INTRODUCTION

Much has been written during the course of the last hundred years or so about the works of Rome's republican historians. Livy's methods, for instance, the manner in which he arranged his material, and the style in which he wrote have all received extensive treatment. As for his many predecessors, even though virtually all of their works have been lost, a great deal has nonetheless been written about them as well. It has, for example, been argued that Licinius Macer in his history may have sought to rationalise the mythical elements in the tradition of Rome's past, and that he appears to have used his account of the conflict of the orders to comment upon contemporary politics. Valerius Antias, it has been suggested, may have inserted numerous Valerii into the tradition and may have even given them a prominent role in events. As Livy pointed out, Antias also tended to exaggerate, and Livy noted that Licinius Macer was not to be trusted when he wrote about his own family.[1] A very great deal has equally been written about the source material that may (or may not) have been available to Rome's republican historians and about the ways in which they may (or may not) have used that material.

In contrast to all this, comparatively little attention has been given to those various things – beliefs and thoughts about human behaviour, and about the ways in which, and the reasons for which, events occur – that were common to all or most of Rome's historians, and indeed to all or most Romans. It is the purpose of this work to discuss several Roman views and beliefs about human nature and about history and historiography, and to attempt to measure something of the impact that these seemingly common beliefs have had on the literary tradition.

The principal contention is that the Romans often thought about human behaviour, and consequently about the events of the past and about what constitutes a plausible method for reconstructing and explaining those events, in ways that are profoundly different from the ways in which such things are thought about today, and that these differences in thinking have had a significant and, by modern standards, extremely detrimental effect on the value of the literary tradition. This may, however, seem like a rather obvious thing to say. After all, some aspects (for example, the Roman tendency to assume that the past was little or no different from the present) have been discussed at some length, and a considerable amount has been written on the subject of Roman attitudes towards history and historiography. It is now generally accepted that the literary tradition of republican Rome is above all a

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1   On Macer as a rationalising historian, cf., e. g., Walt (1997) 150–69; on Macer and politics, e. g., Wiseman (2009) 19–80 *passim*; on Antias, e. g., Wiseman (1998) 75–89. For Livy's views, cf., e. g., 3.5.12–13, 26.49.3, 30.19.11, 33.10.8, 34.15.9, 36.19.12, 36.38.6–7, 38.23.8, 39.41.6 on Antias, and 7.9.5 on Macer.

social or ideological construct.[2] But, despite all this discussion and debate, it is nonetheless quite striking just how often the literary tradition of Rome's past is still treated as, essentially, a reasonably straightforward record of events, as a record of what actually happened. Almost everyone agrees that the tradition of Rome's earliest history is extremely unreliable, and indeed wholly fictitious in a great many parts, and most people agree that the tradition has been embellished with all manner of unhistorical detail. Most people acknowledge that the attitude of many of Rome's historians towards documentary evidence was, by modern standards at least, often seriously deficient. And yet the literary tradition (usually, but not always, with the exception of the tradition of Rome's earliest history) is nonetheless still generally treated as, in essence, just an account of events. Peel away the embellishment (the 'narrative superstructure', as it has been called) and what is left (the 'structural facts' or the 'historical core') is basically a genuine – if perhaps a little patchy in places – record of what actually happened in ancient Rome.[3]

Behind this approach there lies a fundamental assumption, namely that, all their desires to embellish and elaborate, and all their literary pretensions and political agendas aside, Rome's historians were basically not that different, or even in any way different, in their thinking from people today. What they produced was just literary history, literary history that was composed with varying degrees of poetic licence taken along the way, with the grinding of an occasional axe, the pushing of a political agenda or two, with a desire to entertain, with various gaps filled in and skeletal narratives fleshed out, and so forth. Modern debate about the value of the tradition therefore need only really focus upon the sources that may have been available to Rome's historians, the ways in which Rome's historians appear to have used those sources, the extent to which they could make up stories, the extent to which they could lie, and so on (all the while not infrequently supposing that modern definitions of invention, falsehood, the truth and the like were equally applica-

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2   So, for instance, Cornell (1986a) 83: 'The historical tradition of the Roman Republic was not an authenticated official record or an objective critical reconstruction; rather, it was an ideological construct, designed to control, to justify and to inspire'.

