

Rome: Day One. By Andrea CARANDINI. Translated by Stephen Sartarelli. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011. Pp. 172. \$24.95/£16.95. ISBN 978-0-691-13922-7.

Andrea Carandini is a phenomenon. For twenty years he directed with great success one of the prime sites in all Roman archaeology, the north slope of the Palatine from the Vesta temple to the Arch of Titus. An early find was the remains of a wall datable to the mid-eighth century BC, which was immediately hailed as proof of the historicity of the Romulus legend. On the basis of that belief, Carandini has produced a great succession of hugely ambitious books to present what he sees as the “history” of early Rome from the Bronze Age to Servius Tullius: *La nascita di Roma* (1997), *Roma: Romolo, Remo e la fondazione della città* (2000), *Archeologia del mito* (2002), *Palatino, Velia e Sacra Via* (2004), *Remo e Romolo* (2006), *La leggenda di Roma* (2006, 2010, two more volumes forthcoming), *Cercando Quirino* (2007), *Sindrome occidentale* (2007), *Roma: Il primo giorno* (2007), *Re Tarquinio e il divino bastardo* (2010). The most recent of those titles is written in the form of a novel, and all of them take for granted an epistemological approach which has much in common with imaginative fiction. Carandini calls it “free thinking”; he dismisses those who criticize it as “traditional classicists enclosed in an intolerably snobbish scepticism,” and claims that only their prejudice has prevented the translation of his work into English.¹

But now, thanks to Princeton University Press and the European Secretariat for Scientific Publications, which funded the translation, monoglot anglophones can have at least a small taste of his *oeuvre*. The first thing they may notice is the absence of a bibliography: this author does not engage in scholarly debate, and on the few occasions when he refers to rival hypotheses he attributes them to a straw man called “contemporary historians.” True, there are a few footnotes, but the first is to Sigmund Freud and most of the rest are to Carandini’s own work. Like most of his recent books, this one aims at a non-specialist audience: “I would like to take the reader by the hand and have him or her descend with me some thirteen meters under the city of Rome ... and to go back more than twenty-seven centuries into the past, in search of the first acts and the first day of Rome’s existence: April 21, around 750 BC” (6). Such readers will not be disappointed.

¹ A. Carandini, “Archeologia e libero pensiero”, *Workshop di archeologia classica* 4 (2007) 11-15; *Archeologia classica: vedere il tempo antico con gli occhi del 2000* (Torino 2008) 7.

Carandini writes well, and is generous in providing excellent and informative illustrations. The question is, what is the status of the information they transmit?

No one, of course, would doubt the significance of Carandini's own excavation results. He carefully identifies his six "great archaeological discoveries": the deposit of eighth-century ceramics that dates the wall (59); the remains of a late eighth-century house in the sanctuary of Vesta (74); the remains of an early sixth-century house to the east of it, connected to the Vesta sanctuary by an underground passage (76); the restructuring of the house in the sanctuary in the late sixth century (80); a second-century BC temple next to it, identified as that of the Lares (83); and finally, below those successive developments, the remains of an eighth-century hut about 15m east of the Vesta temple (86). That is all new information, and hugely important. But it is only a small part of Carandini's argument. To make it cast light on Rome's "Day One" he needs a story, and that story has to come from literary sources written many centuries later.

Carandini refers to "the legend of Rome's founding" (15 and *passim*) as if there were only one. Dionysius (*Ant. Rom.* 1.72–3) knew fourteen different versions, Plutarch (*Romulus* 1–2) knew thirteen, Festus (326–9L) knew ten, Servius *auctus* (on *Aeneid* 1.273) knew eight. Even if we restrict ourselves to the Romulus story, which Romulus should we choose? The grandson of Aeneas, as in Naevius and Ennius? That would make him a figure of the Bronze Age. According to Carandini (7), "Roman historians maintained" that Rome was founded at some date between 758 and 725. Those dates are taken, inaccurately, from Dionysius (1.74.1) and Solinus (1.27), but Carandini does not mention the unnamed Roman historians cited by Dionysius (1.73.2) who made the twins the sons or grandsons of Aeneas. Dates of any kind could only be offered once Timaeus and Eratosthenes in the third century BC had worked out a continuous chronological sequence that linked mythological and historical time. One particular chronological context for *urbs condita* eventually became canonical, but it was a purely artificial construct, and the fact that it roughly matches the archaeological date of Carandini's discoveries is no more than an accident.

Rome didn't need "founding" in the eighth century BC. There was already a substantial community there, which dated back well into the second millennium BC. For Carandini, what happened on Day One was "the invention of a new form of organization and government" (22), "a series of ceremonial acts and sacred prohibitions that instilled into the soil and the people a will to power expressed from the start in forms that we might term 'modern' – that is, juridical, political, governmental, constitutional – masked but not negated by sacred and

holy institutions" (p. 28). That is not something archaeology can tell you, and as an interpreter of the literary evidence Carandini has, to put it mildly, no more authority than the classicists he so detests.

The translation is faulty in places,² but it hardly matters. Even where accurately translated, Carandini's handsome little book offers no more than an enjoyable fantasy.

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Cicero in Letters: Epistolary Relations of the Late Republic. By Peter WHITE. New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010. Pp. xii + 235. Hardcover, £40.00/\$60.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-538851-0.

Peter White is well-known to any student or scholar of Latin poetry, but the book under review marks the culmination (so far) of his interest in Roman letter-writing and epistolary culture (see also "Tactics in Caesar's Correspondence with Cicero," in F. Cairns and E. Fantham, eds., *Caesar against Liberty? Perspectives on his Autocracy, Papers of the Langford Latin Seminar* 11 [2003] 68–95). His book on Cicero's letters comes at a time when studies in Latin epistolography and Ciceronian scholarship on the correspondence are flourishing. Most recently, Hall's *Politeness and Politics in Cicero's Letters* (Oxford, 2009), has turned our attention to the social interaction and social etiquette played out in the correspondence. There is so much more to be done with Cicero's letters and White's work is therefore a welcome addition to the scholarship on epistolary culture and the Ciceronian correspondence.

The book comprises six chapters divided into two parts. The first part, "Reading the Letters from the Outside In," deals with practical aspects of letter writing in the Roman world (Chapter 1), the ways in which the collection of Cicero's letters was edited (Chapter 2), and the structural elements of a letter (Chapter 3). The second part, "Epistolary Preoccupations," looks at three differ-

² E.g. "below see level" for *sul livello del mare* (p. 64), "fourth century" for *VI secolo* (p. 75), "pagan statue" for *statuto paganico* (p. 96), and more complex misunderstandings of the original at pp. 33, 40, 59, 93, 103, 108.