

John Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography*, 2 vols. Oxford: Blackwell, 2007. xli + 705pp. ISBN 978-1-4051-0216-2.

We live in an age of handbooks, companions, introductions, dictionaries. In the current generation, academic and commercial publishers have invested heavily in surveying and summarizing the world's knowledge. Classics and Ancient History have proven especially attractive, or susceptible, to this enterprise: practically every author, genre, historical period and phenomenon has been or is being reduced to a *vade mecum*. Blackwell, Oxford, Cambridge, Routledge and Brill, to mention just the major players, are competing for readership and market share. While the meaning of this competitive frenzy can be judged only by a future generation looking back at us, it seems facile to attribute the trend in Classics to the wane of classical learning and its marginalization in western culture, even if that is indeed happening (Woodman's non-conformist essay in the present collection, 'Readers and Reception: A Text Case' [133-44], poignantly demonstrates the weak command of the classical languages even of those who presume to translate ancient texts!). Nor does the summarizing trend seem from our (my) perspective to be a sign of curtailed creativity in scholarship, or of a scholarly art more derivative than that of an (imagined) preceding "classical" period; on the contrary, scholarly publication seems to be ever increasing, and much of it is marked by original, creative ideas and synthesis of current intellectual and cultural trends with traditional Classics. Maybe that is the problem: the handbooks are a response to information overload in the Information Age.

The target audiences of these handbooks are not always identical, or clearly defined: newcomers, undergraduates, scholars, or a confusing combination. The arrangement and scope of John Marincola's two-volume *Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography* seem designed for readers who have already entered the gate but know little about the interior of the palace of ancient historiography. That palace is enormous, of course, spanning the 1200 years between Herodotus' predecessors, the *logographoi*, and the seventh century CE, when publication of Evagrius' *Ecclesiastical History*, Theophylact's history and the *Chronicon Paschale* all marked 'the end of Greco-Roman historiography', as Brian Croke, in the last essay of this Companion (567-81), uncompromisingly calls it, remarking: 'Why such different forms of representing the past should all cease around the same time is a question ripe for more detailed analysis'. Perhaps the answer to that question will some day, too, be summarized in a handbook.

Croke is really talking about the three hundred years preceding his triad of ultimate historians, but the question is too narrowly framed: the influence of the classical models persisted past the end of antiquity into modernity, and the very idea of History, its main purpose, subject and requirements, was seriously challenged and partly defeated only in the twentieth century, when new technology, enabling massive collection of data, and new human sciences — psychology, sociology, anthropology, and even some branches of economics — provided subversive tools and conceptual paradigms enabling unimagined questions to be asked. Yet the twentieth century witnessed not only the transformation of historical research and writing, but, for some, its demise, as the "linguistic turn" of the "post"-movements attacked the reconstruction of a historical reality outside the historian's imagination as a chimera. Carolyn Dewald, in 'The Construction of Meaning in the First Three Historians' (89-101), defines original Greek historiography as 'an intellectual project ... a product of imaginative construction' which however 'makes good on its claim to belong to the human sciences', and she reflects on our own epoch: 'We have perhaps too much to remember, to memorialize, and we have lost collective sight of why it is especially important to remember real things' (101).

That is one way to understand the problem of modernity. Yet antiquity, as this Companion demonstrates panoramically, struggled not with the possibility of memorialization but with defining the best medium for it. When we look back from the seventh century CE to Herodotus, it seems a wonder that one rubric, "Greek and Roman Historiography", can embrace not only such a

vast period and territory — the historians came from Spain, Babylonia and myriad places in between — but also such a variety of styles, methodologies, theories, subjects, audiences. How can Herodotus and Florus live under the same roof? How can Thucydides and Second Maccabees? Or the Atthidographers, Berossus and Manetho, Nicolaus of Damascus, Cato, the first Roman annalists, Livy, Josephus, Tacitus, Festus, Eusebius, Procopius, Isidore of Seville? This list, which could be considerably extended by odd pairings, demonstrates not only the power and endurance of the models which Herodotus and Thucydides, and then Sallust and Livy, created, but also of the essential dynamism and adaptability of those models to fit each historian's peculiarities and the tastes and expectations of his readers, while preserving the elements of historical narrative. For every work falling under the variegated rubric "historiography" contains a rhetorically shaped continuous narrative in Greek or Latin based on essential concepts of time and chronology, causality, human character and motivation, and a claim to factual truth, over which an ever-present authorial personality, named or not, presides.

