanus, cuius est summa potestas omnium rerum*. Cf. (in a specifically electoral context) *Planc.* 11: *Est enim haec condicio liberorum populorum praecipueque huius principis populi et omnium gentium domini atque victoris, posse suffragiis vel dare vel detrahere quod velit cuique.* Cic. *Rep.* 1.39.1: *res publica res populi*. Cf. Liv. 25.2.7, 38.36.8; App. *Pun.* 112 (see pp. 11f.). The principle thrice cited by Livy that *quodcumque postremum populus iussisset, id ius ratumque esset* (7.17.12, 9.33.9, 9.34.6) is however probably only a principle to determine the validity of overlapping or conflicting laws, "not a general statement of popular sovereignty" (Crawford et al., *RS* 2.721, Tab. XII.5). For sharp criticism of some scholars' inclination to characterize this as "popular sovereignty" (if used technically, a modern concept anyway) see Hölkeskamp 2010: 12–22 with earlier literature cited at 13n6; also Mouritsen 2017: 15–21 (cf. Lundgreen 2011: 259–272); more favorably, see Straumann 2016: 119–129 and cf. Morstein-Marx 2004: 120n11. As will be clear from Morstein-Marx 2013, I think Hölkeskamp and Mouritsen go too far, overlooking the clear implications of the historical record of 140–50 BC (and before) while exaggerating the practical effects of the various forms of (mostly religious) obstructionism available to the Senate and magistrates. But this argument would usurp too much space here and must be reserved for another occasion.

[24] Morstein-Marx, forthcoming, where it is also noted that the assertiveness of the *populus* is by no means restricted to the Late Republic. (The plebiscites authorizing Scipio Aemilianus's consular election and takeover of the African command take the pattern back to 148, and earlier instances are by no means rare (*lex Flaminia de agro Gallico* of 232 BC, *lex Claudia de nave senatorum* of 218 BC, *lex Valeria* on full citizenship for Formiae, Fundi, and Arpinum of 188: Elster 2003: nos. 77, 83, 156). On *populares*, see Yakobson's recent summary in the *OCD*, with bibliography (2017). Classic discussions include Meier 1965, Seager 1972, and Mackie 1992. Robb 2010 concedes too much to their enemies by glossing the term as "*seditiosi*": see Yakobson 2012 and now Tiersch 2018: 62. Gelzer's description of *populares* in his classic biography of Caesar (first published 1921), clearly shows its age: "The populares sought to achieve a majority in the popular assembly. With this support they intended to replace the Senate and to govern the state from the Forum. In constitutional form, the magistrates were no longer to receive their instructions from the Senate, but to become the servants of the sovereign people" (1968: 14).

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those who defaced the Opimian Temple of Concord with a *graffito* characterizing the slaughter as an "act of madness," or those who set up shrines at the locations where the two brothers were murdered.[25] Why should we assume the superior representativeness or legitimacy of Cicero's view, if the Roman Republic was composed not just of "the Senate" but also "the People of Rome" (*Senatus Populusque Romanus*), especially given the recognized primacy of the People in any matter on which they voted? If political legitimacy is ultimately and practically determined by society as a whole rather than a narrow elite, the popular conception of how the Republic worked and was supposed to work appears in fact to have the better historical claim to dominance, however philosophically superior Cicero's more elitist or even Cato's outright oligarchical views might be.[26] This will have obvious implications for our assessment of the clash between Caesar and Bibulus in 59, or the dispute over Caesar's *ratio absentis* that brought on the Civil War.

Correspondingly, the understanding has gained ground over the past couple of decades that Cicero cannot be regarded as the arbiter and touchstone of all things "republican." Late-republican Roman history from about 66 to 43 is often referred to as the Age of Cicero, not without reason. The nearly one thousand letters, fifty-eight speeches, and numerous political, rhetorical, and philosophical essays that come down to us from the pen of this towering figure of Latin literature cast into shadow virtually all of other sources for this period, mostly much later biographies and historical narratives (Plutarch, Suetonius, Appian, all imperial), and even those are frequently influenced by the record Cicero left behind. (Sallust departs our story early with his Catilinarian Debate, but in any case his account of that crisis is itself strongly colored by the Ciceronian tradition.) The only other substantial contemporary source, the war *Commentaries* by Caesar himself, are tightly focused military narratives that, though of extraordinary interest due to the identity of their author, usually only indirectly cast light on events in the capital (with a few, often problematic exceptions). It is impossible to escape entirely the shadow that Cicero casts over the history of this period. Yet we must try.

