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# Review of *A Guide to Reading Herodotus'* Histories by Sean Sheehan

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discovered a clue of her estranged brother's presence: 'Since Father has had his muddy offerings now, // I'd like to share another bit of news.' (p.92, vv.164-166). And when Apollo describes the return of Agamemnon in the *Holy Goddesses*, the lightness of language results in a phrase too bland for a god, testifying in an Athenian court no less: 'The king had just returned from waging war // and doing rather well.' (p.173, vv.631-632).

Alongside the text, the volume has much to offer, although the intended audience of the peripheral information is not always clear. Mulroy uses the Preface (pp.ix-x) and the Introduction (pp.xi-xv) to, slightly haphazardly, discuss themes, historical context, the authorial voice, and the idiosyncrasies of his edition (i.e. naming the wife of Agamemnon 'Clytaemestra' with good reason, and labelling the Chorus Leader 'Coryphaeus' with none). These pique the interest but it is not clear why some information is fronted in the introduction, and other pertinent or useful material is relegated to the seven appendices at the end (pp.193-231). For the reader, Appendices 1 and 3, which contain synopses and the mythological background, are most useful, while Appendices 2 and 4, on Aeschylus, and the historical and political context, may suit the school student. Appendix 7 addresses the theatrical context and staging, which is also inconsistently included by Mulroy in the body of his translation; at times he asserts a certain staging, beyond what is necessary for an understanding of the text, such as the tentative direction in the *Holy Goddesses*: 'the Ghost of Clytaemestra appears. Perhaps she rises from behind the navel stone' (p.146), but does not do this often enough to properly scaffold a production.

Appendices 5 and 6 concern the technicalities of Mulroy's renaming of the *Eumenides* to the *Holy Goddesses* (a compelling argument), and a detailed discussion of metre, both Greek and English. I would be surprised if either of these would be accessible to anyone below undergraduate level. Taken as a whole, the appendices, as well as the footnoting and bibliography, represent far too varied a selection of information. A trained Classicist may well find themselves distracted or bored by footnotes explaining, for instance, who Zeus is (pp.4-5), but more concerningly, Mulroy's target audience, that is an interested reader of English, may be baffled by interjected comments on textual corruptions and conjectured reconstructions, which too often bar a straightforward reading. Mulroy has the capacity to write for either audience, but he must choose which.

I repeat that this volume has much to offer. The three translations are often lively and the metre does not restrain bold and beautiful language. The wealth of information contained in the footnotes and appendices, evidence of the depth of research, stimulates engagement with these texts at any level. However, it will be incumbent on any reader to read selectively, or for the teacher to select appropriate extracts. Furthermore, reading this edition alongside other translations, and indeed the Greek text, will illuminate obscurity, throw occasional bland passages into relief, and ultimately achieve the best understanding of the *Oresteia*.

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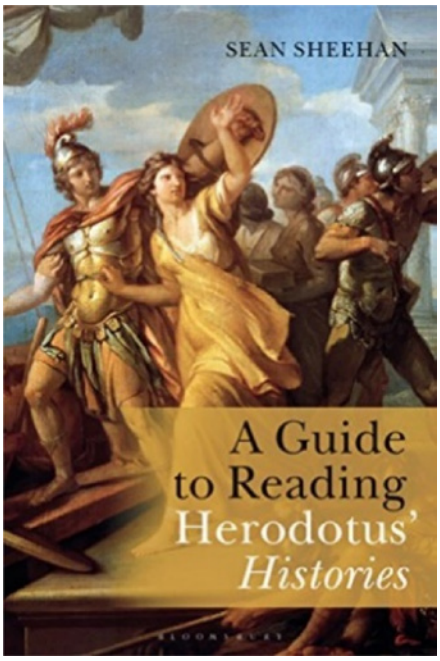
## Sheehan (S.)

***A Guide to Reading Herodotus' Histories*. Pp. xii + 316, ills. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Paper, £22.99. ISBN: 978-1-4742-9266-5.**




I was very pleased to have come across this book just as I was preparing to teach Herodotus again after an interval of several years. I had taught a core History course to first-year students using the *Histories*, but now would be leading an independent study by more advanced students. I would say that this guide would be of more use to the more advanced students.

