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**Regal Myths M. Fox: *Roman Historical Myths: The Regal Period in Augustan Literature.* (Oxford Classical Monographs.) Pp. 269. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. £35. ISBN: 0-19-815020-2.**  
**T. P. Wiseman: *Remus: A Roman Myth.* Pp. xv + 243, 18 ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Cased, £35/\$54.95 (Paper, £12.95/\$18.95). ISBN: 0-521-41981-6 (0-521-48366-2).**

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subject-matter emanate from the activity of the Church/Churches. It is precisely the impact on Imperial policy of such activity which has not been given its proper weight here and at the heart of it all there lies a profound terminological *malaise*. We may, indeed, quite reasonably take the period from the death of Marcus Aurelius in 180 to the death of the Prophet in 632 and give it the useful label of 'Late Antiquity', but we must not forget that two-thirds of that period coincides with what with equal propriety may be termed 'Early Byzantine History'—hardly a routine overlap springing from the exigencies of historical periodization! Both approaches are, in fact, indispensable. Nor is it mere frivolity to point out that whereas Late Antique Byzantium can only be Late Antique, Late Antique Constantinople can only be Byzantine.

Finally, a few points of detail should be noted. Passages translated by way of evidence or illustration in the text are regularly quoted in the original Greek or Latin in an appropriate footnote, an excellent practice vitiated only by inadequate proof reading. Though most of the actual misprints are obvious enough, a few are less so. Moreover, when we are told (p. 28) 'Beiläufig bemerkt Sokrates, Theodosius habe häufig aristotelische Syllogismen zitiert' (a notion repeated on p. 65 n. 1), a glance at the corresponding footnote where we read '...πολλὰ χαίρειν τοῖς Ἀριστοτέλους φράσας συλλογισμοῖς...' is enough to suggest the possibility that the Church historian's Greek has been misunderstood. An approximate translation might read: 'Theodosius dispensed with the syllogisms of Aristotle and practised philosophy through deeds etc.' Christian disparagement of pagan philosophy already had a long tradition behind it, as witness the attack on the philosophers in Tatian's *Oratio ad Graecos*, which is perhaps a further reminder that we are dealing here with a complex set of phenomena for which no single label suffices.

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## REGAL MYTHS

M. FOX: *Roman Historical Myths: The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*. (Oxford Classical Monographs.) Pp. 269. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996. £35. ISBN: 0-19-815020-2.

T. P. WISEMAN: *Remus: A Roman Myth*. Pp. xv + 243, 18 ills. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995. Cased, £35/\$54.95 (Paper, £12.95/\$18.95). ISBN: 0-521-41981-6 (0-521-48366-2).

F.'s *Roman Historical Myths* examines the accounts of Rome's regal period in Augustan literature, focusing on the works of Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy, on Propertius, *Elegies* 4, and on Ovid's *Fasti*, currently a highly fashionable text. The book begins, however, with an analysis of Cicero's *Republic*, the earliest surviving extended narrative of the regal period in Latin. A particularly useful appendix deals with Varro and the regal period, gleaning much from the scanty fragments of the *Antiquitates Divinae*, *De Vita Populi Romani*, and *De Gente Populi Romani*, as well as from the better-preserved *De Lingua Latina*. An analysis of the Varronian corpus is particularly important, as F. reminds us: Varro saw the regal period as 'a historical object in its own right' (p. 256), and his antiquarian investigations were highly influential in the creation of the late Republican view of early Rome (p. 236). F. is

quite right to stress the influential nature of antiquarian studies, and to dismiss the 'deceptive demarcation of antiquarian from historian' in the ancient world (p. 3).

F.'s work concentrates on a discussion of 'ancient historiography, the representation of the past, and how such representation can be used as evidence for the culture and politics of the time of its writing' (p. 4). He provides a close analysis of key texts on the regal period, looking separately at the chief Augustan authors. This, the core of the book, divides neatly into two sections: he first scrutinizes the major extant examples of historical writing on early Rome (Livy and Dionysius), and then the differing poetic treatments of the subject by Propertius and Ovid. Examining in particular certain rhetorical or dramatic elements (such as the rape of Lucretia), F. analyses the characterization of the regal period in each text. He explores the 'basis...for making deductions about Augustan politics from historical accounts, and at what level this kind of analysis can operate' (p. 4). With each, he demonstrates that the regal period was more than merely a way of discreetly commenting upon the Augustan regime (as is so often thought to be the case).

