the *Annals*[9] is all you would expect and more from a meticulous scholar who has been thinking about the subject for many years. Teachers of classical literature in translation are only too familiar with the experience of wanting to draw attention to a detail in a text only to find that the translation they are using obscures the detail entirely. At first sight, that is not a fault they will encounter here. If this translation errs, it errs only in excessive literalism, a most unusual complaint. Strangely, however, this very literalism can deceive. For instance, at 1.55.1 *Druso Caesare C. Norbano consulibus* is rendered 'With Drusus Caesar and Gaius Norbanus as consuls' which is more literal than 'In the consulships of Drusus Caesar and Gaius Norbanus' or even 'In AD 15', but the more literal translation misleadingly suggests that there is something about Drusus Caesar and Gaius Norbanus significant for the narrative after it, in spite of the fact that in the Introduction (p. xix) the idiom is fully explained. The translation is often punctuated by one asterisk or three, but there seems to be no explanation of why. Sometimes, an ambiguity in Tacitus is ignored in the translation. In the first few words of the account of Tiberius' reign (1.6.1) *primum facinus noui principatus* the translation renders *facinus* as 'act'. That is, indeed, possible, but Woodman's readers are surely entitled to know that there is another quite different possibility. But such details do not obscure the real merits of a most useful work which will bring Tacitus to life for a whole new generation capturing so much, including the idiosyncratic style of one who is indeed (p. ix) 'the greatest historian of ancient Rome'. These reviews end with two works, one by Scott McGill the other by Theodore Ziolkowski devoted to the *nachleben* of Virgil[10] and Ovid[11] respectively. McGill has produced a fascinating collection of Virgilian Centos, poems composed of Virgilian segments rearranged to produce something entirely different, while Ziolkowski has cast his net much wider to report on literature inspired by Ovid's *Metamorphoses* embracing European and American literature up to our own time.

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[9] *Tacitus the Annals*. Translated, with Introduction and Notes. By A. J. Woodman. Hackett Publishing Company Inc., 2004. Pp. xxx + 412. Paperback.

[10] *Virgil Recomposed*. The Mythological and Secular Centos in Antiquity. By Scott McGill. American Philological Association. American Classical Studies 48. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. xxviii + 231. Hardback £45.

[11] *Ovid and the Moderns*. By Theodore Ziolkowski. Cornell UP, 2005. Pp. xvi + 262. Hardback.

*Greek History*

As the British Museum's highly successful exhibition on Achaemenid Persia packs up and moves to Barcelona, the more positive (and less Hellenocentric) view of the Persian Empire that informed that exhibition can be safely said to be triumphant. In the light of the work of Pierre Briant and others, few would now claim, for example, that Persia after the Persian wars was on its decadent last legs, waiting for merciful release at the hands of Alexander. Now a new book by one of the great figures of Greek history of the last half-century reminds us that such a position is not entirely novel, and that not all Greek historians have been slaves to their Greek sources.[1] 'This

[1] *The Greek Wars*. The Failure of Persia. By George Cawkwell. Oxford UP, 2005. Pp. 316. Hardback £65.

