

the sides. Typically, they referred to the Persian monarch as ‘the King’, so recognising him as superior to all other kings. This consciousness manifested itself across the literary spectrum. In his *Persians*, in having the queen ask, ‘My friends, where is this Athens they speak of?’ (line 231), Aeschylus is not portraying her as ignorant (though doubtless some in his audience would have taken the question to mark her as such) but is alluding to the geopolitical reality. Similarly, Herodotus, in a passage used by L.-J. for exactly the opposite purpose (pp. 12–13), reveals that King Darius had never heard of the Athenians prior to their involvement in the burning of the temple at Sardis.

The Greek historian is singled out for special censure for his caricaturing of Xerxes as ‘a narcissistic tyrant’ (p. 233). The description of the King’s famous decorating of a tree by the roadside near modern Sarigöl in western Turkey is used to illustrate the point. ‘It was Herodotus’ way to show that Xerxes was quite unhinged, unfocused, and unworthy of a victory over so fine a people as the Hellenes’ (p. 234). To my mind, though, that reading does not do Herodotus justice. His recording of this extraordinary, one might say beautiful, moment, is a way of highlighting the King’s unique relationship with the earth. This is an extension of the ideology embodied in the *paradeisoi*, the royal parks laid out with orderly rows of trees and water channels to symbolise the King’s mastery over the earth.

L.-J.’s contribution to the field of Achaemenid historiography is bold and, in its own terms, largely successful. My own sense is that his contribution would be stronger if the polemic was moderated and more emphasis laid on the collaborative nature of the diverse sources that clearly indicate a singularly rich ancient civilisation. The fear of it as a power has persisted in the Western mind ever since, as Iran’s modern isolation attests. That this severe attrition requires favouring a range of regional actors distinctly lacking in terms of democratic standards is an irony I am sure L.-J. appreciates.

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THE STORY AND RECEPTION OF MARATHON

NEVIN (S.) *The Idea of Marathon. Battle and Culture*. Pp. xii + 236, ills, maps. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022. Paper, £24.99, US\$34.95 (Cased, £75, US\$100). ISBN: 978-1-350-15759-0 (978-1-7883-1420-6 hbk).

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This clearly and engagingly written book takes readers on a journey from the events leading to the battle of Marathon in 490 BCE, through the battle itself and its immediate aftermath, the subsequent Persian invasion of mainland Greece, to the many ways in which the battle and its cultural significance have been used and interpreted from antiquity to the present day. The great strength of this book is not just in its recreation of the narrative of the battle or excellent discussion of the historiographic problems surrounding it (as with many other recent books, such as R. Billows, *Marathon* [2010]; P. Krentz, *Battle of Marathon* [2010]; and D. Fink, *Battle of Marathon* [2014]), but also in its exploration of cultural history. Another particularly strong feature is that the book accords the

Persians an integral place in the story and gives Persian cultural receptions of the battle their due.

Whilst reading the book, I did wonder precisely at whom it is targeted. It seems most valuable as a resource for undergraduate students trying to understand the Persian Wars and their significance to Classical Greek history. The lay enthusiast, who should form another natural target audience, might find the assumed knowledge too great an ask. The specialist is left with questions that the endnotes regularly do not provide answers to nor clear routes of further investigation. The book is ambitious in its coverage of such a wealth of material, but numerous aspects are not considered in the depth scholars would find helpful. One example is the discussion of the Erechtheid casualty list discovered at Loukou in the Peloponnese in 2000 (p. 95), which relies on a superseded version of the epigram published by G. Spyropoulos (*Οι Στήλες των Πεισώντων* [2009]) rather than M. Tentori Montalto's more accurate edition based on a recent squeeze (*ZPE* 192 [2014]). Consideration of the intriguing argument of A. Petrovic (in: C. Carey and M. Edwards [edd.], *Marathon – 2,500 Years* [2013]) that this epigram speaks back to the Pythia's oracle before Salamis, recorded in Herodotus (7.140) and advising the Athenians to flee to the ends of the earth, moreover, would have complemented the themes of N.'s book and enriched her discussion of commemoration.

Admittedly, the balance between addressing a general audience, students and scholars is extremely difficult to find in a book of this nature, and, as a solid and thoughtful examination of the battle, the book is especially successful. N.'s strong historiographical skills are fully on display in the first half, in which the background to the battle and the battle itself are covered (Chapters 1–7). This section provides a brilliant supplement to Herodotus and will be a fantastic resource for undergraduate students studying this text. N.'s careful narrative of the events, combined with perceptive analysis of Herodotus' methods and nuanced explanation of the broader historical context is a significant contribution, as is her focus on Herodotus' role in shaping ideas of the battle's significance for posterity. The book's eleven figures complement and enhance N.'s analysis here.

