

CHAPTER I

THE SOURCES

Of all the tribes and nations with whom the Romans found themselves obliged to dispute the supremacy of Italy none were more formidable than the Samnites of Samnium. They were the stalwart possessors of a larger territory and of a more determined temperament than any other people in the peninsula. They were numerous enough and spirited enough to refuse to submit tamely to Rome, and the military and political opposition that they put up against her was of the toughest.¹ It is a commonplace that they, and they alone, were the really redoubtable rivals of Rome for the hegemony of peninsular Italy, and they came within measurable distance of winning it. For half a century and more, from 343 to 290, they engaged her in the three successive conflicts known as the Samnite Wars, and they renewed the struggle with her whenever opportunity offered in the course of the two centuries that followed: the war upon which the name of King Pyrrhus of Epirus has been bestowed might with equal propriety be called a Fourth Samnite War, as indeed Livy implies and Orosius positively states;² Hannibal, too, found some solace and support amongst the Samnite tribes; and in the first century the last great uprising of the Italians against Roman despotism once again found the Samnites in arms, characteristically displaying greater tenacity and a more resolute will to resist than any of the other insurgents.

In view of the notable role of this people it is surprising that they have attracted, relatively speaking, so little attention. No version of Roman history can possibly fail to give them a good deal of space. But this is invariably done within the Roman frame of reference, and not as an independent study, although they are worthy of investigation for themselves. The narrowness of the margin between victory and defeat for them is in itself a challenging subject of inquiry. Yet they have seldom any received thorough or searching attention. No

¹ Even after the Romans had celebrated twenty-four triumphs over them (Florus 1. 11. 8), the Samnites were still prepared to renew their resistance whenever they got the chance.

² Livy 23. 42. 2; Orosius 3. 8. 1; 3. 22. 12.

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full-length, comprehensive monograph on the Samnites has ever appeared.¹ And this is the more remarkable seeing that, though remote, they are not mere creatures of legend, but are very much alive in a period that has been intensively scrutinized. It is a compact tale that begins with their sudden appearance as allies of Rome in 354 and ends with their massacre at the Colline Gate in 82, and, if not fully within the light of history, its outlines are firm and many of its details certain.² The Samnites are mentioned by name by Greek authors of the early fourth century, but only casually.³ The surviving ancient accounts of Roman history are concerned almost exclusively with the Romans. The people whom the Romans defeated receive only incidental attention; they are mentioned only when they are considered relevant to the Roman story. Münzer has drawn attention to the narrow-mindedness of the accounts: 'Things are viewed from one specific aspect only. In the matter of relations between Rome and the outside world all views except the Roman were suppressed. . . .'⁴

Dionysius of Halicarnassus, it is true, is one writer who is quite catholic, and he inserts into his narrative erudite excursuses about the various Italic peoples whom the Romans encountered.⁵ But, for the period of Roman dealings with the Samnites, his *Roman Antiquities* (Books 15–20) are extant only in scanty fragments.⁶

The story of early Rome was itself told in the form of a fixed and inviolate tradition, some of which was already known to Greek writers of the fourth century, or earlier,⁷ and the firm framework of

¹ B. Kaiser's *Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der Samniten* (Progr. Pforta, 1907) never got beyond volume I.

² It is precisely in the period of the Samnite Wars that Roman history acquires an aspect of vital reality. Certainly from the fourth century on Rome must have had historical records of a sort; Greek writers of that time would hardly have described an unlettered settlement as an 'Hellenic city' (Heraclides Ponticus *ap.* Plut. *Cam.* 22. 2.; cf. Demetrius Poliorcetes *ap.* Strabo 5. 3. 5, p. 232).

³ Philistus *ap.* Steph. Byz. s.vv. 'Mystia', 'Tyrseta'; Ps. Scylax, *Periplus*, 15.

⁴ *Römische Adelsfamilien*, p. 46, cf. p. 66; also see such passages as Livy 33. 20. 13; 41. 25. 8.

⁵ Strabo also bestows more than a passing glance on non-Roman peoples, but primarily with the eye of a geographer.

