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Introduction

The Roman historians can seem deceptively familiar. Three authors especially from the late Republic and early Empire left works that survived in substantial enough form to shape our understanding of the periods they wrote about. From the pen of Sallust, writing just after the civil war between Caesar and Pompey ended and as the new civil war between Antony and the future Augustus was coming into view, we have two monographs. One relates a recent domestic crisis, the coup attempt of Catiline (63 BCE); the other the war against the North African king Jugurtha from two generations before. A decade after Sallust, as that period of extreme internal violence was giving way to the nervous stabilities of the Empire, Livy began a history of Rome from its foundation, concluding eventually with the death of the emperor's stepson Drusus in 9 BCE. This enormous project would take its author many decades and fill 142 book rolls; from it, we possess the first ten books on the early history of Rome up to the beginning of the third century BCE and another twenty-five taking the story from the struggle against Hannibal (218–201 BCE) through the conquests of the early second century BCE. Finally Tacitus, writing a century after Livy's death, produced two extended works that together tell the story of the Empire, from the moment it became clear it was an empire (that is, when Augustus died and was succeeded by Tiberius) up to the revolution that gave power to the dynasty under which he wrote. Of his first work, the *Histories*, which presented the later part of this period, we have four out of twelve books, all covering the civil wars of 69 CE. From his *Annales* of the Julio-Claudian emperors survive masterful portraits of the reigns of Tiberius, Claudius, and Nero. To an extent that is almost impossible to think away, Livy's depiction of Rome's rise, Sallust's account of the moral decline that led to civil war, and Tacitus' analysis of the dangers and deceptions of empire have both directly molded the image of Roman history in Western culture since the Renaissance and set the terms for scholarly investigation of the Roman past. This volume will nevertheless attempt to look at this influential tradition from the outside, to escape from its seeming

inevitability and invite all who are engaged by the representations of Rome that flow from it to investigate how it came into being, the literary and historical circumstances that shaped its aims and methods, and finally how its history became our history.

First, we must make it clear how diverse this tradition was. Each of the three best-known historians, though indebted to his predecessors for his material and conscious of continuities with past authors, had equally to re-define the aims and methods of the genre to suit the times about which, and within which, he wrote. Choices of style, subject matter, and authorial persona help to construct quite different senses of what history is for: to commemorate great deeds, to provide a repertory of acts and behaviors for emulation, or to analyze how societies fail. But although Sallust, Livy, and Tacitus each merits a "Companion" of his own, an overview of Roman historiography as a whole has several justifications. For all their differences, the three major historians share methods, like the insertion of composed speeches, that separate them more from most modern assumptions about what a historian should do than they do from each other. They work with shared conceptions of time, space, and causality that invite investigation in their own right. By taking a larger view of these issues, each reader may gain a new understanding of what options were available to individual writers and the significance of the particular choices they made.

A second advantage of the broad view taken here is to draw attention to less generally familiar authors, including both other Roman historians whose works survive in significant proportion, such as Curtius Rufus and Ammianus Marcellinus, and Greeks writing about the Roman past, from Polybius in the second century BCE to Appian in the second century CE and Dio in the third. The distinctive perspective of the Judean historian Josephus, writing in Rome just after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 CE, also receives a chapter. Of course the list of authors and subjects deserving treatment could have been extended. Roman historiography, like the empire it describes, has messy borders.[1] If our criterion for inclusion had simply been written representations of the past, claims could be made for antiquarians such as Varro, biographers such as Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos,[2] those who, like Caesar, styled their work "Memoranda," the raw material for historical treatment, collectors of *exempla* such as Valerius Maximus, and especially epitomators such as Florus whose "abbreviations" of Roman history constitute an important chapter in how the Romans conceived of their past. Indeed it is remarkable how much of Roman literature, from satire to oratory to the epics of Vergil, Ovid, and Lucan, aims at offering its own vision of Roman history,

[1] See Kraus 1998. [2] For the imperial biographer Suetonius, however, see Vout in this volume.