The reading toward which Sheehan would guide us is complex, flexible, and sophisticated. It draws upon Herodotean scholarship from Felix Jacoby to Tom Holland (though Seth Benardete appears as 'Bernadette'), folds in the anthropology of Levi-Strauss and the metahistory of Hayden White; and invokes such figures as Walter Benjamin and the Bakhtinian. He even reaches as far afield as *Finnegans Wake* for 'Hairyoddities', Joyce's gloss on the tendency of the Father of History to be a purveyor of fables. On the other hand, he is very concerned to make the *Histories* accessible to those who would look to him for guidance. The Guide includes a series of diagrams – which he calls 'boxes'– which outline the *logoi*, lay out the plots and plot the themes, and mobilise the quotes. These are always clear, and clearly connected to the more discursive explication.

Sheehan's *Guide* is divided into a series of chapters representing 'Approaches to Herodotus', followed by 'Commentary', which proceeds straightforwardly through each of the nine books of the *Histories*. These Approaches are themselves straightforward enough: The Form of the *Histories*; Herodotus the Historian; The *Histories* as Literature, among others; but a comparison of these with the chapter titles of similar introductory books about Herodotus might remind readers of this one just how approachable the *Histories* are. James Romm writes of 'The Man and the Work', but also of 'The Downfall of Greatness' and 'The Kingdom of Culture'. John Gould, whose work Sheehan seems to particularly approve of, has written about 'Enquiry' and 'Social Memory', 'Mapping Other Worlds', and, in the end, 'Reading Herodotus'. I once thought of writing such a book myself; it would have begun with 'What is History for Herodotus?' and ended with 'Herodotus Today'. These books are made of those approaches, but have not the Commentary that comprises the greater part of Sheehan's Guide. It is rather more like J. L. Myres' *Herodotus: The Father of History*, which does not appear in Sheehan's bibliography. But if that is outdated, Sheehan updates it. It is no longer necessary to convince readers that Herodotus was indeed the Father of

History; but it is now necessary to convince people to read the *Histories*.

We may take as an example of Sheehan's approaches the one that considers 'Herodotus the Historian'. Herodotus is 'The Father of History', because what he wrote *was* history, and no one wrote it before he did. As early as Thucydides and Plutarch, critics have questioned whether Herodotus makes proper use of his sources; but Sheehan argues that he used the sources available to him; and if he sometimes seems too credulous, at other times he is explicitly critical. The *historie* are critical on 'an epistemological sliding scale' (p.17) that accounts for the relative credibility of his various sources. Herodotus has a sense of history, recent and distant; he knows what can be known, and what can't. He can distinguish between what he knows from what he hears, and what he knows from what he sees. His use of folk tales and oral traditions (where he may seem most uncritically credulous) sheds light on how history works. 'The conversation between Solon and Croesus', for instance, 'may be an invention originating in oral tradition, but it functions as a paradigm for underlying themes of importance to Herodotus' view of history' (p.20).

As for the commentary on the nine books, let us take Book Two, since that is where I am at the moment with my Herodotus students. Book Two is all about Egypt. It is less digressive than Book One, but is itself a digression. Herodotus writes about Egypt because the Persian King Cambyses is planning an invasion; he *can* write about Egypt because Greeks have been there for centuries, and he went there himself. He writes about the history of Egypt, but also the geography, ethnography, and even zoology of the country. He is always interested in religion, but is here particularly interested in distinguishing religion from history, even though most of his sources are Egyptian priests. They are the keepers of extensive records covering thousands of years; but though they have kept records, they have not made *inquiries*. And Herodotus, in Egypt, relies as much on what he sees as on what they say.

This is a good Guide to Reading Herodotus' *Histories*, in that it is also a good guide to writing about it. Neither the Approaches nor the Commentary explicitly address the writing that the readers are likely to do; but a teacher might readily turn it to those purposes. In its organisation, its mix of paraphrase, summary, and interpretive observations and claims,and its deployment of quotes from both Herodotus and Herodotean scholars, Sheehan can show students how such stuff is done.