⁶ He was verbose and rhetorical and one wonders how trustworthy his information would have been, had more of it survived. His figure of 15,000 for the Roman dead at Heraclea hardly inspires confidence: he must have known that Hieronymus of Cardia, a contemporary of the battle, gave the number as 7,000 (Plut. *Pyrhh.* 17. 4).

⁷ Thucydides' contemporary, Antiochus of Syracuse, referred to Rome (Dion. Hal. 1. 73. 4); Aristotle alluded to the sack of the city by the Celts (Plut. *Cam.* 22. 3); and Theopompus at least mentioned Rome (fr. 317 Jacoby). See further Dion. Hal. 1. 72 and E. Wikén, *Die Kunde der Hellenen, passim*.

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which was rendered canonical by Fabius Pictor in the third. It derived ultimately from the bare and unadorned records of the Roman pontiffs (*tabulae pontificum*)¹ which were gathered together and expanded in the second century in the collection known as the *Annales Maximi*; and the individual historian felt it his duty not to depart from this established outline, but rather to produce a literary creation within it.² His not to embark on the task of painstaking research to confirm or radically modify the accepted version.³ One result of this is that the appearances of the Samnites in ancient literature are haphazard and sporadic. The only occasion on which they receive even a semblance of continuous treatment is during their wars with Rome, and even these are described exclusively from the viewpoint of the Roman victors. Nor was this the result of accident. Fabius Pictor had set out deliberately to justify the ways of Rome to men. He sought to replace any and all conceptions of the history of Italy, which Greek writers had been spreading, with securely pro-Roman versions.⁴ Duris of Samos, Hieronymus of Cardia, Philistus and Callias of Syracuse, Lycus of Rhegium and

¹ Every sacerdotal college seems to have preserved its *fasti* (CIL, 1. 1976–2010). Those of the pontiffs were very ancient (Dion. Hal. 3. 36; cf. 5. 1) and some of them escaped the Gallic sack, so Livy implies (6. 1. 10 and even 6. 1. 2). A famous emendation of *de leg.* 1. 2. 6 makes Cicero describe these records of the pontiffs as ‘jeune’; Cicero, however, is referring to their style rather than their content. In fact the *tabulae* contained a good deal of information: they mentioned grain shortages and eclipses of the sun and moon, according to Cato (Aul. Gell. 2. 28. 6; cf. Dion. Hal. 1. 74), and probably much more, if the length of the *Annales Maximi* means anything. (The *Annales* were in eighty books; in other words their compass exceeded Livy’s (see Cic. *de orat.* 2. 52; Festus, p. 113 L.; Macrobi. 3. 2. 17; Serv. *ad Aen.* 1. 373; cf. Livy 1. 31, 32, 60 and especially Sempronius Asellio, fr. 2 P.) Presumably those *tabulae pontificum* which were compiled during the Samnite Wars (that is, after the Gallic sack of Rome) survived intact into historiographical times; and from at least the Pyrrhic War onwards they were drawn up in firm chronological outline (Pliny, *N.H.* 11. 186). The information contained in the priestly records could be supplemented from popular ballads and folklore, to which a number of ancient authors allude (Varro *ap.* Nonius, p. 77; Livy 2. 61. 9; Hor. *Odes*, 4. 15. 29–32; Dion. Hal. 1. 79. 10; 8. 62. 3; Val. Max. 2. 1. 10; Plut. *Numa*, 5. 3).

² The *Annales Maximi* were anything but skimpy (see preceding note). They must have been padded with much fictitious material. Of the two items positively known to have been recounted by them, one is an obvious falsification (it is a line of poetry which purported to be a popular Latin verse, but was in fact a mere translation from Hesiod: Aul. Gell. 4. 5. 6). The other is probably trustworthy: it is an eclipse of the sun (5 June, c. 350 A.U.C.) recorded by Ennius, who had obtained it from the records of the pontiffs (Cic. *de re pub.* 1. 25). Ennius, however, like Cato (fr. 77P.), used the pontifical records before they were edited, and contaminated, as *Annales Maximi*. To identify the fictitious additions to the *Annales Maximi* is not easy: but one such is almost certainly the Camillus saga, which is certainly later than Fabius Pictor (M. Sordi, *I Rapporti Romano-Ceriti*, p. 46).