F. shows how, for Roman writers, the regal period 'was central to a conception of Roman identity and culture' (p. 139). This was not only true of historical writers: the fact that poets were also attracted to the period, and concerned with the same 'problematization of similarity and difference', demonstrates the general importance of early Rome for the creation, exploration, and redefinition of (a) Roman identity in the Augustan Age (p. 140).

F.'s interests lie squarely within the field of classical literary criticism. He seems largely indifferent to the question of where the poets and historians of the Augustan Age obtained their information on the regal period, or how each author's idea of that period was formed. There is little analysis of the validity, or credibility, of the information the Augustan authors possessed about the regal period. Moreover, from the outset F. makes it clear that he is unconcerned with what reconstructions modern historians can make of the regal period on the basis of surviving evidence in Augustan literature. (He gives a short bibliography for 'the reconstruction of early Rome by historians and archaeologists, often employing ancient literary sources', which includes R. Ross Holloway's *Archaeology of Early Rome and Latium* [London, 1994], hardly a key work, but neglects a series of important recent studies [p. 33, n. 4].) This exclusive emphasis on the texts as literature alone is disappointing, and to my mind prevents the book from being as useful as it otherwise might have been for students of early Rome.

Chapter 2, 'Some Theoretical Considerations', discusses the nature of history and myth, and the influence upon both of historical reality. He examines 'the relationship of historical truth to belief, and of history to myth' (p. 30). These are interesting questions, and F. is right to ask us to consider carefully what aims ancient authors had in writing about early Rome. Similarly he is right to question where Roman writers drew the line between myth and history. Scholars need to pay attention to these problematic issues; unfortunately F.'s argument is at times convoluted, and not always easy to follow, while the separate discussion accorded to each author can hinder understanding of the issues involved. Nevertheless, this book is clearly the product of much thought: it offers rich discussion and provides a thorough, modern approach to the subject. There are one or two minor misprints, but the volume is otherwise admirably produced.

W.'s book provides a welcome investigation of the curious myth of Remus, twin brother of the founder of Rome. The first part (together with the appendix) sets out the ancient evidence for the myth, summarizing both the 'standard' version of the tale

and variant traditions. W. goes on to investigate the theories offered in modern scholarship, from Niebuhr to the present day. (Particularly amusing and interesting is his sharp dissection of the Indo-Europeanist 'primal twin' motif [pp. 18–30].) W.'s own arguments are presented lucidly, though parts are tenuous and conjectural (as he willingly admits).

W. assumes that myth can be 'explained'; part and parcel of this is the notion that a myth is created at a specific moment (a very particular concept of what 'myth' means). Thus, as Remus' name does not appear before the second half of the third century B.C., a century after the first literary attestation of Romulus (p. 61), W. believes that Remus was invented in the late fourth century B.C. Specifically, he argues that the myth was created within a period of about twenty years, at the end of the fourth and beginning of the third centuries B.C. Its genesis came about, he suggests, through 'topical and partisan' dramatic performances at the public *ludi* (p. 158), a form of myth-making which enabled stories rapidly to be invented and developed, reworked, or forgotten. Conveniently for W.'s thesis, 'by definition, non-literary story-telling (dramatic or otherwise) leaves no textual evidence behind' (p. 141).

Yet, as W. himself points out, the first sources to name Remus 'give us no more than a *terminus ante quem* for the existence of the traditions they attest' (p. 42). The absence of prior evidence does not prove that the story was invented in that period (although the myth may well have been reworked then). In order to support his dating of the myth, W. must ignore early iconographic evidence, interpreting an engraving on a mid-fourth century B.C. mirror (of Praenestine workmanship) as the Lares Praestites, instead of Romulus and Remus (pp. 65–71). The myth of the Lares would then (unconvincingly) provide the origin for the more familiar story of the twins. W. also has to deny the relevance of the archaic Capitoline she-wolf to the myth of Romulus and Remus (p. 65). Yet the wolf, with her full teats, surely symbolizes the myth, even if the twins are not an original feature of the sculpture.