Greek and Roman historians were self-reflective on their art (or some would say: craft) — sometimes hyper-reflective, like Polybius, whose super-ego tirelessly interrupts his narrative to explain what he is doing and to polemicize with others. Historians and others also wrote works with titles like *Peri historiās*. The earliest such title known is that of Theophrastus, Aristotle's pupil. We would very much like to know how many similar works were written, and what they contained. Dionysius of Halicarnassus' treatise on Thucydides is an idiosyncratic example; Fronto's evasive *Principia historiae* documents indirectly a historiographical wilderness rather than engage in methodological debate, while Lucian's satirical *Quomodo historia scribenda sit* attests to a decline of a different kind (see John Matthews' good essay in the Companion, 'The Emperor and his Historians', 290-304). In the absence of those polemical ancient treatises on historiographical method, the whole of Greek and Roman historiography, even with its huge lacunae, in itself presents a kind of reflection or negative image of that evolving (or who knows: maybe repetitive?) debate. Marincola's now-fundamental *Authority and Tradition in Ancient Historiography* (Cambridge 1997) set the issues clearly and in detail. The ancient dialectic on 'What is History?' echoes in the background of this Companion as well.

Marincola organized 56 of the 57 essays into four broad categories, with Croke's single article comprising the last section, 'Transition'. Let it first be said that the sheer physical and logistical effort of corraling 55 scholars on three continents — Marincola himself wrote two articles — to produce their essays in a timely fashion, *without footnotes*, is itself worthy of admiration. And the volumes were "timely" indeed: Frank Walbank, whose contribution here revisits an old theme from his research, *tyche* in Polybius (349-55), died in 2008, the year after the Companion appeared.

The first section is called 'Contexts', representing the essence of *historiē* and historical writing, its materials, methods and purpose, in ten acts — or really nine, since Woodman's purpose (see above) is an angry defense of the knowledge and linguistic skills required to read the ancient historians. This section could not have had a better start than the essay by the proven master Roberto Nicolai (13-26), who locates historiography's place in the constellation of established or emerging literary genres, particularly epic and tragedy, and historiography's role in the education systems of antiquity, with a particular emphasis on its relation to rhetoric. As a complement to this, Guido Schepens' essay, 'History and *Historia*: Inquiry in the Greek Historians' (39-55), effectively demonstrates how and in what ways historiography, first with Herodotus and then with Thucydides, was a new intellectual and literary endeavor in the fifth century BCE. The other essays in this section combine to flesh out an unstated theme of the Companion, namely how different ancient historiography is from modern. P.J. Rhodes, e.g., in a skillfully condensed treatment (56-66), traces the centuries-long transition in the use of documents as evidence, from Herodotus, who cited inscriptions as mere adornment or reinforcement of points established by other methods, to historians' eventually using inscriptions 'intelligently as a basis

for argument', as found, e.g., in Josephus and Plutarch (Latin historians could also have been mentioned). It is appropriate that the hard reality of inscriptions should be in the same interactive discussion with myth. As Suzanne Saïd points out in 'Myth and Historiography' (76-88), 'historiography was born out of myth', *mythos* signifying something quite different from the *mythos*-based words in modern languages, and historiography was in large measure self-defined by its refutation of, or competition with, mythical stories as repositories of truth and memory.

The fifteen articles in Part II, 'Surveys', lay out in rough chronological order all the periods (sometimes overlapping), forms and styles of ancient historiography, first Greek and then Latin. Most of the essays are perforce straightforward and obvious — and therefore useful, covering the territory competently. Significantly, oriental historians writing in Greek (Berossus and Manetho) and the Jewish Greek historians (also oriental but almost always inhabiting a separate category) are not forgotten. The student will read this section more for information than illumination: a Companion has to be serviceable, without excess innovation. Yet Hans Beck's 'The Early Roman Tradition' (259-65), which brings light and insight to a murky area, is worthy of special mention. Beck serviceably puts aside the notion inherited from earlier handbooks, themselves based on Cicero's problematic judgment (*De or.* 2.51-3) that Roman historiography arose from arid annual chronicles kept by priests, and shows how the earliest Roman historiography — while in contradistinction to its Greek counterpart it was curiously document-driven and research-intensive — displayed 'a variety of intellectual approaches, narrative patterns, and authorial intentions' (263): though still cloaked in darkness, the first Roman historians were much more interesting than scholars had imagined, or students had learned.

The next part, 'Readings', is what forced this Companion into two volumes, and more importantly raises questions regarding the methodology and audience of this endeavor and most other handbooks on the ancient world. Twenty-four articles, most of them close "readings" of different authors, are presumably intended to demonstrate modern methods and approaches to the ancient historians, and above all to stress the importance of philological grounding. This latter purpose is praiseworthy, and there are some fine articles in the group. But what exactly are they doing here, in such great number? Is the same person who is supposed to benefit from Marincola's solid but introductory article on speeches in historiography (118-32), e.g., supposed to read and understand an examination of chronological cruxes in Diodorus or minute philological analysis of passages in Tacitus' *Agricola*? Reflexively, No; but perhaps, even reasonably, Yes. Marincola does not state his justification. He does, however, reveal his skill in imposing editorial discipline in the fact that none of these "readings" exceeds ten pages. An unintended effect is also evident: the readings deal serially with extant, integral texts, thus skipping from Xenophon to Polybius to Diodorus to Caesar, silently acknowledging the absence of hundreds of historical authors, leaving most of Hellenistic historiography and all of Roman historiography before Sallust nearly blank (not to mention most of Roman imperial historiography as well). Handbooks and companions relate to what is, not what is not. Generalizers beware.

