

GAETANO DE SANCTIS AND LIVY: THE FIRST DECADE

Abstract. The classic history of the Roman republic in the twentieth century is Gaetano De Sanctis' *Storia dei Romani*, although it reached only to 134 BC. The most important source for that history is, of course, Livy's *ab urbe condita*. De Sanctis' attitude to Livy is therefore of interest. He began with a devastating assessment, and that is borne out throughout his own narrative, where Diodoros is almost always preferred. When De Sanctis came, however, to reconstruct Rome's history, he proposed the most radical revisions of the tradition, usually relying on Livy!

Keywords: Livy, early Roman history, Diodorus, Gaetano de Sanctis

In 1907 Gaetano De Sanctis (1870–1957) began to publish his *Storia dei Romani*, which because of the vicissitudes which I have elsewhere analysed,¹ finally reached only to 134 BC in the last posthumous instalment.² It is generally regarded, however, as the classic history of that government, at least in the twentieth century. This is because of the detail of its narrative (4 volumes in 8 parts), its documentation, and, truth be told, its ideological stances: the attempt to swing the balance away from Ettore Pais' 'hypercritical' school,³ the influence of De Sanctis' formation at the feet of Karl Julius Beloch, and his own very particular interpretations. There is, in addition, his standing as a beacon of humanity in resistance to the Fascist regime, and that not for the left-wing end of the spectrum, but the Catholic right.

Livy was obviously the main source for that Republican history. De Sanctis' *Storia*, nevertheless, virtually opens with a denunciation of Livy which has never been equalled. In his history of Rome Livy evinced not the slightest interest in a 'work of criticism and learning'; he was concerned only with the 're-evocation and transmission of the glorious deeds of the Roman people' ('rievocare e tramandare le geste gloriose del popolo romano'). Nothing was more repugnant to his mind than historical criticism. An

¹ Ridley (2008). Compare Polverini (1982), which focuses on the limits of the *Storia* (intended to reach Augustus), and the reconstruction of the missing volumes. My own approach was rather different, using the many personal documents which De Sanctis left in order to explain his personal conditions from the 1930s until his death.

² De Sanctis was not the only famous historian not to finish his history of the Republic: Wilhelm Schwegler to 366, Barthold Georg Niebuhr to 264.

³ There is little on Pais in English: Ridley (1976) and (2002).

examination of contradictory accounts—the first duty of the true historian—was beyond him: he left that to his readers. In the entirety of the surviving books there is not ‘the slightest trace of the use of any document whatsoever’ (‘non appare traccia dell’uso diretto d’un documento qualsiasi’). What is worse, he had no idea of the value of such a source (witness his failure to consult for himself the linen books). He preferred to rely on predecessors such as Valerius Antias, of whose ‘impudent mendacity’ (‘sfacciata mendacità’) he was fully aware. He did not organise or bring his sources to life: ‘nothing is more common than his political, military and religious ideas’ (‘nulla è più volgare delle sue considerazioni politiche, militare, religiose’). ‘He is unable, as few other historians, to understand real developments, equally inept in judging a statistical fact, in gaining a clear idea of the conflict of parties or the progress of a battle, or in understanding the value of a legal formula’ (‘Incapace come pochi tra gli storici di rappresentarsi un fatto nel reale suo svolgersi, inetto parimente a giudicare bene d’un dato statistico, a farsi un’idea chiara del contrasto o dell’andamento d’una battaglia, o intendere il valore di una formola giuridica’). His characters only seem alive: it is all artifice and rhetoric. Roman pseudo-history, based on etymological myths and legal debates, deteriorated even further with Livy. ‘Worse still, Livy was unable to control and synthesise his narrative: he not only refers twice to the same fact from different sources without realising it, but—more serious—relates attacks on cities the destruction of which he had related a few pages earlier, the breaking of treaties which he had forgotten to mention had been made, and bitter wars by people whom a little earlier he had talked of as almost annihilated. The only thing which can raise our estimate of Livy is a comparison with Dionysios of Halikarnassos ...’ (‘Peggio ancora, Livio inabile a dominare sinteticamente i fatti che narra, non solo riferisce talora due volte senza avvedersene uno stesso fatto secondo relazioni diverse, ma, ciò è più grave, narra assalti a città di cui poche pagine prima aveva riferito la distruzione, rotture di tregue di cui aveva ommesso d’indicare che si erano concluse, guerre accanite di popoli che poco prima aveva rappresentato come quasi distrutti’)!⁴