When I first taught the *Histories*, Herodotus was hot. The 9/11 attacks had reactivated the ancient narrative of enmity between East and West. The Zach Snyder film *300* brought the Persian Wars into popular culture. Tom Holland first came to Herodotean prominence with *Persian Fire*. I set up a Google Alert for Herodotus, and every day would get an email with at least half a dozen links to news articles and blog posts. The *Landmark Herodotus* was published, as were *Travels with Herodotus* by Ryszard Kapuscinski and *The Way of Herodotus* by Justin Marozzi. Anthony Pagden's *Worlds at War* began precisely where Herodotus did. That moment seems to have passed; and yet Herodotus is no less worth reading. I hope that Sheehan's *Guide* might inspire a new generation of students to read their *Histories*.

***Barry Knowlton***

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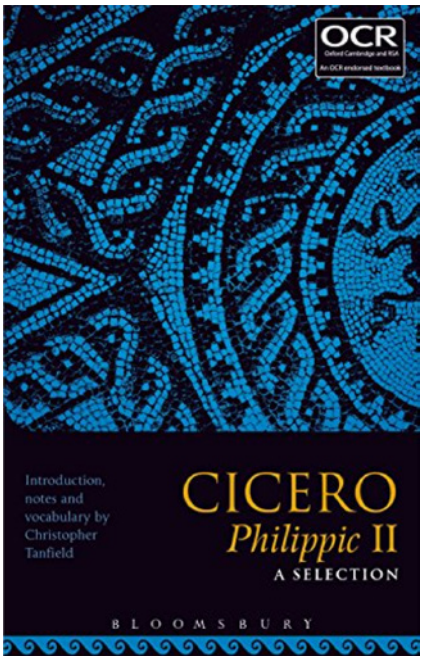
## Tanfield (C.) (ed.)

**_Cicero_ Philippic II: _A Selection._ Pp. viii + 179, maps. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018. Paper, £16.99. ISBN: 978-1-350-01023-9.**




This work, blue-liveried and with the OCR stamp of endorsement, joins the growing collection of companion editions for current and forthcoming OCR set texts. The ever-present issue of these editions is utility; the text is virtually unchanged from the 1918 OCT edition (*v.* p.34), and this book will very soon be outdated (these sections of *Philippics II* will be the set text for examination in 2020-2021). As such, one might expect a substantial commentary, as well as a decent array of corresponding information to support the teacher and student. In this, Tanfield delivers on the latter, but not the former.

Tanfield provides a meaty introduction to this edition (pp.1-27), which covers historical context, introduction to and classification of classical oratory (which happily does not shy away from a wealth of technical terms), Demosthenes' legacy, a glossary of stylistic features, notes on scansion and clausulae, and a reading list. Here the value of the book is most apparent; not only has Tanfield collated this information effectively (so the teacher doesn't have to), it is also written in an accessible way, clearly with the A-level student in mind. The exemplar paragraph which shows how to tackle rhetorical devices in essay writing is a particular highlight and could easily and usefully be incorporated into a lesson. The introduction thoroughly prepares the student for reading the text with full knowledge of the historical and linguistic hinterland. This is then further supported by the detailed summaries of the non-examined Latin and otherwise prescribed English text, which are excellent and seem to represent the bulk of Tanfield's work, again to the benefit of the teacher (pp.51-53, 69-70, 100).

As for the commentary itself, the content is variable. In its favour, it is peppered throughout with references to Bennett's *New Latin Grammar* (1918), which takes on the heavy lifting of specific grammatical features; for the purposes of understanding the language, this is a sensible subcontraction to a resource easily found online. The vocabulary list (pp.137-179) is another highly beneficial feature, which will allow the student to work from a single book, if that is desirable. The vocabulary items are also marked with an asterisk if they are also found on the OCR Defined Vocabulary List.

The commentary is also full of small pointers, such as on §91: *idem tamen*: 'you, however, also…'; *quasi fuligine abstersa*: Ablative absolute **NLG 227** (p.96). The benefit of such useful nudges to an