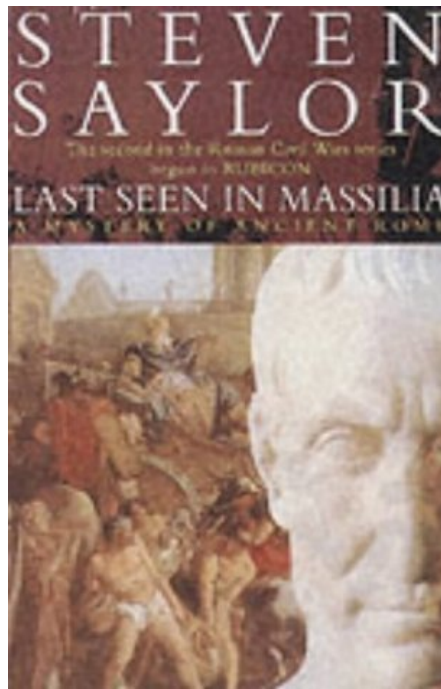




Last Seen in Massilia

Steven Saylor

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In this mystery set in Marseilles in 49 B.C., master detective Gordianus the Finder is on a personal quest to learn the truth about his missing son, Meto. Plunged into the midst of the bloody Roman civil war, the well-connected Gordianus and his son-in-law Davus survive adventure after adventure as they penetrate the Gaulic city Massilia, which is walled against Roman invasion.

From the first pages, author Steven Saylor is on sure ground with his distinguished protagonist. Gordianus's careful, thoughtful musings are infused with real pathos as he seeks out information about his son whom, he has been informed, is dead. There is some speculation that Meto betrayed Caesar and that death was his punishment. Lacking a corpse, Gordianus cannot bring himself to believe that Meto is really dead.

Indeed, bonds between fathers and children—their betrayals, promises, and legacies—play a key role in the twisting plot of *Last Seen in Massilia*. Literally the title refers to Meto, but the motif extends to other key characters as well. Apollonides, the imperious ruler of Massilia, has a peculiar bond with his horribly deformed daughter. The city's "scapegoat", Hieronymus, lives out the legacy of his parents' illegal double suicide by being the human repositor of Massilia's collective sins. He is expected to hurl himself from Sacrifice Rock to appease vengeful gods.

Sacrifice Rock is central to the book, the site of a tussle between man and woman that ends, provocatively, in the woman's death. Was it suicide or murder? The three witnesses—Gordianus, Davus, and Hieronymus—are sharply divided on exactly what they saw. Gordianus pursues the truth of this mystery almost as a diversion from the more compelling mystery of his son's disappearance.

Last Seen in Massilia Details

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From Reader Review Last Seen in Massilia for online ebook

Kyo says

3.5/5 stars!

Another great book in this series!

If you know me a little, you probably know that I'm a big fan of (almost) everything about the Antiquity, including the Roma Sub Rosa series. I'm especially fond of the first 5 books where the murder is the center of the whole story (and Cicero plays a big part, ~~he's my problematic fave tbh~~). Luckily, I also really did like this book in the series.

Before the book begins Gordianus has received a note that says that his son Meto has been killed. Gordianus instantly goes to Massillia (we know call it Marseille if anyone's interested) to find his son and what happened there. But Caesar is on the rise and he's laying siege on Massilla and as a result, Gordianus can't really get in the city. Besides the death of his son there's also another death: a girl jumped/was pushed from the Sacrifice Rock.

So this book contains 2 deaths that Gordianus has to sort out. That might seem a bit much, but to be honest the death of the girl isn't that complicated and Gordianus can't seem to find his son. In the background of this story plays the siege of Massilla: something I enjoyed reading about.

(view spoiler)

All in all, a good book in this series even though it focusses a bit more on the historical background than on the solving of a murder.

Happy reading!

Kayeb says

I have read some of these before and missed this one previously. His "disowning" his adopted son came as quite a surprise to me! I guess I will have to read further now.....

[close:] In this mystery set in Marseilles in 49 B.C., master detective Gordianus the Finder is on a personal quest to learn the truth about his missing son, Meto. Plunged into the midst of the bloody Roman civil war, the well-connected Gordianus and his son-in-law Davus survive adventure after adventure as they penetrate the Gaulic city Massilia, which is walled against Roman invasion. From the first pages, author Steven Saylor is on sure ground with his distinguished protagonist. Gordianus's careful, thoughtful musings are infused with real pathos as he seeks out information about the lost adoptive son whom, he has been informed, is dead. There is some speculation that Meto betrayed Caesar and that death was his punishment. Lacking a corpse, Gordianus cannot bring himself to believe that Meto is really dead.

