

zurecht bemerkt Fuhrmann (IX): "Andeutungen können die Lektüre nicht ersetzen; man lese Bögel."

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DAVID S. POTTER: *Literary Texts and the Roman Historian*. Routledge, London – New York 1999. ISBN 0-415-08896-8. 218 p. GBP 12.99 (P/b).

David Potter warns his readers (p. 60) that only a tiny fraction (perhaps about two and a half percent) of texts written in the classical Greek and Roman world has survived into the modern age. For his purposes, that is just as well. The idea of writing a synoptic account of the significance of literary texts for the Roman historian if everything had been preserved is utterly daunting. Even as it is, Potter has taken on a challenging subject, but it is a challenge to which he issues an effective response.

This book belongs to the series 'Approaching the Ancient World', which is devoted to providing an introduction to methodological problems encountered in studying ancient history. As its title implies, this volume considers how to use literary sources to write Roman history, but it exploits the potential ambiguity of 'Roman Historian' by examining the writing of history by Roman historians both ancient and modern. Potter tackles many issues of fundamental importance for writers of the history of the Roman world. To select just a few, he assesses the significance of *Quellenforschung* tradition: he suggests how ancient texts were published and distributed; and he considers how a historian in Rome could have proceeded to research and write his history. He constantly emphasises the fundamental differences between Roman and modern historical approaches, not least the Roman assumption that good history could only be written by men of good character, and the privileged position of evidence derived from a personal informant above that from documents. Equally significant is the lack of professionalism among Roman writers of history, in the sense that they could not be described as professional historical scholars – the title 'historian' only describes one facet of their lives.

Much of the book's contents come as a surprise. It does not analyse the canonical Roman in any detail. Modern historiographical debates occupy an important part in Potter's vision of the significance of Roman historical discourse. For example, he discusses in some detail the significance of Marxism and the Annales school, and the impact of the thinking of Leopold von Ranke and Hayden White upon historiographical practice in the United States. Such diversity of subject matter is subordinated to the main theme, however. Thus, he explores Marxism and the Annales school within a framework that discusses the importance of selecting appropriate paradigms in attempting to understand the Roman world. By juxtaposing Roman and modern historiographical traditions, he illustrates how 'the study of historical representation, in whatever form it takes, is integral to the study of the values of the society in which it was, or is, produced' (p. 151), a theme which is designed to draw non-classicists towards the Roman world.

Potter states that his intended readership includes historians from other disciplines alongside Roman historians. The book is also designed to appeal particularly to the American market, with its focus on modern historical practice in the United States (especially pp. 121–130). Discussion of the problems of writing history from fragments leads to a cogent analysis of Jacoby's principles of arranging his material in *Die Fragmente der griechischen*

Historiker. However, historians from other disciplines are in for a shock, if, inspired by Potter's exposition, they seek out a copy of the multi-volumed work: surely Potter should have warned not only of the structural problems, but also of the linguistic challenges of working from Jacoby!

Unfortunately, the reader has to grapple with a significant number of typographical errors. Some of these obscure the author's meaning and could confuse the reader coming to the subject for the first time. For example, on p. 71 'AD' is either a mistake for 'BC', or is misleading for the uninitiated who do not know that Livy's history never did reach the first century AD. Sometimes inaccuracies have crept into the text: Potter's translated version of Tacitus *Ann.* 1.1 *quorum causas procul habeo* as 'I have distance from their affairs' (p. 16) is idiosyncratic to say the least. See the review by A.J. Woodman online at [HTTP://WWW.DUR.AC.UK/CLASSICS/HISTOS/1998/WOODMAN.HTML](http://www.dur.ac.uk/classics/histos/1998/woodman.html) for a more detailed discussion of the lack of polish displayed in this book. Four illustrations depict a reading stand, the library at Ephesus, and two papyri. The caption to fig. 4, pointing out the 'diple oblismene' is not going to help many non-specialists. Two short bibliographies, 'Issues in modern historiography' and 'Ancient history and historiography' helpfully present a selection of works drawn from the much fuller references contained in the notes.

Nevertheless, it is a stimulating read, although one that is more suitable for historians with a fair degree of familiarity with Roman historiography rather than for absolute beginners. Nevertheless, every effort is made to help the non-specialist, not least the appendix listing key facts about classical authors mentioned in the text. Potter takes an optimistic view of how much history can be extracted from literary texts. He could have included more of a sense of the shortcomings of the perspective on offer, adding however brief an acknowledgement of the sorts of questions which literary texts do not answer in the same way as other sources, especially archaeology. He does take some pains, however, to broaden the traditional picture by stressing the existence of alternative historical traditions such as the Martyr Acts and prophetic texts alongside the more commonly discussed histories written by the urban-based male elite. To some extent, this seems like special pleading in the face of the 'discourse of the dominant', but it is a useful reminder of the less well-known material that does exist. Despite the fact that we possess so little of what was originally written, Potter demonstrates the richness and vitality of Roman historiography.

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SARAH ILES JOHNSTON: *Restless Dead. Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece*, University of California Press, Berkeley – Los Angeles – London 1999. ISBN 0-520-21707-1. xxi, 329 p. USD 40.00.

The beliefs in ghosts and the interaction between the living and the dead receive here their first comprehensive study. Sarah Iles Johnston combines well-known ancient literary sources and recently published texts (e.g. the Derveni Papyrus) with methods of cultural anthropology fruitfully. The main argument is easy to follow thanks to the summaries in between the chapters and sub-chapters unfortunately not indicated in the list of contents.