The remainder of the *Storia* reveals a barrage of criticism directed against the annalist, or, often, a strange neglect of him. This essay will concentrate on volumes 1 and 2, covering the monarchy and the unification of Italy during the first two centuries of the Republic. It is divided into two parts: De Sanctis’ attitude to Livy; and his attitude to the Roman tradition as represented in Livy. The study is restricted to this early period, because this is where distrust of the tradition is most trenchant, and it will provide

⁴ *Storia dei Romani* (hereafter = *SdR*), I–II (Torino 1907); vol. II² (1960); vol. I³ (1979). *SdR* I.36–8.

the sharpest insight into De Sanctis' attitudes. Consideration of the other twenty five books of Livy, being an entirely different historical problem, may be reserved for another place—or another person. The study is also not a history of the monarchy and early Republic as such, but focused on Livy and de Sanctis. Documentation similarly privileges those two.

In the early chapters, Livy hardly appears. He is mentioned directly in chapter 6, the Origins of Rome, for erroneous views on the *pomerium*,⁵ hardly something everyone even now agrees about; and he is listed as an authority half a dozen times. In chapter 10 (the monarchy), one quarter of the footnotes include Livy, the same proportion as for Dionysios. That is all in the first volume. We shall return to the monarchy and the institution of the Republic in the second part of this essay.

De Sanctis enunciated a basic law: that the narrative of Rome's internal history is much less reliable than that of her external relations.⁶ In keeping with that, the 'Conflict of the Orders' sees little of Livy's account left standing. De Sanctis accepts that the causes of the plebeian crisis were economic, but declares that the agrarian crisis of the fifth century was modelled on that of the second, and that the debt question is treated unconvincingly. Then suddenly, out of nowhere, there appears a reliable source:⁷ none other than Diodoros! This sends us scuttling back to the discussion of sources in chapter one, where we find that he is declared a much better source than Livy or Dionysios.⁸ De Sanctis knows something special about Diodoros, and since he is a contemporary of the other two historians, his value must lie in his sources—and they have been argued over for centuries. Mommsen thought that Diodoros' source was the earliest annalist, Fabius Pictor; the idea that it was Calpurnius Piso, leading 'middle' annalist, goes back at least to Octavius Clason in 1872; Eduard Meyer placed that source between these two; and perhaps De Sanctis' beloved teacher Beloch had already suggested the Sullan Claudius Quadrigarius.⁹ The crucial question is what De Sanctis thought. He gives a very lacunose survey of the debate, but does discount Fabius. We search for clues.

⁵ *SdR* I.196.

⁶ *SdR* I.401.

⁷ *SdR* II.10.

⁸ *SdR* I.41.

⁹ Mommsen (1864–79) II.221–296; Clason (1872) (I owe my copy of this vital article, which has disappeared entirely from bibliographies and is almost unfindable, to Paul Rowan of Glasgow University Library); Meyer (1882); Beloch (1926) 107–8.

More recent views on Diodoros' sources suggest Polybios and Posidonios for the Middle Republic, but 'the sources for most of the early Roman material in the *Bibliothèque* are indeterminable': Sacks (1990) 121, 118.

Diodoros, he states, was using ‘one of the oldest’ annalists, but ‘not one of the oldest, who wrote in Greek.’ That is all. As well as Fabius, excluded would be Cincius Alimentus (Fabius’ contemporary), C. Acilius (fl. 150) and Postumius Albinus (cos. 151). That seems to leave as Diodoros’ source for *De Sanctis* Cato or Cassius Hemina (fl. 150) or Cn. Gellius (after 146).

