
In the study of Tacitean historiography, one can sometimes be forgiven for resorting to Old Testament resignation: ‘there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, “Look! This is something new”? *'(Ecclesiastes 1.9-10) Haynes provides a remedy, and it is the chief merit of *The History of Make-Believe* that it is unequivocally new. She examines Tacitus’ *Histories* and aims to show how Tacitus ‘recreates with the peculiarities of his narrative the perceptions of the Julio-Claudian regime that existed in people’s minds’ (180). In essence, she sets out to prove Gertrude Stein’s assertion that ‘there’s no “there” there,’ which Haynes herself uses without attribution (28).

Haynes is not the first scholar to try to bring something new to the subject in recent years. P. Sinclair brought sociological methodology to bear in his *Tacitus the Sententious Historian. A Sociology of Rhetoric in Annales 1-6* (Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995), and a reader’s response to *The History of Make-Believe* can largely be predicted on the basis of how Sinclair’s work was received. Those who found it a fascinating and worthwhile approach will get a lot out of Haynes’ recent work. Those who found it unhelpful will also respond negatively to Haynes. The latter category of readers could more fruitfully turn to A.J. Woodman’s works such as *Rhetoric in Classical Historiography* (London 1988) on the ways in which ancient rhetorical techniques could lead to elaboration beyond the point of strict truth. Woodman and Haynes aim at the same target, but Woodman is solidly grounded in the ancient world, while Haynes’ work is founded upon contemporary postmodernist literary criticism.
Haynes' index makes informative reading, and is revealing of her methodology. A brief list of examples follows: Czar Alexander, Hans Christian Andersen, Madame Bovary, Capitalism, Bill Clinton, Wile E. Coyote, Don Quixote, Foucault, Hitler, Holocaust, Kafka, Kennedy, Life of Brian (Monty Python), Marx, Oklahoma City bombing, Napoleon, Nazis (fictional state of), Oliver North, Rousseau, Stalin, Oliver Stone, and Talk radio (right wing). Thus revealed are her innovative and wide-ranging thought patterns which reach across disparate time periods and topics. Again and again the reader is challenged by unexpected and sometimes comical comparisons. It is essential to keep a copy of the complete works of Tacitus on hand when reading this book, as Haynes repeatedly provokes one into reading and rereading seemingly well known passages. Above all else, this is probably the chief merit of this book.

Haynes' bibliographical referencing is troubling for what it does not contain. P. Sinclair, for example, is completely missing as is R. Mellor. Woodman is directly discussed on only three pages; R. Martin is cited just once. There are also odd omissions in her use of articles given her chosen topic, such as H. Y. McCulloch Jr., 'The Historical Process and Theories of History in the Annals and Histories of Tacitus,' ANRW 2.33.4 (1991), and T. J. Luce 'Ancient Views on the Causes of Bias in Historical Writing,' CP 84 (1989). The real Achilles heel of the work is the sparse use of ancient sources. For example, Dio Cassius, Pliny the Younger, and Suetonius, are seldom mentioned. Possible Tacitean sources such as Fabius Rusticus and Domitius Corbulo are completely absent from the text, and Vipstanus Messala appears just once in a footnote, and is not identified as a source.

Perhaps the worst fault with the book is the editing, or more accurately, the lack thereof. The book proceeds in a roughly chronological structure, but breaks from this for reasons that are not made apparent in the text. For example, Chapter 3 on the
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Emperor Vitellius breaks into an extended comparison of Domitian and Nero and Chapter 4, ‘Vespasian. The Emperor who succeeded’, offers a lengthy discussion about the Emperor Tiberius. Chapter 5, ostensibly on the Batavian revolt, contains a discussion of Agricola. The book is also filled with sentences that make life difficult for the reader. Three examples follow: ‘Tacitus does fantastics in order to examine the nature of the misrecognition that keeps opinion, or ideology, in place, since this is not an enterprise that admits of a unified narrative’ (20). ‘Tacitus’ indirect communication is therefore not a pessimistic abjuration of making meaning, but a precise expression of ideology via the inextricability of style and content’ (31). ‘Tacitus implies that the notion that it is possible to distinguish ideology from nonideology is itself an ideological gesture, because it involves the intervention of a fiction made-up precisely in order to sustain belief in its own order’ (37). This is the fault of the University of California Press, which should never have allowed this work to go to press without a better structure and better clarity of expression.

The conclusion is disappointing, because it does not offer a conclusion to the book as a whole, but rather returns to a (not entirely convincing) argument in Chapter 1 linking Tacitus to Socrates. This deprives the reader of an insight into how Haynes intended her final chapter (on the Batavian Revolt) to be read within the overall context of her argument. In Chapter 5, Haynes departs from her postmodernist agenda, and discusses the objectivity and accuracy of the Tacitean narrative, and informs the reader that speeches from this section of the Historiae are ‘sure statements of contemporary Roman ideology’ (164). It is also the only time within the book where she brings up the issue of Tacitus’ sources, and the possibility of pro-Flavian influence, although she limits this to Pliny the Elder.

A History of Make-Believe is in essence a work of make-believe itself. Tacitus’ work exists as an ‘island unto itself’ completely
divorced from its historical context. It takes post-modernist literary
 techniques to the point where Tacitus is himself treated as a post-
 modernist in his intent. Thus the book jacket claims that Haynes
 shows that "Tacitus calls into question the possibility of objective
 knowing." The book is extremely useful to modern historians and
 contemporary sociologists, in that it reveals a large amount about
 modern social and scholarly values, but it has very little connection
to 1st Century Rome or Roman historiography.

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