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viewpoint' – of the need to 'rid ourselves of a Hellenocentric view of the Persian world' – is one, George Cawkwell insists, 'I would modestly claim to have shared'. This is reflected throughout his book: not only in the reversed perspective of his title (*The* Greek *Wars*) or in his repeatedly harsh assessments of the Greek sources, their misunderstandings and omissions, but also in its minimalist explanation of the eventual defeat of the Persians at the hands of Alexander (no moral decline in sight). Cawkwell's focus is tightly restricted to the military-political relationship of Persia with the Greeks. This is not the place to look for literary or – broadly – historiographical finesse, or for an understanding of Greek *representations* of Persia in their own terms. His genius consists in his ability to reconstruct well-worn episodes (the Ionian revolt, say) on the basis of practical probability. For that reason, *The Greek Wars* is not only highly readable (despite Cawkwell's opening insistence to the contrary), but also provides bracing insights to any number of questions in Greek-Persian relations. It would be hard to imagine a book more different in style or approach from Cawkwell's (curiously, despite Cawkwell's focus on panhellenism, it is also one that does not make it into his bibliography) than Jonathan Hall's *Hellenicity* – now reissued in paperback.[2] *Hellenicity* has already been extensively reviewed (not least, and very favourably, by my predecessor in these pages: *G&R* 50.2 [2003]). Some things still chafe with me about this book: at the trivial end of the scale, its spellings of ancient names (Ploutarkh, Ailian); more seriously, its condensed discussion of material from the classical period. Its main thesis, that a sense of Greekness based on common descent only emerged relatively late (and quickly gave way, from the fifth century, to a cultural definition of Greekness), is as problematic as Hall's rather stuck-on discussion of modern theories of ethnicity. But enough churlishness: this is an important book on an important topic, one that amply deserves a still wider readership. Thomas Figueira's edited volume *Spartan Society*[3] is the latest instalment of the proceedings of the 'International Sparta Seminar', a series driven till now by Anton Powell and Stephen Hodkinson. One of the admirable characteristics of this series has been its inclusiveness: its involvement of part-time as well as life-long Spartanologists, of more and less experienced scholars and (as Figueira calculates in his preface) of thirteen nationalities. The published proceedings are inevitably then something of a plum pudding (formless but rich), taking in (amongst other papers, not all of even quality) arguments for the Spartan cultivation of the Homeric 'virtues' of theft and deceit, for the polyvalence of the festival of the Hyacinthia (wouldn't it be a relief to discover a festival or a deity with a single unambivalent meaning?), that Sparta's role as a model of modern democracy has been overlooked, and that Spartan women were excluded from warfare more emphatically than other Greek women because of an exclusive focus on their reproductive role. There are two important contributions to the hideously complex issue of land-ownership (Figueira on land-allotments or *klêroi*, Hodkinson on female land-owners), two nuanced discussions of aspects of Xenophon's biography (Tuplin on his estate at Scillus, Humble on the uncertain truth of the tradition of his sons' Spartan education), and, arrestingly, two contradictory pieces on the massacre of the

[2] *Hellenicity*. Between Ethnicity and Culture. By Jonathan Hall. University of Chicago Press, Illinois, 2005 (first published 2002). Pp. xx + 312, with 5 maps and 6 line drawings. Paperback £20.50.

[3] *Spartan Society*. Edited by Thomas J. Figueira. Classical Press of Wales, Swansea, 2004. Pp. xv + 389. Hardback.

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helots recorded by Thucydides (Thuc. 4.80): David Harvey's holding to the historicity of the episode, Annalisa Paradiso's (which, to my surprise, gets my money), doubting its historicity, and explaining it in terms of propaganda (whose propaganda – Spartans' or Messenians' – she never decides). Pure conference proceedings sometimes seem to be a species doomed to extinction, but for throwing up quirky pairings like this last one, they deserve to live forever. There is plenty here to suggest that the Sparta seminar will run for a good time yet – and to make a worthy volume for dedication to the '"external memory device" for contemporary Spartan history' (Paul Cartledge). Ian Morris and Barry Powell's *The Greeks*[4] is not, as so often, a narrative history with sections on society and culture bolted on; the three emphases of their subtitle (*History, Culture, and Society*) are genuinely meshed, with discussions of demography, landscape and nutrition, and the 'Greeks at home' placed at the outset rather than the close. *The Greeks* encompasses a huge chronological range (from the Ice Age to Augustus), but manages within that not only to take seriously the contributions of neighbouring peoples but also to represent a range of Greek experience (the section on the Persian wars, for example, begins in Sicily). As in any such textbook difficulties and debates are largely written out, and the authors seem to enjoy the freedom that this affords them unrepentantly ('we have told the story in our own way, as if this were the way it really happened'). Now that our admiration for the Greeks is more tempered, it is also not easy to find an overarching 'story' for a book like this: the description of the Greek world as 'an astonishing culture, but no utopia', or of the Greeks as 'good to think with' are carried through well; Morris and Powell's other framework – what they term 'the Greek problem', of enlightenment from religiously-based authority – does not quite convince. Nonetheless, this is a book that is thoroughly well conceived for its intended readership in terms not only of content but also approach; it goes further than any textbook I can remember, for example, in giving pronunciations of significant names (so: thu-**sid**-i-dēz). In short, *The Greeks* is probably the best one-volume history of the Greek world on the market. James Romm's collection of sources on Alexander the Great[5] is again, at least partially, intended for a student market. Rather than adopting the standard 'synoptic approach', however, of presenting the same episode – the destruction of Thebes or the battle of the Granicus – in multiple, subtly variant, versions and asking the reader to identify and explain the differences, Romm takes a different tack. 'The reader of history . . . wants to follow a coherent narrative line'. The core of the narrative is taken from Arrian, with other sources introduced only when they include material that Arrian does not (so, for example, Plutarch on Alexander's upbringing, or Diodorus on Chaironeia). In reviewing Romm's earlier book of excerpts of Herodotus in these pages, I wondered aloud what the market was for abridgements like this when the complete texts are so affordable. Well, since the publishers have evidently come back for more, what do I know? With Romm's elegant introduction and well-judged notes (from which you can discover variant versions, incidentally), this volume certainly provides a good taster of some key episodes in the ancient sources. Whether or

