Greek History

Alexander is upon us. Not one but two 'major motion pictures', and endless documentaries and tie-ins, are on their way. While Robin Lane Fox is leading the cavalry charge for Oliver Stone, in the scholarly vanguard comes the latest addition to Brill's series of co-authored 'Companions'.[1] The most striking fact about any Brill book, of course, is its prohibitive cost. In this case, that is more than usually sad: the Companion to Alexander, edited by Joseph Roisman, provides a rich, up-to-date, and frequently challenging, collection of pieces on central themes in Alexander scholarship. The best of these chapters – I would single out those on sources and on Alexander in art, by Elizabeth Baynham and Andrew Stewart, or Waldemar Heckel's survey of the factions within Alexander's companions – are those which address their briefs head on. Less satisfactory to me are the more heavily narrative chapters, or those which express an excessive confidence in accessing Alexander's personality and intentions. So, for Barry Strauss, Alexander 'was courageous, bold, rugged, resolute, shrewd, versatile, and fast', while, for Maria Brosius, in the course of a bizarrely personal denunciation of Alexander for failing to understand Persia, his destruction of Persepolis is termed an 'act of hooliganism . . ., a senseless act of unprovoked violence, brutal killing and deliberate destruction.' But the volume also contains surprises. Though I struggle to understand why Brian Bosworth's short narrative of the Indian campaign was excerpted from the *Cambridge Ancient History*, another of the more original inclusions, Loring Danforth's discussion of the modern struggle for Alexander and ancient Macedon, is perhaps the most rewarding piece of all. Danforth is helped, of course, by the availability of so many colourful quotes (a politician's description of Andronikos, the excavator of Vergina, 'as 'arming the quiver of Hellenism', for example), but this is a cool and dispassionate treatment of what is still a hot topic – even if its final hope, that 'in a new transnational, or post-national world, there could be two kinds of Macedonians', those who are Greeks and those who aren't, might strike some as over-optimistic. If some of the contributors to the Brill companion might have spent a little more time considering the literary mirage that surrounds Alexander, no such charge could be levelled at Diana Spencer. The focus of her *The Roman Alexander*[2] – reflected by a lurid grid of Andy Warhol Alexanders on the front cover – is precisely the construction of Alexander's celebrity (it was, Spencer reminds us, 'the Romans who made him "the Great" '), and how even today we find in Alexander 'an appropriate model for the increasing importance of celebrity and media manipulation in public life'. This is a well-presented, very thoughtful and fluently written book. The bulk of it is centred around a series of readings of passages of Roman authors in all of which (or in most of which: just occasionally Spencer's sightings of Alexander in far-flung literary contexts have a hint of Lord Lucan about them) Alexander is adduced as a model or analogy. This structure, together with the helpful appendix of 'Modern Alexanders', make it a very student-friendly volume (I shall certainly use it as part of my course on Alexander), but, it has to be said, it would be very much student-friendlier if it were not for its knowing Hendersonian style: 'The Augustan principate stands as a winning fiction based on the balancing act that was necessary to sustain it' (and so on). One final mystery: a

[1] *Brill's Companion to Alexander the Great*. Edited by Joseph Roisman. Brill, Leiden, 2003. Pp. xx + 400. Hardback €155, $194.

[2] *The Roman Alexander*. Reading a Cultural Myth. By Diana Spencer. Exeter UP, 2002. Pp. xxiv + 277, with 2 maps and 6 illustrations. Hardback £47.50; Paper £15.99.