³ The traditional version seems to be confirmed by the scanty surviving fragments from Greek writers.

⁴ See especially M. Gelzer in *Hermes*, LXVIII (1933), 129–66.

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Timaeus of Tauromenium between them may have had more than a little to say, and not all of it unfavourable, about the Samnites, while largely ignoring the Romans.¹ Pictor remedied this only too successfully.

The seventh to the tenth books of Livy are the principal source for the three Samnite Wars, and it is usually admitted that the account they contain rests upon a basis of solid fact. At the core of Livy's narrative, and deriving ultimately no doubt from the priestly records,² are the lists of Roman consuls, and these lists seem to be reasonably trustworthy.

Admittedly Livy's annalistic predecessors were only too prone to rely on the statements and records of careers which, according to Pliny, filled the archives of the great Roman houses and which, according to Cicero, Livy and Plutarch, were themselves replete with exaggerations and distortions, if not unblushing lies.³ The generals who fought the battles sometimes composed their memoirs, and there is no reason to believe that in doing so they were either modest or scrupulous.⁴ Nor should it be forgotten that Roman statesmen and generals sometimes also had their own personal poets and panegyrists to laud their exploits.⁵ Even more numerous, glib and plausible were later members of a *gens* who were determined to parade its glories. The Flavii evidently had their own archives, the Carvili their own family historian. If the Postumii had A. Postu-

¹ They could hardly have avoided mentioning the Samnites when they described the activities of Tarentum's assorted mercenary captains (Pliny, *N.H.* 3. 98; Plut. *Ag.* 3; Lycus, fr. 1. 2 (in Mueller, *FHG*, II, 371)). Theopompus, we know, paid little attention to the Romans (Pliny, *N.H.* 3.57). Hieronymus, however, did not ignore them (Dion. Hal. 1. 6. 1).

² It is usually impossible, however, to say which items in the narrative go back to the *tabulae pontificum* and which are culled from family or other records. Ti. Coruncanus, cos. 280, was one hero who certainly appeared in the priestly records (Cic. *Brutus*, 14. 55). We have no precise details about C. Tuditanus' *Libri Magistratum* (Macrob. 1. 13. 21) or the *Libri Linte* which Licinius Macer used (Livy 4. 1. 2; 4. 20. 8; 4. 23. 2; cf. Dion. Hal. 11. 62. 3; R. M. Ogilvie in *J.R.S.* XLVIII (1958), 40–56).

³ Pliny, *N.H.* 35.7; Cic. *Brutus*, 16.62; Livy 8.40; Plut. *Numa*, 1 (citing a certain Clodius). One wonders whether the great plebeian houses, once they obtained political equality, did not concoct family records so as not to be outshone by their patrician rivals.

⁴ Ap. Claudius Caecus, the celebrated censor of 312, was a man of letters according to Cicero (*Tusc. Disp.* 4. 1. 4), and he evidently recorded his Samnite War exploits: he vowed a Temple to Bellona then (Livy 10. 19. 17), and we know that this temple was adorned with shields lauding the achievements of Claudii (Pliny, *N.H.* 35. 12; the reference must be to 312, not to 495). Later generals who described their own operations (in letters, it must be admitted) were Scipio Africanus (at Nova Carthago: Polyb. 10. 9. 3) and Scipio Nasica (at Pydna: Plut. *Aem. Paul.* 15. 3).

⁵ The case of Fulvius Nobilior and Ennius immediately springs to mind.

