
Irwin and Greenwood have undertaken an experiment that deserves close attention from classicists who look for innovative ways to bring across their views. Their volume results from a colloquium at Cambridge University in July 2002 and brings together twelve readings of subsequent passages in Histories Book 5. The discussions of textual, grammatical and interpretative problems fruitfully accompany those involved in a linear reading, whereas the volume’s many-voiced nature stimulate the matching of different approaches and thereby opens up new paths to explore in the future.  

On the whole, the volume breathes the flair of contemporary scholarly debate, evidenced by humorous touches in the contributions of Munson, Pelling and Henderson on one hand, and fierce polemics on the other, as witness Moles’ rejection (pp. 262-3) of Van der Veen’s interpretation of Socles’ speech (5.92) and Hornblower’s reprimand (p. 178) of Gabrielsen, who has overlooked the kinship of Cleinias and Alcibiades, each fighting with his own ship at Artemisium (Hdt. 8.17) and in Sicily (Th. 6.50.1; 61.6) respectively.

The editors have acted as ἱστορεῖς ἐπιεικεῖς and brought a wide variety of viewpoints together. After their elaborate introduction, a—slightly premature—synkrisis to the entire volume, Irwin focuses on the opening chapters, the war between Paonians and Perinthians and the ethnography of Thrace (5.1-2 and 5.3-10, pp. 41-87). Thanks to her close-reading skills and her intertextual observations on Thucydides and Old Comedy the programmatic value of these passages has now been unearthed. In his insightful analysis of Herodotus’ presentation of the Paonians (5.11-6, pp. 88-97) Osborne follows Irwin’s approach and points


4) And as editors ἀκριβεῖς too, the occasional oddities confined to a few instances of overzealous psilosis (p. 42 ὑπηκόος, p. 52 ἥμιν, ἴμετερον, p. 100 ἴμερς), misplaced or lacking accents (p. 47 ὁνομαστό, p. 48, n. 18 μεγίστο, p. 57 εἰρητοῦ μοι, p. 83 n. 114 ἐμοῖ) and γύρος (p. 80, n. 104 Kühner-Gertz, p. 116 φόμευο, p. 155 prolepsis, p. 158, n. 54 χειρωθῆναι).

© Koninklijke Brill NV, Leiden, 2010 DOI: 10.1163/156852510X496026
out that this people in all its aspects, including its diplomatic ties with the Persians, anticipates Spartan and Athenian behaviour later in the Histories.

In a subsequent in-depth study, Fearn reconsiders the role of the Macedonians in the Histories, taking the story of Alexander's killing of the Persian envoys as his point of departure (5.17-22, pp. 98-127). His over-all judgment, that Herodotus presents Alexander as a deeply ambiguous and “duplicitous” (p. 126) character, hard to pin down in relation to Greeks or barbarians, is one I entirely support. Fearn’s interpretation of this story, however, as one that “has systematically exposed and undermined Macedonian claims to Greekness” (p. 116) sits in uneasily with Herodotus’ own insistence on Alexander’s Greek ethnicity (5.22.1), and the case is not strengthened by his argumentation. I fail to see, for instance, why Alexander’s successful attempt to keep the Persians at bay by marrying off his sister Gygaea would make him look like a Lydian (p. 114). Herodotus indeed tells us of the Lydian habit to prostitute their daughters (1.94.1), but marrying off female kin is practised by Greeks and non-Greeks alike and a matter of power politics rather than boundary-blurring.

Next, Greenwood focuses on the underexposed chapters that bridge the story of the Persian campaigns in Europe to the Ionian Revolt (5.23-7, pp. 128-45). She carefully studies how Darius lures Histiaeus away from Myrcinus and thereby unwittingly sparks a chain of events that leads to the Ionian Revolt. Thereupon, in a playful yet convincing analysis, Munson discusses Herodotus’ story of the beginnings of the Ionian Revolt, the failed campaign of Aristagoras against Naxus and the planning of the revolt (5.28-38.1, pp. 146-67). Munson challenges the traditional viewpoint that Herodotus presents a bungled version of the events, looking only at the roles of the leaders, and failing to see deeper causes. According to her, Herodotus’ emphasis on the leaders serves to highlight the absence of the Ionian démos, who are thereby “stripped of the initiative, valour, determination, love of freedom and hatred of tyranny” (p. 167) and tossed around as a speechless nobody between larger powers in East and West.

After the Dorieus episode has benefitted from Hornblower’s pan-Mediterranean perspective, and is upgraded from a loose parenthesis to a passage tightly woven into the fabric of its revolutionary context (5.42-8, pp. 168-78), Pelling (5.49-55, 97, pp. 179-201) and Gray (5.55-69, pp. 202-25) explain the contextual relevance

6) On the Greek side, for instance, Megacles marries off his daughter to Pisistratus (1.60.2; 61.1). On the non-Greek side, Amasis marries off his daughter to Cambyses (3.1.1).