

Lange, C. H. and Vervaeet, F. J. (edd.) 2019. *The Historiography of Late Republican Civil War. Historiography of Rome and its Empire Series*. Leiden: Brill. Pp. xiii + 527. ISBN 978-90-04-37359-4. €130.00/\$156.00.

For writers of historiography, proximity to or distance from events produces different sets of concerns, perspectives, and realities. This is particularly pertinent when it comes to the impact and repercussions of the internal conflicts, ruptures, and transitions of a community. The problematic nature of engaging in the writing of the history of civil conflict is exemplified by an anecdote concerning the early career of the emperor Claudius, used by two of the contributors to this volume. As a young man, the future emperor took up his narrative ‘after the death of Caesar the dictator’ (*post caedem Caesaris dictatoris*), which Suetonius tells us, was due the restriction placed on him by his mother and grandmother, preventing a ‘free and true’ account (*Claud.* 41). As Dexter Hoyos and Rhiannon Ash in their respective chapters on Livy and Tacitus in this volume demonstrate, this anecdote effectively highlights questions of who controls the shaping of history and its purpose, and the relationship of the writer to the history they are narrating. What the editors of this volume, Carsten Lange and Frederick Vervaeet, have successfully illustrated through the chronological arrangement of its seventeen main chapters (Chapters 1 and 2 providing an introduction and historiographical contextualisation of *bellum civile*), is that there is no single, agreed narrative or explanation on the civil wars of the Late Republic. It is rather that the personal experiences and relative perspectives of the various authors are crucial in understanding the various approaches to the historiography of the civil wars.

As the editors stress in their opening chapter (‘Historiography and Civil War’, pp. 1-16), the volume is not intended as a companion, but instead brings together detailed studies on individual ancient historiographers – a categorisation used very inclusively to cover ‘the telling of historical events’ (p. 6), focused around a key set of questions: (1) how did authors approach civil war, (2) how did their treatment of the civil wars of the late Republic fit into the structure and narrative of their works, and perhaps most significantly, (3) in what ways were these presentations subject to the authors’ personal experiences and agenda. The volume is a welcome addition to numerous recent studies on the civil wars of the late Republic – which continues to be an area of productive research – focusing as it does on the integral importance of historiography and reflecting on the creation of the

narratives we have available (or, in the case of both Andrew Turner's and Richard Westall's chapters, do not have available or have only in fragments).

Following their introduction, Lange and Vervaet provide further context to a central concept for this volume: the language used to describe and conceptualise civil war. In their second chapter (pp. 17-28) they address the introduction of the notion of *bellum civile* into Roman thought and writing, linking this to the aftermath of the civil wars of the 80s and Sulla's *Res Gestae*. While Sulla's position as the originator of the phrase has been questioned elsewhere,¹ this chapter serves to frame the introduction of *bellum civile* into Latin literature and thereby provides a *terminus post quem* for the historiographical studies and their narratives in this volume. The question of terminology and language is centre to several contributions in this volume. Henriette van de Blom provides a nuanced examination of Cicero's application of *bellum civile* and related terms, in which she demonstrates the flexibility of Cicero's terminology to suit his need for legitimacy in different circumstances and contexts over the course of more than twenty years (pp. 111-36). Pedro López Barja de Quiroga's contribution on Sallust (pp. 160-84) emphasises how the historian approached questions of legitimacy in civil war through an exploration of the 'dual vocabulary of legitimacies' (pp. 172-73), which was engrained in the division of Roma as a political community (only held together through the *metus hostilis*). Honora Howell Chapman illustrates how an examination of the uses of στάσις and ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος in Josephus' *Jewish War* offers insight into his work and places him firmly within a Graeco-Roman historiographic tradition, although it is a tradition he uses to prioritise understanding the impact of Rome on Judaea (pp. 292-319). Kathryn Welch provides great clarity through her reading of Appian's *Civil Wars*, tracing his 'vocabulary of conflict' (pp. 445-49) of the terms στάσις, ἐμφύλια, and ἐμφύλιος πόλεμος over the five books, to demonstrate that, for Appian, civil conflict and war was tied to the monopolisation of the state and armies for private conflicts (pp. 439-66).

