

EDITH FOSTER AND DONALD LATEINER (eds.) *Thucydides and Herodotus*. Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 399. ISBN 9780199593262.

Comparison of Herodotus and Thucydides has become an increasing focus of scholarly endeavor over the past generation. A full-scale treatment of the two authors at every level, in all relevant facets of their works, probably lies beyond the capability (or the career-span) of any single scholar. This volume gives us a taste of such a project by bringing together a dozen or so well-known scholars of Greek historiography. It is an edited volume of the best sort, originating from and maintaining a clear purpose while allowing individual voices to be heard. The essays are generally of a high quality and reflect the richness of these two foundational texts. Students of Herodotus, Thucydides, and ancient historiography will read them with benefit and pleasure.

After a very brief introduction by the editors, the essays are divided into three parts: 1) methods of reasoning, 2) common themes, 3) reception. Essays are footnoted, with bibliographical references at the end of each contribution. Three indexes include passages, names (ancient and modern), and a fairly detailed topics index.

Richard Rutherford, “Structure and Meaning in Epic and Historiography” (13–38), stresses epic’s importance in providing a model for large-scale narrative. He focuses on structural elements used by Homer to achieve effects of meaning which are also found in Herodotus and Thucydides: repetition of motifs and scenes, especially between the first and second halves of a work, or “progressive iteration” (“Fenik’s Law”) in which a minor incident recurs later with more narrative and emotional force. One difference which Rutherford highlights is the fact that Thucydides now had Herodotus as a model, in addition to Homer.

Philip Stadter, “Thucydides as ‘Reader’ of Herodotus” (39–66), examines how Thucydides borrowed from and adapted his predecessors’ technique in four areas: chronology; dealing with events which Herodotus wrote about; the proem; and the opening narrative section. He offers many valuable insights, including how Herodotus – normally seen as ignoring or complicating chronological concerns – in fact showed Thucydides the way to his summer/winter framework. Stadter also illuminates the similar purposes of the Croesus *logos* and the Corcyrean narrative, with some key differences in the latter (for example, Thucydides eschewing individuals and focusing on cities).

Carlo Scardino, “Indirect Discourse in Herodotus and Thucydides” (67–96), lists many examples of *oratio obliqua* in the two authors along with their use of argumentative *topoi* and instances of rhetorical sophistication. It is interesting to see both historians utilizing indirect speech in similar ways (such as the juxtaposition of direct and indirect) despite the overall differences in their employment of direct speech. More analysis along the lines of Scardino’s final two examples (Hdt. 9.41, Thuc. 6.72) would have been helpful to further elucidate the conclusions he draws. For example, he notes the heavy presence of money and materiel in the indirect speeches; is this a way for the ancient historian to avoid dealing with “mundane” matters in his own voice?

Catherine Rubincam, “The ‘Rationality’ of Herodotus and Thucydides as Evidenced by Their Respective Use of Numbers” (97–122), starts from a critique of Paul Keyser’s 2006 article on the issue to argue that the differences in the two authors’ treatment of calculations stems from historiographical roots. As she has done elsewhere, Rubincam illustrates how we must set aside our modern attitudes toward the numerical when evaluating ancient historians’ practice in this regard. She also makes the intriguing suggestion that Thucydides was affected, in his own approach to numbers, by the unbelievable nature of some of those found in Herodotus – namely, that Thucydides gave the information he felt he could authoritatively present, but refused to go any further in performing calculations (using the battle of Mantinea in Book 4 as an example).

Hans-Peter Stahl, “Herodotus and Thucydides on Blind Decisions Preceding Military Action” (125–153), investigates the way both authors portray decision-making before military action, taking as his examples the Athenian invasion of Sicily and Xerxes’ campaign against Greece (in that order). After beginning with brief comments on what he describes as a classic case of blind decision-making – Melos’ refusal to surrender to Athens in 416 – Stahl details the language of blindness, ignorance, and illogic with which Thucydides opens Book 6, up through Nicias’ and Alcibiades’ speeches concerning the Sicilian Expedition. The rest of the essay entails a much lengthier review of the stages of Xerxes’ decision to invade Greece at the opening of Herodotus’ Book 7: the apparent initial overpowering of reason by flattery and self-interest; reversal followed by “supernatural guidance (seductive and therefore easily misread)” (142); the advisor recanting. A similar pattern appears later when Artabanus and Xerxes discuss their chances at the Hellespont. Stahl concludes that Herodotus and Thucydides share an outlook in which blind decisions, often accompanied by confidence and pride, precede disastrous outcomes.

Donald Lateiner, “Oaths: Theory and Practice in the *Histories* of Herodotus and Thucydides” (154–184), gives a rich and fast-moving overview of oaths in both authors. Herodotus of course finds room for exotic oath

rituals, but his literary imagination finds fuel in oaths among the Hellenes too; his Spartan stories highlight the gap between theory and practice (i.e. swearing oaths versus keeping them). Thucydides mentions oaths much more frequently and records many details, at the same time as he displays their almost constant violation and ineffectiveness, reflecting his view of the decline of Hellenic morals and values under the pressure of the Great War. *Tisis* is a factor only in Herodotus, but both historians “demonstrate both the poetics and problematics of oaths” (179).

Edith Foster, “Thermopylae and Pylos, with Reference to the Homeric Background” (185–214), interweaves detailed analysis of the language and structure of Herodotus’ narrative of Thermopylae and Thucydides on Pylos in order to show how closely the latter followed the former’s lead in composing battle narrative, as well as Herodotus’ adaptation of Homeric techniques. The most important change is the addition of narrator explanation of the major actions of the battle. Thucydides, while following in Herodotus’ footsteps, reintroduces two Homeric elements – psychological updates and description of battlefield experience – and he provides a general’s strategic thinking. Foster sees Thucydides using echoes of Thermopylae in the Pylos narrative perhaps to demonstrate that the Spartan virtue of the earlier battle no longer suffices.