Livy is lambasted for his mistakes in Sicilian chronology (4.52): there were no tyrants in Syracuse in 411. The whole story of Sp. Maelius which Livy (4.12–16)—and everyone else—told is dismissed as only an aetiology for Servilius’ cognomen Ahala and the place-name Aequimaesium, but Minucius the *praefectus annonae* is genuine¹⁰ (why could his part not be dependent on his statue (Livy 4.16.2))? As for the decemvirs,¹¹ the narrative was subjected to a thorough-going demolition: for example, the account of Verginia was totally wrong in the legal sense: she had to be entrusted to her father until her status was assessed;¹² the secession of the plebeians in 449 was a doublet of that of 494; contrary to Livy’s explicit statement (4.3.17), there were plebeians in the second college; and all three laws of the consuls of 449 were apocryphal; but the XII Tables did establish equality before the law. This was all another illustration of the unreliability of the tradition on political history—and Diodoros was the best source.¹³

Early fifth-century history in Latium is fatefully entitled ‘The Triple Alliance’, alluding to that of Italy, Germany and Austria, which was to play such an important part in *De Sanctis*’ life in 1915, when he fought in vain to uphold it.¹⁴ A personal note which is too fundamental to overlook is his bemoaning the fact that the creation of a single state in Latium was delayed for four centuries by the resistance of the Latins.¹⁵ As a child of the Risorgimento, one of the leitmotifs of *De Sanctis*’ historiography was the search for national unity. Most details of the battle of Lake Regillus in the 490s are declared unreliable, but it is Dionysios who is criticised more than Livy, although only he gave the terms of the subsequent treaty between Rome and the Latins.¹⁶ In the early Etruscan wars the most famous episode is the defeat of the Fabii at the Cremera in 478 (Livy 2.48–50). Dionysios (9.22) had already totally demolished this elevating epic: there could hardly

¹⁰ *SdR* II.15.

¹¹ *SdR* II, ch. 14.

¹² Personal notes on *De Sanctis*’ part are rare: he seems to approve of the freedom of Roman wives: *SdR* II.63.

¹³ *SdR* II.50.

¹⁴ *SdR* II, ch. 15.

¹⁵ *SdR* II.85.

¹⁶ *SdR* II.90, 93.

be only one infant of the Fabii who survived—and was consul ten years later; one family, indeed, could hardly have three hundred members. De Sanctis then leaves no doubt about his rejection of Mommsen's interpretation that it was a private war, a kind of *coniuratio*, and equally of Pais' view that it was all modelled on the three hundred Spartans at Thermopylae. After that, Livy, of all people, is declared preferable—that is, to Mommsen and Pais.¹⁷ If the wars around Cremera contain little that is credible, those of 438-395 have 'an obvious historical foundation' ('un evidente sostrato storico'). When we turn to the later period of the narrative, based on Livy, however, De Sanctis declares that 'it nowhere gives any assurance of truth' ('non dà in ogni parte affidamento di veridicità').¹⁸ The key episode here is Cossus' *spolia opima* of 437 won from Tolumnius of Veii, ally of Fidenae (Livy 4.20), which Augustus tried to downdate to 428. One of De Sanctis' weakest analyses is his throwaway line that the earlier date was a simple misunderstanding, deriving from the fact that a consul of 437 had the surname Fidenas.¹⁹ That overlooks the fact that there were no wars fought in Cossus' consulship in 428 (Livy 4.40.9). As for the great siege of Veii, De Sanctis notes the doublets caused by beginning the war in 407 and 406, and asserts that the ten years' duration was copied from the Trojan War (so there are Greek borrowings!), that no Roman could have known what was said at meetings of the Etruscan League (5.17.6), that the monarchy at Veii was hardly a reason for refusal by the Etruscans to lend aid (5.19.10: it was the normal form of government there), and that the tunnel under the city would have had to go under the surrounding river and through rock.²⁰ In sum, despite the introductory assertions, these later Etruscan wars do not seem to be based on a very sound tradition.

Livy's history of the great Gallic invasions (5.3-45) is declared 'a late, more or less fantastic attempt at historical reconstruction' ('non sono che un tardo e più o meno fantastico tentativo di ricostruzione storica'). On the famous battle of 390 and the capture of the city, Livy is given a back-handed compliment: he is superior to Diodoros (14.113-17) and Plutarch's *Camillus* in literary merit—and not always inferior to Diodoros in historical value—but the last is the best source!²¹ The Etruscans would hardly have sent for aid to a hostile power such as Rome; the Gauls had no need of diplomatic niceties to attack Rome; and Camillus' exile is simply a device to separate him from

¹⁷ *SdR* II.124.