[4] *The Greeks*. History, Culture, and Society. By Ian Morris and Barry B. Powell. Pearson Prentice Hall, 2005. Pp. xvii + 534. Paperback.

[5] *Alexander the Great*. Selections from Arrian, Diodorus, Plutarch, and Quintus Curtius. Edited, with introduction and notes, by James Romm. Translated by Pamela Mensch and James Romm. Hackett Publishing Company, Lancaster, 2005. Pp. xxix + 193, with 2 maps. Paperback £7.95.

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not, as Romm hopes, the study of Alexander can 'inform the difficult choices that lie ahead as America shapes its role in the world' is another question – the central one of another (very American) book on Alexander, Frank L. Holt's *Into the Land of Bones*.[6] Holt focuses on only one slice of the Alexander-story, the 'beating' he took in Bactria; he interweaves his account of Alexander's campaign with details of ill-fated British and Soviet interventions in Afghanistan – and of a third attempt to 'impose a new world order' on the region, that of the United States today. The overwhelming implication is sobering: that in the context of Afghanistan a 'cakewalk' too quickly becomes a 'death march', but Holt probably has no choice but to pull his punches. He leaves open (just) the possibility that a route could be found to avoid the mistakes of the past. US intervention in Afghanistan is presented as inevitable as soon as 'out of crystalline autumn skies four jetliners [screamed] on paths of unspeakable destruction'. And he is careful also to insist on the US troops' 'skill, dedication, honor [and] heroism'. While British and Soviet callousness/carelessness get given frank attention, Holt admits only 'a sniff of the same haughty attitude' in the assertions of American pundits – nothing here on the ethics of daisycutters falling from the clear sky of Afghanistan. Into the Land of Bones is well-paced, written with verve, and generally well-grounded (though it is hard to agree, for example, that Alexander was always intent on 'regime change' in the Persian empire). When Holt is most passionate – for example, over the destruction of Afghanistan's archaeology – it is a great read. In significant ways, however, its probing of contemporary parallels seems limited.

doi: 10.1017/S001738350600009X THOMAS HARRISON

[6] *Into the Land of Bones.* Alexander the Great in Afghanistan. By Frank L. Holt. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2005. Pp. 254, with 4 maps. Hardback £15.95.

*Roman History*

This review is quite an ark, as we shall see. Both chronological order and merit suggest that first entry must be accorded to a splendidly civilized and civilizing work, T. P. Wiseman's **The Myths of Rome*.[1] The author's aim is to prove that there were such things (not that R. Graves did not make an earlier effort). He succeeds brilliantly, necessarily throwing light on shifts in modern perceptions of the Romans. As it uses painting, notably that of Tiepolo, to demonstrate earlier interest in Roman myth, the book is lavishly illustrated, the more so because unearthing the stories involves archaeological finds. Ovid too provides material generously quoted in various translations. Piquant and illuminating observations from well outside Roman literature and Renaissance and Baroque painting, as well as a friendly style, will retain the interest aroused in younger readers when they open the volume. There is more still: political tendencies in the stories, especially those with a popular bent, are brought out and sympathy with the ordinary people of Rome allowed free play. Again, the author persuasively has the stories purveyed on the stage before they were read in the study – and, not surprisingly, given his earlier works, takes us into the theatre to hear some of them. The results are enriching and memorable. Now two quibbles. The first is with the current filmic fad of cutting into an on-going chapter, without warning, or even sufficient typographical distinctness, to insert boxes, a page or two of extraneous

[1] *The Myths of Rome*. By T. P. Wiseman. University of Exeter Press, 2004. Pp. xxii (including two maps) + 390, with 16 colour plates,109 figs. Hardback £45.

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