Wolfgang Blösel, “Thucydides on Themistocles: A Herodotean Narrator?” (215–240), goes against the grain of the volume in attempting to deny a close relationship between the two authors in a particular passage, Thucydides’ portrayal of Themistocles in Book 1. Picking up on his earlier treatments of Herodotus’ Themistocles, Blösel argues against the historicity of the building of Athens’ walls via the ruse of Themistocles; rather, Thucydides used the story because he needed to for his “narrative aims” (222). He restates Westlake’s case for Chares of Lampsacus as the source for this story and for Themistocles’ death, based especially on Ionic elements of the passage (linguistic and otherwise). Rather than reading the excursus as an attempt to “correct” Herodotus, Blösel concludes that Thucydides felt he could not combat the predominant defamatory view of Themistocles and thus praised his general intellectual abilities without taking a position on the treason charges.

Rosaria Munson, “Persians in Thucydides” (241–277), investigates elements of Thucydides’ rejection and imitation of Herodotus in this area, revisiting the topic in light of Rood’s 1999 essay. Her review of the evidence confirms that “Thucydides . . . pays attention to the Persians only insofar as they potentially affect Greek interests” (250), with the major and striking exception of the Pausanias-Themistocles excursus. Munson suggests this was a “farewell to Herodotus” (cf. Blösel, above) and emphasizes that Thucydides must have chosen to include it at a relatively late date. The Persians’ other major presence is in Book 8, but these are not Herodotus’ Persians: Thucydides

focuses almost exclusively on the western satrapies, and while eastern wealth is a factor, it is not presented in exotic extravagance, but simply as “hard cash” (261). However, Thucydides does at times echo his predecessor, such as on the fate of the Ionian Greeks, and his treatment of Tissaphernes includes Herodotean narrative techniques (such as variant versions) reflecting a lack of reliable knowledge about Persian motives.

Christopher Pelling, “Aristotle’s *Rhetoric*, the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum*, and the Speeches in Herodotus and Thucydides” (281–315), argues that (*pace* Hornblower) the *Rhetorica ad Alexandrum* can be useful for analyzing Thucydides when we find subtle differences between its advice and his speeches. This is followed by a demonstration using alliance speeches, building on the work of Colin Macleod. He then compares Aristotle on pity in Book 2 of the *Rhetoric* with notions of pity in Thucydides’ speech for Cleon and in the Melian Dialogue, noting how a sharp focus on expediency pushes pity to the side. Pelling’s final section looks at the “expedient” (*xumpheron*) and the “just” in the three authors. For Herodotus, he emphasizes the difficulty in disentangling the two notions, concluding with the allies’ visit to Gelon in Book 7: Herodotus implies that the Greeks’ “perceptions of what is just [for their own cities] have got in the way of what is expedient” for Greece as a whole (304). Combining this with the evidence from Aristotle, Pelling suggests, we can understand better the lack of the ethical in Thucydides’ speeches: forefronting expediency is not cynical *Realpolitik* but reflects “the moral claim that the city has on its citizens” (306). He also sees the change in discussion of morality over the course of the work not as an indication of moral decline but a response to the failure of arguments based on justice early on in the war.

Emily Baragwanath, “A Noble Alliance: Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon’s Procles” (316–344), argues that Xenophon’s “explicit self-positioning” in the *Hellenica* reveals that both Herodotus and Thucydides were essential components of his historiography. She finds adaptations of their methodological themes, a redefining of “greatness” to include individual character as “worthy of record” (under the influence of Socratic philosophy) while still focusing on the political and military narrative of (mostly) major cities. Most of the essay consists of a close reading of Xenophon’s two speeches for Procles (Books 6 and 7) as a case study for these notions. There are specific echoes of ideas and vocabulary from both predecessors (for example, Procles as a warner figure in the second speech), but Xenophon also challenges some prevalent notions in their works. More importantly, she argues that his intention here is to mark the historical significance of the moment – that is, these are not just literary allusions, but an invocation of his two models for an historiographical purpose. Especially since the first speech has no real effect on the narrative and the second is somewhat implausible, it makes sense to read them as “the statement of an ideal that was important to

Xenophon” (329), reflecting the changed political nature of the Greek world after the Peloponnesian War.

Iris Samotta, “Herodotus and Thucydides in Roman Republican Historiography” (345–378), posits that the historians of the Roman Republic show “a lengthy tradition of reliance on and response to Herodotus and Thucydides” (346). Her stated approach is one of “thick description” à la Geertz; this, combined with the fragmentary nature of the evidence, produces more food for thought than convincing conclusions. She argues that Fabius Pictor was influenced by Herodotus and Thucydides both through the western Greek historians (Timaeus, Diocles of Peparethus) and directly, since individual episodes and structuring techniques reveal knowledge of them (and thereby assume his readers’ knowledge too). Other examples include Cato’s adaptation of the story of the 300 at Thermopylae for Roman, and self-aggrandizing, purposes; Coelius Antipater making truth claims and offering variant accounts based on inquiry; and the atticism of the latter portion of the first century as seen in Tubero, Cicero, and Sallust, reflecting the increased presence of Thucydides.

The volume is very nicely produced and carefully edited. I found only three errors: at 359 n. 87, the citation should read Hdt. 7.229; at 369, “Thucydideism”; and in the topical index, the entry for Battle of Pylos is left blank (but Pylos fortunately can be found in the index of names).

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