In varying degrees, other contributions draw out how the language of civil war was replicated, echoed, or confined and reconceptualised within an author's wider narrative to help frame their presentation of civil war or

¹ Brown, R.D. 2003. 'The terms *bellum sociale* and *bellum civile* in the late Republic.' In C. Deroux (ed.) *Studies in Latin Literature and Roman History* 11, 94-120. Bruxelles; Arena, V. 2020. 'The notion of *bellum civile* in the last century of the Republic.' In F. Pina Polo (ed.) *The Triumviral Period: Civil War, Political Crisis and Socioeconomic Transformations*, 101-26. Seville. Zaragoza stresses that irrespective of uncertainty as to the origin of the phrase, for ancient authors, Sulla initiated the *exemplum* for Roman civil war (pp. 104-5).

reveal their comprehension about either the inherent or distinct nature of civil conflict in the late Republic. Hoyos, in his examination of Livy (pp. 210-38), urges caution against a reading of Livy writing history 'backwards' (in which his early narratives might be read as copied and pasted from his civil war narratives),² though he acknowledges the replication and borrowing of details and literary echoes of the language of civil war in the early history. Eleanor Cowan (pp. 239-62) explains how Velleius is particular in the application of the phrase *bellum civile* to denote a specific period of conflict, enabling him to present the twenty-year period of civil war (50/49-30/29 BCE) as 'a distinct hiatus in the history of the Roman community' (p. 256) and providing a framework wherein there was not so much a transition from a republican political system to the principate, as a return to normality after the disruption of civil war. For Tacitus, Ash clearly articulates (pp. 351-75), that the 'absent presence' (p. 355) of civil war loomed large in his evaluation of the early principate, bleeding through into his presentation of the mutinies of 14 CE. The language of *seditio* collapses into civil war to reveal its programmatic and continuous nature.

These evaluations of language reveal another prominent theme which is drawn out across the volume: narratives of legitimacy and illegitimacy, from the amorphous and flexible debate and language around legitimacy to sanitised narratives of justification. The former is cogently demonstrated by Westall (pp. 54-86) through an examination of some key central characteristics and themes to be traced in the fragmentary works of six historians, while Turner (pp. 29-53), who addresses the difficulties in reconstructing lost works of Asinius Pollio and Cremutius Cordus, surviving as fragments quoted and referenced by later writers, persuasively argues for the durability and value of the viewpoints that these lost authors were remembered for upholding. Indeed, Pollio's presentation as a narrator independent from Caesar's authorial version of the civil wars and so his validity as a source is noted by David Wardle in his thorough analysis of Suetonius' break from the narrative's chronology to understand the reasons why Caesar started the civil war. Wardle's chapter (pp. 376-410) provides an extremely close and detailed reading of a section of the *Life* and reveals how Suetonius' uses the 'unhistorical' account of the divinity present at Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, as a means of legitimising the subsequent political state giving 'a clear teleological dimension to the civil war' (p. 394).

Legitimacy was a key aspect for authors whose accounts of civil war served as self-promotion and justification (as the previously mentioned

² Hoyos is certainly more sceptical than others about this notion of writing history 'backwards', as is noted in this volume by Berge (p. 416, n. 5).

chapters on Sulla and Cicero demonstrate), most notably Caesar and Augustus. Josiah Osgood (pp. 137-60) examines how Caesar's writing of the *Civil War* can be viewed as a 'persuasive strategy' (p. 140), though the partisan presentation of his opponents (as illegitimate actors) ultimately belied the message of reconciliation and a true end of civil war which Caesar professed. As Lange notes in his chapter on Augustus (pp. 185-209) and the *Res Gestae*: 'As a genre, autobiography is about justification' (p. 197). Through his examination of *bellum civile* within both Augustus' lost autobiography and the *Res Gestae*, Lange demonstrates how Augustus created a positive account of his involvement in civil war, marking the success of his achievement through its ultimate absence.

