

Chapter six identifies subversive and satirical images of the ‘Twelve Caesars’ and addresses the nuanced way in which modern receivers have used imperial images to communicate their own messages. Beard highlights a number of 19th century artists who have asked searching questions of the imperial system through their images, focusing on the vice or cruelty of the emperors or on their (often rumoured) assassinations. Of particular interest is Beard’s discussion of *The Death of Nero*, Vasily Smirnov’s four-metre-wide painting of 1887 that depicts the *princeps*’ ignominious end (p.231–234). The evocative painting is presented in a double page colour image and, as the author herself says, is an excellent example of how imperial images have been used to question rather than promote imperial power (p.231).

Chapter seven addresses the reception of women in the imperial hierarchy, including, amongst others, Livia, Messalina and Agrippina the Younger. Beard discusses the often-dimorphic depiction of these characters: as either models of virtue or vice. Particularly interesting are the author’s thoughts regarding images of imperial women and power: she draws a number of interesting conclusions that, much like the images under discussion, have much to tell us about both the ancient and modern worlds (p.238–242).

In conclusion, this is an important book with much to say about the place of the Classical World in modern society. In an educational setting, it should be read by sixth form or undergraduate students thinking further about their subject. Whilst *Twelve Caesars* does not tell readers much – beyond a certain amount of background information necessary for the discussion – about the ‘Twelve Caesars’ themselves, it, more importantly, tells them why and how the ‘Twelve Caesars’ matter.

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Early Rome to 290BC: the Beginnings of the City and the Rise of the Republic

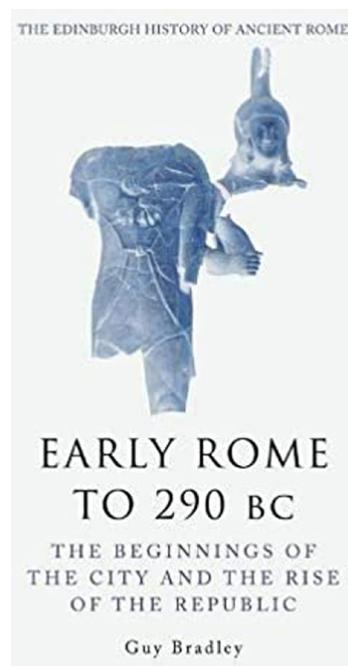
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Guy Bradley’s *Early Rome to 290 BC* is an engaging analysis of Rome’s ascension from a small hillside community to a supreme power in central Italy. I found it both accessible and scholarly, and enjoyed the way it presents the latest archaeological evidence in tables, maps and illustrations.

The main thrust of Bradley’s argument is that the archaeology confirms Rome’s cosmopolitanism from its inception. The tension and complementarity between Rome and other Mediterranean states helped to forge its unique and complex identity. Readers will be familiar with this paradox from literature, wherein Rome identifies with the foreign state of Troy in the *Aeneid* (perhaps as a way of distinguishing itself from the omnipresent Greeks) whilst nurturing the myth of autochthony in Romulus and Remus.



In chapter one, ‘Sources and Approaches’, Bradley recognises the constrictions brought on by Rome’s positive spin on its history, with our main sources, including the inescapable Livy, emphasising the powerful Romanocentric self-construct of a state rising from humble beginnings to consolidate a vast empire. In order to create a more coherent picture, Bradley tries to treat archaeological and epigraphic evidence with the same amount of scepticism and, perhaps most importantly, he strives to compare Rome with other ancient societies of central Italy for context. Archaeology’s main drawback, Bradley argues, is the fact that the city of Rome has been uninterruptedly inhabited and

has suffered from constant alluviaions. But he also contends that literature presents us with even greater issues, such as idealisation, anachronism and the personal agendas inherent in sources typical of Roman memory.

The most enjoyable aspect of this chapter for me was the comparison made between Livy and Dionysus of Halicarnassus, our main literary sources for the period. Bradley discusses the resuscitation of Livy’s reputation among scholars, in the past tarnished by accusations of plagiarising earlier sources, his infamous lack of economic insight and the Romanocentric and anachronistic nature of his writing. Modern scholarship, however, recognises Livy’s fine editorial eye, his ability to entertain his audience within the scope of the historiography of his day, his reconstructions of direct speeches and his astute treatment of individual psychology. Bradley contrasts this with Dionysus, whose writing was characterised by a very different agenda. He aimed at correcting previous Greek sources and at establishing Rome’s Greek roots, whilst being both less scholarly and more pedantic than Livy.

