

the wondrously exotic even without any self-reflective intentions. Secondly, and only seemingly in contradiction to this, the fact that accounts of foreign lands and peoples – so many playful variations on the same recurring themes – often presented Greek authors with the only opportunity to conceptualise what was foreign and unknown and connect it with what they already knew in an early phase of contact, before this ethnographic material could be progressively enriched with empirical data and embellished in literary form.

F. does not always succeed in comprehensively exploring and interrelating these different levels; his chosen organisational framework is too dominant for that. Nonetheless, the overall impression is positive. F. delivers an amply documented yet nuanced panorama of Greek thought on liminal worlds that links iconographic evidence with analysis of literary sources to arrive at mostly convincing conclusions. For this he deserves our thanks, even if few new details could be brought to the table: the sources are well known, their statements largely undisputed. The book's strength lies instead in its synthetic power. It is not always easy to read because F. does not shy away from repetition and often strings together texts and comparable interpretations where one or two incisive examples would have sufficed. He occasionally passes up opportunities for more probing interpretations, as with regard to the question of how changes in ideas about the periphery related to processes of discovery and sociopolitical developments 'at the centre'. At times, too, he reprises standardised explanations, even though his stupendous knowledge of the sources would have enabled him to steer a more independent path. For example, there is simply no evidence in Homer for qualifying the entire race of Cyclopes as man-eaters. Solely the loner Polyphemus attacks Odysseus' companions in this way, and clearly only because they wanted to plunder the dairy products stored in his cave and steal his 'kids and lambs from the pens' (*Od.* 9.226, including after their dramatic escape: 9.469–70). It is no longer the *communis opinio* that all the hero's 'wanderings' took place in a fairytale realm (p. 117); this claim ignores the multidimensional structure of the text. These explanatory gaps could stimulate further research – a further service performed by works of diligent synthesis such as this.

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RELATIONS BETWEEN ATHENS AND BOIOTIA

VAN WIJK (R.) *Athens and Boiotia. Interstate Relations in the Archaic and Classical Periods.* Pp. xvi + 461, colour ills, b/w & colour maps. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2024. Cased, £115, US\$150. ISBN: 978-1-009-34059-5.

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It is a mildly jarring experience to read a book on Athenian and Boiotian relations without ever once coming across a mention of Boiotian swine, a jibe already by Pindar's day (*Pind. O.* 6.89–90). There is no place for such stereotypes in V.W.'s treatment of the subject, which is tightly focused on specific episodes, snapshots that capture relations between these factious neighbours. For V.W. the problem is that to move from a series of such frames to a continuous reel, depicting the relationship across two centuries, we fill in

the blanks by resorting to what he calls the 'Realist school' of political thinking, the view that states are inherently motivated by self-interest and fear of other states, especially of their neighbours. There is no systematic discussion of this school of thought, although scholars such as D. Kagan and P. Cartledge receive some criticism; rather, there are asides aimed at researchers who 'eagerly follow the ancient sources by assuming these neighbours were natural enemies, their licentious desire to outdo one another interrupted by hiatuses of peace' (p. 4). This is a mistake, according to V.W. Instead, 'non-rational' factors are key: 'kinship, social memory, reputation, reciprocity and justice' (p. 5), 'honour, standing, social memory and mutual trust' (p. 154) and even 'conviviality' (p. 192) exert more influence on policy than 'inveterate hostility' (p. 81) or 'deterministic, inexorable mutual enmity' (p. 382). This sounds good, but the notion that international relations were shaped by these positive inclinations often runs into brutal realities. 'Contrary to all the beautiful words proclaimed in the Assembly in support of the Plataians, its fortunes were sacrificed on the altar of expediency when the opportunity to join forces with the Boiotians presented itself' (p. 241). Such hypocrisy hardly aligns with V.W.'s emphasis on benign Athenian policy. Similarly, 'social memory' is a big category, and if the Athenian 'memory' of Theban medism (pp. 297–300) is not an example of 'inherent neighbourly hostility' (p. 90), it is not much different.

On the plus side, V.W. offers an exhaustive account of Athenian and Boiotian relations, providing future scholarship with a broad narrative sweep against which to read specific encounters. His questioning of the existence of a deep, fundamental enmity forces us to scrutinise each phase in the long history of Athens and Boiotia without preconceptions. His account is painstaking, and the care with which separate episodes are analysed is remarkable. Nevertheless, historical episodes do not occur in isolation. It is easy to miss the wood for the trees. For example, the trees of Oropos. In 374 BCE the Athenians took control (again) of Oropos and its woodlands. According to Isocrates, the Thebans were not pleased. For V.W. this is Isocrateian slander, and he proposes instead that the Thebans accepted the annexation as a 'quid pro quo' or 'as a fortification of their ally's position' (p. 218). Yet half a page later one reads that 'the cold war on the borders turned warm in 366'. The affair 'was parlayed to an interstate arbitration to determine the rightful owner', and the Theban claim to the territory was vindicated. Despite V.W.'s disdain for 'Realist dogma' (p. 87) the result of this revisionist approach looks like a good old-fashioned border dispute. V.W. concludes that 'territorial disputes emerged during hostile times and were the result, rather than the cause of hostilities' (p. 220).

