

Edward G. Andrew, *Imperial Republics. Revolution, War, and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution*. Toronto, Buffalo, London: University of Toronto Press, 2011. Pp. xxi + 197. ISBN 9781442643314. Hardcover: \$50.00

Edward G. Andrew's *Imperial Republics. Revolution, War, and Territorial Expansion from the English Civil War to the French Revolution* investigates the relationship between Rome as an imperial republic and the political and philosophical thinking in England, France, and America during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Political leaders during the English Civil War, the American War of Independence, and the French Revolution looked to history, and especially to Rome, Athens, Sparta, and Carthage for their models of nation building. In each of these cases, Rome serves as a model for a state that sees itself not only as republican, but as imperialistic. Athens is frequently cited as a counter-example to Rome: political philosophers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries saw it as the manifestation of why a democratic republic is weaker than an imperial one, and thus sought to avoid repeating Athens's mistakes while reinstituting in their own nations those facets of politics that made Rome successful. Andrew discusses political theories of Machiavelli, Thomas Hobbes, Thomas Jefferson, James Madison, James Oglethorpe, Montesquieu, Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, among others. He also uses one example from literature: the dialogue between Satan and Jesus in John Milton's *Paradise Regained*. In the conclusion, Andrews turns to the question of national identity in his own country, Canada, and leaves his readers with his thoughts about 21st century imperialistic policies of the United States.

Andrew devotes his introduction to a definition of the term "imperial republic" as it relates to Rome and provides an overview of Rome's place in political thinking during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He describes the main attribute of an imperial republic not simply as "territory ruled by an emperor" and "the policy of expanding the emperor's reach," but more specifically as "territorial expansion and domination over people not yet integrated or incorporated by the imperial power" (4). In looking to Rome as the model imperial republic, thinkers of the seventeenth and eighteenth century saw territorial expansion as a noble and natural goal, and the inequality that marked Roman society was not seen as a drawback, but rather a successful strategy for maintaining peace. The authoritative role of the senate in Rome provided a more stable and just society than a democracy in which every person's view had equal weight. Andrew describes in the first chapter how the Machiavellian model of authoritative leadership prevailed over the Aristotelian one of equality during this time period, as demonstrated by Montesquieu's and Madison's rejection of the Aristotelian model in favor of a "separation of powers, which had no role for poor citizens in the legislative, executive, or judicial branches of government" (24).

In the second chapter Andrew discusses Thomas Hobbes's opposition to modeling contemporary governments after ancient republics such as Rome. This chapter also contains the only example from literature that Andrew uses throughout the book: that of John Milton's "Paradise Regained", in which Jesus and Satan debate the merits of imperialistic policies. Although Milton has often been called "the republican" and "the poet against empire" (30), Andrew presents a more nuanced view of Milton's political thinking, arguing that "Milton, as a republican and Protestant militant, was imperialist, but Milton, as a Christian and a lover of Athens, was anti-imperialist" (30). In "Paradise Regained", Satan urges Jesus to expand his empire on earth, to become "a King compleat" (31), a notion which Jesus rejects, sending the message of "pacific anti-imperialism" (35). Andrew goes on, however, to cite instances that demonstrate Milton as a "Protestant militant" (30), fully condoning the expansion of the Protestant empire. Andrew leaves us with a few questions about the relationship between Milton's literary works and the political contexts in which he wrote them: "To what extent was the anti-imperialism of *Paradise Regained* a critique of the imperialist policies of the Commonwealth and his own participation in them? Had his republican passions been

spent when he wrote his great poems in the restoration?” (35) For scholars of literature, Andrew’s reading of “Paradise Regained” within the context of the political discourse presented in the rest of the book is probably the most interesting section; more examples of this kind could have been used to elucidate the historical contexts discussed throughout the book. Andrew’s thoughts on that work are certainly developed enough to stand on their own, but they also raise expectations for further references to literature in the remainder of the book, which never appear. In this sense, Andrew’s book can serve as a springboard for literary scholars to reexamine texts that emerged during the English Civil War and the American and French Revolutions through the lens of Andrew’s concept of the imperial republic and the Roman model.