At the end of this chapter, Bradley aptly suggests looking at Rome in the context of the wider Mediterranean world. Such an approach had already been attempted by scholars such as Vlassopolous with archaic Greece in order to avoid the pitfalls of the nationalist narratives of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Even ancient authors such as Livy and Cicero observed how Rome, like Sparta, participated in its wider milieu, which fed into its unique blend of democracy, monarchy and oligarchy; both Rome and Sparta nourished anxieties about population decline and land reforms and their respective elites were obsessed with militarism, austerity and sacrifice to the state.

Chapter two, ‘Early Italy, from the Bronze Age to the Classical Era’, goes further into looking at Rome from the outside in, particularly through archaeological evidence from neighbouring cities rather than the usual view centred on the capital. Bradley argues that some of the evidence from neighbouring cities can be more elucidating than the evidence from Rome itself, such as the 600 graves from Gabii dating from the ninth to sixth centuries BC which survived in larger quantities than those in Roman cemeteries.

Like other centres in Italy, Rome appears as a stable settlement in the Bronze Age (c1800-900BC). The most radical changes in central Italy occur in the Villanovan period (9th and 8th centuries BC), the Orientalising period (c730-580 BC, an art history term denoting strong Greek influence with great urbanisation and monumentalisation) and the Archaic period (753-510 BC, an era bookended by the foundation of the city and the expulsion of the kings). There is an intensification of commerce, with the advent of Eastern goods and practices like literacy, the appearance of grave goods in burials showing traces of an elite culture and the increase in urban sites. These developments will culminate in the kingship which is dealt with in the following chapters.

Chapter three, 'Myths and Legends of the Foundation of Rome', analyses the foundation myths through a Mediterranean prism, acknowledging the mix of Greek and local influences. Bradley notes that Livy is not as interested in the pre-foundational myths as he is in the kings, while Dionysus, due to his Greek agenda, is much more forthcoming. However, both Livy and Dionysus focus on strong men such as Aeneas, Evander and Hercules at this early time, as Rome was not yet delineated as a state.

Bradley shows how Rome's two foundational myths, that of Aeneas and that of Romulus and Remus, figure as collaborative early central Italian myths and have become firmly established by the monarchical period. Bradley argues that the clashing self-image is a product of this wider context, and he suggests that the shifting nature of Rome's date of foundation might further reflect Rome's insertion within the foundation myths of neighbouring cities.

Chapter four, 'Kingship', starts by looking at the thematic elements of Romulus' mythological kingship and comparing them to other Mediterranean foundation myths. Romulus is a shepherd, occupying the fields outside the city. Other founders too tend to occupy liminal spaces. Also, in common with other ancient founders, Romulus finds unusual ways of populating his city, first by providing asylum to male refugees, including low-born slaves, and then, to remedy the 'imbalance', by capturing women in the episode known as The Rape of the Sabine Women. Bradley argues that, whilst both myths explain the mixed ethnicity of the population, the Sabine story helps elucidate the greater role attributed to women in Rome. It is Hersilia, Romulus' Sabine wife, who negotiates citizenship status for her fellow folk and brokers the reconciliation between Romulus and the Sabine king, Titus Tatius. Bradley also discusses the curious issue of Romans being so unashamed of the seemingly undignified origins that their foundation myths convey. He speculates that it is this very unguardedness that proves the antiquity of such myths, untouched by later propaganda.

According to Bradley, Romulus' foundation myth follows the irregular patterns of oral history (reflected in Romulus' rather confusing end-apotheosis or murder at the hands of senators) but also reflects other cities' foundation myths (Rome takes its name from him as Capua takes its name from its founder Capys). Romulus is an archetypal leader, followed by equally archetypal kings: Numa, his successor, is a religious leader, Tullius Hostilius, a warrior king.

Bradley engages with the debate surrounding the confusing nature of the list of kings. He is in agreement with the consensus that the kings become more three-dimensional and plausible as the list moves on, that there was indeed kingship at Rome and that either it began later than previously thought or some kings were erased from the list. Although from Tarquinius Priscus onwards the evidence becomes stronger, some fantastical elements still survive, most amusingly in the stories surrounding Servius Tullius,

considered to be a sort of second founder due to his Servian reforms. Perhaps the best myth surrounding his conception is that he was the product of a disembodied phallus (belonging to Vulcan) emerging from the hearth at which his mother sacrificed.

