
Rezensiert von: Lieve Van Hoof, Postdoctoral Research Fellow of the Research Foundation – Flanders, Belgium / Visiting Member of the Corpus Christi Classics Centre, Oxford

Lucullus, consul in 74 B.C., has received much less scholarly attention than more famous figures of the late Roman Republic such as Sulla, Pompey and Caesar. With this book, based on his doctoral thesis, Manuel Tröster aims to give Lucullus the place he deserves amongst the elite of his times. His careful study of the available sources shows a picture of Lucullus as „an ambitious politician and general who pursued his personal objectives of power and prestige by adopting a variety of techniques, including both coalition-building with fellow aristocrats and regular appeals to the multitude“ (p. 155). As such, this interpretation offers a welcome complement to the traditional image of Lucullus as a conservative nobleman whose power base lay exclusively with the senate. Instead, he shows how Lucullus sometimes capitalized on the multitude in order to oppose his aristocratic peers. Furthermore, this chapter also discusses Lucullus’ relationship with Pompey, and contains some interesting confrontations between Plutarch’s presentation of affairs in the Life of Lucullus and in that of Pompey. The next chapter examines Lucullus as a military leader. According to Tröster, „the defects in his leadership on the one hand and the legionaries’ intractability on the other are considerably overdrawn in the sources“ (p. 105). The sixth chapter, finally, studies Lucullus’ activities in matters of foreign affairs. It shows how Lucullus built out a wide network of personal connections in the East, which also boosted his political power at home. The chapter contains some of the most interesting sections of the book, including the ones where Tröster uses epigraphic material and the one on Pompey’s subsequent efforts to favour different Eastern friends than those favoured by Lucullus; the section on aristocrats and intellectuals, however, although potentially one of the most fascinating topics to be discussed, is not only brief, but also leaves one wondering what its point is.

The conclusion sums up the results of Tröster’s examination once more, and as such lays bare both its merits and its limits. It starts off with a discussion of Plutarch’s Life of Lucullus. Tröster states that „it would be misleading to suppose that he

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(sc. Plutarch) encountered accurate and complete information in his sources before going on to remodel and rearrange this material to suit his own agenda" (S. 151-152). First of all, this claim suggests that the sources available to Plutarch were often biased either against or in favour of Lucullus. Throughout his book, Tröster argues this point very convincingly, and it is, I think, one of the book’s most important and innovative aspects. At the same time, however, Tröster’s claim also illustrates how he searches to construct what he calls an accurate historical account, that is, one in which any trace of propaganda has been wiped out. For one thing, this betrays a conception of historical truth which, as I said before, many twentieth and twenty-first century readers will object to. The assumption is all the more striking, however, given that Tröster’s interpretation, more than any previous one, brings to the fore how Lucullus was a different person to himself, to his supporters, and to his opponents: Lucullus’ life, as well as his *Life* (written by Plutarch or by others, including Lucullus himself), is inseparable from what Tröster considers mere propaganda. More engagement with some of the excellent work on identity published in the last decade or so would therefore have been helpful in providing a better framework. What I also missed – given statements like the one just quoted and Plutarch’s importance as a source for Lucullus – is a discussion of Plutarch’s agenda, of his aims, strategies, and readership: although Tröster repeatedly stresses the importance of taking into account Plutarch’s agenda, he never really discusses its implications for his reading of the *Life of Lucullus*. Notwithstanding the order of title and subtitle, then, Tröster’s book is not so much about Plutarch’s *Life of Lucullus* as about Lucullus himself. This does not mean, however, that it is of no interest to scholars studying Plutarch’s *Lives*. On the contrary, Tröster’s book offers a very good starting point for studying Plutarch’s *Life of Lucullus*, offering the necessary historical background that is all too often missing in Plutarch. But it is more than that, and therefore of interest to a much wider circle of classicists: it presents a new and more dynamic image of Lucullus in his historical context on the basis of detailed discussion and convincing arguments, and in constant dialogue with previous scholars. As such, it will become a point of reference for any scholar studying Lucullus.