

(562-73). Equally illuminating is the discussion of the Mesopotamian and Levantine contribution to Greek epic (W. Burkert, 'Near Eastern Connections', 291-301). It is interesting to note in this context that Assyriologists, more than Classicists, tend to be skeptical about this assumed influx of literary motifs and borrowings from Mesopotamian literature to Greek epic. The main argument against these alleged borrowings is that literary parallels, even striking ones, are not by themselves a proof of direct borrowings. Moreover, supporting conditions, such as political influence or strong economical ties, do not necessarily mean transfer of literary compositions. Finally, and most importantly, it is broadly construed that cuneiform writing formed a cultural valve which did not allow wide transmission of literary oeuvres beyond the borders of the Fertile Crescent.<sup>4</sup>

These, however, are minor comments. On the whole, the *Companion's* wide selection of well-written essays offers the reader a full arsenal of methodological, historical and literary tools with which to attack the high walls of epic in antiquity.

Nathan Wasserman

Hebrew University of Jerusalem

David M. Schaps, *The Invention of Coinage and the Monetization of Ancient Greece*, Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2004. 293 + xvii pages. ISBN 0-472-1133-3-X.

There are several recent studies on the development of money and the consequences of monetization in ancient Greece (L. Kurke, *Coins, Money, Games and Gold*, Princeton, 1999; R.A. Meadows and K. Shipton (eds.), *Money and its Uses in the Ancient Greek World*, Oxford, 2002; R.A.S. Seaford, *Money and the Early Greek Mind*, Cambridge, 2004). Nevertheless, David Schaps' book will be most welcome by undergraduates, non-specialists and scholars of other disciplines. It offers a broad perspective on the development of money in archaic and classical Greece, has a clear hypothesis, and is a pleasant read. It has a clear agenda when suggesting that 'a survey of the monetization of a previously moneyless society demonstrates to us what the effects of this concept have been; what alternatives have existed, and what illusions and paradoxes it brings with it' (211). Indeed, the author hopes that a greater awareness of these matters may 'help us to live a life whose ideas of happiness are more carefully thought out, and in the end more satisfying, than the ideas that the monetized economy offers us on its own' (212).

When does the history of money begin in ancient Greece? Seaford (see above) spends twenty pages on this question, and Schaps (=S.) devotes a lengthy appendix to monetary objects before coinage. Yet he argues that only with the invention of coinage did the concept of money, as we have it, come about in the Western world. Of course, the first minting of coins in Asia Minor was not a revolutionary step in itself, nor was it recognized as such by contemporaries. Various items fulfilled monetary functions previously and so the underlying ideas of money, rooted in concepts of exchange, justice and reciprocity, had time to develop before the advent of coinage. But money as a recognizable phenomenon with clearly defined functions and meanings came into being only with coinage (15).

S. begins his argumentative story with a survey of money in Egypt, Babylonia and Assyria. In the Near East certain forms of money developed in the millennium before the invention of coinage, without ever functioning like modern money. In Egypt, for example, copper, silver and gold were used as standards of value in payment and exchange, but were not actually exchanged in trade. They were hoarded as stores of value, but not cut and formed in pieces of a standard weight. The four functions of money — medium of exchange, means of payment, standard of value and store of wealth — had not yet merged, and no single monetary item was a means by which wealth was calculated and quantified (42). In Mesopotamia, copper and silver were actually used in all

<sup>4</sup> See N. Wasserman, 'Review of "M.L. West, *The East Face of Helicon*"', *SCI* XX (2001), 261-8 and A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition and Cuneiform Texts*, Oxford, 2003, 57.

monetary functions. There were markets and prices, and traders exchanged their goods for a quantifiable profit. But metals were not generally available to everybody, and so they did not become a general medium of payment. There also remained a close connection between silver objects and silver as a means of payment; it had not yet become an 'identifiable item that represented nothing but money' (51).

In Greece, several monetary phenomena preceded the emergence of coinage. S. surveys the evidence of the Mycenaean bronze tablets and of Homer, as well as tripods, cauldrons, spits and silver bullion, all serving in some places, at some stage, as media of exchange or objects of payment in archaic Greece. The background to the emergence of bullion and utensil money as media of exchange and payment in Greece was an explosion in metallurgy, and the development of the polis as a social context. The availability of precious metal increased massively and a more complex range of transactions emerged within and between poleis. At the end of this pre-monetary development stands the stamping of pre-weighed pieces of precious metal, first attested by electrum coins in the famous Artemisium hoard from Ephesus in Asia Minor. Its precise dating is controversial, and S. very rightly concludes that no more is certain than that the coins of the hoard date to any time before 560 BCE when the foundations of the latest Artemisium on the site were built.

The section explores a wide range of evidence and puts it smoothly into historical order. This is laudable and the comprehensive notes refer the reader to the various debates that lie behind the interpretation of the evidence. Yet as a novice one should not be persuaded too readily by the story S. suggests. He points rightly to the institutional context as a pre-condition for the development of Western money, which is distinct from forms that developed in the Far East earlier. But he focuses quite exclusively on trade and exchange as the decisive factors for the development of 'our' money. Other factors, such as the development of particular forms of law and arbitration (which led to the transformation of retribution and recompense), of inter-polis relationships (leading to subsidy payments and particular tributary structures), social institutions (such as the regulation of matrimonial property) labour regimes, military organisation, and particular forms of political participation and religious ritual were equally constitutive for a special monetary path in Greece and Asia Minor. Another curious phenomenon of Western money, the use of figurative imagery on coins, which is entirely absent in early Chinese coinages, is not taken into consideration at all.

