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## PREFACE

This volume examines various aspects of contemporary historiography in the ancient Greek and Roman worlds. The term ‘contemporary historiography’ (Jacoby’s *Zeitgeschichte*) is usually applied to historical works that cover, in whole or in part, the periods of time through which the historians themselves lived. These works are typically valued for their proximity to the events they narrate, though they are not without their problems of interpretation. Through various devices, authors might attempt to give the impression of eyewitness status even when they themselves were not present; contemporary events could shift authors’ point of view and compel them to provide unrealistic or biased accounts; and memories of eyewitnesses were not always sharp. The papers in this volume examine how we might read and understand histories of this type. They demonstrate how contemporary historiography was practiced across time and how it was a constantly evolving part of the Greco-Roman historiographic tradition.

The papers on Herodotus and Thucydides, Julius Caesar, Cassius Dio, and Herodian originated in a session held at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Classical Studies in San Diego in 2019. To the original four papers presented there have been added chapters on Ptolemy I Soter, Sallust, and Tacitus.

My thanks go to the contributors to this supplement, for their dedication and persistence, and to John Marincola, for his help and patience in bringing this work to publication. I also thank the anonymous reviewers, who offered many criticisms and suggestions for the improvement of this volume as a whole.

A.G.S.  
Philadelphia, November 2022

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I

INTRODUCTION: THE METHODOLOGY,  
POLITICS, AND VALUE OF  
CONTEMPORARY HISTORIOGRAPHY

Andrew G. Scott

The term ‘contemporary history’ is frequently applied to works of history that detail the events of the author’s own life, in full or in part, and as such has wide, if sometimes unspecific, application to a large number of ancient Greek and Roman histories. The surviving corpus of historical works demonstrates that this was a prominent mode of history writing, especially as the historian was meant to employ their ‘eyes and ears’ in researching their work, with particular emphasis on the former.<sup>1</sup> Given the strength of the tradition, we can observe an ongoing process of adherence, modification, and manipulation that stretched from Thucydides to Herodian, and beyond. Adherence to tradition also brought a host of concerns for the contemporary historian, especially as the circumstances under which they wrote changed over time and place. Likewise, it raises a number of concerns for the student of ancient history, which bear directly on their ability to properly interpret historical works both within the tradition and in and of themselves. It is the purpose of the volume to consider various aspects of contemporary history writing, including the use and manipulation of accepted methodology, its political implications, and debates around its value. Before an introduction to the papers included in this volume, it will be useful to lay out some thoughts on the primacy of contemporary historiography, the concerns of the contemporary historian, and the value and limits of this type of history writing.

<sup>1</sup> For the methodology, see, e.g., Schepens (1975). Translations of Greek and Latin texts are from the Loeb Classical Library, at times with slight alterations.

### Writing Contemporary History: Methods and Concerns

Thucydides in large part set the parameters for how to write contemporary history in Greco-Roman antiquity and also for how ancient historians would later be received.<sup>2</sup> He believed that inquiry into the past was difficult because of the passage of time and the unreliability of those who wrote about it (1.20). Instead, he claimed to have thoroughly and accurately researched the events of the Peloponnesian War through his own autopsy or by the reports of others (1.22.2). Later, he explains that he lived through and experienced the entire war, and he brought his judgement to bear on it so that he might accurately understand it (5.26.5). These tenets are a magnification of ancient historiographic methodology, which was based primarily on ‘personal observation (autopsy), inquiry, and travel’,<sup>3</sup> and can be observed earlier in the interrelationship between autopsy and accurate storytelling in the *Odyssey* or in Candaules’ remark that eyes are more trustworthy than ears.<sup>4</sup> Thucydides’ innovation was to centralise the recounting of events that the historian had lived through and to eschew, for the most part, the history of the more distant past. Since Thucydides, ‘contemporary history’ has occupied a central position in both ancient and modern conceptions of history writing.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to his prescriptions on method, Thucydides lays out some of the difficulties with which contemporary history was written. It was difficult to find reliable eyewitness accounts, since they were affected both by misremembering and bias (1.22.3). There was also the need to correct contemporary misperceptions, since so few people pursued truth with much effort (1.20.3). Finally, speeches, which might also be witnessed and heard

<sup>2</sup> The dominance of writing contemporary history can be glimpsed in Ephorus’ defence of writing of the more distant past (*BNJ* 70 F 9).

<sup>3</sup> Fornara (1983) 49.