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mius Albinus to glorify their name, the Valerii had Valerius Antias.¹ The Cornelii, with no fewer than six of the twenty-three known republican *pontifices maximi*,² were in a good position to tamper with the priestly records; and so too, probably, were the Papirii, early redactors apparently of the *Annales Maximi*.³

A welter of conflicting claims was spawned, with the various *gentes* either fabricating wholly imaginary exploits or seeking to seize the credit for achievements other than their own or belittling the claims of others. The rivalry between Fabii and Cornelii Scipiones is notorious, and for good measure the Fabii were also jealous of the Carvili, and the Cornelii Scipiones of the Fulvii.⁴ The Claudii and the Postumii were obviously targets for denigration by other aristocratic houses and, to judge from what Livy says, the Volumnii too had some annalists for them and some against.⁵ It was always possible for a historian to stake out a claim for his own clan by simply inventing a promagistracy or some other special office in which a member of the family could be said to have particularly distinguished himself.⁶

Fortunately it seems to have been much less easy to invent consulships, and as a result the lists of consuls, and even of triumphs, do not appear to have been vitiated to the same wholesale degree.⁷ It is true that they often fail to reveal which of the two consuls was responsible for any given action, so that it was easy for a tendentious annalist to invent or exploit the illness of one consul in order to

¹ Livy 8. 22. 2; 8. 37. 8; Val. Max. 8. 1. 7; Plut. *Rom. Qu.* 54, 59; Polyb. 39. 1. 4; Pliny, *N.H.* 11. 186.

² See Broughton, *MRR*, vol. 1, *ad ann.* 431, 332, 304, 221, 150, 141.

³ See Dion. Hal. 3. 36. 4; A. Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.* 1, 24 f.; F. Münzer in *R.E.* xviii (1949), s.v. 'Papirius, nos. 1–5', cols. 1005 f.

⁴ Livy 10. 17. 11 f. (= 296); 10. 22. 1 f. (= 295); 23. 22. 8 (= 216); 28. 45. 2 (= 205). Three Fabii in succession served as *pontifex maximus*; their terms of office covered almost the whole period of the Samnite Wars. Thus they were ideally placed to falsify records.

⁵ See, e.g., Livy 9. 42. 3; 10. 15. 2; 10. 18. 7; 10. 19. 2 f.; 10. 23. 4; 10. 30. 7; and cf. *CIL*, I², *Elog.* x, p. 192. The misfortune of the Postumii in being associated with Roman setbacks later in the Republic, e.g. in the Litanian forest (Polyb. 3. 118. 6; Livy 23. 24. 6; Front. 1. 6. 4), in the Jugurthine War (Sallust, *Jug.* 38) and in the Social War (Livy, *Epitt.* 72, 75), reinforced the unfavourable view of them that the Caudine Forks disaster had produced.

⁶ During the period of the First and Second Samnite Wars, the Triumphal Fasti reflect only three dictatorships, whereas Livy records almost thirty (F. Cornelius, *Untersuchungen*, p. 36).

⁷ For the period of the Samnite Wars, for instance, the iterated consulships usually occur after a reasonable interval and seem not implausible. (Before 343 they often happened at very short intervals; but perhaps that was inevitable when consuls were obtained from the small handful of patrician houses.)

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ply the other with honours.¹ Under the circumstances Cato's refusal to name any commanders at all is understandable,² and so is Livy's honest bewilderment as to which commander should get the credit for certain victories.³ Nevertheless the Consular and Triumphal Fasti are a well relatively pure and undefiled, and a large degree of credibility can be accorded them.⁴

The records of the foundations of colonies and the dedications of temples by the Romans are another reasonably trustworthy source of information. They seem to be generally accurate, and this is a matter of some importance, since it provides a yardstick for measuring the progress of Roman arms: temples were often vowed and colonies planted as the result of Roman victories.

Evidently then, Livy has preserved many grains of historical truth. He has, however, also mixed in a lot of fictional chaff. Apart from his own eagerness to embroider the tale and to convert what might have been a sober narrative into a heroic saga,⁵ he has reproduced many of the wilder flights of fancy of his predecessors. Roman historians could never resist the temptation to magnify the exploits of either their nation or their family or both. This was true of the earliest of them as well as of the latest, of Fabius Pictor as well as of Valerius Antias.⁶

There were admittedly differences in degree. The earlier the writer the more likely he was to keep within bounds and to place some curbs on an unbridled patriotic imagination. Fabius Pictor and his near contemporaries, while far from truthful, seem to have

¹ Examples of consuls getting sick are L. Furius Camillus in 325 (Livy 8. 29. 8), P. Decius Mus in 312 (Livy 9. 29. 3), T. Manlius Torquatus in 299 (he died: Livy 10. 11. 1), L. Postumius Megellus in 294 (Livy 10. 32. 3).