The inclusion of related genres to historiography (in the strictest sense) is a strength of this volume. Indeed, a number of contributions reveal the significance of genre for the authors' approaches to and interpretations of civil war. Alexander Lobur shows (pp. 87-110) that contemporary responses to the civil wars could bring about literary innovation in the form of Cornelius Nepos' series of political biographies, which provided models of civic harmony as a response to crisis, both through the *Atticus* (as an *exemplum* of 'benign neutrality', p. 97) and the *Lives of the Foreign Commanders* (as *exempla* of moral military leaders). Although Plutarch's works did not focus on (understanding of the problem of) the civil war and the collapse of the Republican community, his biographies are set against the political background of the late Republic, and as Federico Santangelo argues (pp. 320-50) deserve closer attention for readings on the Late Republican civil wars and the different angles on the same set of material, revealing the possibilities and rejections of civil war. While Nepos' innovation lay in being the first Roman biographer, Florus' novel shape to his division of history between external and internal conflicts, is persuasively demonstrated by Bram ten Berge (pp. 411-38) to support and advance his narrative on Roman discord, clearly distinguishing him from the traditional annalistic approach. This division enabled Florus to frame Late Republican Civil War not as a recurrent theme in Rome's history, but as a short-term point of *discordia*, which found resolution with Augustus.

The lens of contemporary stability, which began with the *pax Augusta*, allowed authors such as Velleius and Florus to disassociate civil war from the regular rhythms of society. By contrast, for Cassius Dio, who lived through a period shaped by internal ruptures in 193 CE, civil war could be justified as a transformative tool for advancing a community's future. Dio, as Jesper Madsen clearly articulates (pp. 467-501), stood apart from other ancient observers such as Tacitus, who criticised the removal of open

political debate and opposition under the principate. Having experienced civil war and its aftermath, Dio read the final civil war of the late Republic as a necessity for removing the destabilising forces of 'the right to opposition and free political competition' (p. 496) that democracy embodied. By contrast, Appian's preference for one-man rule, which he like Florus personally experienced as a period of stability, was, Welch argues, 'tangential rather than intrinsic' (p. 441) and the disruptive effect that Appian's own research had on his intended narrative of the civil war underlined the lack of resolution to civil war.

The concept of civil war with 'no end in sight' is likewise used by Michèle Lowrie and Barbara Vinken (pp. 263-91) to frame Lucan's epic poem *De bello civili*. One of the only contributions to reflect on how historiography (in its broader sense) reflects wider socio-political implications of civil war, they demonstrate how Lucan's concept for his poem of *bella plus quam civilia* articulates broader concepts of community and belonging than citizenship. The failure of marriage as discord thus forms 'an index of the Republic's normative perversion' (p. 265), but one that, despite Lucan's apparent praise of Nero (1.33-66), does not dispel the continuation of civil war within the Empire. Another contribution which provides a broader scope and perspective to the nature of late Republican civil war is Chapman's treatment of the themes of civil unrest and war in Josephus' *Jewish Wars*, where Roman civil war is relevant inasmuch as it shapes the treatment of Judaea by Rome's generals.

This volume is well edited, with the chapters making good links and references to each other and including a thorough *index locorum*. As is perhaps unavoidable in a volume of this size, there are minor omissions and typos, including some minor copy-editing issues with the Latin and Greek, but these in no way disrupt the argument. As full translations have been provided throughout, the volume is highly accessible. The editors have put together a substantial contribution to the ongoing work on Late Republican civil war, which perhaps most strikingly draws out, through its focus on historiography and individual authors, the ongoing fascination and influence of those wars for authors of subsequent periods of Rome's history.

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