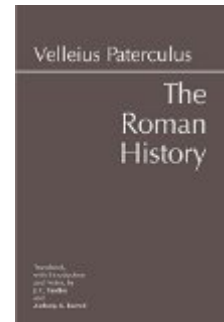


Velleius Paterculus. *The Roman History: From Romulus and the Foundation of Rome to the Reign of the Emperor Tiberius.* Trans. J. C. Yardley and Anthony A. Barrett. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 2011. xlvii + 174 pp. \$14.95, paper, ISBN 978-1-60384-591-5.



Reviewed by Nikolaus Overtoom

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

It has been nearly a century since the last English translation of Velleius Paterculus's *Historia Romana* was published. J. C. Yardley and Anthony A. Barrett offer a new translation, which aims to reach a wide nonspecialist audience. Their goal is to create a translation that is clear, accessible, and approachable. Yardley is a professor emeritus of classics at the University of Ottawa and has published translations on Livy, Tacitus, Curtius Rufus, and Justin. Barrett is a professor emeritus of classics at the University of British Columbia and has published several works on the early imperial period.

Velleius is one of the lesser-known Latin authors, whose material focused mostly on the late Roman Republic and early imperial period. Yardley and Barrett's translation centers on Velleius's Roman material. The small fraction of surviving Greek material is located in an appendix. The translators try to limit potential awkwardness and confusion in their translation by emphasizing clarity in the context and organization of the work over slavish devotion to the Latin. For exam-

ple, where possible, they offer standard English names for well-known places and people. Their translation mostly follows the Teubner edition of W. S. Watt in an attempt to limit textual inconsistencies. In addition, they offer an appendix on variations from the Teubner text. Their goal is to balance authenticity with approachability by capturing the meaning of Velleius's work without rigidly following his convoluted sentence structure. The result is a lucid and succinct rendition of Velleius's longwinded Latin.

A sizable introduction, a bibliography with a list of other translations and editions of Velleius, a map, three appendices, and a glossary of common terms accompany the translation. The translation runs 148 pages and covers the short book 1 and the much longer book 2. Appendices A and B provide the reader with the missing Greek history, while appendix C displays textual variations. Also included in the work is a short preface, abbreviations of ancient authors and works, short notes on the text and translation, and a satisfactory index of people and places. The introduction and glos-

sary of common terms especially will come in handy to nonspecialist readers.

The introduction is divided into three sections. The first section discusses Velleius's family background and career. In it one learns that Velleius liked to brag about his Campanian aristocratic roots. He came from an Italian family that served the Roman state well, and he gained access to the senatorial class. Yardley and Barrett reject that Velleius died as a result of Sejanus's fall from power in the early 30s CE.

The second section discusses Velleius's history, which survived antiquity in just one manuscript and in rather poor condition. Much of the first book and the original preface are lost. Originally, the first book began with the Trojan War and quickly progressed until the destruction of Corinth and Carthage. The second book covered events from 146 BCE to the death of Livia in 29 CE. Yardley and Barrett argue that Velleius's work was a preliminary project to a much larger major work addressing the civil war between Caesar and Pompey down to the military disaster at Teutoburg Forest. Debate over when Velleius wrote his history ranges from him starting it in the mid-20s CE to him writing the entire work in 29 CE. There appears to be a consensus that he published the work in 30 CE. Although it is known as a "Roman history," in its original state it was more like a "universal" history since Velleius had considerable interest in Greek topics. Yet it is a rather peculiar universal history. The work features several digressions, what the translators call "compendiums," addressing important political and cultural phenomena (p. xxviii). It also contains a eulogy of Tiberius, which fits better in the genre of panegyric. These peculiarities have led many notable scholars to disregard Velleius's work. Yardley and Barrett defend Velleius against the attacks of some scholars, such as Ronald Syme, Italo Lana, Friedrich Klingner, and Wilhelm Sigmund Teuffel, who view Velleius as a propagandist rather than a historian.[1] Instead, Yardley and

Barrett praise Velleius for being a historian who engaged in source criticism and sought out accuracy in his account. They lament that modern criticism "had a chilling effect on his reputation" and praise G. V. Sumner and A. J. Woodman for changing the discourse on Velleius in the 1970s (p. xxxvi).[2] They note that in recent years there has been a growing trend to rehabilitate Velleius's reputation and reconsider his work. This new translation is in line with that trend.

The final section provides a brief account of how the Roman political system worked in the late Republic and early imperial period. It is aimed at nonspecialist readers specifically and should prove helpful to those with little background in Roman history. Yardley and Barrett argue that Velleius viewed the Roman system of his day as a more efficient continuation of the Roman Republic. For Velleius, there was no revolutionary break between Republic and empire.

Yardley and Barrett's translation takes an active part in rehabilitating and reconsidering Velleius's work. They carefully navigate the difficult waters between Velleius's complex Latin and the problematic reconstruction of Velleius's surviving work in 1515 by Beatus Rhenanus. The result is a well-vetted, well-thought-out, and much overdue updated English translation. It will make Velleius accessible to enthusiastic casual readers and undergraduates, who previously may have only read Livy, Sallust, or Tacitus. Perhaps the greatest merit of the book is its thorough notation throughout the translation. Yardley and Barrett offer essential background information to the important people, places, events, and items of note (465 notations in all). These notations also provide cross references between different sections within Velleius's work and with other ancient authors. Velleius's brevity and tendency to move from topic to topic make such thorough notation a necessity for nonspecialist readers.

My criticisms of this book are few. The map provided is awkwardly labeled in the eastern re-

gion. The area of Mesopotamia is labeled incorrectly as “Commagene.” The small kingdom of Commagene was nestled mostly along the western edge of the Euphrates River and did not stretch to the Tigris River. Additionally, the region north of the Tigris River confusingly is labeled “Parthia.” Undoubtedly, this is meant to portray the edge of the Parthian Empire; however, the region of Parthia was in northeastern Iran and should not appear sandwiched between Armenia and the Tigris River. Further, since Velleius’s work survives in a highly problematic manuscript, and since literal translation of Latin to English is often undesirable, it would have been pleasing to have some textual analysis made in the relevant notations explaining why certain translation choices were made. I understand that such analysis can prove overly technical and overwhelming in a work targeting nonspecialists; however, specialists undoubtedly will want to consult this new translation and such technical additions would have proved helpful. Yet with these moderate criticisms aside, Yardley and Barrett provide an engaging rendition of Velleius’s work, which specialists and nonspecialists alike will find a welcome addition to their libraries.

Notes

[1]. See, for example, Italo Lana, *Velleio Patriculo o della propaganda* (Turin: Giappichelli, 1952); and Ronald Syme, “Mendacity in Velleius,” *American Journal of Philology* 99 (1978): 45-63.

[2]. G. V. Sumner, “The Truth about Velleius Patriculus: Prolegomena,” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 74 (1970): 257-297; and A. J. Woodman, “Questions of Date, Genre and Style in Velleius: Some Literary Answers,” *Classical Quarterly* 25 (1975): 272-306.

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