² Pliny, *N.H.* 8. 11. Yet one might wonder whether Cato was not chiefly responsible for many of the legends that clustered around such great plebeian heroes as M'. Curius Dentatus and C. Fabricius Luscinus, both of whom he much admired (Cic. *Cato Maior*, 15. 15; *de re pub.* 3. 28. 40; Plut. *Cato Maior*, 2).

³ Sometimes Livy's dilemma probably reflects not so much family rivalries as the struggle between the Orders: the same victory was claimed for either the patrician or the plebeian consul, according to the annalist's predilection.

⁴ The Younger Annalists did not know the *Fasti* in their present form, for which Varro's researches seem in large measure responsible. They might have given a soberer account of events had they been familiar with his scholarly reconstruction.

⁵ Livy's attitude can be judged from his own words (10. 31. 15): *quinam sit ille quem pigeat longinquitatis bellorum scribendo legendoque quae gerentes non fatigaverint?* The tedium could be relieved by adding picturesque details, especially as the period of the Samnite Wars was the truly great age of Roman history anyhow: *illa aetate qua nulla virtutum feracior fuit* (9. 16. 9).

⁶ See the remarks of A. Alföldi, *Early Rome and the Latins*, pp. 123–75.

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written episodically and in relatively small compass and therefore provided themselves with only limited scope for fiction on the wholesale scale: they were *non exornatores rerum sed tantummodo narratores*.¹ Manifestly the elaboration of their accounts must have been less than was that of the year-by-year version of the so-called Older Annalists, such as Calpurnius Piso and Cassius Hemina,² of the age of the Gracchi. Yet even the latter were models of sobriety in comparison with the writers of Sulla's time a generation or two later, the notorious Younger Annalists, such as Valerius Antias and Claudius Quadrigarius.³ Some of these wrote at such inordinate length as to allow themselves unlimited space in which to exaggerate or excogitate almost at will individual episodes for their favourites (although it should be added that by Cicero's day excessively long-winded exaggerations were no longer fashionable). Livy's use of, and dependence upon, the Younger Annalists is so universally recognized as to need no further demonstration;⁴ and the consequences of this for his presentation of the Samnite Wars are worth pondering.

The writers of the Sullan period were contemporaries of the Social and the immediately succeeding Civil War and were so close to these crucial conflicts that their outlook could hardly fail to be coloured by them. In their own lifetime these writers had seen the Samnites make peace on their own terms in the Social War and, in the Civil, come within an ace of victory at the Colline Gate. Inevitably they interpreted the Samnite Wars of over two centuries earlier in the light of these stirring events. They were certain that both Romans and Samnites realized, from the moment of their first

¹ See Cic. *de orat.* 2. 54. Livy cites Fabius Pictor at 8. 30. 9 and 10. 37. 14, but this is no guarantee that he used him directly.

² Fabius Pictor is not usually reckoned an Older Annalist even though there is no absolute proof that he did not use the annalistic method. Livy never mentions Cassius Hemina, but does cite Calpurnius Piso (9. 44. 3; 10. 9. 12). The latter was also used by Diodorus, to judge from his failure to record any happening in the Varronian Year 307 (which year was omitted by Piso: Livy 9. 44. 3). At least one of the Older Annalists, Cn. Gellius, seems to have written carelessly and at great length (Dion. Hal. 6. 11. 2; 7. 1. 4).

³ The *Annales* of Calpurnius Piso were 'written baldly' (*exiliter scriptos*): Cic. *Brutus*, 27. 106.

⁴ Not that he actually names them much in his account of the Samnite Wars: Aelius Tubero (10. 9. 10), Claudius Quadrigarius (8. 19. 3; 9. 5. 2; 10. 37. 13), Licinius Macer (7. 9. 4; 9. 38. 16; 9. 46. 4; 10. 9. 10). But he frequently cites *quidam auctores*, by which it is generally agreed that Valerius Antias is usually meant. For good measure Tubero also seems to have used Antias. See A. Klotz, *Livius und seine Vorgänger*, pp. 201–97; R. M. Ogilvie, *Commentary on Livy i–v*, p. 5.