so powerful was the authority of the past. The first work certainly designated as *Annales*, the term we use for histories written in a year-by-year format, indeed the first history written in Latin, was not a prose work, but an epic poem written by Ennius in the 170s BCE.[3] Given the diversity of texts that could legitimately count as "written history," our choice to limit the term 'historiography' to continuous prose narratives, intended to be read as "fact," and organized around the experiences of the Roman community rather than those of an individual, may seem very conservative and practically motivated; yet these criteria also correspond to significant distinctions used by ancient writers to define their work.[4]

Above all, a volume of this scope invites its readers to think in larger terms about the function of written history in Roman society. For the existence of Roman historiography was by no means inevitable. Though the Romans from the eighth century BCE were surrounded by literate cultures, and we have inscriptions from Rome itself as old as (perhaps) the seventh century, it would not be for another four hundred years that literary works were written in Latin. The "invention of Latin literature,"[5] an occurrence without parallel in the Mediterranean world, where the norm was either to write in Greek, the common literary language, or not to write at all, has rightly emerged as one of the most interesting and controversial developments in classical culture. Why were literary texts written in Latin? And how did the new literature relate to pre-existing oral forms of cultural expression? Should Latin literature be conceived as a continuation of old, indigenous practices, as a carefully staged appropriation of Greek culture defining in embryo the political position Rome was soon to occupy in relation to the Greeks, or as the creative product of Greek-speaking intellectuals of Southern Italy, to whom it offered the unprecedented challenge of becoming the Homers of a new literature? Within these larger debates, the invention of historiography at Rome poses its own distinctive set of questions. For although the first written history at Rome followed very shortly after the first Latin plays, hymns, and epic poems, it proves very much the exception among literary genres in that its first practitioners were not outsiders but members of the political elite. And, while Southern Italians like Livius Andronicus, Naevius, and Ennius were learning to compose in Latin, these senators chose to write in Greek. The dramatic development of literary composition in Latin has tended to obscure the equally striking fact that the earliest Roman historian, Fabius Pictor, was

[3] Gildenhard 2003a.

[4] For the facticity of history, see, e.g., Polyb. 2.56.11–12, Livy, *praef.* 6–7; for its essentially narrative nature, see, e.g., Isid. 1.41.1, and Lucian, *Hist. Conscr.* 55; on the distinction between history and biography, Plut. *Alex.* 1.1–2 and Nep. *Pel* 1.1.

[5] For different perspectives on the problem see Habinek 1998: 34–68 and Feeney 2005.

also the first Roman to write in Greek. It would be almost half a century before Cato the Elder wrote the first prose history of Rome in Latin (see Gotter in this volume).

Nor does the first written history mean the first representation of the Roman past. We may not know precisely how it was done – whether through staged performances and oral poems, or through better-attested institutions like commemorative building, historical painting, or the aristocratic funeral with its long procession of animated ancestors – but even before Pictor, diverse practices of memory and memorialization filled Roman public and private life with competing images of the Roman past. How did Fabius' new technique define itself in relation to these earlier methods of telling and showing history?[6] What audiences did it reach and what new authority did it bring? And how did the replacement of Greek with Latin as the language in which Romans wrote their history change the picture again?

Debates about how and why Roman historiography first arose thus locate its development in two contexts, as a literary phenomenon but also as a political one. This double face of written history at Rome constitutes perhaps its most distinctive feature in relation to the largely academic historiography of the present. "Historian" was not a Roman profession. It was at once a literary practice and one that maintained a close connection to the public events that were its subject. Livy may well have devoted almost his whole adult life to writing his history; yet he was trained, as all Romans of any social pre-eminence were, in rhetoric, not in "history," much less in methods of archival research and historical analysis. Cicero famously described history as "a job for a public speaker" (*De or.* 2.62); a self-serving statement to be sure in a work devoted to proving the prestige and omnicompetence of the orator, yet also a key reminder that ancient historians were always subject to evaluation with regard not only to the material they presented, but also to the way they presented it.