¹⁸ *SdR* II.128, 130.

¹⁹ *SdR* II.131.

²⁰ *SdR* II.133-4.

²¹ *SdR* II.151, 155.

the defeat. On the other hand, Camillus' return and victory to avenge the Allia is 'a legend admirably narrated by Livy' ('questa leggenda è mirabilmente narrata in Livio'), and there is no reason to doubt that the Capitol held out. Best of all, on the most fundamental matter, which side of the Tiber the battle was fought (left, not right, *contra* Diodoros), 'it is interesting [sic!] to see that, in this case, the more ancient and trustworthy account is preserved in Livy' ('È interessante vedere che in questo caso la tradizione più antica e fededegna ci è conservata da Livio').²² Regarding Manlius Capitolinus, his part in the defence and all the details of his subsequent 'revolution' and trial are declared suspect by De Sanctis. He nevertheless accepts the contrast between Manlius' revolution and Camillus' peaceful reforms.²³

The extremes to which De Sanctis could go in his prejudice against Livy and preference for Diodoros are nowhere better illustrated than in his judgement on Livy's description of the disaffection of the Latins towards Rome after the Gallic sack (6.8.3). 'This notice is not in Diodoros, but the whole history of the following years suggests that it is authentic' ('Questa notizia non è in Diodoro; ma tutta la storia degli anni seguenti induce a ritenerla autentica')!²⁴

The struggle for the consulship in the 360s shows, De Sanctis declared, that Livy does not take the trouble to reflect on his 'absurdities' ('aneddotto, privo di senso'):²⁵ this was the story of the two Fabias (6.39.6–7). De Sanctis also detects doublets: the dictators Camillus and Manlius in 368 and the clash between the two saviours of 390. He then becomes involved in contradiction: the *lex Licinia Sextia* was necessary for the election of a plebeian consul (not what Roman law stated: the XII Tables, ap. Livy 7.17.12), but the law was then disregarded—perhaps because such election was optional, not obligatory (which is not what the law stated and what happened from 342 BC to the end of the Republic). The *lex agraria* and law on priesthoods may have been invented—but that only proved the authenticity of the electoral law!²⁶ Livy's account of the Gallic wars of the

²² *SdR* II.162, 165, 158.

²³ *SdR* II.184–5.

²⁴ *SdR* II.229.

²⁵ *SdR* II.201.

²⁶ *SdR* II.204. There are further personal revelations. Claudius (censor 312) tried to remedy 'one of the major social injustices' ('una delle maggiori ingiustizie sociali') by distributing the urban population through the tribes, but there were some unforeseen results: the 'plebaglia' could outvote the urban population, and had been 'infected with disordered elements' ('infettare d'elementi torbidi') through manumissions (2.214, 217). One recalls that De Sanctis was to stand for the Partito Popolare 1919–1921. On the other

360s and 350s is, according to De Sanctis, totally suspect. The invasions can neither be affirmed nor denied, but there are certainly imaginary victories in 350 and 349 (Livy 7.23–6). On the other hand, Livy is complimented for his prudence regarding the raids of the Greek pirates (7.25, 26).²⁷ It is, however, no surprise that De Sanctis accepts Diodoros' date of 348 (16.69) for the first Roman–Carthaginian treaty, against Polybios' 509 (3.22): but Livy also notoriously has nothing until 348 (7.27).²⁸

In the Latin War, apart from the causes—notably the Latins' demand for shared power (Livy 5.5), which was the situation two centuries later!—De Sanctis' main criticism of Livy is that he had no idea of topography.²⁹ The battle in 340 could not take place near Vesuvius (Livy 8.8.19), because this was south of every participant's territory. Using the best sources (sic: Diod. 16.90), De Sanctis placed the battle near Vescinus near Suessa. This solution is not known to Oakley, who accepts Vesuvius, but was to Walters and Conway,³⁰ but Vescinus had been already proposed by Madvig. The error may not, of course, be Livy's at all, but that of his copyists, because he mentioned this area later (10.20.1, etc).³¹

De Sanctis misses no chance to catch Livy in contradiction: the Aurunci were destroyed in 326 (8.25), but had asked for Roman help in 337 (8.15–16), 'a patent contradiction, which, as usual, he does not notice' ('con patente contraddizione, di cui al solito non s'avvede').³² Much, however, might have happened in eleven years. The truth is worse: De Sanctis' references are wrong: the Aurunci (Ausones) were 'wiped out' in 314 (Livy 9.25), twenty-three years later. By insisting on Roman numerals for books, the reference has been corrupted.

