

Herodotus and the Persian Wars. By JOHN CLAUGHTON. Greece and Rome: Texts and Contexts. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008. Pp. vii + 152. Paper, \$25.00. ISBN 978-0-521-68943-4.

Claughton's collection of selections from Herodotus, narrowly arranged around Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars proper (few digressions are included), is attractively produced and provides a very readable translation of excerpts that provide a good overview of Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars. This collection is part of Cambridge's new series *Greece & Rome: Texts and Contexts*, which is intended for secondary schools and undergraduates, with the aim of enabling students to engage with the primary texts and develop their own informed opinions. While this is a laudable goal, and while the most dedicated students may find that this edition piques their interest in Herodotus and encourages them to read more on their own, this edition provides little real help to the average student in understanding Herodotus or his *Histories* or the world and world view that shaped his work. These limitations reduce the value of this translation as a text for students.

Claughton's translation has several strong points that will certainly prove attractive to students. The appearance of the book is appealing to the eye with its full color illustrations and well-chosen maps; the method of indicating footnotes is both visually striking and familiar (key words and phrases are printed in blue, reminiscent of links on webpages, indicating the presence of a footnote that is introduced with the lemma reproducing the highlighted words in the text; the use of footnotes rather than endnotes is to be applauded). Also useful is the inclusion of ancillary texts, which are helpfully placed in the main text rather than relegated to an appendix (e.g., Herodotus' account of Croesus on the pyre is accompanied by a selection from Bacchylides' Ode 11, although its number is omitted, as is any translation of Bacchylides in the recommended readings; students who find Bacchylides interesting are left to their own devices). On the whole, the resemblance to webpages will likely prove familiar and comfortable, potentially encouraging students to read the book.

Its eye-catching appearance and the readable translation aside, the narrow focus and the lack of sufficient help to the novice render this book of limited use to students who want to understand the *Histories*. There is no introduction, and while it is good to encourage students to develop their own opinions about ancient sources, these opinions need to be informed, and informed opinions do not spring fully formed from the heads of high school or undergraduate stu-

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dents. In addition, while each chapter and section ends with questions that can serve to guide students towards thinking more deeply about particular issues, these questions tend to be unanswerable on the basis of the student's reading of the selection. For example, students are asked to consider what sources Herodotus had for the Battle of Marathon and how these sources affected his narrative (p. 48). This is not a question a student can answer simply from reading the text, and the question of Herodotus' sources has not been discussed in an introduction or footnotes, nor is a source for further reading suggested. An introduction that set out the background for Herodotus and his methodology, the Greek world on the eve of the Persian Wars, the Persians themselves, the nature of Greek warfare, etc. would have helped the student immensely. Engagement with scholarly issues requires familiarity with the scholarly background to those issues. A book aimed at students ought not to leave them floundering about on their own, attempting to make sense of aspects of the text that they are in no position to know about on their own and have been given no help in understanding.

The majority of the footnotes are also of limited value in understanding and appreciating Herodotus. Instead, they tend to be idiosyncratic and in the earlier sections are often uninformative, enigmatic and undisciplined. (Those to the sections dealing with Xerxes and his invasion are more useful). While it is interesting to learn (in connection with Philippides' run) that the distance of the modern marathon is that used in the 1908 London Olympics (with a few extra yards tacked on to ensure that those in the royal box had a good view of the finish, this information did not broaden my understanding of the *Histories* and is probably of limited interest to North American students. The frequent references to Shakespeare, Marco Polo and modern politics may allow for a cross-cultural look at specific themes, but they illustrate little about Herodotus or his *Histories*. When the footnotes are geared towards Herodotus, they are too often of limited use to a student reader. For example, a footnote on "laughed" (p. 19), generated in response to Cyrus laughing at Croesus' suggestion that he send his shackles to Delphi, informs us that "laughter is not always the right response to advice nor is it the only response in Herodotus"—but to what end? What is the intended audience of high school students and undergraduates supposed to make of this? Why is Cyrus' laughter correct here? Why is laughter incorrect elsewhere? And where else is laughter used, correctly or incorrectly, and how do we determine this?

The Recommended Readings section is useful in providing a starting point for students interested in secondary literature. All suggestions

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are all in English, which is reasonable given the target audience, are relatively up-to-date (although nothing earlier than 1989 is mentioned), and include a brief description of the work in question. But what use is it to a student to learn that Claughton is “deeply antipathetic” to Fehling’s argument (in *Herodotus and his Sources*)? What is Fehling’s argument, and why is Claughton not convinced? If students are to develop their own informed opinion, it might be more useful to illustrate the specific weaknesses of Fehling’s argument (or simply omit the comment) rather than present an enigmatic *ipse dixit* statement.

Claughton’s selections cover mainly episodes from the Persian Wars themselves, and digressions from this topic are kept to a minimum. But much of the text has been omitted (including important thematic sections), and since there is no introduction to give a sense of the overall scope and purpose of the work, students will thus not get the full impact of the *Histories*. In a translation that consists of selections, choices need to be made, but concentrating so heavily on the Persian Wars proper compromises an understanding and appreciation of Herodotus’ achievement. Where is 3.80–2, the discussion of the various forms of government, which is an inherent element in the *Histories*’ central theme of freedom vs. autocracy or Greeks vs. the Persians? Certainly, not all of the Egyptian and Scythian narratives had to be included (Claughton omits the Scythians entirely), and the selections from Book 2 do illustrate Herodotus’ interest in ethnography, but again the student is given little help in understanding this interest. (Claughton’s comment that “Herodotus wants to show us something that is timeless, that the customs of people differ, but that doesn’t mean that one is superior to the other” [p. 23] is again misleading; regardless of Herodotus’ views on the customs of the Egyptians, he is clear on the superiority of the Greeks and their customs over the Persians and theirs.)

Overall, the translation is sound and readable, its presentation is attractive and appealing, and this book will likely stimulate interest in Herodotus in the more disciplined student. All the same, the limited help it offers in understanding the *Histories* and their larger significance mean that instructors may get more bang for their buck with Waterfield’s complete translation in the Oxford World Classics series (\$10.95). If only a selection is desired, Shirley’s translation with Hackett (*Herodotus on the War for Greek Freedom*; \$8.95) provides both more text and more context.

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