But the oratorical aspect of historiography involves its effects in addition to the way it was composed. Like all Roman public speech, history was highly oriented towards the traditional rhetorical goals not only of instructing and delighting its audience, but also of moving them, and consequently of transforming their behavior. The connections between written historiography and historical reality were therefore multiple and complex: The events of the past, and the figures who performed them, could lend a weight and authority to the text, in contrast with the fabulous stories of gods and heroes one might find in poetry. The historian himself developed a persona that drew upon the actual

[6] For an introduction to the "Prehistory of Roman historiography," see esp. Purcell 2003 and Wiseman 2007. For the culture of memory in Republican Rome, see Walter 2004.

position he occupied in the Roman social hierarchy (see Marincola in this volume). Thus a Tacitus can speak as "Tacitus," as someone who had an established identity in Roman political life which determined in turn how his work was judged: whether, to take one example, his own personal connections to the emperors whose reigns he chronicled was likely to color his representation of them (*Hist.* 1.1). And finally the finished text could claim not just to report Rome's past, but through its audience's reception of it, to intervene in Rome's future as well. Perhaps the most ambitious claim for the political agency of history comes from Livy who invites his readers to imitate the behaviors that bring success to the state and to avoid those that brought disaster (*praef.* 10). His written history thus promises to bring the story of Rome right down to the moment when it was written and read, and to determine Rome's future history by making the real events to come an emended version of those described in his text. Such historiography stands at the intersection of textual representation and reality, when real history becomes text and text becomes history.

The mechanism behind Livy's claims for the political agency of historiography was exemplarity, a widespread and traditional educational practice in Roman culture that operated through the re-performance of the successful behaviors of prestigious predecessors (see Roller in this volume). But this was not the only way in which history could claim to affect the future. Another widely recognized aim of history writing, which again betrays its close connection to rhetoric, was bestowing praise and blame (cf. Tac. *Ann.* 3.65). Here too what we might be tempted to define as a largely literary impulse has an equally important political dimension. It draws historiography into the network of self-evaluation by which the Roman elite helped police the behavior of its members. By perpetuating a system in which praise and blame function respectively as the reward and punishment for actions, the historian can hope to regulate the behaviors of contemporaries as well, subjecting even emperors, some of whom struggled precisely to distance themselves from the sphere of aristocratic competition, to the control and judgment of peers. Yet another conventional aim of historiography again involved learning from the past, but in a more generalized sense than the informed replication of specific models. The Greek notion of "practical history" implies a continuity in human affairs, so that studying what happened in any specific period teaches general rules about the nature of human behavior and human interaction (see esp. Thuc. 1.22.4 and Polyb. 12.25b.3). Knowledge of history's patterns can, like knowledge of specific *exempla*, inform the actions of those with political responsibilities, who may themselves be called on to compose a persuasive speech or deploy a military or political stratagem. It can also determine the reception of such acts of leadership by their audiences. More than that, this sense of what history can teach extends the genre's potential relevance beyond

the public and the political realm, the "active life" as ancient philosophers described it, to the "contemplative life," as accounts of the past offer material for reflecting on, for example, the relation of body to mind or the role of fortune in human events. These last instances are both drawn from the prefaces of Sallust's monographs, where they offer a strikingly broad frame for the tightly focused narratives that follow.

