

BOOK REVIEW

The Historians of Ancient Rome: An Anthology of the Major Writings. Third Edition. Edited by RONALD MELLOR. London and New York: Routledge, 2012. Pp. xxx + 583. Paper, \$42.95. ISBN 978-0-415-52716-3.

When a volume intended for use in a college or university class reaches a third edition within fifteen years of first publication, it is a clear sign of the author's success. Comparison with the first edition of 1997 shows evolution of Ronald Mellor's concept.

The early volume was about fifty pages shorter than the present one, yet the philosophy behind them has changed dramatically. The former offered selections from only ten authors, the present one has twenty-one, including some whose names will likely be unknown to the average reader. In 1997 some works were presented in their entirety, such as Tacitus' *Life of Agricola*. Now there are only twenty-two chapters, about half of the essay. Livy then had just over two hundred pages, now there are one hundred thirty-six. But the balance of the volume has been substantially improved, with a Timeline, an Introduction, brief comment on Reading Roman Historians, a Glossary, and a Select Bibliography. A student who comes to the study of the historians as a *tabula rasa* will now start the journey with some basic material at hand.

The additions are four historical inscriptions (the Twelve Tables, the *Senatus Consultum de Bacchanalibus*, Claudius' speech on the Gallic senators, and the *Lex de Imperio Vespasiani*), Cicero (though not an historian in a strict sense, but whose letters often treat of history), Nepos, Velleius Paterculus, Josephus, Pliny the Younger (like Cicero in his frequent discussion of historical events), Plutarch, Cassius Dio, Lactantius, Eusebius, and Zosimus. In the first edition, the first two authors were Greek, the remainder Latin, in the present reincarnation there are four additional Greek authors. A student will be more fully aware that the later empire consisted of two halves, speaking different languages.

Any selection of passages for a collection of this sort will leave many readers wishing that certain passages had been included and perhaps some of the offerings omitted. But any author or editor is aware that the publisher's limitation of allotted words constricts many efforts. Nonetheless, I wish that two others had

been added: Tacitus' discussion of Maternus in the *Dialogue on Orators* 1–13 and Caesar's gripping narrative from *B.G.* 5.24–48, dealing with the slaughter of Sabinus' and Cotta's men and the rescue of Quintus Cicero's camp.

This is, quite literally, a heavy tome, which I should not wish to lug in a backpack. The publisher has done a fine job in production. The pages are pleasing in appearance, the type is of ample size for steady reading, proof reading has been very good. I discerned only five slips in Mellor's introductory and closing material. They are: (1) p. xxi, bottom: Tacitus tells us in *Agricola* 45.5 that he was absent from Rome for four years, not five; (2) p. xxiii: Ammianus was born c. 330, not 350; (3) p. 575, under Campus Martius: Augustus did not build the Pantheon, which was Hadrian's glory—perhaps the Ara Pacis was intended; (4) p. 576, under Proconsul, propraetor; (5) p. 578, under Julius Caesar, Handford.

I shall conclude this discussion of Mellor's fine book with a paragraph from page xxviii:

Moral historiography became the conscience of the Roman People, and it is in Sallust, Livy, Tacitus, and Ammianus that we find the most cogent Roman discussions of freedom versus tyranny, the corrupting effect of individual or civic power, and the decline of political and social institutions.

And these remain central issues for the historian of any age.

The linking of the names of the "big four" recalled for me the first significant volume dealing with these four which appeared after the conclusion of World War II, M.L.W. Laistner's *The Greater Roman Historians* (1947). The four would now be differently evaluated, but they remain the glories of Latin historiography.

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