3   For the distinction between the 'structural facts' and the 'narrative superstructure', see Cornell (1986a) 85–86, (2005) 53, 58, 61–62, (1995) 17–18, and (2004) 129; for the adoption of this approach by others, see, e.g., Smith (2006) who also talks of 'structural facts' (e.g., 198). The approach has been criticised, but not infrequently on the grounds that it is impossible to draw any such distinction, a response which still seems to assume the presence of something akin to a simple record of events. Harris (1990) 495–96, for instance, dismisses Cornell's approach, but goes on to say: 'No one, I hope, will claim that what we have in the literary sources on this subject is any better than a bare factual outline embedded in a mass of romance, error, propaganda and rhetoric', and thus retains the assumption that the tradition is, in its most basic element, a record of events; cf. similarly Smith (2006a) 223: 'One of the great difficulties for everyone who writes on early Rome is that the criteria for choosing what to keep as fact and what to jettison as invention are highly subjective'. The metaphor of the historical 'core' is one very commonly employed. The problem is, if the very *thinking* behind the tradition is, by modern standards, unhistorical (as will be argued here), then why should any 'factual outline' or 'facts' have been immune or impervious to the effects of this unhistorical thinking?

ble in the ancient world).[4] Modern debate has, in effect, concerned itself primarily with two things: the sources that Rome's historians may have used, and the literary genre of history, its nature, its requirements and the limits of what was acceptable; it has concerned itself much less with Roman thinking and theorising, and how such things may have affected what the Romans actually wrote. Thus, while numerous histories of Rome begin rightly enough with a discussion of the sources, surprisingly few give much or indeed any consideration to the ways in which the Romans thought about human behaviour and in turn about the events of their past,[5] and yet the ways in which they thought about these things must inevitably have had an enormous impact on what they actually wrote about their past.

The following study considers two important and related phenomena. The first chapter ('The influence of noble self-presentation on historical thought and historiography') looks at the Roman tendency to believe that members of the same *gens* behave in the same way and consequently do similar things, and at the possible effects that this belief may have had on Roman thinking about the past.[6] Chapter II ('The traditions of the Fabii') continues to pursue this same theme and attempts to measure something of the impact which this belief has had on the literary tradition. It does so by means of a case study, a detailed examination of the presentation of the early members of the *gens Fabia* in the literary tradition. Chapter III ('The Fabii and the Gauls') examines – by means of a detailed analysis of the tradition of the

4   In fact, they do not appear to have been; see, e. g., Wiseman (1993), (1981) 387–90, (1979); Woodman (1988), who includes various references to, and discussion of, the work of those scholars who simply assume or who believe that modern ideas about the truth and about history and historiography were equally applicable in the ancient world; more recently, see Marincola (2009) 18–19, with some modifications and further bibliography. A full-scale attack on the views of Wiseman and Woodman can be found in Lendon (2009), who argues that the jejune notices in the early books of Livy prove that the tradition of Rome's early history rests upon documentary sources (46–49), but the matter is not so straightforward; such an approach does not, for instance, explain the discrepancies that can be found in those notices, and in the consular and triumphal *Fasti*, and there are alternative explanations available (cf. Chapter I, section 5 for further details); nor does Lendon succeed, in the end, in proving that the ancient definition of the truth was no different from the modern.

5   See, e. g., Ogilvie and Drummond (1989), an essay of twenty-nine pages devoted entirely to the sources for early Roman history, in which just a few paragraphs (on pages 26–27) are dedicated to the influence of Roman thought and theorising about the past and about human behaviour; the situation is similar in Bispham (2006), an essay of twenty pages, in which only a few sentences (on page 48) are dedicated to differences in approach and thinking, differences which are then played down in the subsequent paragraph; there is, in contrast, essentially nothing to be found in, to pick only a few examples, Astin (1989); Lintott (1994); Cornell (1995) 1–26; Forsythe (2005) 59–77. While it is not, strictly speaking, an historical work, note also Oakley (1997) 3–108, although relevant issues are touched upon in places.

6   It should be noted from the outset that a distinction needs to be made between models of behaviour which were unique to specific *gentes* and general exemplary figures who embodied particular qualities (such as *virtus*, *frugalitas* or *honestas*). Although individuals may have aspired to behave in accordance with the standards set by some exemplar of frugality, for instance, this was, as will become clear, something very different from the emulation of ancestral models of behaviour, which was automatically expected and indeed simply taken for granted.

Gallic sack of Rome – the Roman practice of incorporating material into their historical tradition simply because that material conformed with expectations, or fitted with generally accepted ideas and theories about what is plausible and what is appropriate to history and historiography. The effects of this practice can be seen most clearly in the standardised presentation of members of the same *gens* (the issue addressed in Chapters I and II), but they can also be seen elsewhere. They can be found, it will be suggested, in those episodes in the Roman historiographical tradition which appear to have been lifted from Greek tradition, or adapted to conform with Greek thinking (for historiography was, after all, a Greek invention).

