

have had many contacts with the Peloponnese, it is not correct to say that Megara was located in the Peloponnese [p. 54]; and something seems to have happened to the Greek cities on the western coast of Asia in the lower map on p. 72). The conclusion must be that this is a handy and useful volume, especially for those in need of concise historical information on classical Greece.

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RONALD MELLOR: *The Roman Historians*. Routledge, London – New York 1999. ISBN 0-415-11773-9 (hb), 0-415-11774-7 (pb). 212 pp. GBP 12.99 (pb).

The author of *Tacitus* (1993), Ronald Mellor from the University of California, Los Angeles, has written a useful general outline of Roman historiography, intended to be used as a textbook in universities. A similar textbook on Greek historiography, T.J. Luce's *The Greek Historians* was published by Routledge in 1997. Mellor's aim is to introduce Roman historians and their books in their political and literary context, in order to understand why and how these histories were written. He has succeeded in composing a concise and accessible survey, even though this compactness has its regrettable limits; the author sometimes makes annoying generalizations such as "the Romans were not by nature a speculative people" (p. 27).

In *The Roman Historians*, Mellor shows how we in fact remain dependant on historical reconstructions by a handful of Roman historians. Roman historiography has, for the most part, moulded our ways of perceiving and structuring ancient Roman history; Sallust, for example, has shaped our gloomy picture of the end of the Republic while it is to Ammianus Marcellinus that we owe the rather dark-coloured history of the fourth century. The central themes of Tacitus' narrative of the first century of imperial Rome, growth of tyranny and decline of Roman morality, tend still to dominate our views of the Principate; Tacitus, for example, divides the reigns of Tiberius and Nero into positive and negative phases which is still often taken for granted in modern research.

*The Roman Historians* introduces the origins of Roman historiography, Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus as well as Roman biography (particularly Suetonius, *Historia Augusta*) and autobiography (especially Caesar). Mellor shows how the works of historians are connected with their own lives, e.g., how Sallust, after being driven from public life, channelled his own disappointment and bitterness into examining the political pathology of the Roman Republic. For Mellor, Tacitus is the greatest historian that the Roman world ever produced. He extols Tacitus' works with such words as 'psychological penetration', 'acute political analysis', 'moral grandeur', and 'literary genius'. Although Mellor admires Tacitus and Ammianus Marcellinus, he also shows some appreciation and understanding for the much despised 'salacious scandalmonger' Suetonius, calling him 'the ancestor of the modern scholar' with 'formidable research skills' for Suetonius used archives, acts of the Senate, pamphlets, histories, monuments, inscriptions and oral tradition. Mellor points out that because "the *Lives of the Caesars* is a book written by and for the equestrian ... class" (p. 152), such political issues as the loss

of political power and freedom (of the small senatorial elite) did not interest Suetonius and his readers as much as it worried Tacitus and other senatorial writers.

Mellor pays special attention to the rhetoric in Roman historiography and shows how Roman historians were deeply bound to the ancient literal and rhetorical tradition. All Roman historical writers were well educated in literature and rhetoric and they clearly display their training in their works, not only in speeches composed as part of the narration, but also in the structures of the histories and in methods of analysis and strands of narrative, digressions and parallels. Historians brought drama into their histories since the characters with their motives resemble the familiar ancient stereotypes learned in the rhetorical schools: there is a tyrant, a collaborator, a philosophical martyr, a noble barbarian, etc. As Mellor rightly points out, a Roman historian was above all a literary artist – in Cicero's words an 'embellisher of events' – a circumstance that is often forgotten or overlooked. Even the most scrupulous of Roman historians – in Mellor's opinion – Tacitus and Ammianus, did not avoid these literary techniques, and Livy's histories seem to be akin to a historical novel or 'a poem in prose' as Quintilian called history.

The moral dimension is linked to this conspicuous literary element in Roman historiography. The Roman historians used history as a medium to address the moral and political issues of their time, such as freedom versus tyranny, the corrupting effect of individual or civic power, the decline of political and social institutions. Tacitus particularly was a pessimistic moralist who related the loss of *virtus* to the loss of political freedom in Rome and also saw a connection between the private morality and the public actions of the emperors. Senatorial historians themselves were sometimes involved with various political factions which their works often quite clearly reflect. In Ch. 8, "Historical writing at Rome", Mellor treats the role of history and historians (e.g., public readings by historians and their audience) as well as the function of history in public life and the craft of writing history, and I find this discussion the most interesting contribution of his book. Throughout his book, Mellor problematizes the accuracy and credibility of Roman historiography, often comparing the ancient craft of history with modern research. An ancient historian used *inventio* to find appropriate material to illustrate his story which was made plausible, probable and credible. Mellor states that this is "different from the modern idea of historical truth as an absolute" (p. 27). One begins to wonder what this modern idea of historical truth might be which Mellor regards as uniform and absolute. However, in the theoretical discourse, history and its epistemology has been under constant lively discussion in modern times; one should rather speak of various modern ideas of 'historical truth'.

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GERHARD HORSMANN: *Die Wagenlenker der römischen Kaiserzeit*. Forschung zur antiken Sklaverei, Band XXIX. Franz Steiner Verlag, Stuttgart 1997. ISBN 3-515-07234-9. viii, 339 S. DEM 96.

Es fehlte bisher eine eingehende sozialhistorische Studie zu den römischen Wagenlenkern, die zu den wenigen Berufsgruppen der römischen Gesellschaft gehören,