

Describing Greece: Landscape and Literature in the Periegesis of Pausanias. By WILLIAM HUTTON. Greek Culture in the Roman World. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006. Pp. xiii + 372. Cloth, \$95.00. ISBN 0-521-84720-6.

Pausanias is one of those ancient authors, like Strabo and Pliny the Elder, whose literary output has long been valued as an unmotivated repository of objective data. Like those same authors, Pausanias' esteem has improved with the deepening interest in Imperial culture generally, and particularly the "Second Sophistic." Over the past two decades, following the seminal study by Christian Habicht, [[1]] scholars have explored with fresh vigor the social and cultural setting, themes and strategies of the *Periegesis Hellados*. [[2]] Among these works, *Describing Greece* by William Hutton (H.) is distinguished as a vastly detailed reading that aims for a comprehensive picture of Pausanias the literary and cultural figure. The project probably seemed more bold (cf. pp. xi-xiii) as a Texas dissertation in the early 1990s, when the studies of Habicht and a young Jaś Elsner were still defining the field. The excellent, ambitious monograph that has come from this thesis synthesizes earlier scholarship and offers a wholly new assessment of Pausanias and the *Periegesis*.

According to his introductory chapter (pp. 1-29), H. endeavors to understand the *Periegesis* on its own terms and in its own time. This is not a new goal, but no previous study has pursued it on such a scale and succeeded on so many levels. Pausanias, H. asserts, was a dynamic and erudite thinker with a distinct range of interests. His cohesive work was the product of a cultural setting intensely engaged with the Classical Greek past but defined by the Roman Imperial present. In other words, Pausanias was not a "dependable dullard," H.'s favorite catchphrase for old interpretations that underrate Pausanias' mind and quarry the *Periegesis* for nuggets of *realia*. Instead, the author should be viewed as an innovative "non-conformist" (pp. 51-3), because of his unparalleled investment in the description of places, his focus on the old Greek gods, his studious avoidance of Atticism and his reticence to present himself in an era of competitive intellectualism.

Chapter 2 (pp. 30-53), which serves as an extended introduction, aims to contextualize the *Periegesis* in social, economic and cultural history. H. already identified (pp. 9-11) the elusive author conventionally as an educated, wealthy resident of a city in Asia Minor, possibly Magnesia on Sipylus, who was active during the middle to late 2nd century. His outline of "Pausanias' world" is prudent: Mediterranean travel flourished in a peaceful age; Hellenism was a mark

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of cultural sophistication within a network of elite associations; Greeks could view the Roman conquest as a misfortune while appreciating the benefits of Imperial stability and promoting their past among natives and foreigners alike. But certain observations are incomplete or wayward. Contrary to H.'s claims, the archaeology of ports and shipwrecks does not in fact reveal that "the majority of people whose movements have left some trace" possessed considerable political power, and frequent travel generated many pluralistic communities, not just "cultural homogenization" among elites (pp. 30–1). Moreover, H.'s treatment of the sophists is too simple, and one wonders whether they really imagined themselves on the model of the "itinerant wisemen" of Classical Greece (pp. 33–4). Also striking are H.'s initial emphasis on the uniformity of elite identity across the Empire, and his soft-pedaling of any cultural or political significance attached to local identities, specifically ethnic (p. 31). While exceptional figures like Philopappus and Polemo could showcase their local and supralocal attachments for effect in different contexts, honorary and commemorative activities across the eastern provinces show that many Greek elites were presented foremost as members of civic communities. If one considers the importance of civic identity for elite self-fashioning, it is unsurprising that municipal aristocrats were also deeply interested in the uniqueness of their historic community, the ancestral home. Likewise, the diversity of local history, genealogy, cult and landscape was a chief interest of Pausanias, who reveled in recording divergent mythic traditions, and single buildings or artifacts.

Chapters 3–5, which address the structure of the *Periegesis*, are perhaps the strongest of the book (pp. 54–174). H. argues persuasively that Pausanias' criteria for inclusion in his description of central and southern Greece are the richness of the local traditions and remains, as well as personal familiarity and the organization of his work. His depiction of territories followed a well-known radial pattern, but H. adds nuance: regions can have subregions and multiple hubs, centrality can be defined on political, religious or historical grounds, and routes often disregard physical geography. The narrative structure applied to territories can be seen in miniature within cities. H. illustrates these principles by treating the example of the Corinthia and Corinth. He concludes that Pausanias strove to uncover contemporary reflections of the ancient Corinthian identity, even when that meant eliding the colony's monumental grandeur in favor of a "rhetoric of smallness" (pp. 166–73). This sensitive reading shows how the fluid narrative of the *Periegesis* embeds culture and history in physical space; it eschews a picture of relentless linearity that

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merely charts places. This point has never been demonstrated with such acuity and force.

