See the bearded Amazon

EDITH HALL

Kathryn Bosher

THEATER OUTSIDE ATHENS

Drama in Greek Sicily and south Italy

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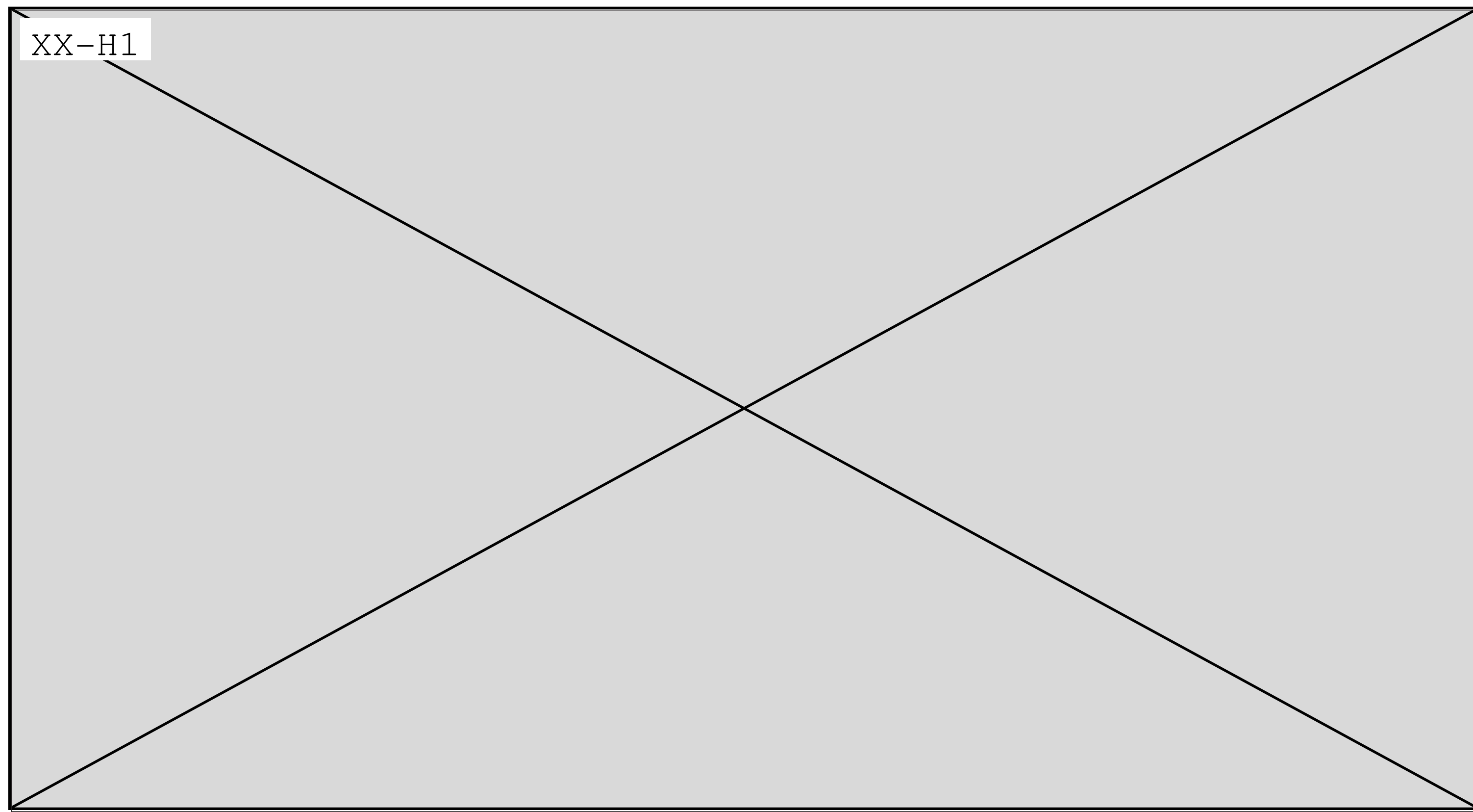

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In about October 1989, the genre long known as "classical Greek drama" became "fifth-century Athenian drama". It had at last become acceptable to eschew the quest within Greek dramatic texts for expressions of transcendent beauty and ideal Classicism in favour of returning them to the specific historical contexts of their original, usually Athenian, production. In consequence, over the past two decades, critical orthodoxy has been dominated by interpretations of both tragedy and comedy that stress the particular perspective of the democratic Athenian citizen and his empire. But this outstanding collection of essays, *Theater Outside Athens*, edited with assurance by Kathryn Bosher, restores classical drama in ancient Greek to at least some of the many Greeks of the fifth and fourth centuries BC who lived far from Attica. They inhabited colonies established from the eighth century onwards in Sicily and "Magna Graecia" in southern Italy (essentially the heel, foot and ankle of the Italian "boot") – whose history is usefully discussed by Jonathan Hall in an introductory chapter.

Besides challenging the Athenocentric model of ancient theatre history, there are two other widespread assumptions about Greek drama that this volume questions. One is that performances were intimately tied to festivals of Dionysus. This may have been the case in Athens, but attractive arguments are made here for enacted performances in other cults, such of those of Demeter and Kore and the Nymphs, and at funerals. These alternative contexts are illuminated by Kathryn Morgan's deft survey of pre-dramatic song culture in archaic Sicily, above all the lyric poems of Stesichorus. The other axiom challenged is that drama was particularly associated with democracy. The surviving, canonical Athenian plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes did all originate during the period of Athenian democracy, but, in Sicily, tragedy (although probably not comedy) was favoured by tyrants. Aeschylus, the tragedian so closely associated with Athenian democracy's struggle for liberty in his *Persians*, had no apparent qualms about writing plays for the formidable Hieron I, tyrant of Syracuse in eastern Sicily between 478 and 467 BC. *Persians*, indeed, was revived at Syracuse to celebrate Hieron's victory over the Carthaginians. Bosher's own contribution to the volume explores some of the international resonances that the transplanted Athenian text would have gained in that other place of performance. This reminds us that tragedies had been first produced in Athens under the enterprising tyrant Peisistratus, and that the explicitly democratic values in some plays must therefore have been responses to the civic administration sponsoring the drama competitions rather than an inevitable feature of the genre.

