

BOOKREVIEW

States of Memory: The Polis, Panhellenism, and the Persian War. By David C. Yates. Oxford, UK and New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2019. Pp. xx + 337. Hardback, \$85.00. ISBN: 978-0-19-067354-3.

This book offers a nuanced interpretation of Greek commemorative practices surrounding the Persian War and the divisive, competitive nature of Greek social and political realities from the 5th century down to the early Hellenistic era. Overall, the interpretations are sophisticated and well articulated, reflecting a close engagement with ancient evidence and modern scholarship. Yates' arguments and approaches, for instance, his emphasis of the self-serving and competitive nature of Greek politics and the spatial and temporal interpretations of Greek commemorative monuments and literature, are not entirely new.¹ What makes Yates different from previous scholars is his focus on the 'commemorative dynamics' of Greek practices over the Persian War itself (8). Throughout the book, Yates attempts to deconstruct a single, dominant Persian-War narrative held by the Greeks as a collective action, and emphasizes Greek commemoration over the Persian War as 'parochial' and 'idiosyncratic.' The central work of scholarship that Yates thoroughly engages with is Michael Jung's 2006 book *Marathon und Plataiai*, which argues that the Greeks commemorated the Persian War as a collective action that 'transcended the polis' in a rejection of the Spartan usurpation of the war tradition, and furthermore that the Peloponnesian War marked the failure of this 'transcendent panhellenism.' Instead, Yates argues that the 'transcendent panhellenism' can only be traced to Philip of Macedon and Alexander the Great, when the Persian War started to be commemorated as a

¹ For a recent overview on the topic of panhellenism and Greek as an imagined communities, see L.G. Mitchell's *Panhellenism and the Barbarian in Archaic and Classical Greece* (2007, Swansea); for some excellent works on the spatial competition at Delphi and Olympia and Athenian social memory in the 4th century, see, for instance, M. Scott's *Delphi and Olympia: The Spatial Politics of Panhellenism in the Archaic and Classical Periods* (2010, Cambridge) and B. Steinbock's *Social Memory in Athenian Public Discourse: Uses and Meanings of the Past* (2013, Ann Arbor).

collectively Greek war for Macedonian political propaganda (3–8).

Instead of giving a comprehensive theoretical framework in the Introduction, Yates adopts an ‘integrative approach’ to expand on the concepts of modern memory theories while closely analyzing the ancient evidence in individual chapters (19). This approach attempts to demonstrate ‘a more dynamic relationship between memory theory and the case study of the Persian War’ (19). In Chapter 3 ‘Contestation,’ Yates introduces Foucault’s theory on power and Scott’s analysis of spatial politics to demonstrate the ‘intensity’ between the dominant and counter narratives over the Persian War at Delphi. Chapter 4 uses the term ‘*canonical* narrative frame’ to challenge the tendency to ‘privilege certain events (Marathon, Thermopylae, Artemisium, Salamis and Plataea), participants (Athens and Sparta—in that order) and ways of thinking about the war (an unprovoked foreign invasion)’ (137). Instead, Yates identifies several narrative frames concerning the periodization and spatialization that the Greeks set on the Persian War. Chapter 5 applies Hayden White’s concept of ‘emplotment’ to explore the ‘idiosyncratic’ narrative frames held by Greek states with three case studies on Plataea, Megara and Corinth with comparison to the plot elements deployed by Athens. Chapter 6 adopts Hobsbawm’s concept of ‘invented tradition’ to articulate the main argument that ‘transcendent panhellenism’ was Philip’s invention as his ‘top-down’ implementation of Macedonian political propaganda by establishing ‘a monolithic/ubiquitous experience’ of the Persian War that ‘transcended’ the previously held parochial narrative (214). By highlighting Greek resistance to Philip’s and Alexander’s ‘top-down’ propaganda (228–247), Yates points out that the practice of commemoration by various Greek communities in ancient times was far more complicated and diverse than modern scholars of memory theories have previously imagined (228 n.124; 248).

Yates’ emphasis on the ‘idiosyncratic’ narrative frames adds a welcome corrective to the Athenocentric view on the Persian-War past and our understanding of the self-serving, local forces behind Greek commemorative practice. For instance, in Chapter 5 Yates suggests that recent interests, real experience and pre-existing social memory constitute the meta-narratives underlying the meanings of the war for the three exemplary states, Plataea, Megara and Corinth. The war was variously presented as ‘a glorious victory over a foreign invader or a disturbing civil war, a strong of divine salvation or deep loss, the achievement of restrained masculinity or the gift of untrammelled female sexuality’ (169). The ‘idiosyncratic’ narrative frames and emplotments of different *poleis* also set up constraints on their citizens’ experience and how they negotiated the political contestations and

meanings in cross-polis context through a ‘constellation of local prejudices’ (201). Yates also adds a perspective to the dominant masculine narratives of the Persian-War past by establishing the interconnectivity between erotic, female sexuality and the local significance of Aphrodite Ourania in Corinth, which he interprets as a symbolization of Corinthian women’s contribution to war (196–198). However, to what extent female sexuality was ‘untrammled’ and male sexuality ‘restrained’ in commemorating the Persian War—and, more generally, in war narrative—is a question that needs to be more fully examined. In addition, Yates explores the multiple narrative frames concerning spatial and temporal boundaries of the Persian War in major Greek literary works such as Herodotus, Thucydides, Plato, Diodorus Siculus and Attic oratory in Chapter 4. It might be helpful to give more clarification to the extent that the authors’ personal experience, their distinct intellectual engagements with different literary genres and activities and the development of historiography from the 5th century down to the 1st century influenced the authors’ practices and representations.

In general, the book is a very welcome contribution to the growing research area of memory in the Greco-Roman world and the historiography of the Persian War, as well as to the study of Greek history from local perspectives.

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