The final three chapters adopt a topical approach that results in a somewhat disjointed triad. Chapter 6 (pp. 175–240) is a masterful survey of Pausanias' language. Blatantly devoid of Atticism, his style recalls Herodotus and perhaps the Asianist rhetorician Hegesias, another Sipyrene, but an almost Thucydidean "proliferation of notable idiosyncracies" gives his language its own pungent flavor. Chapter 7 (pp. 241–71) investigates the generic roots of the *Periegesis*. H. sensibly observes that, while many other works described monuments and art, Pausanias' creation of an itinerary through a broad region and his fascination with historical landscapes were novel, though reminiscent at least in organization of the geographic tradition of *periploi*. The book ends with a discussion (pp. 273–324) of the shifting attitudes of the *Periegesis* and their putative link to Pausanias' growth. Such interpretations are always tricky, and ultimately we cannot know for sure whether Pausanias' varying treatment of, for example, the Imperial cult or religious history is a psychological or a structural symptom, or both at once (cf. pp. 307–8). In any case, by this point H. has convinced the sympathetic reader to embrace the complexity and individuality of the *Periegesis*.

Describing Greece is a learned and insightful study that successfully portrays the creative and intellectual mind behind the *Periegesis*. To this end, H. has written a sweeping overview of Pausanian studies, citing and engaging every major and minor predecessor back to August Boeckh and Wilhelm Schmid. He addresses most of the basic controversies surrounding the *Periegesis*, and his own conclusions are always cogent and often convincing. H. shines most brightly in his sharply-focused analyses of structure and language. Readers will look elsewhere for better coverage of the historical realities of touring, of archaeological and epigraphic data and of reception (see n. 2, above). But no other book offers a more intricate and eloquent evaluation of Pausanias as a writer to be appreciated for his ingenuity in composition and his innovative vision of history.

For all its sophistication and breadth, *Describing Greece* has a few inconsistencies. Although this long book is admirably polished, the quality of the plans and photographs is insufficient for a study that depends on imagining the landscape, and there are a handful of glaring errors in content and language. [[3]] Moreover, in certain respects, H. seems to have become one with his subject, which does not always make for easy reading. The prose is crisp yet prolix, and the chapters exhibit a Pausanian capacity for detail and complication.

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Some sections, such as the one on Lucian (pp. 195–203), are so digressive as to be distracting. Like the *Periegesis*, for better or worse, *Describing Greece* is most comfortably approached piecemeal or chapter-wise, as a book to digest over time and to enjoy as a thesaurus of categorized observations. This is undoubtedly a tool for research, not teaching: younger students should still turn to Habicht for a concise and dependable introduction.

Any study of such a challenging author cannot accomplish everything, and H. has mixed success at situating Pausanias in his literary tradition. To be sure, the associations H. traces between Pausanias and many other Greek authors both big and small enrich our understanding of Imperial Greek literature. But H. oddly pegs the *Odyssey* as the zenith for the literary subject of travel (pp. 5–6) and neglects the Argonauts, Alexander, the novels, the apostolic narratives and two works of patent relevance (if somewhat later date), the *Heroicus* and the *Life of Apollonius*. Underlying the romantic décor of these travel-stories is a vivid concept of the city, the countryside, the wilderness and the sea that resonated with the cultured authors and their readers, men like Pausanias. The *Periegesis* also shares something important with other compilatory projects of the age, such as those by Aelian and Athenaeus: an impulse to collect and classify disparate information as a means to order knowledge and construct identity. It is a sign of H.'s achievement that, while scholars continue to explore Pausanias' many contexts, *Describing Greece* will furnish both a solid starting-point and an authoritative point of comparison.

JOSEPH L. RIFE
Vanderbilt University

[[1]] *Pausanias' Guide to Ancient Greece*, Sather Classical Lectures 50 (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1985; rev. ed. 1998).

[[2]] E.g., Domenico Musti and Mario Torelli, eds., *Pausania: Guida della Grecia* 1–8 (Milan, 1990–2003, 3rd ed.); Jaś Elsner, "Pausanias: A Greek Pilgrim in the Roman World," *P&P* 135 (1992) 3–29; Jean Bingen, ed., *Pausanias historien*, Fondation Hardt, Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique 41 (Geneva, 1996); Karim W. Arafat, *Pausanias' Greece: Ancient Artists and Roman Rulers* (Cambridge, 1996); Viciane Pirenne-Delforge and Gérald Purnelle, eds., *Pausanias: Periegesis* 1–2 (Liège, 1997); W. Kendrick Pritchett, *Pausanias Periegetes* 1–2 (Amsterdam, 1998–9); Susan E. Alcock, John F. Cherry and Jaś Elsner, eds., *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (New York, 2001); Johanna Akujärvi, *Researcher, Traveller, Narrator: Studies in Pausanias' Periegesis*, *Studia Graeca et Latina Lundensia* 12 (Stockholm, 2005);

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Maria Pretzler, *Pausanias: Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London, 2007).

[[3]] E.g., Megara is not on the Isthmus of Corinth (p. 27, but correct on p. 73); misuse of “notoriety” with a positive connotation (p. 34 n. 14); Longus is not “among the earliest of the Greek novels” (p. 50); apparent confusion over the ancient usage of “Isthmia” for the Panhellenic Games and Festival but “the Isthmus” for the site (p. 99 n. 15); scattered misspellings in the main text and typographical errors or omitted information in the bibliographic entries.