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central theme of *The Roman Alexander* is Alexander's '[persistence] in the mythography of celebrities who die young' – and yet there is one such celebrity, Spencer's more famous namesake, who is never mentioned. A. B. Bosworth's *The Legacy of Alexander*[3] could not present a more striking contrast in style or content. Alexander in fact scarcely haunts what is, at least for the most part (there is also, for example, a lengthy new discussion of Macedonian depopulation), a dense narrative treatment of the early history of the Hellenistic successor kingdoms. This is a period that, as Bosworth remarks, 'is generally regarded as an anticlimax, a depressing anticlimax' – it is something of an irony then that, like Shipley's *Greek World after Alexander*, the book's title borrows the glamour of the preceding climax – but Bosworth makes as good a case as possible for seeing this crucial period 'as one of creation rather than disintegration'. The fight between Antigonus Monophthalmus and Eumenes is presented as an epic struggle. Another chapter charts the stealthy rise to secure power of Seleucus. (Particularly admirable here is his use of Babylonian sources: Bosworth convincingly argues for a major war between Antigonus and Seleucus that has left no trace in classical sources.) And a concluding discussion presents the best account I know of the way in which the successors came gradually to legitimize their rule. All of this is suffused with a splendid cynicism. The provisional apportioning of Alexander's empire (the so-called Babylon settlement) is seen rightly as merely a stage in a long and sordid process of bargaining. Even elephants are viewed unsentimentally: far from being a secret weapon, they were expensive and counter-productive, though 'like all such military luxuries, . . . irresistibly attractive to commanders'. Bosworth is only starry-eyed, it seems, when it comes to historians. Hieronymus of Cardia, the author behind much of Diodorus' account of the period, is raised to the rank of a second Thucydides. More generally, Bosworth's reconstruction of events sometimes seems to depend on a distinctly confident form of source-criticism. But then this is a period so dizzyingly complex that one needs to be a little trenchant to construct any kind of narrative: this is an eye-wateringly patient work of scholarship that will be at the heart of discussion for many years. François Chamoux's *Hellenistic Civilization*[4] should be welcomed – cautiously – to the still small shelf of usable textbooks on Hellenistic history. Updated from the original French edition of 1981, Michel Roussel's clear translation has done nothing to dispel a distinctly Gallic tone, which veers from the grandiose and world-weary ('Here too our research options remain subordinated to . . . the passing whims of contemporary taste') to the grandiose and euphoric ('So many bold speculations, so many endeavors crowned with success!'). The first part of the book consists essentially of a good-old fashioned narrative in which impersonal forces slop about and individuals are filled, inexplicably, with 'an insatiable desire for conquest'. The value of this book, however, is mainly in its thematic chapters, rich in detail and wide-ranging, both geographically and in topics covered: there are good discussions, for example, of the Greek city, land-use, travel, and Hellenistic theatres. Two main drawbacks, however. First, though the book is otherwise well presented (with good illustrations and plans), there are no references to primary material: readers must apparently buy Chamoux's vision wholesale or do the work for themselves. Secondly, students should be warned

[3] *The Legacy of Alexander*. Politics, Warfare and Propaganda under the Successors. By A. B. Bosworth. Oxford UP, 2002. Hardback £42.50.

[4] *Hellenistic Civilization*. By François Chamoux. Translated by Michel Roussel (in cooperation with Margaret Roussel). Blackwells, Oxford, 2002. Pp. xii + 452. Hardback £60; Paper £17.99.

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against a markedly chauvinistic (it would be nice to believe, outdated) brand of Hellenocentrism: this is the story of the 'Hellenic people's ability to adapt to new circumstances', of the persistence, for example, of Greek communities in Egypt 'even when they were almost lost amid a teeming population of fellahin'. Blackwells would have saved themselves some of their translation costs by opting for Heinz Heinen's *Geschichte des Hellenismus*[5] instead. This is a pocket-sized book that forms part of Beck's *Wissen* series (an extraordinary range of volumes on topics as diverse as The Samurai, Mahler's Lieder, Asthma, and Alchoholism). Heinz' contribution moves, in a little over a hundred small pages, from a historical overview, through a survey of various regions, to a discussion of Hellenistic 'cultures and religions', artistic development, the development of the *koinê* or common dialect, or the relationship of the Greeks with the Jews. Inevitably what one gains in brevity one loses in detail and nuance (we are worlds away from Bosworth here), but this is a clear, up-to-date, and usable introduction to the period – usable, that is, to the many English-speaking students who can read German. In contrast to this wave of volumes on Alexander and his aftermath, we have no more than a trickle on the classical and archaic Greek worlds. Eric W. Robinson's *Ancient Greek Democracy*[6] presents a series of secondary 'readings' on Greek democracy together with a spattering of the sources around which they revolve. So, for example, a chapter on the 'beginnings of Athenian democracy: who freed Athens?' gives us, first, the main primary evidence (Aristotle, Herodotus, Thucydides, and so on) and then two divergent interpretations of that evidence: Josiah Ober's now well-known 'Athenian revolution' and a surgically removed excerpt of an article by Loren J. Samons, newly titled 'Compromise or revolution?'. The formula of presenting contrasting approaches to the same evidence works well. The volume also has a refreshingly broad focus (informed by Robinson's own research interests) on cities other than Athens – one chapter is dedicated to Syracuse – and on democratic ideology and excluded groups such as women and slaves. There is scarcely any emphasis, on the other hand, on the institutions of democracy and little trace (beyond the discussions of Cleisthenes) of traditional narratives of constitutional reform. What I missed, however, was more editorial comment. The excerpt by Samons is introduced with a single sentence: 'Samons criticizes Ober's approach and offers a more sceptical interpretation of the democratic nature of Cleisthenes' reforms'. The student reader at whom this well-conceived volume is aimed might like just a little more unpacking of the issues at stake. 'Cohorts of nubile men found spouses by groping randomly in a dark room'. So Sarah Pomeroy paraphrases the third-century author Hermippus' account of Spartan betrothal. 'This method of spouse selection', she concludes, 'reflected the ideal of equality among potential partners'. A wealth of such saucy anecdotes, together with Pomeroy's established reputation as an accessible author, will doubtless make *Spartan Women*[7] sell well, but Hermippus' tale of random groping might stand, alas, for other aspects of this book: its largely uncritical approach to sources and a pervasive wishful thinking. Life was sweet, apparently, for Spartan women. Unlike boys, they were not