Of course the way we define and explain the differences between Roman and contemporary historiography is itself informed by shifts in the kinds of questions modern scholars have asked about historians' texts. For a long time, because of the very different interests of ancient historians and of philologists and literary scholars, the Roman historians tended to be read through scholarly "bifocals."[7] To the former group, the value of these texts resided predominantly in their content: such scholarship traditionally focused on the question of how to use ancient historians' works to reconstruct the reality they described and attempted to sort reliable information from fabrication, in part through elaborate genealogies of source criticism, which aimed at tracing each fact back to the author ultimately responsible for it. Praise was generally awarded to historians who displayed modern academic habits of skepticism and scrutiny. At the same time, however, these investigations implicitly relied on limiting the individual historian's intellectual range and original contribution to his narrative, since authorial initiative inevitably muddied the search for sources. A quotation from the younger Pliny (5.8.12), who never did in fact produce a history, epitomizes an approach to writing about earlier periods that made the task of the modern source critic much more straightforward: "The investigative work has already been done, but it is troublesome to gather it all together." If the substantial meat of historiography fell to the province of the historian, what was left for literary investigation was inevitably a husk. One obstacle to moving literary historiography beyond merely stylistic analysis was the assumption that the historian was fundamentally not in control of the content of his narrative, which derived from his sources and was ultimately determined by "what actually happened."

Two changes in thinking about historiography, both dating from the 1970s, suggested and legitimized new approaches to the Roman historians. First, the works of Hayden White, though not specifically focused on ancient historiography, paved the way for more "holistic" readings of the Roman historians by underlining the inseparability of content and form. White shows how two texts can transform identical data into very different representations of the past, and how even such spare narrative modes as the chronicle, where

[7] See Dench in this volume.

literariness seems to approach the vanishing point, nevertheless shape the way the past is conceived rather than simply offering neutral media for transmitting facts.[8] The second development was oriented specifically towards Roman historians. It had long been debated how Livy and the writers he drew upon could preserve such voluminous and detailed information about periods of early Roman history for which there could be no contemporary narrative sources. In 1979, T. P. Wiseman proposed an answer: Roman historians could use their rhetorical training in constructing plausible stories and an elaborate series of conventions for describing landscapes, composing speeches, etc. to turn a meager record of events into a narrative.[9] His work revealed that the rhetorical element in Roman historiography was not limited to adorning received facts, but to a much greater extent than had been previously suggested generated the content of historical narratives. Equally significantly, Wiseman argued that such narratives would have been recognized as rhetorical by their original audience. It was our mistake to read them as we would contemporary history. A further step in stressing the fundamental resistance of the rhetoricized history of the ancient Greeks and Romans to modern criteria of historical accuracy was taken by A. J. Woodman in 1988. Through meticulous analyses of ancient claims about the truth content of historical writing and careful re-consideration of historians like Thucydides, long regarded as the paragon of scientific standards in ancient historiography, Woodman proved just how pervasively ancient history was a rhetorical genre, and how fundamentally it differed from modern historiography, even when it seemed to speak the same language. For Woodman, statements such as Cicero's claim that "the first law of historiography is to tell the truth" referred only to a "hard core" of historical data, which were in fact rarely in dispute. It was the historian's job to "build up" this data with the tools of rhetoric, and these tools were applied not just to the "language" of the historical discourse but also to amplifying the substance of that data to make a plausible and satisfying narrative.[10] No longer primarily a repertory of information whose literary form offered only a sort of interference to our recovery of the past, the works of the Roman historians now demanded to be read as what they inescapably were, literary texts.

These bold re-categorizations of Roman historical writing expanded the range of historiographic scholarship in the subsequent three decades, and have made the Roman historians matter to new audiences. Yet it may be that productive avenues for future work, both literary and historical, will begin by re-examining the premises on which the "Wiseman–Woodman revolution"

[8] See esp. White 1973: 1–42 and 1990: 1–25. [9] Wiseman 1979: 1–56.
[10] See esp. Woodman 1988: 78–94.

