

BIROn - Birkbeck Institutional Research Online

Constantakopoulou, Christy (2016) (G.) Parmeggiani Ed. Between Thucydides and Polybius. The Golden Age of Greek Historiography (Hellenic Studies 64). Washington DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2014. Pp. vii + 328. £18.95. 9780674428348. [Book Review]

Downloaded from: <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/id/eprint/30749/>

Usage Guidelines:

Please refer to usage guidelines at <https://eprints.bbk.ac.uk/policies.html> or alternatively contact lib-eprints@bbk.ac.uk.

LITERATURE

PARMEGGIANI (G.) *Ed. Between Thucydides and Polybius. The Golden Age of Greek Historiography* (Hellenic Studies 64). Washington DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, Trustees for Harvard University, 2014. Pp. vii + 328. £18.95. 9780674428348.

This edited volume is based on two conferences on Greek historiography that took place in 2007. There are 12 contributions and an introduction by the editor. I should comment on the title, which in my opinion is misleading. The focus of all the contributions of the book (with the exception of R. Thomas) is on fourth-century historians and historiography. Indeed I would highlight as one of the key contributions of many of the articles the repositioning in scholarship of prominent fourth-century authors: Theopompus, Isocrates, Xenophon and Ephorus. It is clear by the editor's introduction that an important aim for the publication of this volume is to go beyond established assumptions in scholarship about the primacy of fifth-century historiography (especially Thucydides) and to reconsider fourth-century authors within their contemporary historical, political and overall cultural context. This is indeed an important issue. What I find perplexing is the choice of the subtitle: *The Golden Age of Greek Historiography*. The choice of this title for the content of the book reinforces rather than subverts established (and in my opinion, misleading) ideas about the primacy of the historiography of one period over that of another. In other words, why should there be one single 'golden age' of Greek historiography? Doesn't this imply a certain degree of a teleological approach to the writing of history, which is exactly the approach the volume criticizes, and rightly so?

That said, the actual contributions are much more nuanced than the title implies. Due to lack of space, I will not be able to comment extensively on every single contribution.

The introduction by Parmeggiani sets the tone for the volume: the emphasis is on fourth-century historiographers and their recontextualization. Memory and the processes through which collective memory is constructed are also discussed. R. Vattuone focuses on Theopompus and his methodology, which put emphasis on individual personalities as part of the causal explanation of historiography. He stresses the political context as a key feature in shaping the historian's

choices rather than the 'intellectual' environment that has attracted recent scholarly attention. J. Marincola turns his attention to Isocrates and his relation with historiography. The treatment of the past is a central concern for Isocrates, as he engages with some of the themes that are crucial for historiography too, such as political power. This does not mean, however, that Isocrates had a cardinal position of importance in the development of historiography. R. Nicolai and C. Bearzot in their contributions discuss Xenophon. Bearzot compares the use of documents in Xenophon's *Hellenica* with Thucydides and Herodotus. The differences in these historians' use of documents has to do with the contemporary nature of the *Hellenica*; documents, in other words, were considered more useful in the reconstruction of the more distant past. Parmeggiani compares Ephorus' fragment about the reasons for the outbreak of the Peloponnesian War with the relevant passages in Thucydides. He convincingly argues that Ephorus provides a dual explanation for the Peloponnesian War that links it with both the pre-existing tension between Athens and Sparta over the course of the fifth century and the internal politics of Athens, particularly Pericles' position, in the immediate background to the war. Ephorus' fragments, therefore, reveal a broader and more balanced insight than Thucydides, say, into the origins of the war.

N. Luraghi's contribution is a highlight of the volume. He too discusses Ephorus and focuses on Ephorus' and Diodorus' relation to the *spatium mythicum*. He argues that the choice of starting Ephorus' history with the episode of the return of the Heraclidai is not related to Ephorus' belief that this episode was the threshold for historical memory, as it is normally perceived in modern debates; rather, this choice had to do with the particular importance that this mythological episode had for the politics and interstate relations of the Peloponnese and beyond during the fourth century. J. Tully also focuses on Ephorus and the return of the Heraclidai, continuing, in a way, Luraghi's argument. He examines Ephorus' relation with universal history; while some interesting observations are offered, the lack of editorial control of this contribution makes it an uneven piece of work; this contribution is double the length of the other articles in the book and, surely, a tighter representation of the argument would have been useful.

D. Lenfant and C. Tuplin examine the role of *Persica* in historiography. Lenfant provides an

enlightening comparison between authors of *Persica* in the fourth and fifth centuries, while Tuplin examines attitudes to decline and collapse. R. Thomas looks at local historiography, with Delos and the Ionian cities as case studies. She stresses the importance of such historiography for local *polis* identity and self-assertion. S. Ferrario discusses the uses of memory by prominent individuals in the fourth century; historiography and inscriptions are her main sources. While the article is undoubtedly useful, I found that the lack of engagement with some excellent recent work on memory and memorization (by J. Shear, among others) weakens her argument. Finally, L. Bertelli discusses the relationship between Aristotle and history.

All in all, this is an excellent volume that will appeal to anyone interested in Greek historiography or fourth-century history and culture. As is expected in edited volumes, there are some uneven contributions; additionally, as mentioned above, the title does not do credit to the otherwise highly nuanced content of the volume. The volume shows, however, how crucial the fourth century is for our understanding of ancient historiography.

CHRISTY CONSTANTAKOPOULOU
Birkbeck, University of London
c.constantakopoulou@bbk.ac.uk