Indeed, bonds between fathers and children--their betrayals, promises, and legacies--play a key role in the twisting plot of Last Seen in Massilia. Literally the title refers to Meto, but the motif extends to other key characters as well. Apollonides, the imperious ruler of Massilia, has a peculiar bond with his horribly

deformed daughter. And the city's "scapegoat" Hieronymus lives out the legacy of his parents' illegal double suicide by being the human repositior of Massilia's collective sins. He is expected to hurl himself from Sacrifice Rock to appease vengeful gods.

Sacrifice Rock is central to the book, the site of a tussle between man and woman that ends, provocatively, in the woman's death. Was it suicide or murder? The three witnesses--Gordianus, Davus, and Hieronymus--are sharply divided on exactly what they saw. Gordianus pursues the truth of this mystery almost as a diversion from the more compelling mystery of his son's weird disappearance.

Fans of Saylor's Roma Sub Rosa series, of which Last Seen in Massilia is the eighth installment, will be pleased by the author's consistent tone. Saylor has proven that he knows how to season a good plot with lively historical details, and this book is perhaps even more gratifying than previous installments. --Kathi Inman Berens

[close:]

Ankit Jairaj says

3.5

Pretty good for a crime thriller. Kept me hooked and I liked the last few pages. Good for easy reading.

Gretchen says

[when Gordianus disowned Meto. It seemed like a rather rash reaction. I am hoping the next novel deals a little with the reaction of Gordianus

Erica says

I think this was more of a 3.5 star book. I enjoyed it and flew through the story, but it seemed to take its time to get going with a strong plot, and I wasn't overly interested in (what I considered to be) a rather simplistic mystery at the sacrifice rock. However, I think it was an extremely interesting historical setting, I loved reading about Massilia, and I'm sure this story is integral to the later books. Not a disappointment at all, but not as interesting as some of the earlier books in the series.

Doug Wood says

Last Seen in Massilia is another worthy addition to Saylor's Roma Sub Rosa series featuring ancient Roman detective Gordianus the Finder.

Like all of the books in the series, Last Seen in Massilia features a mystery with excellent historical detail.

Gordianus is a 'white hat' in search of the truth. The truth turns out to be shockingly painful in this instance. He has received an anonymous message that his son Meto has died in Massilia and goes there with his son-in-law Davus to learn the truth. A civil war rages between Pompey and Caesar and Massilia (current day Marseilles) has sided with the Great One. Caesar has moved on to Spain but not before placing Massilia under siege.

Gordianus, now age 61, finds a way into the city where he encounters a highly structured society tightly controlled by the richest merchants now suffering severe deprivation as the siege nears the end game. Befriended by the city's official 'scapegoat', Gordianus manages to solve a murder mystery as well as the fate of his son. The book concludes with a stunning ending that sets the stage for the next work in the series.

Inês Beato says

Mais uma grande aventura de Gordiano, o Descobridor! Desta feita, Roma foi totalmente deixada de lado e a acção decorre do princípio ao fim na cidade de Massília (atual Marselha). Como tal, nesta obra não se encontram algumas das personagens já habituais, como Betesda, Diana, Cícero ou Eco.

Esta aventura tem início no ponto onde a anterior terminou e Gordiano vê-se obrigado a partir para Massília com Davus, em busca do seu filho Meto, após ter recebido uma carta que o dava como morto.

O descobridor fará todos os possíveis para solucionar o enigma envolto na suposta morte do filho e, pelo caminho, vai tentando deslindar outros acontecimentos estranhos que acontecem na cidade até um final surpreendente e chocante.

Saylor foi, mais uma vez, exímio na forma como transmitiu informações históricas e cultura envoltas em ficção. Neste livro o leitor fica a conhecer o funcionamento da cidade de Massília na época, o seu sistema político e o estilo de vida dos seus cidadãos, numa altura em que a cidade estava cercada por Júlio César, que já havia entretanto tomado Roma.