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encounter, that the mastery of Italy was the prize of their contention and that they were therefore engaged on a struggle of titanic sweep and grandeur.¹ Under the circumstances the Younger Annalists were bound to describe the Samnite Wars in terms of a grand Roman epic. And for this they had a plethora of models ready to hand, Greek as well as Latin: *nec id tamen ex illa erudita Graecorum copia sed ex librariolis Latinis*.² If they felt no need to tamper much with the traditional framework, they could nevertheless give free rein to their inventive genius or imitative inclination for individual details within that framework.³ To imagine or repeat Roman victories⁴ and to suppress or gloze over Roman defeats was their standard, indeed their automatic, practice; and they enlivened their narrative by embroidering most events, real or fictitious, with picturesque, prolix and preposterous details. The remoteness of the period they were depicting and the tenacious conservatism of Roman aristocratic nomenclature greatly aided and abetted such forays into creative writing.

Nor did the Younger Annalists let their fancy roam merely over their own countrymen. They were liable to resort to the same practice, in reverse so to speak, when making their casual and cursory comments about the peoples whom Rome was uninterruptedly defeating. If the repeated use of the same name through generations of a Roman family made it possible to attribute to one of its ancient members exploits that more properly belonged to one of his descendants, it might seem fully justifiable to adopt the same procedure for the Samnites. If Samnite achievements in the Social and Civil Wars have influenced the interpretation which the Younger Annalists gave of the earlier Samnite Wars, one wonders whether their description of details in the latter also is not tricked out with episodes and personages from the former. It has, for instance, often been remarked that the Samnite worthies of the

¹ The Samnite Wars are viewed in this light by Cicero (*de off.* 1. 38), Livy (8. 23. 9; 10. 16. 7), Diodorus (19. 101. 7; 20. 80. 3), Dionysius of Halicarnassus (17/18. 3), and Appian (*Samn.* 4. 1. 5).

² Cic. *de leg.* 1. 2. 7 (on Licinius Macer).

³ *Concessum est rhetoribus ementiri in historiis ut aliquid dicere possint argutius*: Cic. *Brutus*, 11. 42 (perhaps, however, Cicero is being ironical). Hellenistic historians could supply material with which Roman writers of the late first century might embellish what they had to say about the Samnite Wars: e.g. the comparison of Fabricius with Aristides (Cic. *de off.* 3. 87), the death of Aulus Cerretanus (Livy 9. 22. 7–10; cf. Diod. 17. 20, 21, 34), the excursus on possible Roman rivals to Alexander the Great (Livy 9. 17 f.).

⁴ Note the allusion to *falsi triumphi* in Cic. *Brutus*, 16. 62.

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fourth and early third centuries bear names remarkably like those of the Samnite leaders of the nineties and eighties, and some scholars go so far as to pronounce the earlier group fictitious anticipations of the later.¹ Such methods can, of course, be overdone. To deny the existence of Gavius Pontius in 321, simply because a Pontius Telesinus led the Samnite forces in 82,² is to carry scepticism to unjustified lengths.³ The Churchill of the eighteenth century is not less real because a Churchill led Britain in the twentieth.⁴

Even so, it is a fact that the Younger Annalists, whether they were treating of either Romans or Samnites in the fourth and third centuries, were only too likely to be untrustworthy, and unfortunately much of what they wrote is reflected in the pages of Livy. Although well aware of their unreliability, he seems nevertheless to have relied upon them very heavily: perhaps he shared the Elder Pliny's conviction that there was no book so bad as to be entirely worthless.⁵ In places his own narrative supplies needed correctives, as for the Caudine Peace in 321–316 or the Roman defeat at Lautulae in 315. In fact painstaking perusal of Livy is far from fruitless: from the information that he supplies a consistent account can often be pieced together that carries conviction.