Bradley disputes the traditional claim that most reforms were a product of Republican times, as the archaeological record shows the archaic period to be much more sophisticated than once believed. Bradley is undecided on whether Rome became a republic in line with other Mediterranean cities in a time of political experimentation, as we don't yet have a clear picture of the impact of these external forces.

Chapter 5, 'Urbanism and City Foundation', discusses the dynamism of Rome's urbanisation that culminated in the monumental boom of the seventh and sixth centuries BC. It seems evident that urbanisation developed at different key stages and that the technologies that permitted such development in the form of terracotta tiles and ashlar masonry were borrowings from the Greek East and the Levant combined with local inventions. In any case, the permanent nature of these architectural developments points to a move towards a more stable society.

A particularly interesting part of this chapter was Bradley pointing out that the most distinctive of Roman urban landmarks, the aqueducts, were inspired by similar projects of the Greek tyrants. Similarly, the Cloaca Maxima has close parallels to the Great Drain of democratic Athens, which made a central meeting place for the city feasible.

Chapter six, 'Economy and Society in Archaic Rome and Central Italy', seems to fit several complex issues into a single chapter, ranging from the surprisingly dynamic economy of early Rome to its incipient social structures and the role of women. This was for me the most interesting chapter of the book, but also the most challenging because of the density of information.

Bradley finds it implausible that a city with the size and importance of Rome could be dependent on subsistence agriculture alone. Instead, he paints a picture of a more diversified agricultural society with market characteristics by the sixth century BC. Again, Rome seems to follow Mediterranean trends with the introduction of the polycultures of olive and vine in the archaic period. Agricultural innovations such as the metal plough and crop rotations appear in the surviving evidence from religious calendars and the XII Tables. Also attested is the raising of pigs, sheep and goats for food (cattle seem to have been used exclusively for ploughing).

Bradley notes that the trades develop apace with the advent of ceramic and metal industries and with the introduction by Numa of trade *collegia* or guilds. Workshops were filled with immigrants, especially Greek ones, and all these developments culminated in the major building works of the seventh and sixth centuries. However, the archaeological record is then slowed to a halt by the recession and the changes in burial trends (particularly the disappearance of grave goods) of the fifth century BC.

I found it amusing that the Romans were as insufferably snobbish about the trades as any latter-day aristocrat (e.g. Cicero and the XII Tables express such disdain) and that, despite its prime location, Rome would have a navy only in the third century BC. Rome exploited its geographical position in other ways. It used other cities to procure grain surplus for its growing population whilst it worked as an intermediary between the hinterland peoples such as the Sabines, producers of salt for food preservation, and the wider Mediterranean world of luxury goods and grain. In a similar vein, Rome started full-scale coinage production late, in the 270s, although foreign money and a system

of weights and measures had been in circulation from the sixth century BC. This, Bradley writes, should not be seen as a sign of a delayed economy as coinage in ancient times was primarily associated with financing mercenary armies and large-scale public works.

Bradley hits some seemingly unsurpassable obstacles when it comes to determining Rome's demography due to the unreliability of sources, especially before the third century BC, and the limitations of extrapolating a population based on territorial capacity. The only estimate that seems more or less plausible is Livy's 250,000 for the year 336BC as confirmed by Coarelli (p. 214). Despite this hindrance, Bradley is able to delineate much of the shape of Roman society at the time.

The fact that Rome was, from its early history, a highly stratified society (with the bond of *clientela* appearing quite early on) should be one of the least surprising aspects for readers. The only striking finding is that the first elites were more diverse and more ostentatious than later Romans led us to believe. Bradley postulates that such displays may have been related to anxieties caused by the economic crises of the time.

The plebeians found themselves in an even more precarious situation. This was largely due to the institution of debt-bondage and to the exploitation of their labour by the kings, which figures prominently in the literature of the fifth and fourth centuries. The plebeians' repeated struggles for *isonomia* (equality before the law) align with wider Mediterranean trends. Bradley also alludes to a relatively visible foreign population in the mould of the metics of Athens, but without the same rights.

It is heartening to see that new evidence points to greater female participation in early Roman history. Despite women's largely domestic roles, findings of female burials in the Orientalising and archaic periods, some attributed to 'princesses', are characterised by collections of jewellery, wool working, and banqueting and drinking equipment. Eastern symbols of royal power such as diadems and fans might indicate the foreign origins of many of these women but also perhaps that women were participants in symposia. Bradley believes that the fact women inhabit the very centre of power, the palace, explains their greater prominence during the monarchy. Women were also conspicuous in religious roles from the archaic period onwards (Vestal and Salian virgins).