Mais uma vez, uma grande obra de Saylor, uma viciante aventura de um personagem fantástico e uma magnífica lição de história. Tenho agora, muito a custo, de me obrigar a fazer uma pausa de Roma Sub Rosa (ou, pelo menos, tentar!), para ler outras coisas, por forma a não correr o risco de me faltar antes de terminar a série. :)

Lianne says

The civil war in the territories continues in #8 of the Steven Saylor series about ancient Rome. It's 49 B.C. and Gordianus the Finder has received an anonymous message from the city of Massilia (Marseille) declaring that his son Meto is dead. Is Meto a double agent for Caesar? Massilia has declared illoyalty to Pompei Caesar's rival. Gordianus does not trust the news and resolves to find out the truth about his son's life. He sets out with his son-in-law Davus as bodyguard and companion. Together they slip behind battle lines into the city where they find desperation and famine. The only person who seems willing to befriend them is Hieronymus, designated as the city's scapegoat by ancient custom. While they are sitting on his balcony, they witness a young woman fall to her death from Sacrifice Rock intended for Hieronymus. Gordianus trusts his well developed intuition to suspect something is awry and embarks on an investigation of whether the woman took her life or was pushed. In the process he learns the truth of Meto's fate. As years go by, and he cannot depend on his physical stamina, Gordianus must learn to adapt, and depend on the younger generation.

Ian says

With this episode in the continuing saga of Gordianus the Finder, our hero leaves the mundane plane of every day existence and gains the rarified status of a super-hero. I say this as in this novel Gordianus survives several dangerous escapades, by rather incredulous means, escapades which would land any ordinary person (not a super-hero) in their urn.

The story: Gordianus, on hearing of the death of his son Meto, in the Greek colony of Massilia, travels to the city to see for himself just what is going on. He finds Massilia besieged by Caesar's troops, but he manages to enter the city (a tale in itself), and then meets an amazing variety of people, including the arch Roman exiles Verres and Milo. Adventures, death, gainful employment, and murder ensue. At novel's end father and son are reunited, but Gordianus disgusted by the intrigue and deception in his son's life as a follower of Caesar, renounces Meto.

As with every Saylor, a bright and detailed account of life in the ancient world is presented. Massilia itself is shown warts and all, and its customs revealed to our gaze, including that of the "scapegoat". One criticism, these later Gordianus novels suffer from being part of a series. They do not stand on their own as well as they should, however, this is the inevitable effect of a long running series.

Georgina Ortiz says

Last Seen in Massilia, like the other books in the Roma Sub-Rosa series, is like a bag of Kirkland's fruits and nuts--you can't just stop devouring it (the sweetness of the fruits--eaten alternately with the salty nuts--is extremely addicting).

Learned a lot about ancient Massilia (modern-day Marseilles in France) and its people:

- 1) "Without wealth, a man in Massilia is nothing" (p.83)
- 2) "Massilians were said to love money above all else and to exemplify the concomitant virtues--diligence, shrewdness, patience" (p.317)
- 3) "I'm a Massilian, Gordianus, and above all else, a Massilian respects a contract" (p.322).

Well-written and fast-paced, I only had one qualm with the ending--and it's purely sentimental on my part.

The book's winning line: "Now go, Gordianus. This is my moment!" (Massilian Hieronymus to his friend Gordianus the Finder, in an effort to shoo away a grieving Gordianus who wanted to save him from being sacrificed by the goddess' Artemis' priests).

Kim Headlee says

Hemmed inside the walls of ancient, Greek-controlled Marseilles, Pompey's sympathizers besieging your loyalties even as Julius Caesar's legions blockade all access by land or sea, what would you expect to find? Starvation and hysteria, certainly, as well as suspicion and political intrigue in abundance. But if you happen to be Gordianus the Finder, renowned sleuth of the Roman Empire, murder finds you.

In 49 B.C., civil war embroiled Rome's vast empire. Caesar crossed the Rubicon to assert his regal claim upon Rome only to find himself bitterly opposed by his former ally, Magnus Pompey. No one in the Mediterranean world could remain neutral in the face of the ensuing conflict. The merchant Greeks of the fiercely independent city-state of Massilia unwisely chose to side with Pompey, prompting Caesar to lay siege to this strategic port.

Gordianus, upon receiving anonymous word of his son Meto's ignominious death as a spy and traitor to Caesar, travels to Meto's last-known location, Massilia, to seek the truth. As a father and a Finder, Gordianus refuses to believe the charges. One of Caesar's closest officers, Meto would seem the last person to double-cross the great warlord. Gordianus braves capture by both sides, a flooded siege tunnel, insane city residents and other perils in his quest. But his investigation soon takes a sinister turn when from afar he witnesses a woman plunge to her death from atop Massilia's Sacrifice Rock.