In all parts of the book, therefore, it is the repetition of events in the historiographical tradition which will be used as a means to gain some insight into Roman thinking about history and historiography. Events at different times and in different places can, of course, pan out similarly, and the individual members of a specific family can, from time to time, behave similarly and achieve similar things (and this is especially the case in a society where the range of activities that members of the nobility were expected to pursue was relatively restricted and where emulation of ancestral deeds was expected). Allowances must be made for this; the strength of the present argument lies in the extent of the repetition that is found in the tradition, and in the repetition of precise details and themes.

It is necessary at this point to say a few words about the method that has been employed in attempting to discern repetition in the tradition. The approach that has been taken in Chapters II and III of the book has deliberately tended very much towards the inclusive. That is to say, an extremely wide range of possible parallels and repetitions has been explored. Inevitably this may well have resulted in some forced arguments and tenuous inferences, and some suggestions that may not appear to be entirely persuasive. There are two reasons why this approach has nonetheless been adopted. Firstly, an unpersuasive connection is as useful as a persuasive one, even if only in a negative way, as it allows for the limits of the repetition and patterning to be tested. What counts as persuasive will, moreover, inevitably vary from person to person and so an inclusive approach will allow readers to assess the evidence as they wish and to discard whatever they find unconvincing. However, allowances must be made for ancient thinking too, and this is the second (and more important) reason why this approach has been adopted. One of the principal theses of this book is that people in antiquity were considerably more alert and more open to seeing repetition in behaviour and parallels in events than people are today, and that people in antiquity were more likely and more willing to draw connections between events than people are today. Consequently what may seem forced to modern tastes need not have done so to ancient. It is worth illustrating this briefly with one example here.[7]

Consider for instance the discussion concerning Themistocles and Coriolanus that takes place between Cicero and Atticus in Cicero's *Brutus*. Cicero draws the

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7   Various other examples can be found in Chapter I, and elsewhere; see esp. Chapter I, section 3.2 (the discussion of the Furii, the Manlii and the Gauls) and also section 5. For another good example see Krebs (2006) on the story of the Roman military tribune who, according to the Elder Cato, did the same thing as Leonidas at Thermopylae.

following parallels between the two men: they were near contemporaries; each was prominent in his state; each was driven from his state by an ungrateful people; each then went over to the enemy; each later died voluntarily, although Cicero notes that Atticus preferred a different version of Coriolanus' fate. In response to all this, Atticus points out that, according to Thucydides, Themistocles died naturally and it was only suspected that he had poisoned himself; it was the later writers Clitarchus and Stratocles who invented the story that he had died after drinking the blood of a sacrificed bull.[8] As for Coriolanus, it would appear that, in Fabius Pictor's version of the story, Coriolanus did not commit suicide. Instead he lived to an old age in exile.[9] In other accounts, there is a different version of his demise, according to which he was killed, but not by his own hand. Dionysius of Halicarnassus says that he was stoned to death by the supporters of Attius Tullius, that is, by some of the very people to whom he had defected.[10] Once the elements of suicide are removed from the story of Coriolanus, the parallels with Themistocles that are left (or better, that had previously existed in the story) are merely prominence, then exile and defection. But these supposed parallels largely evaporate on closer inspection, partly because they are so very general, and partly because they are also rather forced (note, in particular, the idea that the people of Rome were ungrateful to Coriolanus, a man who was an outspoken opponent of the plebeians and who had, tradition claimed, actually sought to do them considerable harm; and Coriolanus' achievements and prominence prior to his exile – which was voluntary in some accounts – are scarcely comparable with Themistocles').[11] The details of the careers of these two men are really quite different in a great many respects,[12] and these differences far outweigh the few parallels that do exist between them. It is safe to say that no one today would ever consider making anything much of these parallels. And yet, to return to the *Brutus*, it would seem (even when allowances are made for the light-hearted nature of the exchange between Cicero and Atticus) that they were considered fairly comprehensive. For Atticus goes on to allow Cicero to attribute to Coriolanus precisely the same method of committing suicide that Themistocles was said by Clitarchus and Stratocles to have employed and, by doing so, to make everything the same for both men. Coriolanus, says Atticus, will thus plainly appear as a sec-