In the Samnite wars, Diodoros is declared to be 'relatively free from falsifications' ('relativamente scevro di falsificazioni annalistiche'), while they 'abound' ('abbondano') in Livy, who 'either reports what he has read, or clothes it in artistic blandishments' ('riferendo tal quale ciò che legge, o anzi rivestendolo coi lenocini dell'arte'). And yet at the very same time he is

hand, he describes the customary defects of popular sovereignty as dispersal of energy and contradictory policies (II.221).

²⁷ *SdR* II.245, 251.

²⁸ *SdR* II.239.

²⁹ *SdR* II.262.

³⁰ Oakley (1998) 486; Conway and Walters, OCT ad loc.

³¹ For De Sanctis, the settlement with the Latins was 'the critical moment in Rome's history' ('il momento critico della storia di Roma', II.267).

³² *SdR* II.270.

credited with being fully aware of the problems with his sources (8.40).³³ De Sanctis admits that Livy's preferred version for the capture of Naples in 327 at the beginning of the Second Samnite War (8.26) is indeed the one to be preferred. The annalists, however, could not imagine that one of Rome's most faithful allies could revolt; they therefore split the city into two and blamed Palaiopolis (8.22): all this is invention, declared De Sanctis. Another invention is the alliance of Rome and the Lucanians (8.27.2). Livy admits to doubts about the campaigns of 324, but still gives a long account (8.30–6). Suspect also are the truce with the Samnites in 323 (8.37.2) and the victory of 322: note the lack of location (8.38–9) and the uncertainty about the commander (8.40.1).³⁴ What all this in fact proves is that the Roman historical tradition was very unreliable still at the end of the fourth century, and that was the tradition to which Livy was heir; it was unreliable, moreover, contrary to De Sanctis' rule, in major matters of foreign history.

The Caudine Forks (321) is, of course, a crux in any history of this period. A battle (*proelium*: Cic. *Cato* 41; *pugnatum est*: Cic. *Off.* 3.109) has been converted into an ambush, all to provide a doublet for Mancinus in Spain in 137: such was De Sanctis' convincing analysis. The necessary consequence was the total dishonouring of fourth century ancestors! Worse was the 'pseudo-history' ('pseudostoria') of 320 (9.12–15), the Roman revenge, with the 'absurdity' ('è assurdo') that one legion could win where two could not.³⁵

On the resumption of hostilities in 315, the Romans won a victory at Terracina in 314 with 10,000 casualties (Diod. 19.76) cf. at Caudium, with 30,000 dead (Livy 9.27). Capua was recovered, but Livy misunderstood. He also retails 'fables' of vast Samnite losses in 311 (9.31). The famous story of Fabius invading Etruria through the Cimminian forest (9.36) is 'excessive, almost ridiculous exaggeration' ('pecca di smisurata e quasi ridicola esagerazione'): this forest had nothing to do with the Etruscans, Rome already had relations with them beyond it, and her allies like Caere knew the passes, declared De Sanctis. Livy again doubles battles: Sutrium in 310 (9.37) = Perugia in 309 (9.40).³⁶ One must note at the same time De Sanctis' inconsistent methods in dealing with the *Acta Triumphalia*. A victory is registered, but not believed, or a victory is uncertain because it is not registered.³⁷ Even when Livy records a Roman defeat at the hands of the Samnites in 310 (9.38.8), he is declared 'a source of mediocre value' ('una

³³ *SdR* II.277. De Sanctis praises the Samnites for their egalitarianism (II.258).

³⁴ *SdR* II.286–7.