The second part of the book (chapters 8 to 13) is devoted to the gradual monetization of institutions in which coinage came to be used: the market, politics, warfare, labour relationships, agriculture, and credit. The order of discussion and some omissions are significant. The market comes first, yet monetization of legal and religious institutions, as well as inter-polis relationships do not receive a chapter. S.'s general approach to the impact of money, however, is convincing. None of the changes were immediately linked to the invention of coinage, but the massive use of one monetary medium gradually affected the Greek world profoundly (see e.g. 153). One could have theorized here a little more. Was it the standardization and quantifiability of payments and prices that caused the transformation? Was it the institutionalisation of payment (in e.g. wages, exchanges, remuneration of political office)? Or was it the reduction of transaction costs — search costs, costs of making contracts, etc. — which stimulated monetization and transformed relationships? S. considers many possibilities, but a greater degree of theoretical abstraction would have facilitated the discussion of different cases. In Hellenistic Egypt, for example, coinage was introduced and several relationships of payment successfully monetized under the first three Ptolemies. Monetary taxation and the need for money by the kings were main vehicles for monetization here, while agricultural rents and taxes, which in some cases continued to be paid in kind, were a major impediment. How does this case compare to mainland Greece? In whose interest was monetization pursued there, and which institutions drove monetization rather than just contributing to it? S.

would probably argue that it was the market; but this is a claim that has prompted much controversy over the past thirty years.

The book holds a set of quite substantial appendices in which controversial issues are treated. One of them deals with the relationship between historians and economists, a problem that has both a historical and a methodological dimension (for the historical dimension see now M. Nafissi, *Ancient Athens and Modern Ideology: Value, Theory and Evidence in Historical Sciences*. Max Weber, Karl Polanyi and Moses Finley, [BICS Suppl. 80], London, 2004). S. concentrates on the methodological aspects, drawing attention to the research interests and criteria that validate the hypotheses in each discipline. Economists look for laws that have predictive power, whereas historians make sense of the past. The results of the former are tested by the power of their prediction, while the latter are judged by the internal plausibility and the extent to which they can make 'a coherent narrative out of otherwise unconnected events' (218). Both claims are correct, and it is worthwhile to spell them out. This, however, does not invalidate economic theory for economic historians, nor are historical economies totally unrevealing for economists (for a recent debate see I. Morris and J. Manning [eds.], *The Ancient Economy: Evidence and Models*, Stanford, 2005)

S.'s book will be stimulating for teaching, research and interdisciplinary debate. It is more provocative and more controversial than it pretends to be, but this, too, is a great benefit.

Sitta von Reden

University of Augsburg

Gary Forsythe, *A Critical History of Early Rome: From Prehistory to the First Punic War*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005. xvi + 400 pages. ISBN 0-520-22651-8.

Forsythe (hence F.) relates that shortly after he undertook the task of writing this book, Cornell's *The Beginnings of Rome*<sup>1</sup> was published. F. hesitated before writing another 'narrative history of early Rome', but in view of what he describes as Cornell's 'too trusting and over optimistic' reading of the ancient sources, F. was persuaded to present his version using a 'more critical approach' (4).

F. takes as his guiding principle M.I. Finley's statement that 'the ancients' ability to invent and their capacity to believe are persistently underestimated' (3). Consequently, on practically every page of his work, he expresses overriding and rather arbitrary disbelief in the basic sources on which he himself draws, *i.e.* 'the annalistic tradition'. Nor is he impressed by the recent archaeological evidence that has in many ways revolutionized the study of the archaic period: 'the archaeology of early Rome is such that it can be only of limited use in testing the accuracy of the ancient literary tradition ... [it can] neither corroborate nor contradict the written testimony'. He goes on to scold modern Roman historians for doing modern archaeology a grave injustice 'by reducing it to an obliging servant whom we ask to lie down on the Procrustean bed of ancient literary tradition' (79). F. is more willing to accept archaeological evidence when it overlaps with both literary sources and Roman topography (79-82); this, however, is very little to go on and a difficult undertaking, if we are to act upon F.'s advice and 'abandon the safe shelter of the hallowed ancient tradition' (4). In fact, even when archaeology and ancient tradition do seem to concur, he is not satisfied. F. does not really grapple with Alexandre Grandazzi's provocative and forcefully argued study based on Andrea Carandini's finds from the Palatine.<sup>2</sup> Instead he argues that: '[a]lthough modern archaeology, the ancient literary tradition, and considerations of

<sup>1</sup> T.J. Cornell, *The Beginnings of Rome: Italy and Rome from the Bronze Age to the Punic Wars (c. 1000-264 B.C.)*, London 1995.

<sup>2</sup> A. Grandazzi, *La fondation de Rome. Réflexions sur l'histoire*, Paris 1991. English translation: *The Foundation of Rome: Myth and History*, Translated by Jane Marie Todd, Ithaca 1997.