Here I am thinking not so much of the obvious distortions created by Cicero's personal perspective from a distinct locus of time and circumstance

[25] Plut. *Ti. Gracch.* 8.10; *C. Gracch.* 17.9, 18.3. On the graffiti, see Morstein-Marx 2012 and Hillard 2013.

[26] Morstein-Marx 2011: 276–278 and n. 30. To my mind, Drogula 2019 characterizes Cato's political leanings too readily as "traditionalist"; as will become more apparent in Chapters 3 and 4, I consider them *un*traditionally radical and reactionary. His attempt to restrict and redefine traditional military honors such as *supplicationes* and triumphs is similarly untraditional: Segal 2019: 165–226.

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that was hardly representative of senators as a whole – that is that he was a "new man" (*homo novus*) whose standing rested not on noble heritage, military achievements, or awesome *auctoritas* but upon his eloquence and his canny political leadership as *consul togatus* in the crisis of 63, subsequently "betrayed" by the "optimates" whose savior he styled himself to be, sent into humiliating exile by a tribune and the Roman People for his violation of law and tradition, later a committed advocate of peace, even of accommodation with a victorious Caesar, and finally a zealous defender of the morality of the assassination and leader of a powerful attack against Caesar's first potential successor. Such a brief résumé alone gives a hint of the specificity of the Ciceronian perspective and how questionable it can be to extrapolate from his many lamentations (or exultation) over current events to senators as a whole; attentive readers of Cicero's letters will be familiar with how remarkably closely Cicero's pronouncements about the "ups and downs" of the Republic (mostly downs) track the vicissitudes of his own personal fortunes.[27] More fundamentally, however, scholars have often been inclined to adopt Cicero's perspective on the very nature of the Republic itself as if in such matters he could speak for his entire society. But it should give us pause to consider for a moment just how dubious it would be to do the same with a modern politician's views, even those of an eyewitness participant possessed of commanding authority such as Winston Churchill, not to mention lesser figures who have nevertheless put their stamp on an age (e.g. Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan). Cicero may fairly be thought of as, on the whole, a moderate senator, as is shown by his arguments in the *De legibus* in support of "popular" institutions like the tribunate or the (mostly) secret ballot, or his strenuous efforts to mediate the looming crisis of the Caesarian Civil War. Yet the Roman Republic was "the Senate and People of Rome" (*SPQR* – a formula interestingly inverted in its first two epigraphic appearances in the second century BC), and an important implication of the resurgence of the People as a political agent in recent scholarship (as described earlier in this chapter) is that the job of defining the nature or norms of the Republic cannot properly be left to senators alone.[28] Scholars raised on

[27] Hodgson 2017: 105–162 traces Cicero's rhetorical self-identification with the *res publica* from the consular orations to the late 50s. See, for example, *Red. pop.* and *Red. sen.*, passim; *Dom.* 73–76, 96–102; *Sest.* 136–147; *Prov. cons.* 2–3, 13–14, 45, and most interestingly, the retrospective exculpation of Pompey and Caesar at *Fam.* 1.9.11–14. Griffin and Atkins 1991: xiii, rightly comment that Cicero's talk of the "loss of the Republic" tends to be "an exaggerated way of expressing disappointment with its present condition" (more or less identical with *Cicero*'s present condition).

[28] *ILLRP* 514, lines 6–7; *AE* 2006.624. Cf. Polyb. 21.10.8. Moatti 2018: 260–269 (cf. 2017: 40–48) provides a valuable review of the history of the formula, noting that it does not appear to be formally fixed until Augustus.

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