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8   Cic. *Brut*. 41–43.
9   Pictor fr. 17P = Livy 2.40.10–11; see Ogilvie (1965) 335: Pictor had himself already incorporated Greek elements into the story, although these had nothing to do with Themistocles.
10 Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 8.59.1; cf. also Plut. *Cor*. 39.4; App. *Ital*. 5.5; Dio fr. 18.12; and, with some confusion, Polyaenus *Strat*. 8.25.3.
11 Coriolanus' voluntary departure from Rome appears to have subsequently been changed into official exile: see, e. g., Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 8.1.2. Note that Plutarch paired Themistocles with Camillus, and Coriolanus with Alcibiades.
12 Compare their different backgrounds as well as their very different relationships with the people; compare too their careers in exile. Themistocles was elected archon; Coriolanus was not elected consul but was instead, in some versions, rebuffed by the people (an important element – see, e. g., Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom*. 7.21.2 – and a conspicuous difference, and one which may have been smoothed over at a later date: according to *De vir. ill*. 19.2, Coriolanus did hold the consulship).

ond Themistocles![13] However thin or forced the parallels between Coriolanus and Themistocles may seem to modern thinking, they were evidently not so thin to ancient. Moreover, since the story of Coriolanus appears to have been modified to make his career appear more like Themistocles', it seems safe to suppose that the parallels that had previously existed between their careers must have been even more tenuous still; and yet they must nonetheless have provided sufficient grounds for some comparison to be made, for it was this initial comparison that undoubtedly first stimulated the process of homogenisation.

What counted as a noteworthy or plausible parallel or repetition of events in antiquity could obviously differ considerably from what would count as one today, and it is above all for this reason that what may seem like forced or tenuous connections have been included in the discussion in Chapters II and III, at least in those places where they may conceivably fit. All this does naturally make some elements of the argument difficult to judge. After all, the use of modern criteria of plausibility may necessitate the dismissal of certain parallels and repetitions (and any number of these may have been missed in the discussion in any case), but it is, on the other hand, scarcely possible to judge elements of the discussion by ancient standards, and any attempt to do so runs the risk of making the argument circular. There is no easy solution. The matter has, therefore, been left up to the reader to decide. Fortunately many of the suggested parallels and repetitions largely stand (or fall) on their own merits, and so specific elements can easily be dismissed here and there without significant damage to the fundamental argument.

As for the origins of the various repetitions and parallels that will be discussed in Chapters II and III, the common practice of focussing on the contributions of individual historians has usually meant that individual historians have been held largely, if not entirely, responsible for them. Thus, if people in Livy's history tend to conform to standard patterns of behaviour, that is primarily, if not only, because Livy himself has made them conform; he has done so for his own literary aims and purposes, and he has done so consciously throughout. If the story of the expulsion of the Tarquinii from Rome, for instance, contains episodes and ideas lifted from the tradition of the expulsion of the Pisistratids from Athens, or from other Greek narratives dealing with tyranny, that is only because someone like Fabius Pictor has consciously and deliberately incorporated those episodes into his narrative. Although individual historians obviously were responsible for such elements in the literary tradition, it is the thesis of this work that many of these elements are actually evidence of the way in which the Romans thought about human behaviour and about the past and the way in which events occur, and consequently about what constitutes a plausible explanation and a plausible narrative. These elements in the tradition, it will be suggested, are the result of perhaps widely held views and ideas, views and ideas which are, by modern standards, both deeply flawed and fundamentally unhistorical. If that is the case, then in many ways it matters much less

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13   Cic. *Brut*. 43: *qua re quoniam tibi ita quadrat omnia fuisse Themistocli paria et Coriolano, pateram quoque a me sumas licet, praebebo etiam hostiam, ut Coriolanus sit plane alter Themistocles*.

which individual was responsible for them; if not one historian, then some other would have incorporated such elements into the tradition.

In sum, then, it is the aim of this work to try to show that the Romans often thought quite differently from the way in which people today think, and to show that these differences in thinking have had a significant effect on the literary tradition of Rome's past. It is, consequently, not possible to talk blithely of 'structural facts', or to treat the literary tradition merely as an embellished, distorted and, in places, fabricated account of events simply because the very thinking that lies behind the creation of the entire literary tradition (all its supposed constituent parts, the historical cores, the structural facts, the rhetorical embellishment and whatever else, included) was different, and because allowances must first be made, in so far as they can, for these differences in thinking. Similarly, allowances must also be made for these differences in thinking in modern discussion of the aims, motives and intentions of individual Roman historians. Comparison can perhaps usefully be made with Roman republican portrait sculpture. This is often termed 'veristic' rather than 'realistic', as it does not provide an accurate or faithful reproduction of the physical appearance of the individual in question. Roman republican values, ideology and thinking drastically affected the manner in which the Romans depicted themselves.[14] Precisely the same situation applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the literary tradition.

14   See, for instance, the discussion in Gruen (1992) 152–82.