I found several engaging features in Last Seen in Massilia, beginning with the vividly accurate historical and military details. Some of the military descriptions wax technical, particularly those cropping up before the plot hits full stride. But if you're into that aspect of ancient history, you'll find those sections as fascinating as I did.

I seldom read a murder mystery wherein the investigator witnesses the crime. An even more refreshing twist occurs at the development of a dispute about whether the woman jumped or was pushed by a man. This dispute flourishes chiefly between Gordianus's companion and their colorful Massilian host, and quickly turns into a macabre running gag providing welcome comic relief.

Then there's Gordianus himself, a 61-year-old hero who possesses intelligence, pragmatism and fatherly devotion in generous measures. I enjoyed riding his emotional ups and downs in his pursuit of the truth behind what happened to the woman and his son. Near the end, however, Gordianus makes a decision that, as a parent, I could neither relate to nor agree with. And as a reader, I felt deliberately strung along by this plot element's stark lack of closure. Hence, I knocked a point off the score.

But, considering everything Gordianus endured up to that point in this otherwise superbly detailed novel, I do look forward to seeing how the consequences play out in Saylor's next installment of the Roma Sub Rosa series.

(Originally published in Crescent Blues. Reprinted with permission.)

Kathleen says

This is the first one of the series that I have read. It is a great historical mystery in a time and place not often written about. Set in Massilia (now Marseilles) during the Roman Empire, it is a fascinating look into an ancient culture. Wonderful combination of mystery and history.

Christina says

Last Seen in Massilia is a book that would not normally be on my radar, but I was pleasantly surprised. Most of the historical fiction novels I read are centered around strong female characters. Last Seen in Massilia takes place in what would be Marseille, France today but it is called Massilia in ancient Rome. It centers around a Roman Citizen, Gordianus the Finder who is also a detective. Gordianus receives word from an

anonymous source in Massilia that his son may be dead, so he travels there with his son-in-law Davus. Massilia is a city under siege by the Roman army. Several people accused of crimes in Rome had fled to Massilia and are living in exile. Gordianus and Davus manage to sneak into Massilia via an underground tunnel during an attack gone horribly wrong where they are immediately befriended by the city's scapegoat. While most of the city is starving, the scapegoat is treated like a king because he will soon be forced to commit suicide on Sacrifice Rock in order to atone for the sins of the city. The three witness a murder or suicide from the scapegoat's rooftop terrace which becomes the mystery Gordianus will solve along with finding his son.

The novel is rich in historical details; Roman battle and attack techniques, religious practices of the time, and the governmental structure of Massilia to name a few. I felt the mystery seemed a little weak because I thought I solved most of it right away, but I was wrong, and some elements kept me guessing until the end. Overall I enjoyed this novel due to the change of scenery, the historical details which were worked into the story seamlessly and a little bit of mystery.

Eli says

This was a very well written and entertaining read. I am quite a fan of historical fiction, and Steven Saylor does a convincing job of recreating the world of the ancient Mediterranean as we know it, while adding in his little fictional side-show, playing along simultaneously with the real historical events, yet without conflict between the two. His characters are not prominent enough figures to pose any real problems in this regard, at least in this book.

That is one element of this era that would seem to make it particularly lucrative for historical fiction: the evidence is relatively scarce, and the world, largely lost to us, is immensely rich and interesting. There is an abundance of potential to exploit, and only a slight stricture of historical reality to confine it.

That said, this being a mystery, I will not spoil anything about the contents of the book itself, but I will attempt to highlight its strengths and weaknesses in the absence of particular details.

This is very good writing, in my view. The narrative has a quick and energetic pace, and doesn't ever lag; it was never slow or boring to my recollection. Along with the "flow" of the story itself, I also commend Mr. Saylor's ability in the skillful usage of language itself. He was not pedantic, taking every opportunity to use as elusive and "high" of a vocabulary as possible; things were described with very great precision without being bogged down by academic flourish, and thus, without slowing the pace and excitement of the narrative.

