

Katherine Harloe and Neville Morley, eds., *Thucydides and the Modern World: reception, Reinterpretation and Influence from the Renaissance to the Present*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012. 256 pp. Cloth \$103.00. ISBN 978-1-107-01920-1.

Thucydides may have intended his *History of the Peloponnesian War* to endure as a “possession for all time,” but each time has taken possession of his *History* in its own way and for its own purposes. After reading *Thucydides and the Modern World: reception, Reinterpretation and Influence from the Renaissance to the Present*, one might almost conclude that each time has appropriated for itself its own Thucydides and its own *History*. Historians and classicists interested in the varied history of Thucydides’ reception will find this volume an invaluable resource; political scientists and philosophers interested in discovering permanent teachings about politics and the human condition in Thucydides’ *History* will find in these pages pertinent reminders of the difficulties inherent in any such project.

The essays comprising *Thucydides and the Modern World* trace their origins to a series of research workshops held in 2007 at the Universities of Bristol, Oxford, and Cambridge. The goal of the workshops, realized in the present volume, was to examine the historical reception of Thucydides in a cross-disciplinary context, so that political scientists, historians, and classicists could understand, and learn from, the diversity of uses to which Thucydides’ text has been put and the variety of lessons different readers have drawn from it.

The volume’s introduction, by co-editors Harloe and Morley (a classicist and a historian, respectively), provides a summary history of Thucydides’ reception to contextualize the other essays. Of the ten subsequent chapters, five were written by political scientists, four by historians (including one by Morley), and one by another classicist. Their contributions divide approximately into three categories: studies of the uses made of Thucydides’ *History* in different political settings and controversies (chapters 2, 3, 5, 7, 8); investigations into Thucydides’ influence on the development of historiography (chapters 4 and 6); and explorations of the relevance of the *History* to contemporary political science (chapters 9, 10, 11).

The diversity of topics and approaches represented among the chapters is considerable; apart from the disciplinary differences already noted, the chapters also differ substantially in terms of focus and breadth: some discuss multiple authors’ reactions to Thucydides across long spans of time, others focus on shorter time periods, or concentrate tightly on individual authors’ reactions to Thucydides. Although each chapter is informative on its own terms, and all are deeply grounded in the relevant prior reception literatures, only the concluding chapter directly engages with other contributions to the volume; as there were numerous junctures where there appeared to be ample grounds for such engagement, its absence was somewhat disappointing.

Harloe and Morley's introductory history of Thucydides' reception reveals that interest in the *History* has ebbed and flowed, as the interests of scholars have themselves varied. Although early Renaissance humanists took interest in the text and the first Latin translation appeared in 1452, Harloe and Morley observe that the *History* "did not rapidly approach the self-evidently important status it was to enjoy from the nineteenth century onwards" (6). During the time when the interest in history was substantially driven by the desire to study the morally inspiring lives of great men, such writers as Plutarch and Polybius proved more congenial.

Thucydides begins to attract wider and more sustained interest beginning in the second half of the eighteenth century, according to Harloe and Morley. After the political revolutions that brought modern, democratic regimes into existence, Thucydides proved useful as an analyst of democratic politics — cited by some in opposition to democracy and invoked by others to laud it. As historians became more concerned with questions of method, Thucydides came to be studied as a theorist and practitioner of scientific historiography, even as other historians praised his work for its artful and rhetorical composition. In this same time frame, Thucydides comes to be seen as the model of a certain kind of political realist and the practitioner of something akin to political science. In sum, they conclude that although "Thucydides' authoritative status is rarely questioned through most of the history of his reception, ... the nature and foundation of that authority are clearly understood in radically different ways" (12). The arguments developed in the volume's subsequent chapters certainly bear out that contention.

Kinch Hoekstra's contribution (Chapter 2) examines the place of Thucydides as an intellectual authority in early modern political theory. He finds that "by the late sixteenth century, Thucydides was regularly held up as an authority about the legitimacy of imperial expansion and preventative attack, and was read as providing a clear-eyed view of the underlying realities of power" (27). His impressively researched chapter canvasses the use made of the *History* by a broad panoply of thinkers he calls "early modern Thucydideans" (26), including among others, John Dee, Paolo Paruta, Justus Lipsius, Alberico Gentili, Hugo Grotius, and Francis Bacon. Grotius emerges as the most ambivalent of the early-modern Thucydideans surveyed here, invoking examples from Thucydides both in support of bellicose policy and (elsewhere) to undercut arguments for preemptive war. But in this respect, Grotius was something of an outlier; by the early seventeenth century, Hoekstra concludes, "the dominant outlook of the early modern Thucydideans was that of the war party" (54).

Nadia Urbinati frames her account (in Chapter 3) of the reception of Thucydides in revolutionary and post-Revolutionary France, by noting the conflicting and ideological uses to which his work was put on the opposite sides of the English Channel. In the work of mid-nineteenth century English historian, George Grote, Athenian democracy figured as an attractive model, not so much for its specific political institutions, but for its free-flowing, participatory political culture. By contrast with Grote, Thucydides' French translator, Pierre-Charles L vesque, presented him as a critic of Athenian

democracy and thus enlisted him in support of the *doctrinaires'* liberalism, which regarded the radical, participatory democracy of the Athenian assembly as a threat to what Benjamin Constant called the "liberties of the moderns" — the protection of individual rights to life, liberty, and property against infringement by the state. She concludes with the conjecture that the anti-democratic reading of Thucydides was ascendant in France even before the Revolution, though she also notes the existence of at least some pro-democratic readers of Thucydides at the time, most prominently among them Camille Desmoulins. Attention is directed north of the Channel by Elizabeth Potter, who examines (in Chapter 5) the place of Thucydidean ideas in the works of John Stuart Mill and Matthew Arnold. She contends that these later nineteenth century thinkers were more sensitive than the readers Urbinati discusses to the complexity and ambivalence in Thucydides' treatment of the Athenian democracy, writing: "both are profoundly affected by the duality [Thucydides] offers us, the sense of Athenian 'greatness' which is yet unsettling, and which gives way all too soon to decline" (113).