<sup>4</sup> *Od.* 8.487–91, with Marincola (2007b) 5–6; Hdt. 1.8.2.

<sup>5</sup> His work was already canonical in the fourth century BCE, on which, see Matijašić (2018) 123–35. His renown is apparent from Dionysius of Halicarnassus’ *On Thucydides*, in which he refers to Thucydides as ‘the greatest of all historians’ (2.2), which partly derived from his contemporary status and associated methodology (6.3). In the modern period his eminence was not always assured, but by the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries he was clearly at the top (Morley (2014) 7–24). In his influential *Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*, Felix Jacoby saw Thucydides’ work as the peak of ‘true historical literature’ ((2015) 9; cf. 49), and under his category of *Zeitgeschichte* (usually translated as ‘contemporary history’) he gathers a large array of works that, for him, followed Thucydides’ prescriptions to a certain extent and dealt with contemporary events, at least in part. For critiques of this organising principle, see, e.g., Fornara (1983) 3; Humphreys (1997); Schepens (1997).

live, would make their way into his work not as exact replicas, but rather as a means of conveying the message appropriate to the situation (1.22.1). While these professions are part of the author's attempt to build up his persona and appear to be painstaking and enduring of labour, they also open a window into some of the concerns of the contemporary historian and the criticisms that they could face.<sup>6</sup> As such, we find numerous statements from historians attempting to defend themselves and elevate their authority, while at the same time expressing worry about source material, bias, truth and falsehood, and the value of their accounts.

One concern was that a historian could not witness every event. Thucydides deals with this obliquely with his allowance that other eyewitnesses must be consulted. The idea is expanded upon by Polybius, who, quoting Ephorus (*BNJ* 70 F 110) and Theopompus (*BNJ* 115 F 342), acknowledges both the place of autopsy in historical inquiry and the impossibility of the historian being present at all events (Pol. 12.27.6–9):

ἡ δὲ πολυπραγμοσύνη πολλῆς μὲν προσδεῖται ταλαιπωρίας καὶ δαπάνης, μέγα δέ τι συμβάλλεται καὶ μέγιστόν ἐστι μέρος τῆς ἱστορίας. δῆλον δὲ τοῦτ' ἐστὶν ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν τὰς συντάξεις πραγματευομένων. ὁ μὲν γὰρ Ἐφορός φησιν, εἰ δυνατὸν ἦν αὐτοὺς παρεῖναι πᾶσι τοῖς πράγμασι, ταύτην ἂν διαφέρειν πολὺ τῶν ἐμπειριῶν· ὁ δὲ Θεόπομπος τοῦτον μὲν ἄριστον ἐν τοῖς πολεμικοῖς τὸν πλείστοις κινδύνοις παρατετευχότα, τοῦτον δὲ δυνατώτατον ἐν λόγῳ τὸν πλείστων μετεσχηκότα πολιτικῶν ἀγώνων. τὸν αὐτὸν δὲ τρόπον συμβαίνειν ἐπ' ἰατρικῆς καὶ κυβερνητικῆς.

A historian's intense research activity (*ἡ πολυπραγμοσύνη*), on the contrary, requires severe labour and great expense, but is exceedingly valuable and is the most important part of history. This is evident from expressions used by historians themselves. Ephorus, for example, says that if we could be personally present at all transactions such knowledge would be far superior to any other. Theopompus says that the man who has the best knowledge of war is he who has been present at the most battles, that most capable speaker is he who has taken part in the greatest number of debates, and that the same holds good about medicine and navigation.

<sup>6</sup> For these aspects of a historian's persona, see Marincola (1997) 148–58.

This passage, which is part of a larger attack on Timaeus' choice to compose his history primarily from book research, highlights the authority given to eyewitness reports (especially the historian's own).<sup>7</sup> The issue is expanded to include not just witnessing key events but also the general experience of the historian, which Polybius also considered a key aspect of successfully writing about the past.<sup>8</sup> Polybius stresses the importance of autopsy, informed by personal experience.

