

welcome *Von Atheismus bis Zensur*,¹⁴ a collection of 22 essays from a variety of sources, the earliest from 1967, the most recent prepared for this collection, put together by Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier. Most of the essays are in German, a few in English. The subject matter varies greatly and the contributors are not afraid to relate their findings to the modern world. As with the other essay collections described above the essays are assigned to a number of divisions e.g. 'Social customs', 'Hercules Mythology', 'Sacrifice and Death', 'The Vestal Virgins', and 'Seneca and Tacitus'.

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¹⁴ *Von Atheismus bis Zensur*. Edited by Hildegard Cancik-Lindemaier. Römische Lektüren in kulturwissenschaftlicher Absicht. Königshausen & Neumann, 2006. Pp. iv + 382. Hardback €49.80.

Greek History

For those who do not have the stamina to make it through the monumental work of the Copenhagen Polis Centre, their *Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis*, help is at hand. In *Polis. An Introduction to the Ancient Greek City-State*,¹ Mogens Herman Hansen offers a snappy summary (two hundred small-format pages) of the findings of the project. Though the project and this book have their eccentricities, notably a tendency to get tangled up in problems of definition ('we can no longer say that a state is a state is a state'), though I feel bound to quarrel with Hansen's representation of the Greeks as easy-going internationalists, and though bite-size chapters on the Army and Religion do not really do justice to Hansen, this seems to me a book with which, in place of our tired justifications of why we use the term *polis*, every undergraduate should be made to wrestle. What is most refreshing in Hansen's approach is his determination to establish facts: that political autonomy is not a defining characteristic of the polis (it was Late antique bureaucracy and the development of Christianity that finished off the city-state culture); that people lived predominantly in cities; and that there were approximately 7.5 million Greeks, forty per cent of whom lived outside the Greek mainland. As one of the innumerate whose days in academia are numbered, I am a sucker for this kind of demography. Ryan Balot's introduction to *Greek Political Thought* provides a good complement to Hansen's *polis*.² Balot sets out to look at ancient texts in two ways: both in their specific historical contexts, engaging with and responding to what they saw around them, and at the same time for the 'numerous resources [they offer] for us as democratic citizens in a very different world'. His first objective is one he achieves so well that – until you reach Plato and Aristotle at least – the book reads as if it were an (only very slightly) oblique history of the Greek polis, from 'Homeric society' through archaic and classical Athens (and Sparta) to Hellenistic monarchy. The need to spot ancient authors' positions whilst maintaining a narrative coherence leads, of course, to elisions – I bridled, for example, at the tidy characterization of Herodotus as a 'critic of Athenian democracy' – but this is accomplished stuff, and written with verve. I was more sceptical, initially, of the book's claims to a direct contemporary purpose – or at

¹ *Polis. An Introduction to the Ancient Greek City-State*. By Mogens Herman Hansen. Oxford, Oxford University Press. Pp. 217. Hardback £40; paperback £14.99.

² *Greek Political Thought*. By Ryan K. Balot. Oxford, Blackwell, 2005. Pp. 320. Hardback £50; paperback £18.99.