The most interesting section in the Companion is Part IV, 'Neighbors', comprising seven articles which explore the fluid boundaries between historiography and other genres of writing, specifically epic, ethnography, tragedy, antiquarianism, biography, geography and prose fiction, in that order. This group of articles is organically related to Part I, whose pieces trace the origins of Greek and Latin historical writing and its relation to other forms of literature at inception. The first historians borrowed from, or were inspired by, epic, lyric, tragedy, geography, and even nascent notions of biography, but created a fusion greater than the sum of its parts. Thus, in an already expansive Companion, one feels the absence of chapters, in either Part I or IV, titled 'Rhetoric and History' and 'Science and History', even though those subjects are mentioned cursorily in different essays. Antiquarianism and prose fiction, the new subjects in Part IV, developed *after* historiography, exploiting in diverse ways both the weaknesses and strengths of the genre. Prose fiction in particular undermined history's essential claim to truth. Lucian's *True Histories*,

distinguished by being completely and avowedly false, is read by J.R. Morgan, in one of the more thought-provoking essays in the entire collection ('Fiction and History: Historiography and the Novel', 553-64), as asserting 'a legitimacy for invention, provided that it does not claim to be that which it is not. At the same time Lucian affects to employ this as a position from which he can attack writers who invented in illegitimate contexts: history and philosophy. And in suggesting that these writers supposed that no one would notice what they were doing, he actually denies the existence of any fictional contract in their texts: he assumes that they intended their readers to believe in the literal truth of what they read, and their failure to carry this belief marks them as unsuccessful liars rather than producers of fiction.' This appropriately brings the reader back to one of the oldest polemics among ancient historians, the conflict between dry unadorned truth and pleasure. Historians knowingly included material they knew to be untrue, or rather unsourced, for rhetorical reasons, to persuade and vivify (cf. Quint. *IO* 8.3.67). The Greek and Latin historiographical corpus contains "utopian fictions" of far-flung, largely imagined peoples, whose description crosses the line of credibility.

Despite the obsessive attention given today to storing all the world's knowledge in digital archives — akin to Ptolemy II's legendary library in Alexandria? — works of literature, with which ancient historiography is classified, survive in a living sense only if they are read. To this end, this Companion should perform its highest function: it should make a barely initiated reader want to read the historians themselves. Even learn Latin and Greek to do so. If this happens, then the ancient historians, and not just their companions, will survive another generation.

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Catalin Partenie (ed.), *Plato's Myths*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009. xvi + 255 pp. ISBN: 0521887909.

According to a myth told in Plato's *Protagoras*, Epimetheus assigned gifts and talents to all the animals and thereby missed the opportunity to provide humans with what they needed to survive. *Plato's Myths* will remind readers of the Epimethean story in many ways. The book features contributions from supremely gifted scholars (Michael Inwood, David Sedley, Gábor Betegh, Malcolm Schofield, G. R. F. Ferrari, Christopher Rowe, Charles Kahn, Myles Burnyeat, Richard Stalley and Elizabeth McGrath). Each chapter is richly outfitted with insight, argument and analysis. Yet so much talent has been expended on examinations of individual myths that the overall account of myth in Plato is left 'naked, unshod, unbedded and unarmed' (Pl. *Prt.* 321c5-6) for Partenie (henceforth P.) to deal with in a brief introduction. His task is Promethean. He recognises what is lacking and attempts to supply it, but as in the story from the *Protagoras*, the business is left incomplete.

Among the pressing concerns for an account of myth in Plato is just what counts for Plato as a myth in the first place. P. provides a useful review of the term *mythos* in the Platonic dialogues. Yet, his review is only sufficient to flag some of the difficulties. For example, while the dialogues use additional terms to denote stories, legends, and oracles, they also use the term *mythos* in contexts where they present philosophical views that are devoid of fabulous images. One could be forgiven for suspecting that Plato intentionally presents a blurry picture. It is not even clear whether, or in what way, Plato takes philosophy to be distinct from myth. P.'s discussion does not clarify the matter. He mistakenly asserts that Plato 'explicitly opposes philosophical discourse to myth' (xiii, cf. 20). Rather, Plato makes his character Protagoras draw a distinction between *mythos* and *logos* — a distinction whose boundary the sophist comically fails to observe, both in exposition and conception (see *Prt.* 322d5-324d6). P. then goes on to say that despite the distinction between *mythos* and *logos*, Plato 'mixes philosophical discourse with myth' (5).