These prescriptions find a correlation in an earlier passage, in which Polybius, again critiquing the carelessness of Timaeus' research, discusses how the historian should deal with his inability to be in all places at all times (Pol. 12.4c.4–5):

*ἐπειδὴ γὰρ αἱ μὲν πράξεις ἅμα πολλαχῆ συντελοῦνται, παρῆναι δὲ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐν πλείοσι τόποις κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν καιρὸν ἀδύνατον, ὁμοίως γέ μὴν οὐδ' αὐτόπτην γενέσθαι πάντων τῶν κατὰ τὴν οἰκουμένην τόπων καὶ τῶν ἐν τοῖς τόποις ἰδιωμάτων τὸν ἕνα δυνατὸν, καταλείπεται πυνθάνεσθαι μὲν ὡς παρὰ πλείστων, πιστεύειν δὲ τοῖς ἀξίοις πίστεως, κριτὴν δ' εἶναι τῶν προσπιπτόντων μὴ κακόν.*

For since many events occur at the same time in different places, and one man cannot be in several places at one time, nor is it possible for a single man to have seen with his own eyes every place in the world and all the peculiar features of different places, the only thing left for an historian is to inquire from as many people as possible, to believe those worthy of belief, and to be an adequate critic of the reports that reach him.

Polybius acknowledges the importance of contemporary status but also asserts as equally important the ability to sift information properly. In both of these passages, we see Polybius providing a defence against writing about an event or episode at which one might not have been present. This absence

<sup>7</sup> Polybius' use of the term *ἡ πολυπραγμοσύνη* in this passage has been a cause for disagreement. Levene (2005) stresses that the term should refer to all the work of the historian, not just questioning eyewitnesses. I have attempted to convey that idea in the adapted translation above (with thanks to the suggestions of an anonymous reader).

<sup>8</sup> As seen in Polybius' proem (1.1.6) and pursued elsewhere.

could be overcome by other qualities of the historian, especially his experience and judgment.<sup>9</sup>

This passage also brings up the quality of a historian's source material, a concerning limitation for both ancient and modern writers and readers.<sup>10</sup> Thucydides (1.23) assures us that he will not accept just any account, and through his own perseverance and insight he will overcome partiality and failures of memory. Polybius (12.28a.8–10) also offers advice on how to best extract information from eyewitnesses, the success of which depends on the experience of historians and their general knowledge of the affairs that they are investigating. Earlier, however, Herodotus (7.152.3) took a different approach claiming that it was his job merely to report what he had been told, not necessarily to believe it. Seneca (*QNat.* 4b.3.1) took these sorts of claims as proof of falsehoods and criticised historians for passing responsibility for the material onto their sources; and in a later passage (*QNat.* 7.16.1–2) he disparages historians for intentionally seeking and including lies in their work, thinking that their work will not find approval without them.<sup>11</sup> Likewise, Herodian (1.1.1), in a passage that alludes to Thucydides (1.22), censures those who 'have shown a contempt for the truth' (*τῆς μὲν ἀληθείας ... ὀλιγόρησαν*) and who, for the rewards of providing pleasure, have chosen to include legendary or fabulous material (*μυθῶδες*) rather than an accurate account.

The creation of an accurate narrative based on eyewitness accounts coincides with the desire to produce a realistic depiction of events.<sup>12</sup> Lucian (*Hist. conscr.* 51), who assumes that the historian will be producing a work of contemporary history (*Hist. conscr.* 47), states that they should try to 'illuminate events as vividly as possible' (*εἰς δύναμιν ἐναργέστατα ἐπιδείξαι αὐτά*), with the hope that the reader sees what is being described.<sup>13</sup> If pushed too far, however, this vividness (*enargeia*) could contravene the accuracy that the genre required and move into exaggeration or embellishment.<sup>14</sup> Here we

<sup>9</sup> Sacks (1981) 61–4.

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, Woodman (1988) 15–23.

<sup>11</sup> On lying historians, see Wiseman (1993).

<sup>12</sup> On the connection between vividness and plausibility, see Woodman (1988) 28.

<sup>13</sup> Avenarius (1956) 71–9 correlates Lucian's assumption about writing contemporary history with the tradition established by Thucydides and his successors, stretching all the way to Ammianus. See also Marincola (1997) 76.