There are a few other authors besides Livy who supply some information about the three Samnite Wars, but they need to be used with the same care and caution as he does. Indeed some of them, like Eutropius and Orosius, are merely epitomizing him, while at least one of them, Florus, improves on Livy, deliberately resorting to various rhetorical tricks in order to make his essentially Livian account still more arresting.⁶ The slim scraps of information in

¹ Papius Brutulus of 323 (8. 39. 12) surely must be concocted from Papius Mutilus of Social War fame.

² Pontius Telesinus, the general in the Civil War in 82, claimed descent from the Second Samnite War hero, Gavius Pontius (Schol. Bern. *ad* Lucan 2. 137, p. 59). Pontii certainly lived at Telesia (*ILS*, 6510), and some ancient writers actually give Gavius Pontius the *cognomen* Telesinus (Eutrop. 10. 17. 2; Ampelius 20. 10; 28. 2; Auct. *de vir. ill.* 30. 1).

³ The Roman disaster at the Caudine Forks was no fiction. Apart altogether from the improbability that Roman historians would have invented (or publicized) such a tale, the political ruin that ensued for the families of the disgraced consuls vouches for its reliability (after 321 the plebeian Veturii disappear for ever from the Consular Fasti and a Postumius Albinus does not reappear in them until 242). Admittedly this does not prove that Pontius was the victorious Samnite general; but it is significant that Pontius was one Samnite of whose personality the Romans had a very clear conception (cf., for example, Cic. *de off.* 2. 75).

⁴ On family genealogies, see Cic. *Orator*, 34. 120; Corn. Nep. *Atticus*, 19. 1 f.

⁵ Pliny, *Epp.* 3. 5. 10.

⁶ See P. Zancan, *Floro e Livio, passim*.

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Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Cassius Dio and Appian, the isolated incidents mentioned by the Elder Pliny, Frontinus and the author of the *De Viris Illustribus*, and the material strewn haphazardly through a number of Plutarch's *Lives* are similar in character to the matter found in Livy: they are all only too likely to have had the Younger Annalists as their place of origin.

The same is probably also true of the meagre notices in Diodorus despite the widely held belief that these derive from an older source. Diodorus completely ignores the First Samnite War and the opening eight years of the Second, although this is no proof that he knew nothing of them:¹ he is always capricious in selecting events for mention, even when recording the history of his own native Sicily.² Furthermore Diodorus is not extant for the Third Samnite War. So that it is only for the last fourteen years of the Second War that Diodorus is really useful. For twelve of these fourteen years he supplies succinct reports of the operations, which often differ from or supplement what Livy records and have had varying degrees of importance attached to them. The bareness of Diodorus' narrative has led many scholars to think that he is reproducing a version from the Older Annalists of the Gracchan age or from the discursive senatorial historians who preceded them:³ Niebuhr and Mommsen actually went so far as to suggest that Fabius Pictor himself was the source.⁴ Therefore it is often suggested that Diodorus is a more trustworthy authority for the Samnite Wars than any other ancient writer.

The grounds for this view are neither obvious nor convincing. It is true that Diodorus has used a chronological system that differs from Livy's (whose in turn was not the same as Varro's); but there is no reason to regard it as either better or older.⁵ Nor is the threadbare nature of his Roman entries any guarantee that they derive from a single source or a particularly ancient one.⁶ In fact Diodorus

¹ He obviously knew about the first eight years of the Second Samnite War, which included the hardly negligible Caudine Forks episode (19. 10. 1).

² Presumably he chose events that he thought would be most interesting to Greek readers.

³ See, for example, A. Schwegler, *Röm. Gesch.* 2. 22. f.

⁴ B. G. Niebuhr, *Röm. Gesch.* II, 192; T. Mommsen, *Röm. Chron.* pp. 125 f., and *Röm. Forsch.* II, 221–96; Diodorus' source seems to have included the so-called Dictator Years: A. Klotz in *Rhein. Mus.* LXXXVI (1937), 207.

⁵ See G. Costa in *Atene e Roma*, XII (1909), 185–9 and more recently and more soberly G. Perl, *Diodors römische Jahrzählung*, p. 161.

⁶ He might, of course, include material from the earliest Roman historians: but then so does Livy.