

The Romans: An Introduction. Second Edition. By ANTONY KAMM. London and New York: Routledge, 2008. Pp. xxi + 241 + 50 b/w illustrations + 4 maps. Paper, \$32.95. ISBN 978-0-415-45825-2.

The Romans joins a field no less crowded today (first edition, 1995) with books targeted to readers new to the subject or seeking a historical context for Roman literature and art. It stands out for a number of reasons—it remains affordable, compact (at a tad over 6" x 9", it is larger now by 0.75"), concise (the achievements and character of the Romans are presented in 206 pages, divided into 9 chapters, from Rome's foundation in 753 BCE to its collapse in 476 CE) and attractively formatted. Its value to the 21st-century newcomer to ancient Rome is enhanced by a user-friendly website featuring supplementary materials in tabbed chapters and subheadings that correspond to the book, digital maps and a gallery of color images keyed to individual chapters (<http://www.the-romans.co.uk>). The literature segment of the site particularly illustrates the advantages of internet publication with its links to "The Classics Pages Search Engine" and generous notes on primary texts. The major strength of the new edition, however, remains Kamm's (K.) distinctive voice—graceful prose with touches of irreverence and a style that combines analysis of detail with balanced overview. As author, K.'s *persona* is the tutor, conversing companionably with an audience he knows and regards, about a subject he thoroughly comprehends and is passionate about. A good example of his synthesizing approach is the introductory note on literary sources (p. 1), where K. explains his use of and rationale for quotations from historical and artistic sources, while characterizing the value of these observations for coming to know the Romans and their times. Never forgetting that we today are "foreigners," K. integrates ancient materials and modern analogues into a compelling narrative that is at once intelligent inquiry and absorbing story.

K.'s arrangement is both chronological and thematic. Chapters 1, 2 and 3 are primarily chronological: "The Origins of Rome," "The Republic," "Twelve Caesars." Rather than detail every event of Rome's emergence, K. selects those from myth and legendary history that provide insight into Roman character and self-understanding. Sketches of the seven hills of Rome and the harbor at Ostia would be useful complements to his excellent description of the site of Rome. K.'s narration of historical events is given texture and substance by quotations from a wide range of authors—some rather humorous, showing a less severe side of the Romans—and by vignettes of major figures.

The next five chapters are arranged by topic: "Religions and Mythology," "Society and Daily Life," "Art, Architecture, and Building," "Latin Literature" and "The Roman Army." The chapter on religion is impressive for its full presentation and interpretation of Roman beliefs and practices; it is sub-divided into Roman divinities, prayer and sacrifice, omens, worship in the home, worship in the fields, religion of the state, cults of the East, religious philosophies, Jews and Christians. Defining the nature of Roman prayer and sacrifice, K. writes: "The contractual relationship between mankind and the gods involved each party in giving, and in return receiving, services.... The 'services' by which Romans hoped to influence the forces that guided their lives were firmly established in ritual—the ritual of prayer and the ritual of offering. In either case, the exact performance of the rite was essential." A chart of gods, goddesses and spirits is conveniently set at the opening of the chapter (pp. 75–6); although lesser gods are included, Hekate, Italia and Roma are not. Augury is described (p. 84), but is omitted from the list of divinatory practices (p. 77) inherited from the Etruscans. "Latin Literature" opens with brief references to dialects, orality and books, followed by a discussion of meter and scansion; the rest of the chapter is divided into summaries of the life and works of leading authors by genre. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the military; excellent as it is, a much earlier presentation of this institution so crucial to Rome's survival would have been desirable, although certainly after "Society and Daily Life." With "The Empire: Stability, Disintegration, Recovery, Fall," K. returns to a chronological arrangement that catapults the reader from 96 CE to the fall of the Western Empire, concluding with the Eastern Empire's collapse in 1453 and Rome's legacy.

Four maps, clearly labeled with places referenced, open the book: Italy; Roman Empire: provinces at Julius Caesar's death; Roman Empire: imperial and senatorial provinces at Augustus' death; Roman Empire and its neighbors under Hadrian. There are five appendices: the first two ("Calendar," "Numerals") are substantially the same as in the first edition; an expanded "Historical Timeline" (3000 BCE – 1453 CE) is divided by sub-headings; and "Literature Timeline" (753 BCE – 395 CE), including Greek authors as well as Roman, is new, as is "Glossary of Latin Terms," a kindness to the Latin-less reader. The "Reading List" that ended the first edition is now "Further Reading," updated and enlarged, and closing each chapter. The book ends with "General Introductions," with suggested readings less focused than in the first edition on Roman Britain, and "Useful Works of Reference."