<sup>14</sup> Walker (1993) 354; see Woodman (1988) 25 for other equivalent terms in Greek and Latin.

might cite Polybius' (2.56.7–16) attacks on Phylarchus for writing a history that included too much dramatic detail, which was meant to cause the reader to feel pity and ultimately made his work more like a tragedy.<sup>15</sup> Lucian (*Hist. conscr.* 29) alleges that he has uncovered a host of untruths in the work of a certain writer, who claimed to provide eyewitness accounts of events in Syria, Armenia, and Parthia, despite having never left his hometown of Corinth. While we might doubt the veracity of this example, it gets at the connection between a methodology based on eyewitness accounts and the production of a work that would convey the immediacy of those accounts in a realistic and believable way. Relatedly, historians might emphasise autopsy in scenes which they themselves could not have witnessed, as Tacitus does in the early books of this *Histories*.<sup>16</sup>

Speeches, a mainstay of ancient historiography, were another possible place for invention. In addition to Thucydides' beguiling statement on speeches, we find Ephorus (*BNJ* 70 F 9) noting the impossibility of remembering their exact words. While others, such as Callisthenes (*BNJ* 124 F 44), seem to follow Thucydides' (1.22) prescriptions of making speeches appropriate to the occasion,<sup>17</sup> Polybius (12.25a.3–5) faults Timaeus for employing, more or less, this same method. Instead, Polybius says, the actual words of the speech should be recovered, and not substituted for with rhetorical flourish, as these are equivalent to falsehoods (12.25b.1–4).<sup>18</sup> The concerns about speeches run parallel to those of vivid narration: the more realistic the speech or scene, the more convincing it is that the historian, who witnessed the event or drew their account from other eyewitness reports, is producing an accurate account.

Bias also affected historical truth-telling, and although the charge was not limited to contemporary history, such historians were frequent targets of such accusations.<sup>19</sup> Polybius criticises Fabius Pictor and Philinus for being too partisan in their approach to their subject (1.14.1–3). The cause of this was not intentional malfeasance, but rather that they both acted like men in love with their countries. Polybius (8.8.4) later criticises those who wrote

<sup>15</sup> For details of this critique and its political and historiographical implications, see Landucci's commentary on Phylarchus, *BNJ* 81 T 3.

<sup>16</sup> See the recent study of Joseph (2019).

<sup>17</sup> Following Marincola (2007a) 122.

<sup>18</sup> See also Polybius' comments at 12.25i.3–9, as well as the more thorough analysis in Baron (2013) 170–201.

<sup>19</sup> As Luce (1989) 18–19 has put it, bias was caused by the emotions 'hope and fear, favoritism and hatred'.



about Philip out of favouritism or fear and especially castigates Theopompus for his overly negative assessment of Philip, which was full of offensive language and inconsistencies. Other examples come from those writing during the Roman Principate. For Tacitus, Actium dealt a decisive blow to talented writers of history and the pursuit of truth itself, affected as it was by flattery or hatred (*Hist.* 1.1.1; cf. *Ann.* 1.1.2). Despite the favour shown him in his career under the Flavians, he professed that he would write without these vices.<sup>20</sup> Josephus took a somewhat idiosyncratic approach to the issue. In his autobiography (*Vit.* 359–360), he criticises Justus for not having published his account while Vespasian and Titus were still alive, whereas he himself did so. Josephus claims that his account would be open to refutation by some of the work's main characters, whereas Justus hid behind their death and thus their inability to question his version. While Josephus' statements here run counter to the generally accepted view that publication after the death of an autocrat was a better way to ensure lack of bias, the strength of his defence demonstrates sensitivity to the charges made by Justus and in general the need for the contemporary historian to be on guard against charges of bias.<sup>21</sup>

A final concern has less to do with ancient anxieties than with modern apprehension about interpretation and critical distance. The value of writing contemporary history, for the ancient Greeks and Romans, was that the historian himself, who had appropriate experience and was willing to put in the effort, was able to witness, live through, and experience the events that they narrate. In addition to the example of Thucydides mentioned above, Polybius initially tells us that the endpoint for his work will concern itself with the fifty-three years that it took the Romans to bring the Mediterranean world under their control, that is 220–167 BCE (1.1.5). In his preface to Book 3, however, Polybius reports that he will continue his work instead to 146 BCE, when Rome destroyed Carthage and Corinth (3.4.12–13):

διὸ καὶ τῆς πραγματείας ταύτης τοῦτ' ἔσται τελεσιούργημα, τὸ γνῶναι τὴν κατάστασιν παρ' ἑκάστοις, ποία τις ἦν μετὰ τὸ καταγωνισθῆναι τὰ

<sup>20</sup> Notably, however, the *Histories* were published after the deaths of the Flavians, and despite his promise to write of the reigns of Nerva and Trajan (*Hist.* 1.1.4), Tacitus never produced such a work.

<sup>21</sup> As a corollary, the issue of bias seems also to have driven some to write non-contemporary history (Luce (1989) 25–7). For example, Pliny (*Ep.* 5.8.12–13) is not eager to write about his own time because of the possibility of charges of writing with too much praise or blame. For the justifications for writing non-contemporary history, see Marincola (1997) 112–17.