³⁵ *SdR* II.297–8.

³⁶ *SdR* II.307 (Terracina); II.310 (311); II.315 (the forest).

³⁷ *SdR* II.316, 318.

fonte di mediocre valore'). 'Our best source' ('nostra fonte migliore') does not record a Roman victory in 309 (cf. Livy 9.40). Decius' victory over the Umbrians in 308 is similarly suspect because it is not in Diodoros (20.35). What a turnabout, then, that at the very end of the Second Samnite War, despite invented victories again (Livy 9.43.17), Livy is judged correct in his details of the settlement with the various peoples of the Hernici (9.42).³⁸

De Sanctis should be thanked for reminding us of a major problem in the early annals—and its solution: that there is so often argument over which commander fought where (e.g. Livy 10.16). Benedikt Niese suggested that the original source gave only the campaigns and not the commanders, and that the later annalists tried to insert the latter—not always to unanimous agreement.³⁹

In the Third Samnite War, Fulvius' victory in 298 (Livy 10.12.9) duplicates that of 305 (9.44.14–15); the victories of 297 are even less credible, while Decius' exploits in 296 (10.16.2) are labelled 'grotesque' ('grottesco').⁴⁰ Livy's victories lack location (10.19) and are not supported by their effect on the war. The battle of the nations was fought at Sentinum in 295: Livy's preliminaries (10.27) are 'not worth discussing' ('non mi sembrano meritino neppur discussione' (!)), and he has Samnite raids which preceded the battle coming after it (10.31.2). Victories in Etruria 'at the same time' are duplicated (10.30.1 = 10.31.3). In the enemy casualties in the battle, De Sanctis notes only Diodoros' 100,000. Although from the contemporary Duris of Samos (Diod. 21.6), it is declared by De Sanctis to be 'very exaggerated' ('esageratissimo, sebbene dato da un contemporaneo'); Livy's much more restrained 25,000 (10.29.17) goes unrecorded. Livy is praised, however, for mentioning only Samnites and Gauls as taking part, as did Polybios (2.19.5).⁴¹ There are finally two doublets: the *devotio* of the Decii in 340 and 295, and the victories of Papirius in 309 and 293 (9.40, 10.389). In both cases, De Sanctis declares the earlier to be the original.⁴²

De Sanctis' first two volumes thus illustrate all his general charges against Livy: his absurdities (the Cremera, the Fabiae, the war against Veii), his inventions (the Etruscan and Samnite wars), his military vagueness, his exaggeration of enemy losses, his contradictions, his legal inaccuracies, his misunderstandings (the *spolia opima*), his doublets, his aetiological myths (Maelius and Ahala), his anachronisms (conditions in the fifth century, the

³⁸ *SdR* II.316 (defeat); II.318 (Decius); II.321 (Hernici).

³⁹ *SdR* II.334.

⁴⁰ *SdR* II.335, 336.

⁴¹ *SdR* II.339.

⁴² *SdR* II.340, 343.

Gallic sack, the Latin War), his Greek borrowings. De Sanctis is relentless. Rarely is Livy paid a compliment: he does place the battle of the Allia on the right side of the river, he is aware of source problems after all, and he is a fine stylist!

How does De Sanctis sort all this out? In the case of doublets, details can be shown to correspond, but then one must examine which version of the two is authentic and which the copy. It is to be noted that mostly De Sanctis judges that the earlier event is the original; a notable exception is 321 and 137. Absurdities tend to stand out—but those regarding the Cremera were already listed by Dionysios. For aetiological myths we are sure that we can detect the stimuli: names (Ahala, Aequimaelium)—why not then also the statue of Minucius? Greek borrowings were a favourite of Pais: De Sanctis accepts the ten year coincidence at both Veii and Troy (although it is admitted by the despised Livy)—but rejects the equally obvious 300 at the Cremera and also Thermopylae only two years earlier. Topographical errors may be detected by a place that is too far away, but a simpler explanation with such names may be textual corruption. On the vital matter of patrician and plebeian status, modern historians have their own criteria to check the classical sources. In the great crux of the *spolia opima* De Sanctis has followed what some would consider the dangerous path of believing Augustus against Livy. Use of the *Acta Triumphalia* seems inconsistent. And one of De Sanctis' major Ariadne's threads (as he famously called them), his trust in accounts of external relations more than internal history, is contradicted by the many faults he detects in diplomatic history as late as the second half of the fourth century. There is, however, another Ariadne's thread—more like a chain—which guides De Sanctis' judgement more than any other: an unbounded faith in the Greek historian Diodoros of Sicily, a faith hardly justified by the desultory discussion at the beginning of volume 1.