If V.W.'s general edifice is shaky, individual segments are more solid. The section on borderlands (the Mazi and Skourta plains, Oropos and Plataia) is especially good. On the first of these, V.W. draws on S. Fachard's survey of the 2010s and is very up to date, although more credit could be given to J. Camp's 1991 study of Boiotian fortifications (*AJA* 95), the essay that first undermined the older, mistaken view that the fortress at Eleutherai was Attic. V.W. is also convincing on Oropos, although the neck-snapping alternation between Boiotian and Attic control of the area does make one suspect that behind the periodic concessions both sides dreamt of long-term possession. Reading this chapter, I could not help but think of the Franco-Prussian War and Sarah Bernhardt's (apocryphal?) reply to the question, what would it take to perform in Berlin? 'Alsace.' The absence of war does not mean an end to hatred. The discussion could also have paid more attention to the identification of Oropian territory newly acquired by the Athenians with *Ta Nea*, mentioned in Hyperides 4.16–17 and discussed in *Agora* 19. Plataia's position is neatly analysed, and the discussion of the area's integration into the Theban *chora* is particularly astute, although the claim that 'Ethnically, the Plataians always regarded themselves as Boiotians' (p. 232), based on Herakleides Kritikos, is not strictly accurate. The text reads, εἰσὶ δὲ Ἀθηναῖοι

Βοιωτοί (*BNJ* 369a F 1.11), a description that deserves to be unpacked more fully, especially since V.W. classifies Plataia as one of the territories that was ‘never directly owned by Athenians and therefore offered no benefit in terms of resources’ (p. 243). If the Athenians were so ready to abandon the Plataians in the name of ‘courtly relations with the *koinon*’ (p. 243), perhaps we should not be so quick to abandon *Realpolitik* as a defining feature of interstate relations.

Ironically, when V.W. stops resisting the siren call of political realism, his interpretations are more convincing: a well-written section on the seaboard of Boiotia, for example, allows him to argue convincingly that Athenian policy between 458 and 446 BCE, when the Athenians briefly controlled much of Boiotia, was not an attempt to expand their land empire, but to secure control of harbours and ports around the Corinthian Gulf. But the lines between ‘warmer relations’ (p. 383) and cold-blooded exploitation easily blur. V.W. interprets both the Athenian occupation of Boiotia in the 450s and the alliance of 339/8 as evidence that ‘maintaining a fruitful relationship with the neighbours, either through direct occupation or alliance, was a common thread of Athenian relations with Boiotia’ (p. 262). These episodes, however, are set within a discussion of J. Ober’s concept of what V.W. calls ‘buffer defence strategy’, according to which the neighbour serves as the buffer zone where the fighting is concentrated. Was there ever a more cynical and exploitative strategy than allowing your neighbour to bleed for you? Some of V.W.’s interpretations of Athenian policy are viewed through very rosy glasses indeed. Describing negotiations in 395 BCE, he writes that ‘the Athenians must have realized the importance of keeping the Boiotians friendly and that territorial “concessions” would be beneficial for harmonious relations in the long run’ (p. 268). But in Greek interstate relations was there ever ‘a long run’ or just a short sprint to the next crisis, opportunity or invasion? In fact, no Athenian orator ever relied on such a phrase, because, as V.W. shows with great clarity (pp. 153–60), the biggest hindrance to rapprochement in 339 BCE was a deep, lingering mistrust on both sides. However much honour, status and amity may have counted at any moment, they were trumped by a long history of mutual distrust.

Nowhere was this legacy of latent hostility more apparent than at Delphi, where the culture of competitive display turned international relations into a zero-sum game. In Chapter 5 V.W. offers a very persuasive reading of Panhellenic and local sanctuaries in general and the Athenian dedications in particular; yet V.W. is still inclined to downplay deep-seated hostility. *IG* I³ 501 is an epigram accompanying a quadriga on the Acropolis commemorating the Athenians’ defeat of the Boiotians (pp. 311 and 324). For V.W. ‘the desire to underline the identity of the vanquished invaders did not express an established enmity’ (p. 313). Yet if this was ‘the inception of hostilities’, as he claims, that hatred had a long afterlife: Boiotian medism was never forgotten.

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