was based. From the perspective of a modern historian, J. E. Lendon in this volume will re-state the claim that truth in our sense of accurate representations of the past was indeed an animating principle for Roman historians. At the same time, the spread of new ways of thinking about literature means that the re-definition of truth is no longer a pre-requisite for literary analysis to the degree it once was. What it means may be controversial, but the phrase "literature of fact" is not an oxymoron, and analysis of a text's significance no longer requires zeroing in on the specific contributions of an individual author. For instance, by shifting the focus from what the historian intends to how the audience reads, we find that the expectation of truth, far from limiting responses to ancient historiography, makes its reception a particularly dynamic and distinctive process. Cicero in another discussion of "the laws of history" again proves a useful guide. His assertion that "in history we evaluate each thing with regard to its truth, in poetry with regard to pleasure" (*Leg.* 1.5), even if it cannot provide a blueprint for how every Roman read every history, nevertheless suggests an interesting and fruitful model for such reading. For he does not say that truth is expected only of the hard core of facts, nor only by naïve readers, innocent of the rhetorical sleights of hand that produce such reality effects. In trying to establish borders between truth and its mere elaboration we risk at once violating the essential unity of the historical text, and also missing a more profound doubleness in Roman historiography. A historian may, as Livy does for his accounts of the foundation of the city (*praef.* 6–7), instruct his readers to approach his text rather as fable than as history. But this is the exception that proves the rule, for the later parts of his narrative also contain demonstrable elements of rhetorical elaboration that are not so explicitly quarantined. A fundamental sense that the events described in a historical text are categorically different from the events of poetry because we are meant to read them as if they actually happened, then, potentially subtends Roman responses to historiography more broadly than early attempts to prove the literariness of history allow. If we imagine that such assumptions can indeed co-exist with an awareness of the rhetorical, forward-looking aims of historiography as a literary genre, history can be read simultaneously as a literary representation and as a window to a past reality. In Roman terms, a capacity both to see the text as a monument (another Livian image, *praef.* 10), and to see as real the figures represented on that monument, accomplishes an important goal of the genre by blending past and present "realities" into a singularly authoritative discourse about public life. For us, such a model of reading ought to be a reminder that to approach these texts exclusively either as historical evidence or as literary constructs obscures what is unique about Roman historiography.

PART I

Approaches

1

JOHN MARINCOLA

Ancient audiences and expectations

History's audience

Although some Greek historians comment on the audience for their own history or for history in general,[1] the Roman historians are usually silent on the subject, and we must use passing remarks or inferences from their histories and from other writers to determine the audience for history at Rome. That Rome was a society much devoted to the past cannot be denied. Romans of all eras prided themselves on their fidelity to *mos maiorum*, the ways of their ancestors, and the past provided both example and inspiration; Rome itself abounded with concrete reminders of past events; in early times the *pontifex maximus* recorded publicly the year's notable or unusual events; and the funerals of great men rehearsed the deeds of noble Romans and their ancestors.[2] An interest in history is evident, moreover, at the very beginnings of Latin literature in C. Naevius' poem, the *Bellum Punicum*, which treated both earlier Roman history and the First Punic War (264–241 BCE) in which Naevius himself had fought.[3]

The writing of prose narrative history, however, began late in comparison with other genres.[4] Its first practitioner was Quintus Fabius Pictor, a participant in the Second Punic War (218–201) who wrote when Roman history was already nearly five centuries old. Fabius wrote in Greek, a choice that suggests primarily[5] a Greek audience: he was placing Rome and the Roman case before the wider Mediterranean world, in which Rome now played a leading role. When Marcus Porcius Cato wrote the first prose history in Latin

[1] See, e.g., Thuc. 1.22.4; Polyb. 9.1.2–5; Diod. 1.1.5; D. Hal. *AR*. 1.8.3. On the ancient audience for history Momigliano 1978 remains fundamental; for Rome specifically see Peter 1897: 1.54–107; Kraus 2001a and 2001b; Nicolai 2007.

[2] For the physical reminders of the past see Flower in this volume; on the *tabula* of the *pontifex maximus* see Chassignet 1996: xxiii–xlii. On the Roman funeral, Polyb. 6.53–4.

[3] On the *Bellum* see Schanz and Hosius 1914–35: I.53–5; von Albrecht 1997: 1.120–6.

[4] For Roman historical consciousness before written history, see Purcell 2003.

[5] Not exclusively: see Dillery in this volume.