I am new to the genre of mystery. I confess that at the time of writing this review, I have only read a few, and I don't typically care much for it. Even after reading this, I am not overly fond of it, though I do not dislike it. Basically, since I am not a mystery-reader, I cannot properly evaluate this element of the story (it is indeed also a mystery) with the empirical hindsight of one who is well versed in the genre. As I said before, I will not spoil anything, yet I did not guess the outcome of the mystery, and I was impressed by it.

However, the mystery element was only part of the story (which is something that I have never seen in a book before). That was only one element of the story, and there are more than a few twists and plot threads woven in throughout (all of which were well above average in my humble opinion).

It is a short book. You, if you found it as entertaining as I did, will probably read it in one sitting over a few hours. Perhaps not, but given that it is such a well-written and compact story, even if you disliked it, you would not be investing a serious devotion of time.

Perhaps it is my fondness with the era, perhaps I am among the minority in thinking highly of this book, but it is one of my favorite fictional writings for sure.

As for weaknesses, they are few and far between. The primary "weakness" (at least that which prevents it from receiving five stars from me) is that it was not astounding or absolutely incredibly (though it was very good). I would only give five stars to something that was truly life-changing and inexhaustibly rewarding. This is just a story (though an excellent one), and doesn't confer any real meaning or insight beyond the confines of the plot, and so I could not give it five stars. I don't expect the author to taint what this really should be, (a story) by twisting it into something like that, though. Otherwise, there are a few really insignificant repetitions of phrases and states of being (our main character is always said to be tired, which can be a minor nuisance at times, for instance).

Sadly, I was unaware upon picking up the title that it is in the middle of a series. However, though some of the characters carry over, the stories seem to be independent of one another. I will eventually read the entire series, and happily reread this great little novella/novel.

Alison C says

In *Last Seen in Massilia*, the eighth book in the Sub Roma series by Steven Saylor, our hero Gordianus the Finder has traveled with his strong son-in-law Davus to Massilia (present-day Marseille) because he's received a note telling him that his son Meto died there and, being the Finder that he is, he has to learn the truth. As he arrives in Massilia, the place is under seige by Caesar's Roman forces because the city-state had refused him entry some time earlier and instead thrown in their lot with Pompey, Caesar's rival for what will become the Roman Empire. The city has its own scapegoat, pampered until required to take on the sins of the people and sacrifice himself, and that individual takes in Gordianus and Davos mainly to have someone to talk to (as the citizens of the city shun the scapegoat even as they rely upon him). But there are machinations within machinations in the city, and when Gordianus and his companions witness a death on a sacred rock, and disagree as to whether they've seen a murder or a suicide, Gordianus must follow his nature and investigate - and perhaps, if he isn't killed, he'll discover what has happened to Meto as well.... I actually began reading *A Mist of Prophecies*, the ninth book in the series (which I picked up at a used mystery bookstore while on vacation in Victoria, B.C.), but soon realized I needed to know what had happened in this book to make sense of that one; yay for Kindle that makes all books instantly possible! But the story itself is engrossing, the characters are as always very well-drawn and, well, as a history geek I have to say one of my favourite parts of Saylor's books is reading his end notes, where he cites the actual historical sources that underpin his series. If you don't know the series already, you can start here if you like - just don't go to *Mist* until you've read this one! Recommended!

John Devlin says

After a great book 7, Saylor stays on a roll. My only complaint w/these novels is that the characters are too kind hearted and a little too 21st century in their ideas on individual liberties. Similarly, Gordianus has managed to avoid some of the stickier moral issues that would result from a man living in a place like Rome in such a morally barren time. After effectively dealing w/my concerns in book 7, "Last Seen" delivers a

surprisingly good mystery with a personal coda that disturbs for all the right reasons. I can't say I agree w/Gordianus at the story's end. Seems to me he's being naive and pigheaded, but I can't argue against the verisimilitude. I've been reading these piecemeal; a book every month or so, but they've gotten good enough where I find I want to return to the world of Ancient Rome more often, which is the hallmark of some very good stories.

Cyd says

[Perhaps in the next novel Gordianus will reverse his bizarre decision to disown Meto. (hide spoiler)]

Kathy Davie says

Seventh in the Roma Sub Rosa historical mystery series and revolving around Gordianus the Finder and his family in the Rome of 49 BC.

Chronologically, it's MY seventh and Saylor's eighth because the technical sixth, *The House of the Vestals* , is a collection of short stories that I've slotted in chronologically on my website.