[5] *Geschichte des Hellenismus*. Von Alexander bis Kleopatra. By Heinz Heinen. C. H. Beck, Munich, 2003. Pp. 128. Paper €7.90.

[6] *Ancient Greek Democracy*. Readings and Sources. Edited by Eric W. Robinson. Blackwells, Oxford, 2003. Pp. xiv + 26. Hardback £60; Paper £17.99.

[7] *Spartan Women*. By Sarah B. Pomeroy. Oxford UP, New York, 2002. Pp. xi +198. Hardback £45; Paper £14.99.

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exposed as infants. They were more literate. They were encouraged to speak. They had more to eat, and they could drink freely. They could wear flattering 'skimpy clothing', could 'ride back and forth to their country estates', and they even 'exercised control over their fertility'. They probably had a say in choosing their surrogate husbands, and, to cap it all, they lived longer, longer both than Spartan men and than women elsewhere in Greece – oh, and there is no reason to suppose that more women than men died in earthquakes. Of course, there is evidence behind such statements, but it is frequently distorted by special pleading. Herodotus gives a less surprising version of Spartan betrothal, that fathers betrothed their daughters as they chose, but it is Hermippus' account that Pomeroy privileges. Despite the distinctly dubious nature of the Spartan marriage ceremony, with its ritual 'capture' of the bride, Pomeroy cannot countenance the possibility that women may have been subjected to rape by their husbands: Spartan women, like female New York fire-fighters, could easily have manhandled any Spartan man (and yet, inexplicably, they did fear rape by foreigners). And, in one extraordinary passage of her discussion of sources, Pomeroy appears to suggest that all stories told by Herodotus have an element of truth: 'the fact that Herodotus heard stories like those about Gorgo [the feisty daughter of the Spartan king Cleomenes] suggests that there was at least a kernel of historical truth behind them'. One does not have to be a 'contemporary hypercritical Spartanologist', in Pomeroy's phrase, to hold back here. Finally, a sprinkling of books on scattered topics. Eight years after its first publication, Sitta von Reden's rich, anthropologically-informed treatment of *Exchange in Ancient Greece*[8] is now in paperback, with a new preface outlining work done in the intervening years. From the enticing source of the University of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria comes a monograph concerned with the Greeks' representation of Egypt.[9] This covers a broad chronological period (fifth century BC to fourth century AD), but in other ways its focus is narrow. The literary figures one would first associate with the topic (Herodotus, Plato, Diodorus, Strabo) make way in large part for a range of fragmentary authors, making clear how widespread interest in Egypt was. The authors' focus is also not on the underlying question of what drove such representations (for which one should turn to François Hartog's *Memories of Odysseus*, Phiroze Vasunia's *Gift of the Nile*, or a new collection of volumes, *Encounters with Ancient Egypt*) but rather on collating material on a range of disparate questions: the Nile, its sources, the annual inundation, tombs and pyramids, naval technology, the Ptolemies' sumptuous pleasure-boats, or the Grand Procession of Ptolemy Philadelphus. A new series of volumes on inter-state relations in antiquity is inaugurated by a pair of volumes on ancient diplomacy. Luigi Piccirilli's *L'invenzione della diplomazia nella Grecia antica*[10] collects evidence from the whole span of Greek antiquity on, first, the characteristics of ambassadors (their age, their physical appearance, distinguishing forms of dress), and secondly the language that they employed (their appeals to kinship, for example, or to the ideals of justice, liberty or autonomy, the use of symbolic messages, and the