The jewel of the book comes in the next three chapters (8–10): 'Events after Marathon', 'Memories of Marathon in Fifth-Century Art and Literature' and 'Marathon beyond the Fifth Century', which explore the aftermath of the battle and the significance of its commemoration to the internal and external politics and culture of Athens especially, but also of the broader Greek world and Persia. These chapters brilliantly show how Miltiades' centrality to the Marathon legend is established by the Cimonids and how the commemoration of that legend feeds into Athens' naturalisation of their dominance over the Greek world. A succinct and nuanced account of these processes has been sorely lacking, and this central core of the book will be invaluable as a teaching aid at university level. It also provides a number of avenues for future scholarly exploration. Chapter 10, on the fourth century, the Athenian orators and the rise of Macedon, Alexander and finally Polybius supplies perceptive insights into the ways in which ideas of the battle and its importance changed along with the political landscape at Athens and beyond.

The final part of the book, Chapters 11 and 12, I found less effective, largely due to the immense time span covered. These two chapters explore the significance of the battle – the idea of the title – over the past 2,000 years. N. acknowledges the difficulty of this task, given the many possible engagements with the idea of Marathon in a variety of cultural contexts that could be explored over such a long time, and stresses that the thematics that emerge from her chosen examples are more important than a comprehensive treatment. In this she is correct, but the gestures to historical moments and individuals are often too cursory to provide a satisfying impression.

In Chapter 11, ‘Marathon under Rome’, Plutarch is the exception. The section devoted to the many mentions this versatile author makes of Marathon in a number of works is detailed, rich and rewarding (pp. 159–65). The section on Herodes Atticus (pp. 167–71) spends far more time on a range of orators and authors loosely connected to Herodes, such as Aelius Aristides, Lucian, Aelian and others from the later Roman empire, such as Libanius. With respect to Herodes, N. primarily focuses on the family’s promotion of an ancestor, Eucles, as the runner who brought news of victory to Athens. An opportunity is missed here to explore the intricacies of Herodes’ relationship with Marathon, which was complex and pervasive, in a similar depth to Plutarch’s literary engagement. Alongside an epigraphic casting as a new ‘hero of Marathon’ (*IG II²* 6791), for example, the Athenian magnate also represented the landscape of the deme as empty and barren prior to his family’s cultivation of it (*SEG* 53.220). The many monuments he raised on his estate there, moreover, engage with the Marathon legend in a number of ways to ascribe personal meaning to the plain and write memory anew. Herodes thus cashes in on the power of the idea of Marathon at the same time as promoting his self-image above it.

The final chapter, ‘Marathon after Antiquity’, is a series of snapshots across 1,000 years and suffers from a similar lack of depth to the previous chapter. It briefly treats an eleventh-century Persian romantic epic and the Iranian Shah’s ill-advised revival of Achaemenid history at Persepolis in 1971, the experiences of early western European travellers to the plain, Byron’s association of Marathon with Greek freedom (both ancient and modern) in *Childe Harold* (1812) and *Don Juan* (1821), the Greek Colonels’ use of Marathon to legitimise their military junta beginning in 1967, Marathon-themed juvenilia of Elizabeth Barrett (later Barrett-Browning) and the Brontës, Robert Browning’s influential refocusing of cultural attention on the run and the idea of endurance in his *Pheidippides* (1879) poem, how this was picked up in a number of modern children’s and young adult books, and finally Marathon in the popular culture of recent graphic novels and films. This whirlwind tour effectively highlights the ubiquity of the Marathon legend in later culture and the themes (such as endurance) that become most relevant, but this reviewer would have liked clearer justification for the choices of focus and a fuller explanation of their significance. As N. rightly notes, this would require another book, and her thought-provoking examples offer a number of threads waiting to be pulled by future scholars.

This is a very good, stimulating book, whose attention to the cultural history of Marathon’s commemoration is a welcome addition to scholarship on the battle and its reception.

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REMEMBERING THE PERSIAN WARS

PROIETTI (G.) *Prima di Erodoto. Aspetti della memoria delle Guerre persiane.* (*Hermes Einzelschriften* 120.) Pp. xviii + 546, ills. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner, 2021. Cased, €96. ISBN: 978-3-515-12887-2.
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This volume is a dense, well-informed and thoroughly researched contribution to the field of memory studies applied to the ancient world and, particularly, to the topic of the Persian