However, the portrayal of females in early Roman history seems to follow certain pre-determined moralising roles. This includes facilitators like Hersilia and Lavinia, who use their marriages to broker peace between powerful men, and mothers like Rhea Silvia and Larentia, the biological and adoptive mothers respectively of the twins Romulus and Remus. It also includes the extremes of negative and positive exempla of feminine behaviour: Tarpeia, the traitor, and Lucretia, the most virtuous.

Bradley ends this chapter by noting how Rome, which began as a 'multi-ethnic frontier city' (p. 236), becomes much more regulated and shut off with the greater controls imposed by the state in the fifth and fourth centuries BC.

Chapter seven, 'Rome in the early Republic', discusses how, despite the expulsion of the last king in 509 BC and the advent of the new form of government, Rome saw very little constitutional change. *Imperium* was simply transferred from the king to the two consuls and the magistrates, elected by the *comitia centuriata*, which had been established in the reign of Servius Tullius. Not only did the main institutions carry on into the Republic, but the mobile and well-connected Patriciate also continued to occupy the most prestigious posts, taking advantage of their claim to ancestral rights established in the Bronze Age.

Nonetheless, the Plebeians would continually rise against the status quo as the insecure economic environment of the early Republic left them preoccupied with debt-bondage and the distribution of land and food. Plebeian power, which had been courted by the last kings in an attempt to defeat the senate, would carry on threatening the upper classes as the masses became aware of *stasis* (civil strife) and the fight for democracy in Greek states and also as the military importance of infantry began to overtake that of the cavalry, the preserve of the elite. Nowhere is this shift felt more than in Livy, who moves away from the strong individual leaders to a more communal view of the city in a power-sharing republic.

Chapter 8, 'Roman Foreign Relations in the Sixth, Fifth and Fourth Centuries BC', focuses on the conflicts and assimilations that occurred in these periods, particularly with the Latins. For Bradley, the struggles with the Volsci and Aequi prefigure Rome's later wars with the Samnites and Carthaginians.

The instability of the fourth century, which saw Mediterranean states fear for their own survival, sets the stage for two remarkable events that show the dog-eat-dog nature of the environment in which Rome existed. The siege of the Veii, from which the Veii never fully recovered despite many being assimilated into Rome, showed Rome's penchant for imperialism, while the Gallic sack of Rome in 390BC was so traumatic that even the Romans of the Republic feared their return.

Chapter nine, 'Rome and Italy 338-290BC: Conquest and Accommodation', deals with the intensification of war and imperialism from the end of the Latin war in 338 BC to the defeat of the Samnites in 290 BC, with almost all of Italy coming under Roman control by 264BC. Feverish competitiveness among Italian states caused Rome to found colonies, increase its manpower and accumulate resources and military alliances. Neighbouring states were too fragmented or too slow to contain the Roman advance. This competitiveness was also reflected internally, as the Roman elite fought for scarce top posts while the Plebeians happily began to share in the spoils of war.

In chapter 10, 'Rome around 300BC', Bradley argues that the fierce competition for diminishing magistracies amongst the elite, coupled with Hellenisation, made Rome look outwards even more but also pushed it to cement its power within. Rome's state religion was the perfect vehicle for elite and state power displays. Besides claiming arcane control of legal procedures and priesthoods, the elite of the late Monarchy and the early Republic dedicated a large number of temples as a form of propaganda. Some temples, such as the Capitulum, seamlessly transitioned from a symbol of monarchical power to a republican icon, with Jupiter Optimus Maximus becoming the ultimate Republican divinity. This inward and outward looking tendency of the Romans is further exemplified by its 'locative religion' (p. 359) based in the city contrasting with participation in religious festivals in other cities. Bradley demonstrates how Roman religion was fully integrated with the religions of its neighbours, particularly the Latins, and that Roman dedications appeared as far afield as Delphi.

Chapter 11 is the book's short, overall conclusion and stresses how much poorer our assessment of Rome would be if we extricated it from its Mediterranean context, as our main sources have tended to do by focusing on Rome's exceptionalism and insularity. Bradley does not propose that Rome is simply a product of its associations with the Greeks and Phoenicians, but he brings about a greater appreciation of the importance of such connections in the formation of the world empire that Rome would become.