least over how the two objectives could be met simultaneously – but these doubts were quashed on reading Balot's splendid, passionate epilogue. Whilst being clear-sighted about the 'claustrophobic' aspects of the ancient polis (the price of its 'unity and wholeness'), he excoriates our own society, on the other hand, for its agoraphobia, and for 'our loss of a sphere in which to develop virtues such as civic courage, political friendship, generosity toward our fellow citizens, and gratitude'. A properly constituted modern *demokratia* would include, amongst other self-evident goods, substantial state provision for healthcare for all its citizens, not the object of a 'mushy fantasy [but] simple, obvious, and achievable'. From a book on political thought that reads like history to a history textbook that eschews 'what actually happened': the latest addition to the Blackwell History of the Ancient World, Jonathan Hall's volume on the archaic period (defined broadly as 1200–479 BCE).³ Of course, Hall does tell you what happened (within the constraints of the sources), but he is more concerned to usher us into the historian's workshop, to show us how we might go about writing a history of archaic Greece – a worthwhile activity, regardless of the (implicitly pathetic) results obtained, Hall insists. All the methodological preamble gives the slight impression of an author embarrassed by finding himself writing a textbook, but if so it is unwarranted: he then proceeds to give us an original, generally very well told, and in fact often pretty trenchant, version of archaic history. Traditional topics are nimbly recast – so with the Persian wars elegantly folded into a chapter on 'Imagining Greece', or a chapter on 'communities of place' focussing on *ethnè* as well as the origins of the *polis* – and there is also space for discussion of themes less commonly included in archaic textbooks such as economics. Though (inevitably) I still think that more fun can be had with the literary sources, what is perhaps most impressive is Hall's easy command of the full range of evidence, material and literary. Finally, since Hall allows himself excurses, I will indulge myself with one of my own. In my review of Peter Rhodes' volume in the same series I commented on the 'random, inexplicable' image of an owl at the start of every chapter. It's still inexplicable (to me), but turns out not to be so random but a Series Design. Each chapter of this (thoroughly well produced) book has, instead of an owl, a hoplite phalanx marching relentlessly off the page. Godfrey Hutchinson's *Attrition*⁴ rather belies its populist jacket and the identity of its publisher (Spellmount, unknown to me) and presents a scholarly hack through 'aspects of command in the Peloponnesian war' (in the accurate words of its subtitle). For readers like me who like their warfare socially embedded, and are (shamefully) more interested in narrative for narrative's sake than in the whats and whens and hows of battle, it was somewhat attritional reading. For me, Thucydides' account of the battle of Sybota in book 1 is all about the slo-mo moment when the Athenians shift almost imperceptibly from defence to attack, the Sicilian disaster an illustration of Athens' tragic fall (complete with allusions to Xerxes' expedition to Greece). But, as Hutchinson rightly insists in that latter context, Thucydides also 'gives us extremely useful insights in to the day-to-day operational aspects of an attempted siege of a coastal city' – and *Attrition* presents us with a mass of well-grounded observations on tactics and command. All this with a Lazenby-esque eye for detail, a breezy confidence with

³ *A History of the Archaic Greek World ca. 1200–479 BCE*. By Jonathan M. Hall. Oxford, Blackwell, 2006. Pp. 328. Hardback £65, paperback £19.99.

⁴ *Attrition. Aspects of Command in the Peloponnesian War*. By Godfrey Hutchinson. Stroud, Glos., Spellmount, 2006. Pp. 328. Hardback £25.

regard to Thucydidean speeches, and diagrams (that make me nostalgic for childhood) of armies advancing with arrows in neat rectangular blocks. And why not?

With the exception of Peter Rhodes' opening account of the continuing influence of Persia in Greek history (and the Greek imagination) in the classical period, *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars*⁵ could not mark a more striking contrast. (It is also almost unrecognizable as the descendant of a one-day conference which I attended in Durham.) The editors are at pains to make clear that this is not a comprehensive treatment or reference work. But I can't think why (how could it be?). It will certainly be the book for which I reach first on these topics, and it covers a startling range: from treatments of the Persian war 'theme' in classical authors, through the performance history of the *Persians*, the context for Handel's *Xerxes*, to the *300 Spartans* and Stephen Pressfield (but not quite *300*). To single out just a few pieces runs the risk of obscuring the other riches on show, but for me some of those that stood out were: Tim Rood's delicate, sympathetic account of the abortive plans for a classical commemoration of the victory at Waterloo (most fascinatingly, for a Parthenon on Primrose Hill); a crisp piece by Christopher Rowe on Plato and the Persian wars (that made sense of a lot that made no sense to me before), and an arresting demonstration by Johannes Haubold (boldly entitled 'Xerxes' Homer') of a level of Persian engagement with Greek myth and literature. Readers will find no terribly new take on reception here – the Persian wars are evolving, different peoples are figured as Persians, and so on – but this is a thoroughly well-conceived, well-edited, and well-produced collection (though also breathtakingly expensive).

*The Beginnings of History*⁶ presents a collection of the articles of one of the foremost Herodoteans of the last fifty years, J. A. S. Evans. Evans is perhaps best known for being amongst the first proponents of an 'oral' Herodotus and for his anthropological exploration into the role of *griots* – and it is fitting then that it is Robert Fowler, who has significantly nuanced this position with his thesis of 'pseudo-orality', who presents these pieces in a preface. But the articles contained here cover a much broader range: his well-known pieces on Herodotus' encomium of Athens at 7.139 or on the debate of the 'Persian grandees' (the constitutional debate), on the Ionian revolt, Marathon, and Thermopylae, as well as a set of cool-headed discussions of the vexed question, as we all say, of Herodotean veracity. Evans moves effortlessly from historiography to history (as Momigliano is supposed to have said, how can you be a historiographer without being first a historian, and the same is true in reverse). And the volume also contains one fascinating piece previously unpublished: a discussion of the Herodotean influences underlying Joseph-François Lafitau's account of the Iroquois in his *Moeurs des sauvages américains*. All in all, a fitting tribute to a splendidly open-minded intellectual career.