[8] *Exchange in Ancient Greece*. By Sitta von Reden. Duckworth, London, 2003. Pp. xii + 244. Paper £16.99.

[9] *La Imagen de Egipto en los Fragmentos de los Historiadores Griegos*. Una Primera Aproximación. By Luz María García Fleitas and Germán Santana Henríquez. Universidad de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Gran Canaria, 2002. Pp. 124. Paper.

[10] *L'invenzione di diplomazia nella Grecia antica*. By Luigi Piccirilli. "L'erma" di Bretschneider, Rome, 2002. Pp. 151. Hardback.

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Spartans' notorious 'aversion to prolixity'). While Piccirilli stresses the central importance of rhetoric in embassies, the range and density of his survey never really allows him time to discuss single examples of such rhetoric in detailed context. Rather more time for analysis is available to the three contributors to the subsequent volume, *La retorica della diplomazia nella Grecia antica e a Bisanzio*.[11] Domenica Paola Orsi follows Piccirilli's methodological lead in an examination of the terms for communication (persuasion, exhortation, condemnation etc.) employed in Xenophon's *Hellenica*. Less narrowly rewarding, however, are discussions by Lia Raffaella Cresci and Francesca Gazzano of the role of diplomacy in, respectively, twelfth-century Byzantine historiography and Herodotus' *Histories*. Familiar apparently with every recent trend in Herodotean scholarship, and more sensitive than Piccirilli to ideological or literary context, Gazzano sets Herodotus' representations of diplomacy valuably against the background of a common diplomatic code that had developed between the Greeks and the peoples of the Near East. Herodotus appears again in a new selected edition, translated afresh by Samuel Shirley, and edited and introduced by James Romm.[12] The translation is accurate and relatively fluent, if somewhat old-fashioned in style. The introduction and notes are pitched at a very introductory level, are reliable (though Romm misleadingly suggests that *proskynesis*, the ceremonial gesture demanded by Persian kings, reflects a semi-divine status) and show a nice awareness of the contemporary resonance of Herodotus' emphasis on the rise and fall of empires, 'at a time when a latter-day hegemon debates where the limits of its power should be fixed'. But the crucial issue is the selection. In his own words, Romm focuses on the 'main thrust of the *Histories*', the 'war for Greek freedom', at the same time as trying to capture some sense of the *Histories*' 'vastness, diversity and breadth'. Admirable intentions, and they are well carried through, but I am left wondering about the purpose of such off-the-peg selections of major authors. Given the availability of so many affordable and well-presented translations of Herodotus, we can all now tailor our own selections – while leaving open the possibility that the more adventurous students might roam free, and discover the vastness of the text for themselves. I end with a surprise. I have to admit that *Interpreting a Classic. Demosthenes and his Ancient Commentators*[13] was not a book that I was eagerly anticipating reading. I could not have been more wrong. Craig A. Gibson has produced a brilliant slice of intellectual history, compelling, charming and – given its subject matter – astonishingly clear. Gibson sets out not to mine Demosthenes' commentators for nitty-gritty facts on their 'target author', but instead to reconstruct *their* priorities and those of the readers that consulted them, 'to give a detailed and generous portrait', in Gibson's words, 'of a scholarly industry that touched generations of ancient readers'. He accomplishes this with unfailing judgement, but manages also to convey throughout a sense both of feeling for his subjects (it is, in the best sense, a generous book) and of the freshness of discovery (it reminded me, more than any other work, of John Chadwick's *The Decipherment of Linear B*). *Interpreting a*

[11] *La retorica della diplomazia nella Grecia antica e a Bisanzio*. By Lia Raffaella Cresci, Francesca Gazzano, Domenica Paola Orsi. "L'erma" di Bretschneider, Rome, 2002. Pp. 166. Hardback.

