
The first thing to be said about this book is that Grant uses the term 'myth' in a sense quite different from that in which it is normally employed. 'These myths... did not come up from among the ordinary people, as it has often been believed that a decent, respectable myth should.' (p.xv) 'Very often, especially by anthropologists and theologians, no myth is described as a myth unless it is a religious or sacred tale.' (p.261). But Grant's understanding of the word, at least for the purposes of this book, is quite distinct; he takes the expression 'Roman mythology' to mean 'the stories relating to the origin of Rome itself and its early, fabulous history, rather than those accounts of the Olympian gods which were imported with little or no adaptation.' (p.xvii) This special terminology is made clear in the introduction, and there is thus no danger that any reader who gets further than the title page will be seriously misled. Grant is dealing, in fact, with what he calls 'para-history,' which, as he quite properly stresses, is at least as important for the understanding of a culture as history in the ordinarily accepted use of the word.

The next thing to be said is that the book is a resounding success. Any claim to originality would be rash, says Grant, where the material is so extensive. Yet as a work of synthesis the book will be exceedingly valuable, and Grant's particular lines of emphasis - the Etruscans, for example, at the expense of the Sabines - contain much that is new, as does his careful analysis of the various influences at work in the formation of myths: aetiologies and etymologies, families, classes and other sectional and national interests.

The bulk of the book consists of studies of particular myths, but this is preceded by two introductory chapters: first, 'Rome and Etruria without their Myths' - a summary of the archaeological evidence for the early history of the area, presenting lucidly an uncontroversial but up to date account of current views. This is followed by 'Sources of Information', which turn out to be sources available to the myth-makers rather than to the modern scholar. The main sources that Grant himself uses are Virgil, Livy, Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Plutarch and, to a lesser extent, Diodorus. Beyond these writers there is a certain amount of inference, more or less safe, to what their sources were and thus to what groups can be held responsible for the various biases and prejudices that appear in the
versions that we have. Notable here is the stress laid on Etruscan sources, even though their versions were often suppressed by other interested groups who had the opportunity of tampering with the tradition. For the Roman myths were not a spontaneous creation of the people; they were imposed from on top, by those whose own interests made the stories of the past seem of the utmost importance.

The two main discussions are of Aeneas and Romulus, followed by chapters on the mythology of the Roman kings and that of the Roman Republic. The Aeneas story shows, among other things, the passion to find for everything Roman, including Rome itself, an origin in the Greek world. For Dionysius, Aeneas is himself a Greek, being a Trojan; but there is a general tendency, which Grant attributes tentatively to the fourth century and later, to link Greek and Roman institutions at every possible point. A fine example of this is the story of Hercules, in Aeneid VIII, which also illustrates many other threads in Grant's argument. First, the story connects Greece and Rome; secondly it has aetiological (the ara maxima) and etymological (the scalae Caci on the Palatine) significance; finally, there are useful parallels between Hercules and Augustus, in the combat between good and evil, the accomplishment of a series of labours for the benefit of mankind, and in the deification of a human being as a reward for his deeds on earth. At the same time there are elements of ordinary (non-Grantian) mythology, and traces of Etruscan variants can be found elsewhere, in which the characters in the story are quite differently portrayed.

There were particular advantages in the choice of Aeneas, a Trojan, as the founder of the Roman race — a myth which probably grew up after 500, a time when Aeneas becomes extremely popular in Etruscan art, and when Etruscan influence at Rome is still strong. Aeneas had been involved in a Greek context, which gave him a certain legendary respectability, without being Greek; his rivals as founders were Greeks, a number of whom were supposed to have visited the West, and chief among them was Odysseus — no doubt with his peculiarly Greek virtues a man less suitable to be the ancestor of Rome. The Trojan origin of Rome could be exploited diplomatically, as it was in the third century, when Rome began to have dealings with Sicily, and in the second, when large scale involvement with Greece itself followed. Yet Virgil's attitude to Greece is tempered with the spirit of reconciliation, which finds expression in the part played in the Aeneid by Evander, and in the
placing of the most solemn incident of the poem at the Greek town of Cumae. Somewhat surprisingly, perhaps, Grant considers that Etruria was responsible for the transmission of more than the mere story of Aeneas to Rome, and that the Aenean *pietas* also comes from there, accompanied possibly by other moral ideals.

Romulus too provides material to illustrate a number of points. The infancy of the twins is full of Greek features, and some which can be found further afield; yet the story is set firmly in Rome, providing etymology and aetiology; at several stages of the story there are Etruscan variants which failed to find their way into the canon. The reign of Romulus is politically ambivalent: fratricide and autocracy could provide dangerous precedents, yet there was a rival tradition of Romulus as the ideal (if still autocratic) ruler. The varying accounts of his death also provided useful material for later exploitation.

In his account of Romulus' relations with the Sabines, Grant is at some pains to minimise Sabine influence; Sabine culture must have been 'relatively feeble' at the time in question, and it was only the interest of those great families which claimed Sabine origin that resulted in its exaggeration. In contrast, Etruscan influence must have been enormous, but it was largely undervalued or suppressed in the subsequent myth-making process. One result was that the Etruscan goddess Tarquinia, or Tarpeia, was transplanted to a Sabine context, incidentally losing her good name in the move.

The Roman kings are naturally largely mythical, their arrangement making it 'possible to suggest that all the essentials in Roman history had already been anticipated by the first four Roman kings' (p.136), in particular by the warlike Romulus and the peaceful Numa. The process is sometimes aided and sometimes obscured by the apparent wish to substantiate the theory that a monarchy declines steadily after losing its original character. (Incidentally, in this theory, which presumably owes its ultimate origin to Plato, we have an example of the philosophical ideas of history acting on the myth-making process, a side of his subject that Grant otherwise neglects). The culmination is the text-book tyranny of Tarquinius Superbus. But the founding of the Republic, while it brings us within reach of what can be called history, is far from removing us from myth. The first half century is full of mythical tales, as the great families of later days muscle in on the infancy of the Republic; but from this point on Grant is more selective. He deals with Camillus and the embarrassing story of the Gallic conquest; a brief
glance at Regulus and the remark that the myth-making process was still at work on even contemporary events in the time of Augustus leads us to his final chapter, ‘The Character of Roman Mythology,’ which summarises the influences and motives that have been seen at work through the book. Morality, previously underplayed as against other motives, at last gains its due; and the function of myth in providing foundations and justifications for the traditional social institutions is stressed.

Inevitably in a book of this kind there is much that seems rather insecurely based — such remarks as ‘we may assume, therefore, that the historian Licinius Macer, who loathed Sulla, was largely responsible for the first of Livy’s two versions’ (of the death of Remus, p.111) savour of petitio principii, and Grant’s insistence on Etruscan sources is sometimes questionable; as another reviewer¹ has said, ‘here the successful popularizer is caught in his own trap: he must provide a full account, even if it means glossing over gaps in the evidence.’ On p.103 for ‘the Maori hero Massi’ read ‘the Maori hero Maui’; on p.120 for ‘Romulus’ (line 5) read ‘Tatius.’ Misprints are very few, and the book is attractively produced. Notes, though not, unfortunately, at the foot of the page, are clearly set out at the end of the book. Sixteen pages of plates are both relevant and pleasant to look at; there are seven maps, a bibliography of three pages, primarily works in English, and an index, mainly of names. To sum up, a fascinating and useful book, of great value for senior school students and undergraduates studying Latin and Ancient History, and well worth the attention of all interested in the history and literature of Rome.

R.S.W. Hawtrey.