W. looks for a political explanation for the myth of Remus (p. 96), arguing that it arose out of the process of self-definition of the Roman community in the fourth century B.C. (p. 102). Many scholars agree that the twins represent some kind of duality (for Mommsen, the consulship); similarly, according to W., Remus represents the plebs, during a period of patrician–plebeian struggle (p. 110). However, this theory fails to answer one of W.'s own key questions (outlined on p. 17). Why was Remus killed off, when the plebeians effectively 'won' their battle against patrician dominance of Republican institutions? Why create a leader or hero of the plebs who immediately dies?

In fact, twinship and duality are common themes in Italian traditions (especially traditions about kingship), and are not unique to Rome. It would be interesting to have W.'s views on other mythical Italian twins, like Catillus and Coras at Tibur, *gemini fratres* (Virg. *Aen.* 7.670), or the Digidii or Dipidii, uncles of Praeneste's founder Caeculus (W. ignores these pairings). It might also have enhanced our understanding of the myth of Remus had W. explored (for example) the legend of Titus Tatius, who like Remus shares power with Romulus, and dies mysteriously. Stories like these could suggest that the myth of Romulus and Remus was not a Republican creation but part of an earlier tradition about the nature of kingship; further development of this area might well set the myth of Romulus and Remus into its proper context.

The breadth of W.'s learning is impressive, but I would take issue with some points. For example, it is difficult to believe that Greeks of the early fifth century B.C. viewed Etruria as 'the ends of the earth' (p. 58). It also seems unlikely that aristocratic banquets in Central Italy were really all-male events (p. 130), since both archaeological

and literary evidence (e.g. Livy 1.57.9) suggest the presence of women there. Wine amphorae and banquet services have been found in female tombs, including one vessel with, perhaps, an 'inscription of greeting to the hostess' (A. Rathje, 'The adoption of the Homeric banquet in Central Italy in the orientaling period', in O. Murray, *Symptotica* [Oxford, 1990], pp. 279–88, at p. 283).

W's book is witty, entertaining, and readable, full of quirky good humour. The evidence, though complicated, is clearly set out; conclusions are highlighted and re-emphasized so that the reader does not lose the thread of the argument, despite the 'labyrinth of argument and hypothesis' (p. 101). It is a work of intelligence and perception, one of patient scholarly piecing together of scattered fragments of evidence. On the whole, however, the book raises more questions than it provides satisfactory answers. Remus remains an enigma.

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## A GOLDEN AGE?

L. LORETO: *Un'epoca di buon senso. Decisione, consenso e stato a Roma tra il 326 e il 264 a. C.* Pp. 268. Amsterdam: Adolf M. Hakkert, 1993. Paper.

L.'s title is a translation of a comment made by G. M. Trevelyan on the English Revolution of 1688–89 that whilst a heroic age asks questions, one needs an age of good sense to solve them. It is L.'s thesis that the decades on either side of the year 300 B.C. were precisely such an age of good sense, and he sets out with some eloquence and interest the questions which faced the Roman Republic.

L. begins with a statement of his attitude to the sources, primarily Livy for this period. He is generally optimistic about their value, and proceeds throughout to rely heavily on detailed wording of certain passages in Livy. This is clearly dangerous and nothing that L. says, or indeed can say, in his early methodological statement can protect him from the charge that he has taken Livy too literally. In particular, he assumes that there is value in each of the occasions on which Livy recounts a disagreement in the senate or assembly (pp. 120ff., pp. 166ff.), without facing the fact that contemporary sources may not have preserved this level of information, and that Livy may well have used this device as a way of varying his account and expressing his own historical judgement that the sorts of things which were being decided were important and likely to have caused disagreement. Nevertheless, those who take a line of qualified optimism about the written sources for the period will find it worth their while continuing.

L. discusses in Part II the ways in which the Romans faced up to the increasing military burden on the consuls, through prorogation, dictatorships, and rapid iteration of magistracy; he traces a process of trial and error as the Romans tried out various options and contemplated the consequences. He identifies in Part III an economic crisis in the penultimate decade of the 4th century and the attempts to overcome it. In Part IV he considers the power of the Senate and the ways in which it came to its decisions; he gives space to one of its major roles as the body which received embassies and decided on peace and war, and on the whole, notwithstanding the delegation of important decisions to various magistrates, he retains a belief that the Senate held its own with regard to the officers of the state, and that whatever the actual importance of a small élite, there was still space for junior and inexperienced senators to have their