One of the things I have learnt, finally, from my short (and soon to expire) spell as a *Greece & Rome* reviewer is the amusement value that can come from press releases. So with Robin Waterfield's account of the *Anabasis* of Xenophon, *Xenophon's Retreat*,⁷ which – according to Harvard University Press's publicist, at least – is all really about the

⁵ *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars*. Edited by Emma Bridges, Edith Hall, and P. J. Rhodes. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007. Pp. 472. Hardback £80.

⁶ *The Beginnings of History. Herodotus and the Persian Wars*. By J. A. S. Evans. Campbellville, Edgar Kent, 2006. Pp. 360. Hardback \$82.50.

⁷ *Xenophon's Retreat. Greece, Persia and the End of the Golden Age*. By Robin Waterfield. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press, 2006. Pp. 272. Hardback \$27.95.

current US predicament in Iraq: ‘sometimes you *can* go home again’. (If only they had taken care not to misspell Xenophon. . . .) The actual book is, in fact, a sensible, elegantly told account of the ‘survival epic’ of the *Anabasis*, one which folds into its retelling of Xenophon’s story well-grounded digressions on topics as diverse as mercenary armies, Persia, logistics, or (inevitably?) Xenophon’s youthful homosexual exploits. For Waterfield, Xenophon’s exploits fall at the cusp of two eras in Greek history, between ‘the optimism, adventurousness, and high values of the fifth century . . . “golden age”’ and ‘the more pragmatic, materialistic and cynical realism of the fourth’. The clash between East and West that Waterfield finds in the *Anabasis* is also seen as the first of a series of clashes through history, from Alexander to the present day. While I still have this pulpit from which to preach, I do worry – and this applies to some of the contributions to *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars* also – about what we are doing in emphasizing the ancient origins of modern crises: whether we may in fact be playing to the prejudices of the *Clash of Civilisation* doom-mongers by suggesting – falsely – an inevitability to current problems. Now that even the War on Terror has lost some of its sharp edges, perhaps we should examine our post-9/11 rhetoric?

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Roman History

If a review could begin with a headline, this should: ‘Late Antiquity subverted’. B. Ward-Perkins’ **The Fall of Rome*¹ attacks the doctrine that the end of Roman government in the west was comparatively painless, even beneficent. Starting from the ‘conventional’ (but it no longer is that) hypothesis of catastrophic decline due to barbarian invasion, Christianity, lead in the pipes, the author expounds the current emollient view (just the thing for a unified Europe) which focuses on spiritual issues; he then responds with evidence for the misery of ordinary people as Rome lost the financial basis for its defence and complex structures of civilization collapsed. How liberating this will be to those who have felt in their bones that the dark side was being played down! The presentation too is brilliantly clear, the illustrations arresting. Only occasionally has the Press allowed the popularizing author to sell himself short, as with a note on his mother’s thatched house and graphs on economic complexity suggesting quantitative certainty. Long may this howitzer fire and provoke!

F. Millar’s *A Greek Roman Empire*² will certainly be in service for many years. Scrupulously examining rich but difficult and under-used material, historical writing, legal collections, above all the *Acta* of Church Councils (there is an invaluable guide to the fifth century *Acta*), he realigns our view of the reign of Theodosius II in revelatory style. One main theme concerns the places of Greek and Latin in the ‘twin’ Empire of the East (at least thirty million souls) after its almost accidental sundering from the West, which belied the principle of imperial collegiality. The reign covered much of the first part (395–476) of the life of this Greek

¹ *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*. By Bryan Ward-Perkins. Oxford and New York, Oxford University Press, 2005, p/b 2006). Pp. xii + 239. 2 maps (‘endpapers’, actually pp. viii–xi), 45 figs. Paperback £8.99.

² *A Greek Roman Empire. Power and Belief under Theodosius II (408–450)*. By Fergus Millar. Sather Classical Lectures 64. University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, 2006. Pp. xxvi + 279, including 11 figs. Hardback £32.50.