Such are De Sanctis' unrelenting criticisms of Livy in the early history of Rome. There is an even more illuminating way to approach the relationship between the two historians. Despite writing his *Storia dei Romani* explicitly as a reaction to the sceptical Pais' *Storia critica di Roma*, the former's account contains reconstructions of vital episodes which go far beyond any criticism of the tradition in the latter. They also challenge some of the most fundamental episodes in Livy's annals.

De Sanctis' account of the monarchy is basically traditional. The names of the kings were set as early as the fifth century, although it is admitted that there is controversy about the authors of some institutions (many falsely attributed to Servius Tullius), and although he states that the two Tarquins were doublets. It is, in fact, foreign history which is contested: Rome did not

succeed Alba Longa as head of the Latin League, but Rome dominated it under her kings.⁴³

The major rejection of the tradition comes with the fall of the monarchy. Livy (and, of course, the whole Republican historiographical tradition) are overthrown: 'While the records of the colonies founded in the fifth century among the Volsci and the records of the treaty of Cassius are essentially credible, we have no account worthy of trust on the fall of the monarchy, the origins of the consulship, of the dictatorship, or of the tribunate of the plebs' ('mentre le notizie sulle colonie condotte nel sec.V nel paese dei Volsci e quelle sul tratto di Cassio sono sostanzialmente plausibili, non abbiamo nessuna relazione degna di fede sul declinare della monarchia, sulle origine del consolato, della dittatura e del tribunato della plebe').⁴⁴ The crimes of a single king can overthrow a dynasty, he stated, but do not require a new constitution. He preferred two Etruscan traditions, namely: (1) Macstarna from the François Tomb at Vulci,⁴⁵ with Claudius' speech (*ILS* 212); and (2) Porsenna of Clusium. Since the Tarquins are doublets, so were these other Etruscans: Macstarna was not Servius Tullius as Claudius claimed, but Porsenna! Livy and the whole tradition have been swept away in a combination that takes the breath away. There were even bolder anti-Livy moves to follow.

For the Roman historian and the whole preceding annalistic tradition, the monarchy was overthrown and outlawed, and replaced by the double consulship: cause and effect. This was the central fact in the first seven centuries of Roman history, but was wrong, according to De Sanctis, on two counts. Livy knew that the kings continued (2.2.1), and that the earliest title of the Republican magistrates was *praetor* (3.55.12, confirmed by the Twelve Tables of 450 BC). The growing power of the magistrates was, moreover, the cause, not the effect, of the king's 'fall'. His subordinates increased in power and downgraded him. There was a third text from Livy: the earliest praetors numbered at least three (7.3.5). In short, the earliest magistrates of the Republic were not two consuls but three praetors. One was later downgraded to produce the two consuls and the one praetor known to the tradition from 366.⁴⁶ It is De Sanctis' method which is here again fundamental: the worthless Livy has been subverted, but *at the same time* has proved to provide the vital evidence for an alternative narrative totally at

⁴³ *SdR* I.370 (names), 378 (institutions), 375 (Tarquins), 385/391 (League).

⁴⁴ *SdR* I.401.

⁴⁵ For the best photographs, see Alföldi (1965) plates 8-12. On the tradition concerning Servius Tullius, see Ridley (1975) (in the course of being reprinted).

⁴⁶ *SdR* II, ch. 11.

variance with the traditional one. The result is a double paradox: the reliance on Livy, and a wholesale rewriting of history by the conservative De Sanctis.