[12] *Herodotus*. On the War for Greek Freedom. Selections from the Histories. Translated by Samuel Shirley, edited with introduction and notes by James Romm. Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, Indiana, 2003. Pp. 201 + xxvii. Hardback £24.95; Paper £5.95.

[13] *Interpreting a Classic*. Demosthenes and his Ancient Commentators. By Craig A. Gibson. University of California Press, Berkeley, 2002. Pp. xii + 261. Hardback £37.95.

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Classic is not only a book for those interested in Demosthenes, or for that even smaller band concerned with Demosthenes' ancient commentators. It has important lessons for all classicists: how we have privileged the process of 'transmission' over the purpose of it; how mercilessly we have held such ancient commentators to anachronistic standards; how, in short, we have so rarely stopped to ask what these men, our ancient counterparts, were thinking of. We should all hope for a Craig Gibson, two thousand years hence, to rescue our motives and reputations.

THOMAS HARRISON

Roman History

The architecture of this review, suggested by its subjects, adopts a fashion that came in a generation ago, presenting a perspective that leads from centre to periphery – and beyond. To start with the beginning as well as the centre, A. Meurant's *L'Idée de gémellité dans la légende des origines de Rome*[1] appropriately follows a double track, though in a three-part work. In the central part, Meurant studies the legend as it appears in Latin and Greek sources ('Les grands témoins': I could have done with more of this) and finds that Roman writers patriotically reject variants of the 'official' version. Parts 1 and 3 give more space to theoretical enquiry, first accommodating Romulus and Remus to global, even to Old-World versus New-World twins (39), then to Indo-European patterns, notably to G. Dumézil's tripartite schemes, showing an Indo-European schema was adapted to the exigencies of Roman rationalism (96); after that a guiding star is R. Girard's theory of 'le désir mimétique', with explanatory diagrams: against a background of exogamic succession by the maternal line (188), pairs of rivals with identical (*i.e.*, conflicting) desires, starting with Aeneas-Turnus, culminate in the twins proper. This book is richly documented (until 1996) and sometimes the text rests on a bed of footnotes deeper than itself, offering a generous insight particularly into francophone anthropological method. Next, metropolitan literature. Two of the life-enhancing Bristol jackets are on show: E. L. Kennedy's 1941 edition of ⋆*Caesar, De Bello Civili III*,[2] and ⋆*Introducing Cicero: a Latin Reader* edited by six members of the Scottish Classics Group, saluted below.[3] The first gives the modified OCT, a preface stating that the book is intended for 'the average pupil of today of about School Certificate Standard' (do your own conversions), an introduction historically well past its sell-by date ('*Parties in the State* . . .'; 'A new nobility, . . . called Optimates or Aristocrats'), 111 pages of notes (the nub), vocabulary, illustrations nostalgically revealing their epoch, and maps. Perhaps a revised edition would have been worthwhile. *Cicero* is designed for today. The editors provide two dozen passages, mostly from

[1] *L'Idée de gémellité dans la légende des origines de Rome*. By A. Meurant. Classe des Lettres et des sciences morales et politique, 3^{e} sér. tome 24. Académie Royal de Belgique, Brussels, 2000. Pp. 335. Paperback.

[2] *Caesar, De Bello Civili III*. Edited with introduction, notes, and vocabulary by E. C. Kennedy. Bristol Classical Press, London, 2002 (first published by Macmillan and Company, 1941). Pp. xxx + 280. 4 illustrations, 3 maps. Paperback.

[3] *Introducing Cicero*. A Selection of Passages from the Writings of Marcus Tullius Cicero, with Notes on his Life and Times. Prepared by the Scottish Classics Group (M. R. Burns, I. R. Macaskill, M. Barclay Miller, R. M. Orr, H. L. Philip, W. F. Ritchie, K. G. Silver, G. Suggett). Bristol Classical Press, London, 2002. Pp. xvi, 255. 14 maps, 15 illustrations. Paperback.

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