My Take

Last Seen in Massilia is not as tense or dramatic as it could have been. It's definitely an easy read that won't make your heart race. I'm not really sure why Saylor wrote this one, unless it's to create the situation that culminates in that scene at the end. It doesn't feel as if Gordianus is doing much in the way of detecting in *Last Seen in Massilia* but flopping about, providing Saylor the opportunity to show us another style of government, another city in ancient times, a different approach to religion.

That is one of the pluses of Saylor's writing. He *shows* what is happening. It's not as intense a *show* as say, Bernard Cornwell, but he is not *telling* the story. I feel as though I am also walking those streets, wending my way through canyons, swimming my way through a flooded tunnel. I can see the view from Hieronymus' rooftop, the piles of treasures in Verres' vault, the décor within the homes. I can taste those figs — and want some of my own for real! Nor does he indulge in the hated info dumps! Yeah!! Saylor does a great job of informing us without sounding like an encyclopedia or a news article.

Saylor also pays attention to the dress, culture, mores, and more of the time. *Thank you, god! I do get tired of dimes in Regency novels*. It's this attention to detail that helps pull you into 49 BC. And he makes it so seamless.

As for the story itself, Caesar is definitely a politician. He promises one thing and does another. The Council of Fifteen is no better. They never bothered to rotate the emergency stores, deeming it too costly. Now half of it is moldy and rations are reduced within the city. Businessmen and lovers lie and cheat as well, still.

Gordianus takes some tremendous risks to find Meto, and along the way, he discovers some good people. Not many, but some. I'm not sure how to categorize Publicius and Minucius. They do mean well, but if they are an example of Catilina's followers, it's not surprising that he lost his battle. Talk about a couple of idiotic syncophants!

Worshipping gods and goddesses is one thing, heaping all your sins on one person and then sacrificing that person, well, that's another. Oh, wait. That's what the Christians did back in AD 33. Luckily for this story's

Scapegoat, he's at least treated well.

It's fascinating how similar our societies are. Oh, sure, we have television, cars, the Internet, and in many ways I think the Romans and Greeks were more advanced than us. We may have microwaves and refrigerators, but they enjoyed their food. They took the time to enjoy it. They talked, discussed, debated, argued. Person to person. Yes, they also gossiped, but they also had philosophical discussions. On the negative side, people on either end of the timeline are greedy, selfish, cruel, loving, loyal, and more. Politicians and military men have not changed over the centuries. Nor have families.

The Story

Gordianus and Davus have been traveling for the past twenty days, heading to Massilia. That note left Gordianus confused and worried, and he needs to see for himself. They've already heard that the city refused to open its gates to Caesar, and Gordianus is thinking up ways to get in.

No one would ever have suspected the ruse that works, and thankfully, Gordianus and Davus are rescued by the Scapegoat, a sacrifice who can do no wrong.

The Characters

Gordianus is a Finder, a private investigator who has retired. **Davus** is a former slave and bodyguard to Pompey, but now a freedman married to **Diana**, Gordianus and Bethesda's daughter.

Meto is Gordianus' adopted son who edits Caesar's work. Well, he used to be until he plotted to kill Caesar. He ran from Rome to Massilia in *Rubicon*. **Eco** is his other adopted son who has taken over the Finder business.

Gaius Julius Caesar is continuing his hunt for Pompey and is currently waging war in Spain while **Gaius Trebonius** is in charge at the siege of Massilia. **Marc Antony** is holding Rome for Caesar. **Engineer Vitruvius** (*Rubicon*) is a military engineer and designs siegeworks and tunnel operations.

Massilia is...

...what we know as Marseille, and it's a Greek city, an ally of Rome's for the past 500 years. It's also the end of the road for Roman exiles, and the city is full of them. They worship Artemis in Massilia in the form of a misshapen hunk of meteor rock.

The **Scapegoat** was chosen to bear the sins of the city, and hopefully, gain the city safety from the besieging Romans when he jumps off Sacrifice Rock. It's **Hieronymus'** last chance for revenge against the people who destroyed his family.

Apollonides is the **First Timouchos**, the leader of the rotating **Timouchoi Council of Fifteen** which rules Massilia as a timocracy — government by the wealthy. *Hmmm, sounds like us, doesn't it?* The entire Timouchoi body is 600 members. **Cydimache** is Apollonides' hideously ugly and deformed daughter. Normally, she would have been exposed at birth, but the requirements of Massilia encourage her father to keep her. **Zeno** is the man who married her, abandoning the woman he loved.