By contrast, Jennifer Roberts organizes her contribution (Chapter 7) thematically, not chronologically, tracing responses to Pericles' funeral oration, from Plato's *Menexenus* to the present day. In the funeral speech Socrates delivers in the *Menexenus*, she argues, Plato offers a fundamental critique of Pericles' oration, in particular by drawing attention to the contributions of women to the polity, which Pericles had substantially dismissed. Investigating later, English-language funerary oratory, she traces the influence of the Periclean original and deploys the critical perspective her reading of the *Menexenus* suggests. Emily Greenwood's essay (Chapter 8) looks closely at the translation into modern Greek of the *History* produced by Eleftherios Venizelos in the years after 1920, when electoral defeat marked the end of his second term as Prime Minister. She argues both that Venizelos is attempting to reclaim for modern Greece their classical heritage as primarily their own and that, in composing the translation, Venizelos had sought to draw explicit parallels between recent Greek history and the events of the Peloponnesian War.

Two chapters address the place of Thucydides in nineteenth century German debates about historical method. Johannes Süßmann (in chapter 6) seeks to contextualize those debates, arguing that the emergence of a newly scientific approach to history in Germany needs to be understood in the context of the political and intellectual disruptions occasioned by the French Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. Against this background of disruption, the nineteenth century German historians assume a political significance as the creators of a substitute for the intellectual traditions disrupted by political and intellectual revolution. Süßmann treats Thucydides himself only briefly, arguing that the advocates of the modern conception of history regarded his approach as methodologically outdated. Looking specifically at Friedrich Schlegel as exemplary of the new historians, Süßmann finds that, in a series of lectures given at Vienna in 1812, "Schlegel does away with Thucydides" as a model or rival for the modern historian by underscoring the inadequacies of his historiographical method (92). By contrast,

Morley's contribution (chapter 8) examines Wilhelm Roscher's 1842 book, *Leben, Werk und Zeitalter des Thukydides*, noting the ways in which Roscher presents Thucydides as — paradoxically — both a model of scientific history and an exemplary practitioner of the historical art. As Morley presents it, Roscher's reading of Thucydides seems rather more sensitive than Schlegel's. In any case, Morley's account of Thucydides' place among nineteenth-century German historians stands in some tension with Sußmann's, which made the absence of any direct dialogue between the two contributions somewhat jarring.

The final three chapters examine the reception of Thucydides' ideas into the modern discipline of political science. Steven Forde (chapter 9) constructs a conversation among Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Hans Morgenthau regarding the notion of "realism" in the theory of international relations. In its simplest form, realism is the doctrine that states consistently act to maximize their power. Or, as the Athenian envoys to Melos say (by way of Crawley's translation): "the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must." Forde explores his theorists' views of the differing forces that may be thought to induce states to seek power in this way — honor, fear, and profit. He argues persuasively that the Athenians' realism is not Thucydides'; while different Athenian spokesmen variously invoke honor, fear, or profit to justify their city's conduct, Thucydides cites the power of *eros*. Forde concludes that, unlike Morgenthau's realism, which promises to supply a rational basis for the conduct of international affairs, a Thucydidean realism denies us any such hope.

Richard Ned Lebow (chapter 10) surveys the varying uses made of Thucydides by recent and contemporary scholars of international relations, all of whom he characterizes as falling into the larger category of realists. He concludes, however, by sketching his own reading of Thucydides (developed more fully elsewhere) not as a realist but as a "constructivist" — one who holds that the conduct of states is not inexorably dictated by the imperatives of power, as the realists contend, but is constrained and shaped by the institutions and norms constructed through political discussion, debate, and dialogue.

The final chapter, by Geoffrey Hawthorn, serves as a fitting conclusion to the volume. It opens with a glance back at the various ways in which Thucydides has been received and interpreted, engaging with some of the arguments advanced earlier in this volume and arguments developed elsewhere by other readers of Thucydides. In Hawthorn's view, most political philosophers and political scientists fail to appreciate the depth of the challenge Thucydides poses to the ways in which contemporary theorists analyze politics. Thucydides, in his view, offers no universal, rational model of politics that might enable us to predict or control public affairs. Instead, Thucydides stresses that persons and polities change over time and often behave irrationally and certainly act inconsistently and unpredictably. Hawthorne concludes that, despite the obvious differences between modern states and the ancient *poleis* that figured in Thucydides' *History*, we moderns nevertheless have reason to accept his perspective. To embrace the

irreducible contingencies of politics, he suggests, is the basis for “a true political realism” (228).

Although none of the other contributors to this volume directly reply to Hawthorn’s provocative interpretation, given the historical variation, diversity, and complexity of the responses to Thucydides documented in *Thucydides and the Modern World*, it is safe to conclude that his will be far from the last effort to understand or to receive the teachings of Thucydides.

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