From seventeenth-century England, Andrew moves on to eighteenth-century America and France. For American revolutionaries, “the senatorial version of the Roman Republic” (71) was the clear model as opposed to Athens, as demonstrated by the expansionist goals outlined in chapter four. Andrew also shows how the connotation of ‘empire’ shifted during the latter part of the eighteenth century. While it “had negative connotations before the revolution, [it] acquired positive connotations after the French and Americans gained the upper hand on the British during the War of Independence” (71). In chapters five and six Andrew examines French neo-Romanism leading to the French Revolution, focusing initially on Montesquieu’s writings on Rome and Athens. For Montesquieu, Athens’s fatal flaw was that it was “too democratic” (124), allowing the people to participate in their government in popular assemblies, while Romans gave this power to the senate, excluding the general population. Andrew also discusses the political theory of another eighteenth-century critic of democratic Athens, the Abbé Gabriel Bonnot de Mably, who equated Athens’s supposed democracy with a conferring of “an all-powerful magistracy on an ignorant and flighty multitude, always envious of the fortune of the rich, always a dupe of some schemer,” and concluded that it was not democracy at all, but “total anarchy” (126). Here Andrew also provides a summary of Rousseau’s thinking on this subject, which is similar to that of Mably, clearly ranking Rome above Athens.

The concept of love for La Patrie above all raises interesting questions about the relationship between citizens, their empire, and religion. The parallel between Brutus, who sacrificed his two sons in order to save his *patrie*, and God, who sacrificed his one son to save humanity, shows just how important patriotism was. Brutus became the embodiment of patriotic virtue, demonstrating how “the idea of serving ‘la patrie’ replaced the service to God and king. A religion demands sacrifices, as Brutus sacrificed his sons to la patrie” (155-156). The new morality during this period became separated from God and reattached to la patrie, as Andrews describes in his summary of Robespierre’s view that “virtue is none other than love of la patrie and its laws” (156) and of Saint-Just’s assertion that “the indifference to la patrie and the love of oneself is the source of all evil; the indifference toward oneself and the love of la patrie is the source of all good” (156).

In his conclusion, Andrew turns to his own country, Canada, whose citizens “lack the nationalist pride of their republican neighbours to the south” (179). One key difference that is a partial explanation for this is that Canadians did not undergo a Revolution in order to break from European empires, as Americans did. For Canadians, allegiances to provinces and regions such as Quebec, Alberta, Nova Scotia, etc., prevail over any sense of Canadian patriotism. Andrew’s message about the merit of Canada’s form of constitutional monarchy remains ambivalent. While he points out the obvious “pitfalls of neo-Romanism” in referencing Canada’s neighbor, which is “palpably on the decline after besting in Afghanistan its imperial rival in the Cold War” (182), he also leaves room for a more idealistic interpretation of the Roman model by presenting his readers with “a question worth asking”: “[w]hether this city that produced more intelligence and beauty than any other civilization could have done so without excluding from citizenship women and slaves

whose labour provided adult male citizens with the leisure for intelligent conversation and civil duties” (182).

Andrew certainly achieves the goal of calling the diametrically oppositional relationship between the concepts of republic and empire into question and repositioning them into partially compatible, sometimes complementary, and often obliquely situated terms. He presupposes only a small amount of historical background — students and scholars who do not specialize in history will have little difficulty following Andrew’s arguments. The style, while sufficiently complex to do justice to the content of Andrew’s topics and his interpretations of them, remains approachable and clear throughout, with little academic jargon. The brevity of the book (182 pages) does seem to highlight the fact that more examples from literary, historical, and philosophical writings could have been used in order to paint a more thorough picture of political views during the time periods examined.

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