ὅλα καὶ πεσεῖν εἰς τὴν τῶν Ῥωμαίων ἐξουσίαν ἕως τῆς μετὰ ταῦτα πάλιν ἐπιγενομένης ταραχῆς καὶ κινήσεως. ὑπὲρ ἧς διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν ἐν αὐτῇ πράξεων καὶ τὸ παράδοξον τῶν συμβαινόντων, τὸ δὲ μέγιστον, διὰ τὸ τῶν πλείστων μὴ μόνον αὐτόπτης, ἀλλ' ὧν μὲν συνεργὸς ὧν δὲ καὶ χειριστὴς γεγονέναι, προήχθη οἷον ἀρχὴν ποιησάμενος ἄλλην γράφειν.

So the final end achieved by this work will be, to gain knowledge of what was the condition of each people after all had been crushed and had come under the dominion of Rome, until the disturbed and troubled time that afterwards ensued. About this latter, owing to the importance of the actions and the unexpected character of the events, and chiefly because I not only witnessed most but took part and even directed some, I was induced to write as if starting on a fresh work.

The centrality of the author could not be more pronounced, as Polybius states that his own experience in and of these events drove his decision to continue. Polybius' continuation was made both (and especially) because of personal involvement and so that the reader might understand the nature of Roman rule in the Mediterranean world.

A similar, but slightly different, example is provided several centuries later by Cassius Dio (73[72].18.3–4):

καὶ μὴ μέ τις κηλιδοῦν τὸν τῆς ἱστορίας ὄγκον, ὅτι καὶ τὰ τοιαῦτα συγγράφω, νομίση. ἄλλως μὲν γὰρ οὐκ ἂν εἶπον αὐτά· ἐπειδὴ δὲ πρὸς τε τοῦ αὐτοκράτορος ἐγένετο καὶ παρὼν αὐτὸς ἐγὼ καὶ εἶδον ἕκαστα καὶ ἤκουσα καὶ ἐλάλησα, δίκαιον ἠγησάμην μηδὲν αὐτῶν ἀποκρύψασθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ αὐτά, ὥσπερ τι ἄλλο τῶν μεγίστων καὶ ἀναγκαιοτάτων, τῇ μνήμῃ τῶν ἐσέπειτα ἐσομένων παραδοῦναι. καὶ μέντοι καὶ τὰλλα πάντα τὰ ἐπ' ἐμοῦ πραχθέντα καὶ λεπτοργήσω καὶ λεπτολογήσω μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πρότερα, ὅτι τε συνεγενόμην αὐτοῖς, καὶ ὅτι μηδένα ἄλλον οἶδα τῶν τι δυναμένων ἐς συγγραφὴν ἀξίαν λόγου καταθέσθαι διηκριβωκότα αὐτὰ ὁμοίως ἐμοί.

And let no one feel that I am sullyng the dignity of history by recording such occurrences. On most accounts, to be sure, I should not have mentioned this exhibition; but since it was given by the emperor himself, and since I was present myself and took part in

everything seen, heard and spoken, I have thought proper to suppress none of the details, but to hand them down, trivial as they are, just like any events of the greatest weight and importance. And, indeed, all the other events that took place in my lifetime I shall describe with more exactness and detail than earlier occurrences, for the reason that I was present when they happened and know no one else, among those who have any ability at writing a worthy record of events, who has so accurate a knowledge of them as I.

Dio takes Polybius' idea to the extreme. He asserts that the events of his lifetime were unworthy of history in and of themselves, but that it was necessary to record them simply because he was an eyewitness.<sup>22</sup>

While these passages from Polybius and Dio highlight the importance of the author's contemporary status, they raise another concern: that is, how well could the contemporary historian understand the events of his own lifetime within the greater scope of the past? Momigliano has pointed out that changes in contemporary events were what drove authors to write histories.<sup>23</sup> These changes were frequently wars (e.g., Thucydides), changes in world order (e.g., Polybius), or changes in government (e.g., Livy's final decades). Those changes, however, do not guarantee that the author is able to properly situate the events within a longer span of time. In assessing the value of this type of history writing, we might here take our cue from Eric Hobsbawm:<sup>24</sup>

However, it is not the purpose of the book to tell the story of the period which is its subject, the Short Twentieth Century from 1914 to 1991. ... My object is to understand and explain *why* things turned out the way they did, and how they hang together. For anyone of my age-group who has lived through all or most of the Short Twentieth Century this is inevitably also an autobiographical endeavour. We are talking about amplifying (and correcting) our own memories. And we are talking as men and women of a particular time and place, involved, in various ways, in its history as actors in its dramas—however insignificant our parts—as observers of our times and, not least, as people whose views of the century have been formed by what we have come to see as crucial events.