Arausio is a Gaulish merchant whose beautiful daughter, **Rindel**, has disappeared. **Rindel** is also the name of his wife. **Calamitos** was and is one of Hieronymus' torturers.

Famous exiles include...

...**Gaius Verres**, a Sicilian governor who was successfully (surprisingly) convicted of malfeasance; **Milo** was a gang-leader who was found guilty of murdering Clodius in *A Murder on the Appian Way*, 5 (Milo's wife, **Fausta**, declined to go into exile with him); **Publicius** and **Minucius** are two of the followers of

Catilina in the city (*Catilina's Riddle* , 3); and those Romans who were persecuted simply because they disagreed with Pompey.

Rabidus is a cloaked and hooded soothsayer who ghosts through the countryside and Massilia. **Marcus** and a fellow soldier guard the Temple of Artemis just outside the Roman camp.

Gnaeus Pompey has sailed toward Greece. **Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus**, a.k.a., Redbeard, represents Pompey's interests in Massilia; he's the one who convinced the city to side with Pompey. Suckers.

The Cover and Title

The cover is similar to that of *Rubicon* with its huge painting of a battle scene outside city walls framed with gold moldings against a black wall and a deep red carved empaneled wainscoting.

The title is both real and metaphorical, both joyful and grieved when *Last Seen in Massilia*.

Edmund Marlowe says

A typically ancient story of passion and ambition

Saylor's eighth novel about his fictitious private detective Gordianus, actually the twelfth when the prequels are placed in their correct order, is set in 49 BC entirely around ancient Marseilles, which had been founded as a Greek colony nearly six centuries earlier and was then under siege by the Romans. As usual with Saylor, it has evidently been meticulously researched. I have always thought the ancient Mediterranean the most exciting place to have lived and travelled, though preferably when the *pax Romana* was effective, and not least for its rich local cultures; Saylor has reinforced this feeling with his brilliant evocation of the distinct character of an impressive Greek city in Gaul.

Though as in most of this series, the plot centres on a mystery, the solution to this one barely requires any investigation or clever deduction by Gordianus, but mostly unravels itself. This does not detract from its being an enthralling story, conveniently borrowed from a quite different place in that greatest repository of good stories, classical literature itself. The one serious flaw in the plot is Zeno's psychologically highly improbable and pointless confession of wrong-doing that could never have been discovered. But Gordianus's knack of being party to incredibly frank disclosures strains credibility throughout the series. As long as one can overlook this, one can delight in otherwise generally convincing and well-developed characters.

Saylor is one of the best historical novelists, not only because his research is thorough enough for his stories to avoid conflict with known history, but more importantly because he presents the ancient world on its own cultural and moral terms. He is not perfect though and slightly jarring Americanisms occasionally cop up. A trivial but telling example here is when Gordianus replies to the comment "Aren't all slaves bastards by definition?" with the quip "One might say the same about Roman politicians," only really witty if one is inured to anachronistic double-entendre.

Edmund Marlowe, author of *Alexander's Choice*, a novel set at Eton in 1984, but inspired by classical values, <http://www.amazon.com/Alexanders-Choi...>

Tita says

É verdade, mais uma aventura de Gordiano, o Descobridor.

Desta vez, o palco da acção é na cidade de Massília, que actualmente é a cidade de Marselha. Gordiano recebeu, em Roma, uma mensagem anónima a informá-lo que o seu filho Meto está morto, e decide partir para Massília, com o seu genro Davo, para tentar descobrir o que aconteceu.

Gordiano chega a Massília, na altura que a cidade está cercada pelo exército de César, e acaba por descobrir uma forma engenhosa para conseguir entrar nas muralhas.

Para além de Gordiano tentar descobrir o que aconteceu a Meto, acaba também envolvido numa outra investigação. Uma jovem que desapareceu e uma mulher que foi vista saltar ou ser atirada (dependendo de quem viu) de um precipício, por um homem de capa.

Steven Saylor consegue sempre deixar-me agarrada à história e este livro não foi excepção. Acho sempre brilhante a forma como o autor interliga os factos históricos, com ficção, criando um enredo cativante e nada chato. E levando-me a tentar esboçar teorias para o que vai acontecendo.

Sei que posso parecer repetitiva quando falo nos livros de Steven Saylor, mas é mesmo um dos meus autores preferidos e adoro a série Roma Sub-Rosa!