We have already noted the attack on the Livian account of the decemvirs of 451–450.⁴⁷ Demolition of Livy was only a first step; then came the reconstruction. Claudius was not a tyrant but a precocious reformer, and Verginia was not a plebeian but a patrician. The decemvirs were not repulsive despots but good legislators, even pro-plebeians. They were overthrown not by the restorers of Republican freedom, but by patrician reactionaries. The infamous ban on intermarriage between patricians and plebeians was therefore more likely to be the work of these last. In all this it must be admitted that the innovator was De Sanctis: fifteen years after his reconstruction in the *Storia* there appeared in 1921 Eugen Täubler's *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Decemvirats*, which developed all of these ideas.⁴⁸

One of the most famous vignettes of the early Roman wars is the drama of Coriolanus, hero against the Volsci, who then turned traitor (Livy 2.33–4). De Sanctis stressed that there was no chronology, that Volscian successes were hardly likely in the aftermath of the alliance of the Latins with Rome in the 490s, that the town of Corioli was unimportant during the wars, and that the Marcii Coriolani were otherwise known. All this is undeniable. De Sanctis saw in this the evident hand of Valerius Antias. Again De Sanctis stood the tradition on its head: Coriolanus was not a Roman, but a hero from Corioli. It is not, in fact, until ca. 430 in the wars that De Sanctis declares that we are 'now on the edge of history' ('sul limitare della storia').⁴⁹

Livy described the original Roman army as based on three tribal contingents (1.13.8), reformed by Servius Tullius ca. 550 (1.42–3): the so-called Servian Reforms, which introduced the centuriate organisation based on the Greek hoplite phalanx. De Sanctis notoriously down-dated this by one and a half centuries, after the Gallic sack. The main evidence was his belief that the new system presupposed a population of adult citizens of 30,000. It should be noted, in passing, however, that De Sanctis stresses that the centuriate assembly is the key to the plebeians' victory in the Conflict of the Orders, because the patricians were not in a majority, even in the top centuries.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ *SdR* II, ch. 14.

⁴⁸ Täubler (1921). Yet De Sanctis is mentioned only incidentally (123, 125)! The main authorities are Mommsen and Meyer.

⁴⁹ *SdR* II.103–4, 115.

⁵⁰ *SdR* II.181–2, 199.

There is an even more amazing paradox, on top of these reversals of the most basic tradition in a traditional history. In the journal *Pegaso* 1931, De Sanctis addressed himself again to Livy.⁵¹ There were so many of the same criticisms made: gullibility regarding tradition, Romano-centricity, lack of attention to detail, frequent invention, total incompetence in describing battles, disregard of ‘documents’, and supposedly no awareness of historical problems. By this time, however, a quarter of a century after the analysis of Livy in the *Storia*, Livy was no longer the epicentre of these criticisms. He was simply characteristic of Roman historiography! De Sanctis concluded, indeed, with a hymn to Livy’s ‘greatness and efficacy’ (‘grandezza e efficacia’) because of his ‘marvellous intuition’ (‘mirabile intuizione’) about humanity. His was a colossal and unique work: he had no successors.⁵²

De Sanctis made clear in his *Ricordi della mia vita* that the formative influence on his life was his birth a few weeks after the Breccia of 20 September 1870. This was a formative influence on his whole life: he was born a citizen of modern Italy, not the old Papal State. It led him, nay forced him, to take an independent stance within his reactionary family, a very serious step for him.⁵³ This leads to another paradox. Although he is perfectly entitled to judge Livy harshly as an historian if the evidence warrants it, it is strange that he never acknowledged that Livy, if not in an identical situation to himself, was in a parallel one. Livy was born in 59 BC, and when an adolescent the northernmost part of Italy was given full citizen rights. He also from a young age was a citizen of a new Italy.

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⁵¹ Immediately reprinted in De Sanctis (1932) 225–47 and again in De Sanctis (1983) 41–58.

⁵² De Sanctis raises a very interesting and unusual question: why do almost all Roman historians keep going back to the foundation (*ab urbe condita*)? He suggests it was because of new techniques that had been developed since a predecessor’s work, or new developments (‘every point of arrival was a point of departure’). A simpler and more revealing answer is that Roman history was viewed by almost all her historians as a continuum: the present could only be understood in the light of the full past.

⁵³ De Sanctis (1975), esp. ch. 2. The author thanks most warmly two readers who made many helpful suggestions.

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