

BOOK REVIEW

Greek Notions of the Past in the Archaic and Classical Eras: History Without Historians. Edited by JOHN MARINCOLA, LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES and CALUM MACIVER. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012. Distributed in the US by Columbia University Press. Pp. xiv + 378. Hardcover, £75.00/\$120.00. ISBN 978-0-7486-4396-7.

There has been a considerable amount of criticism in recent years of Jacoby's model of the development of Greek historical writing, much of it well rehearsed by John Marincola in his "Introduction" to this volume (a collection of essays stemming from an Edinburgh Leventis conference organized by Marincola in 2009). Less attention has been paid to situating Jacoby's view of Greek historiography in relation to other ways of viewing the past in archaic and classical Greece. The range of Greek attitudes to the past has of course received much discussion, notably in Jonas Grethlein's important monograph, *The Greeks and the Past: Poetry, Oratory and History in the Fifth Century BCE* (Cambridge, 2010). What this collection of essays brings out are some of the (unavoidable) restrictions of Grethlein's approach. Some of the richest chapters move beyond the range of genres treated by Grethlein to embrace the role of the past in other sorts of written evidence such as inscriptions (Lambert, Shear) as well as in contexts such as rituals (partly mediated through written evidence, admittedly, but also based on more theoretical and comparative reasoning: Kearns) and weaving (loom-weights as possible evidence for family traditions: Foxhall). As an incentive to thinking about "history without historians," this collection is particularly timely because it complements another new book, Joseph E. Skinner's *The Invention of Greek Ethnography* (Oxford, 2012), which seeks to challenge Jacoby by extending the definition of ethnography beyond a narrow literary genre (in other words, by looking at ethnography without ethnographers).

Since it is not possible to do justice in a short review to the full scope of the volume (Marincola's "Introduction," 16 chapters, then a closing commentary by Simon Goldhill, Suzanne Saïd, and Christopher Pelling), I will restrict my remarks here to some observations on the way Greek historians are brought into contact with other modes of conceiving the past. One strand that emerges in

many chapters (e.g. Allen Romano on “Euripidean Explainers”) is that treatments of the past are often framed so as to provide an implicit comment on the situatedness of the narrator. Here, Herodotus’ concern with the way in which national traditions are shaped by self-interest is invoked by several contributors. Such a concern was not restricted to Herodotus, however: arguably the Plataean debate in Thucydides as well as Antiphon’s *Tetralogies* (both of which feature competing claims about the past that cannot be resolved by the reader) would have provided a closer parallel than Herodotus for Ruth Scodel in her illuminating discussion of Euripides and Sophocles.

Less satisfying is an occasional tendency to adopt an overly simplistic view of the techniques of Greek historians. Thus Jeffrey Henderson’s discussion of “Old Comedy and Popular History” draws one-dimensional contrasts between mythical modes of historical explanation as evidenced in Aristophanes’ *Acharnians* and more rigorous Thucydidean techniques. Henderson’s loose phrasing on p. 145 would make the uninformed reader imagine that Hecataeus’ rationalization of Greek myth took place decades later than it did, while on p. 158 he appears to place the publication of Herodotus’ *Histories* later than *Lysistrata*. Henderson in any case undercuts his own analysis with his closing suggestion (based on the portrayal of the past in later orators) that the availability of historiography would not have made much difference to Aristophanes and his audiences. Fair enough—but then there are also treatments of the past in Old Comedy that are much more historiographical in tone (e.g. Demetrius Fr. 2, from his *Sikelia*: “the Spartans took down our walls and took possession of our warships, so that the people of the Peloponnese should no longer be the losers on the sea,” trans. Storey).

The great strength of Bruno Currie’s “Hesiod on Human History,” by contrast, is that its author has thought hard about different ways of configuring the relationship between Hesiod and Herodotus. Currie starts with a lucid and densely annotated discussion of the relationship between Hesiod’s “myth of the races” and his account of Prometheus, before offering a nuanced comparison with Herodotus’ technique of including partly incompatible alternatives (though Currie does not address Seth Benardete’s argument for the synchronic placement of Hesiod’s races in Herodotean ethnography (*Herodotean Inquiries* (The Hague, 1969) 29)).

Two broader issues could have been addressed more explicitly by contributors. Marincola’s “Introduction” rightly stresses Jacoby’s interest in the relation between local and national modes of historical consciousness. The opposition of

the local and the panhellenic finds significant echoes in recent scholarship both on the literary genres of epic and lyric (in this volume, in Ewen Bowie's treatment of Stesichorus) and on the development of Hellenicity. Secondly, there is the very idea of "the past." The contributors could not of course have grappled with Zachary Sayre Schiffman's argument in *The Birth of the Past* (Baltimore, 2011) that "classical historians ... conceived of multiple 'pasts' characterized by different time frames" without subsuming "these pasts under a single entity—"the" past" (5). But Schiffman—who places the birth of "the past" in the early eighteenth century—is developing the views of earlier scholars with whom more contributors could have engaged, notably Reinhart Koselleck (who is referenced explicitly by Grethlein and Goldhill).

This volume does nonetheless offer much to anyone interested in those scholarly debates as well as in archaic and classical Greece more broadly. In particular, Currie's chapter is an important contribution to study of the relationship between "mythical" and "historical" modes of thought, while Kearns and Foxhall offer imaginative extensions of scholarly approaches to the past. The editors deserve thanks, then, for a volume that should do much to inform and nuance future debate.

TIM ROOD

St. Hugh's College, Oxford, timothy.rood@st-hughs.ox.ac.uk