While I am loathe to criticize a work which at once so expertly and enjoyably fulfills its promise to introduce readers to the Romans, I offer four suggestions that might be implemented immediately on the website and eventually in another edition:

1. The chapter on “Art, Architecture, and Building” is oddly restricted, perhaps by its announced focus: “the development of the arch, the vault, and the dome, and the use of concrete ... gave distinction, serviceability, and grandeur to Roman domestic and public architecture and civil engineering.” Equally significant is how art and engineering were pressed into service to express, implement and export the concept of *Romanitas*. More might also be said about the role Roman roads played in extending and insuring empire, and the visual impact and function of particular constructions (Roman Forum, Imperial Fora, *Ara Pacis*).

2. A reorganization of Chapter 3 not based on Suetonius’ “Lives of the Twelve Caesars,” a biography of great men, would better reflect Roman history and current historiography. It is true that in the last 100 years of the Republic powerful individuals stepped forward to violently sideline an increasingly dysfunctional Senate and dominate Roman government extra-constitutionally, and thus set the course of Roman history. But Suetonius’ model downplays some key events and personalities (namely, Cicero), while spotlighting the three failed imperial claimants of 69 CE. Furthermore, it privileges the Julio-Claudian and Flavian emperors and 1st-century CE Rome over distinguished emperors and achievements of the 2nd century (currently consigned to “The Empire: Stability, Disintegration, Recovery, Fall”). Perhaps Chapter 3 might be renamed “Transition and Early Empire: 49 BCE – 69 CE,” followed by “High Empire: 69–180 CE” on the period from the Flavians to the last of the “Five Good Emperors.”

3. Although K. cites from a variety of Cicero’s works, and references to him appear under four headings (Twelve Caesars, p. 37; Religious philosophies, p. 96; Education, p. 124; Letters, p. 170), Cicero and his achievements are under-represented. This may be due to the absence of a section on Rhetoric (thus only Cicero’s speeches against Verres and Catiline are mentioned, p. 38). But K.’s references to Cicero are nonetheless dismissive (“an alleged conspiracy against the state led by Lucius Sergius Catilina”; “the watershed in Cicero’s career ... came in 61 BC, when he appeared in court ... as a witness...”, p. 38, emphases added) and minimizing (Cicero’s contribution to religious philosophy is noted as his endorsement of Stoic teachings in

Tusculan Disputation, p. 96; none of his philosophical works are mentioned under literature, p. 169).

4. "Society and Daily Life" is uneven and sometimes confusing, over-generalizing or rushed; although *mores* are addressed throughout the book, particularly in generous captions to images, 1200 years of social history are compressed into this single chapter. Presentation of class and traditional values with expanded treatment of the seminal *cliens-patronus* relationship (pp. 101–4) would be helpful earlier, in "The Republic" following the Twelve Tables (p. 19). The sections on food and public games display K.'s talent for creatively selecting and combining details into readable and informative prose. While the change from "Place of Women" (first edition) to "The Role of Women" and the greater inclusion of women are welcome, K.'s presentation, apart from his opening discussion on marriage, generalizes over huge periods of time and tends to reinscribe the Roman bias against women. The demonstration against the Oppian Law (195 BCE), for example, is offered as an instance of women being "capable of standing up for themselves when aroused" (p. 111), but only Cato's denouncement of their behavior is quoted. Lucretia is cited as "technically and ... legally, guilty" of adultery under the law of the time (p. 113). Octavia is praised as "the most patient wife" (p. p. 115), but she better exemplifies the tradition of arranging marriages for aristocratic women to meet the political or social goals of the family's males. The paragraph on work (p. 113) fails to take account of class differences among women. The negative portraits of Livia and Agrippina accompanied by flip remarks do not help us understand Roman women nor even Roman empresses. Cornelia, daughter of Cornelius Scipio and Scribonia, is a better example of the expectations of elite Roman *matronae*; from the grave she represents herself as a blameless wife to her husband, L. Aemilius Paullus Lepidus (*Propertius, Elegiae* 4.11).

This is an admirable introduction to the Romans for our time. Well-grounded in ancient sources and solid research, it will instruct and delight the general reader and be a popular class text for courses in Roman civilization and history.

ANN R. RAI
The College of New Rochelle