

## REVIEWS OF BOOKS

LOW (P.A.) (ed.) **The Cambridge Companion to Thucydides**. Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. xvii + 382. £90. 9781107107052.  
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*The Cambridge Companion to Thucydides*, edited by Polly A. Low, is an impressive and thorough volume that will prove a helpful guide to scholars and students alike. Although the entire collection is strong, this review will focus on a selection of its entries due to limits of space.

Low begins with a clear and welcoming introduction. She addresses such questions as why the historian's biography matters, the problem of historical objectivity, the challenge of capturing complex historical events in the written word and the interpretation of Thucydides' programmatic statements. The following chapters are divided into three sections: 'Context and Methods', 'Themes and Content' and 'After Thucydides'.

The essential, and sometimes impossible, questions about Thucydides' text are handled well. The *Companion* is dedicated to the memory of P.J. Rhodes, whose own contribution takes on the vexed issue of Thucydides' use of evidence and documents. Such aspects of the historian's methodology are especially challenging because they are almost completely subsumed, as Tom Beasley argues in his chapter, by Thucydides' own presentation of his text as 'narrator-less' (31). Beasley additionally argues against the traditional interpretation of the Archaeology, viewing it as 'anti-programmatic' in that it follows lines of myth and oral history, contrasting with the majority of the work. Emily Greenwood addresses the speeches, handling them as acts of diplomacy, while convincingly arguing for the inclusion of inarticulate speech, such as screaming or shouting, in our understanding of Thucydides' representation of oral communication.

Contributions from scholars of different disciplinary perspectives ensure that the volume covers the wide range of approaches to Thucydides. Cultural and military-historical questions appear in Jason Crowley's 'Thucydides and War'. Rosaria Vignolo Munson offers an insightful discussion of *prolepsis* as both a literary technique and as a characteristic of successful politicians and historians. Jonas Grethlein also takes a literary approach, building on his previous work on meta-history to demonstrate the dangers of historical misinterpretation in both oratory within the work and Thucydides' own narrative. Elizabeth Irwin elucidates the paradoxical role of the reader, who is simultaneously assured that Thucydides has done the work of producing a complete and trustworthy history, while also being asked to think critically. Maria Fragoulaki's valuable contribution on ethnicity shows that representations of identity are just as important, albeit far less obvious, in Thucydides as in Herodotus. Ryan K. Balot explores the political implications of the text, arguing for a new understanding of Thucydides' comments on an ideal government. He reads the historian's presentation of democracy, and specifically Athenian democracy, as a kind of heroic, if deeply flawed, political tragedy. Paul Woodruff characterizes the text as a sophisticated ethical document that displaces morality from the purview of the divine into the human realm.

The third section covers reception, a commendably full treatment of a subject that often receives less attention than it merits. Contributions include discussion of the ways later historiography subtly challenges and competes with Thucydides (by Luke V. Pitcher); the critical appreciation and use of Thucydides by Byzantine scholars (Scott Kennedy and Anthony Kaldellis); and Thucydides' place in the development of the modern practice of

history writing (Alexandra Lianeri). Kinch Hoekstra studies divergent interpretations of Thucydides in the Renaissance, arguing for an appreciation of his influence beyond Thomas Hobbes. Hoekstra notes that this was a time when few people could read Greek, rendering translations exceptionally powerful; these observations fit well with Jeremy Mynott's subsequent chapter. Reception is particularly important given Thucydides' lasting influence not only in the world of scholarship but also in wider cultural conversations, and Joel Alden Schlosser's contribution on modern 'realist' receptions of Thucydides and the so-called 'Thucydides Trap' is thus especially valuable. The *Companion* concludes with a sensitive and engaging study by Jeremy Mynott on the relationship between translation and interpretation and the special challenges of translating Thucydides, whose language includes, as Mynott memorably puts it, 'many special effects' (322).

Thucydidean scholarship tends to focus a great deal of attention on the first two books and books 6 and 7, alongside a selection of 'purple' passages such as the Mytilenean Debate. It would have been gratifying to see more discussion of other parts of the text, including the enigmas of books 5 and 8. Some limitation in scope is understandable and necessary for this genre, however.

The *Companion* thus functions precisely as one would hope, providing essential frameworks for understanding central issues such as programmatic passages, Thucydides' representation of politics and the interplay between evidence, history and narrative. It also offers original interpretations of many of these issues. Each chapter concludes with well-chosen suggestions for further reading, a particularly helpful innovation to the companion genre.

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