

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*¹ 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.² Instead he argues that: '[a]lthough modern archaeology, the ancient literary tradition, and considerations of

¹ 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.

² 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.

topography seem to converge in indicating the Palatine's significance to early Rome, this is still a far cry from demonstrating that the hill played the central role in the city's genesis' (85).

F. nowhere defines what he means by 'critical analysis' and the reader is left with the impression that F.'s criticism of the ancient sources rests mainly on deep personal suspicion of anything preceding the middle of the fourth century B.C. when '...tradition gradually becomes more reliable as the events described approach the period of Rome's earliest historians' (3). This observation, which echoes the famous opening sentences of Livy's sixth book (1.1-4),³ is somehow at variance with F.'s ensuing account, according to which many Roman institutions do not have 'secure evidence until the third century B.C.' (170).

There are few if any 'sacred cows'; most traditions are 'fabricated', 'concocted', 'later inventions', 'fictitious', 'embellished' or fashioned after Greek myths or late republican social, political, and economic circumstances.⁴ A few examples will suffice: the struggle between patricians and plebeians is 'simplistic and stereotypical and has anachronistic elements borrowed from the social, political, and economic conditions of the late republic' (158). The first secession of the plebs is a 'late annalistic invention' (173); the narratives of both Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus on Rome's relationship with the other Latin states during the fifth century B.C. 'portrays her relationship with the Latin colonies during the third and second centuries B.C.' (187); the victory of the consul C. Sulpicius Peticus over the Gauls in 358 is 'consciously patterned' after Marius' defeat of the Germanic tribes in 102 B.C. (277); Ap. Claudius Caecus' enrollment of the sons of freedmen into the senate in 312 B.C. '...is redolent of the Sullan period, for Sulla the dictator was accused of having enrolled persons of low birth into the senate' (318). F. also argues that the rape of Lucretia is an adaptation of the story about the homosexual love affair that contributed to the fall of the Peisistratid tyranny which consequently led to the 'Cleisthenic democracy at Athens in 510 B.C.' (77). In light of all this, it is not entirely clear why F. is willing to accept as true the story of Appius Claudius' immigration to Rome in 504 B.C., as narrated by Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus. Perhaps this is because it supports his theory, that during that time Rome was 'socially fluid and receptive to outsiders' (163). These and many other highly contentious points are not supported by detailed notes which might have helped us follow F.'s reasoning.

F. states: 'The "revolutionary" explanation for the origin of the plebeian tribunate is quite extraordinary and therefore historically improbable' (176). This somewhat shocking assertion is based on a very peculiar analysis of this unique Roman institution (170-6; 207-9). F. argues that the tribunes and consuls corresponded to the concept of *domi militiaeque* respectively: the consuls were an extra-urban and military office, the tribunes an urban and civilian magistracy; hence, these magistracies were intended to complement one another. F. finds proof for this very surprising conclusion in the fact that, at first, tribunes of the plebs, just like the consuls, were two in number and had two aediles to assist them (surprisingly F. does not find fault with the ancient sources on this point). Later Roman tradition, which has been followed almost blindly by modern scholars, failed to see these obvious facts, 'because the creation of the plebeian tribunate was viewed in the context of the struggle of the orders between patricians and plebeians, and was thought to have come into being through revolution' (176). I fail to understand how F. arrives at this 'revolutionary' conclusion from the ancient sources he cites (176, n. 17). Had old but perfectly relevant works such as Mommsen's *Römisches Staatsrecht* (curiously missing from the bibliography) and Niccolini's book on the tribunes of the plebs⁵ been consulted, F.'s account of the *tribuni plebis* might have been more balanced.

Equally puzzling is F.'s arbitrary decision (162, n. 10) not to discuss the peculiar process of *transitio ad plebem* — invoked by both Cicero (*Brutus* 62) and Livy (4.16.3) — to explain the

³ See also Plut. *Numa* 1.

⁴ The theme of Greek myths and early Roman history was developed by Forsythe in his earlier book: *The Historian L. Calpurnius Piso Frugi and the Roman Annalistic Tradition*, Lanham MD 1994.

