

BOOK REVIEW

Republicanism, Rhetoric, and Roman Political Thought: Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus. By Daniel J. KAPUST. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011. Pp. viii + 196. Hardcover, £55.00/\$85.00. ISBN 978-1-107-00057-5.

Over the last decade there has been a revival in the study of republicanism and rhetoric.¹ Kapust's primary contribution is the application of these recent studies to the Roman historians. In addition, Kapust interprets the historians in light of early modern political philosophy, particularly Hobbes and Machiavelli. To fill out the political and rhetorical thought, Kapust reads all the historians along with Cicero and heavy doses of Aristotle and Plato. The range of thought engaged by Kapust—ancient, modern, and contemporary—provides a rich background for reading the Roman historians as political thinkers.

Kapust's introduction reviews the latest scholarship on republicanism and rhetorical theory succinctly and without jargon. Further, he argues for their legitimate application to Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus. Chapters 2 and 3 focus on Sallust. The first of these calls into question Sallust's commitment to republican politics. Kapust presents his argument through Hobbes' reading of Sallust, particularly their ambivalent views on the place of oratory in the state, hence Kapust's description of Sallust as an ambiguous republican. Kapust, however, goes on in Chapter 3 to lay the framework for Sallust's republicanism, which he argues depends upon channeling the tensions and strife introduced by republican politics in a productive manner. For Sallust, oratory potentially functioned as the means for peacefully resolving competing interests and virtues. Kapust formulates this argument largely through his analysis of the speeches of Caesar and Cato in Sallust's *War with Catiline*. Kapust devotes Chapter 4 to Livy, whom he describes as prioritizing *concordia* and *benevolentia* over the strife prevalent in Sallust. For Livy,

¹ See Philip Pettit, *A Theory of Freedom: From Psychology to the Politics of Agency* (Oxford 2001); Quentin Skinner, *Hobbes and Republican Liberty* (Cambridge 2008); Joy Connolly, *The State of Speech: Rhetoric and Political Thought in Ancient Rome* (Princeton 2007); and Robert Morstein-Marx, *Mass Oratory and Political Power in the Late Roman Republic* (Cambridge 2004).

these virtues are contingent upon a strong sense of the common good and the trust between the different orders of society.

Chapters 4 and 5 address Tacitus' views on rhetoric and political thought. These two chapters come across as the least original of the book and are the only two where the ancient writer is not paired with a modern political thinker, which is unfortunate given Tacitus' well-documented influence on early modern political thought. Chapter 4 contrasts the *Agricola* and the *Dialogus* and their protagonists, Agricola and Maternus, who represent *exempla* to emulate and avoid respectively. Kapust's study suffers here from a lack of nuance in interpreting Maternus' character. There have been many good arguments put forth over the past two decades for reading Maternus' speech as ironic critique. Although he cites Bartsch (1994), who is a leading proponent of the figured-speech reading, Kapust reads Maternus' words seemingly at face value as praise of the *princeps*. The critique is not so much that Kapust comes down on one side or another of a reading but rather that he does not acknowledge the controversy, which in turn has implications for his entire study.

Chapter 5 examines how Tacitus portrays appropriate political engagement in the *Historiae* and *Annales*. The argument here is the familiar one of Tacitus the moderate who shuns both *contumacia* and *obsequium*. For Kapust, Tacitus' primary virtue is *prudentia*. While it is not easy to argue against this analysis, one wishes that Kapust had investigated some of Tacitus' ambiguities, such as his praise of *obsequium* in the *Agricola* (42.4) and his critique of it in the *Annales* (4.20.3). Moreover, Kapust focuses almost solely on Tacitus' emperors and overlooks important figures such as Marcus Lepidus and Thræsea Paetus, both of whom figure greatly in Tacitus' conception of proper and effective political activity under the Principate.

Kapust approaches his study as a political scientist rather than a philologist, which has benefits and drawbacks. One virtue is Kapust's willingness to view the historians as political thinkers and not as politicians. Traditionally, the politics of the Roman historians have been analyzed through their political activity and their relationships with prominent politicians and emperors.² Kapust's approach here is a breath of fresh air as it avoids speculation on, say, whether Tacitus was appointed consul by Domitian or Nerva and the consequences thereof. Thus, readers will find Sallust and Livy juxtaposed respectively with Hobbes and

² See the various studies of Sir Ronald Syme, *Tacitus* (Oxford, 1958); "Livy and Augustus," *HSCP* 64 (1959) 27–87; *Sallust* (Berkeley, 1964).

Machiavelli rather than Caesar and Augustus. The drawback to Kapust's non-philological approach is that his readings at times can come across as naïve to the trained classicist, as mentioned above regarding the *Dialogus*.

The book as a whole is very well written and engaging to read. Kapust helpfully signposts where his arguments are going and how each chapter relates to the entire study. Each chapter begins with an introduction, which is then followed by an examination of Cicero and usually another political philosopher; the latter half of the chapter is then devoted to the particular Roman historian in question. The text is largely error free and well-cited, although the classicist may regret the lack of quotations in Latin. The body of the book comes in at a concise 175 pages, certainly leaving space for quoting primary texts in both English translation and Latin, even if the latter is to be relegated to footnotes.

It is both a critique and a compliment to write that I wish Kapust had included a stand-alone chapter on Cicero's political and rhetorical thought. Although Kapust by design and with skill weaves into every chapter Cicero's influence on each historian, this approach only offers a piecemeal understanding of Cicero. Kapust has written an important study for both classicists and political scientists; a chapter on Cicero under Kapust's perceptive analysis would have only enhanced the book's value.

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