<sup>22</sup> On the uniqueness of this passage, see Marincola (1997) 91–2.

<sup>23</sup> Momigliano (1972) 284.

<sup>24</sup> Hobsbawm (1994) 3.

As a writer of contemporary history, Hobsbawm puts his finger on an important point: that such works constitute, for the modern historian, the ‘first draft’ of history.<sup>25</sup> Like Polybius and Cassius Dio, Hobsbawm centralises his experience of the events and acknowledges how contemporary ideas about what constituted the ‘crucial events’ shape the subsequent story that is told about a period.

These concerns are important to bear in mind as we approach the contemporary histories of ancient Greece and Rome. We must deal with these texts within the tradition as well as within the time and place in which they were created. As we have seen briefly above, there are numerous reasons to question the accuracy of contemporary history—or in the very least, to moderate our understanding of where its value lies. Despite the ubiquity of contemporary historiography and the somewhat fixed nature of its basic tenets, we can see in the considerations above that not all aspects of the form were set in stone but remained fluid over time, in order to accommodate political situations, the changing shape of the canon, and the needs of particular narratives.

### **Plan for the Volume**

The papers in this volume do not aim at a comprehensive view of contemporary historiography in the Greek and Roman worlds, but rather they offer examinations of and insights into a number of key ideas and concerns of the contemporary historians. They are presented chronologically, though there is significant thematic overlap among them. Broadly speaking, the papers focus on the reliability of eyewitness accounts; the effect that contemporary political situations had on the writing of history; and the connection between contemporary status and competition between rival historians.

In the first chapter, Christopher Baron examines examples of brief dialogue in Herodotus and Thucydides and how these instances of speech interact with the expectations of eyewitness history. These short conversations break down the distance between the reader and the story that is being told and shift the ‘eyewitness’ aspect of the narrative from author to reader. By using direct speech in such a way, the authors create a narrative fiction that is heavily reader-orientated.

Frances Pownall next deals with the shaping of contemporary narratives and its political implications. Specifically, she examines the contemporary

<sup>25</sup> To borrow the idea that journalism is the ‘first rough draft of history’.

histories about Alexander the Great that were produced in the aftermath of his death. With particular focus on the history of Ptolemy I, she demonstrates how Ptolemy's selective history of Alexander was used to help the author create a new dynasty based in Alexandria.

Lydia Spielberg returns to the issue of speeches, this time examining how Julius Caesar records brief utterances by his centurions at dramatic moments in his *commentarii*. These recorded quips work both to establish the strength of Caesar's relationship with his troops and to allow Caesar to offer interpretations about contested events through the voices of seemingly independent speakers.

In the following chapter, Jennifer Gerrish examines apathy towards truth and the idea of the modern political lie in post-Sullan Rome through the lens of Sallust's *Histories*. With particular attention to the speech of Licinius Macer, politician and historian, in the *Histories*, she shows how Sallust makes the case for the political disengagement of the historian as the only means by which he can usefully respond to contemporary events and concerns.

Contemporary political concerns are also the subject of Adam M. Kemezis' chapter. There, he examines Tacitus' engagement with biological father-son relationships in the *Agricola* as a way to question generational continuity among the Roman elite, as Rome moved from the hereditary dynasty of the Flavians to the adoptive model chosen by Nerva as he passed power to Trajan.

Jesper Majbom Madsen engages with Cassius Dio's contemporary books and the eyewitness reports contained therein. Through a trauma-based reading, he argues that Dio's personally invested autopsy accounts function as a way to universalise the experience of Roman senators and present a united front of opposition to the debased monarchy of his day.

In the final chapter, I also am interested in eyewitness reporting, this time in Herodian's *Roman History*. I argue that, although Herodian purports to follow the main tenets of ancient historiographic theory, his eyewitness reports strain the credulity of the reader. This move, I argue further, is intentional, as it allows Herodian to push the boundaries of historiographic theory in ways that enhance the unbelievability of the actions of the young tyrants in his history, which is one of the main focuses of his work.

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