⁵ G. Niccolini, *Il tribunato della plebe*, Milan 1933.

phenomenon of plebeian *gentes* with patrician *nomina gentilicia* — because it is ‘poorly understood’ and because it has not received ‘serious scholarly attention’.⁶

F. is not consistently critical when dealing with modern authors and he accepts Wiseman’s challenging, intricately woven and argued, and yet highly questionable account of Romulus’ slayed twin (93-6) without any reservations.⁷

It might be unfair to criticize F. for having failed to consult certain works which certainly would have enriched his own research, such as Giovannini’s article on the important role played by the rich salt deposits at the mouth of the Tiber in the history of early Rome,⁸ an element totally missing from F.’s narrative; or F. Zevi’s account of Demaratus.⁹ It is indeed practically impossible to keep abreast of the ever growing number of publications on early Rome written by archaeologists and historians in various languages. Yet, I find it hard to comprehend why F. chose to ignore completely Jacques Poucet’s work on the origins of Rome,¹⁰ an equally critical examination of early Rome, and of great relevance to his book. In fact, F. acknowledges, but does not really discuss, Grandazzi’s study, which is in many ways a reaction to Poucet’s work. Grandazzi indicts Poucet’s book as the ‘the modern version of hypercriticism’.¹¹ A discussion of the debate between Poucet and Grandazzi¹² by F. would have been useful and enlightening.

F.’s lucid style and sound exposition elegantly untangle intricate topics. His many digressions provide coherent information not always readily accessible to undergraduate and graduate students. See the short overview of the Phoenicians in the west and Greek colonization in the west (28-36); the alphabet (51-3); the history of the archaeology of early Rome (82-4); the use of tufa by the Romans in various periods (106-7); an explanation of the official religious calendar (129-35); a discussion of Roman chronology (155-7; 369-70) and explanatory notes such as the one setting out how modern scholars usually cite Festus (65, n. 15). The bibliography is sound (no works written after 1999 are cited), and the book is very well edited.

F. likens the ancient tradition on the regal period to a Hollywood blockbuster about a key historical epoch: ‘The script is a combination of Roman oral tradition and adaptations of Greek myths, all artfully woven together by generations of skillful Roman storytellers’ (78). F.’s thought-provoking and ‘critical’ script, which was ‘not intended as a deliberate criticism of Cornell’s fine work’, but woven according to ‘its own working hypothesis concerning the ancient sources’ (3) warrants a no less ‘critical approach’.

Rachel Feig Vishnia

Tel Aviv University

Liv Mariah Yarrow, *Historiography at the End of the Republic: Provincial Perspectives on Roman Rule*, Oxford: Oxford University Press: Oxford Classical Monographs, 2006. 416 pages. ISBN 978-0-1992-7754-4.

During the last few decades the study of major Roman historical writers has moved from a concern with their veracity to the more ‘literary’ assessment of the strategies and opinions contained

⁶ For a totally different view, see my ‘The *Transitio ad Plebem* of C. Servilius Geminus’, *ZPE* 114 (1996), 289-296, which is not cited by Forsythe.

⁷ T.P. Wiseman, *Remus: A Roman Myth*, Cambridge 1995. See N. Purcell’s review in *Bryn Mawr Classical Review* 97.5.18.

⁸ A. Giovannini, ‘Le sel et la fortune de Rome’, *Athenaeum* 73 (1985), 373-387.

⁹ F. Zevi, ‘Demarato e i re “Corinzi” di Roma’, in A. Storch Marino (ed.), *L’incidenza dell’antico: Studi in memore di Ettore Lepore*, Naples 1995, 292-314.

¹⁰ J. Poucet, *Les origines de Rome: Tradition et histoire*, Bruxelles 1985.

¹¹ English translation, 27

¹² See Poucet’s review of Grandazzi in *Latomus* 52 (1993), 936 and ‘La fondation de Rome: croyants et agnostiques’, *Latomus* 53 (1994), 95-104.