Hieron's interest in tragedy was however outdone by Dionysius I, who ruled the same city (with what later sources recorded was an iron fist) for nearly four decades between 405 and 367 BC. Dionysius not only invited distinguished tragedians to frequent his court, but, according to the Sicilian historian Diodorus, embarrassed himself by composing abysmal tragic dramas of his own. In a path-breaking essay, Sara Monoson reads the portrait of the tyrant in Plato's *Republic* as well as parts of the *Gorgias* and Socrates' critiques of poetry against what we know of Dionysius' self-promotion through theatre and patronage of philosophers. If she is right, Sicilian theatrical performances haunt some of the most important passages in the history of political philosophy.

Athens can never be left out of any account of theatre in the ancient Mediterranean world, since it was probably the actual inventor of tragedy, and certainly the pioneer in the organization of large-scale competitive drama festivals; as a character in Plato's *Laches* puts it, Athens was the longed-for destination of any aspiring tragic poet, much as Hollywood is a magnet for movie professionals today. But Hollywood's domination of much of the history of cinema does not mean that important, innovative and completely independent traditions of film-making have not existed from as early as (or even before) the Los Angeles studios, especially in France, Britain and New York. The significance of an early and independent tradition of theatre in Magna Graecia has indeed long been acknowledged by homegrown Italian archaeologists and German philological specialists in Greek dialects. But *Theater Outside Athens*, by adding literary history into the mix, and making the key debates accessible in English, will draw far wider attention to the theatre-mad Greeks of south Italy.

The book also reinstates Greek-speaking Sicily as the nursery school and perhaps the actual birthplace of comic theatre as we still understand it. Epicharmus may not now be a household name, but this Sicilian, whom Aristotle describes as one of the inventors of comic plotlines, composed dozens of comedies for performance in his homeland before Aristophanes was even born. Not one survives in entirety, but Epicharmus' titles and fragments reveal that he added laughter to serious myths relating to Troy, and especially to the escapades of Odysseus. A close reading by Andreas Willi argues that both the language and content of Epicharmus' plays reflected the expectations of his local audiences. And for readers who have never previously heard of Sophron of Syracuse, the inventor of witty prose dialogues set in everyday environments (confusingly called "mimes"), David Kutzko's refreshing chapter will help them appreciate Sophron's status as a founding father of western literature. The dialogues of Plato, the *Idylls* of Theocritus, and even the talkative Menippean and Roman satires so beloved of Bakhtinian theorists of "heteroglossia" could never have developed without Sophron. Moreover, our modern flight from the previous tyranny of Received Pronunciation in television and radio brings contemporary relevance to Sophron's loyalty to his dialectal heritage. He composed his sketches in his own local broad-vowelled Doric, rather than the sleeker Attic Greek used by Aristophanes.

Clemente Marconi writes beautifully about the rivalry between the cities of Sicily in choosing the most spectacular sites for their glistening stone theatres, high on mountaintops or etched into coastlines and visible by mariners. In a notable coup, Bosher has extracted from Stefano Vassallo the first published account of the fourth-century theatre at Montagna dei Cavalli, more than a thousand metres above sea level between Palermo and Agrigento. But the best chapters in the book discuss iconographic evidence. Hundreds of surviving vase paintings of the fifth and especially the fourth centuries depict theatrical performers, mythical scenes inspired by, or related to, drama and theatrical equipment including props, masks, costumes and wooden stages. I have heard experts on Elizabethan, Jacobean and Restoration theatre say that they would cut off their arms for one tenth of this visual evidence. Its richness and volume, as well as the brilliance of the scholars it has historically attracted (notably A. D. Trendall, and T. B. L. Webster), is something about which classicists have not shouted loud enough. Some of the vases are Athenian imports and others of local production, but the vast majority have been found in Italy, usually in graves. The chapters in this volume by Oliver Taplin, Chris Dearden and Richard Green energetically address (and disagree on the answers to) compelling debates about the interpretation of this glut of evidence, including the fascinating question of whether speakers of native languages in Magna Graecia such as Oscan ever watched Greek plays. But Taplin and Green also convey the sheer delight in theatricality that Greeks everywhere in this era shared – the luxuriant decorativeness of the tragedy-related scenes, with their sinuous palmettes, coiffed gesturing women and languorous gods; the cheeky, joyous expressions on the masks of comic actors, with their fat bellies and ludicrous stage situations. My favourite here is an Apulian image of a bearded male slave on a wooden platform, forced to dress up as a warlike Amazon, complete with exposed artificial breast, enormous shield and crested helmet.

Some of the essays are too speculative (always a danger where historicity is sought in the gap where disparate types of fragmentary evidence fail to meet). Some are recalcitrant, bristling with either hardcore archaeological data or museum catalogue numbers. There are exceptions, especially Taplin's appealing account of the travelling players who toured Magna Graecia with their portable equipment. Taplin is also the only scholar who here takes seriously, if only in passing, the other communities of theatre-loving Greeks who remain to be properly appreciated by western scholarship. A certain case is the Greek cities of the Black Sea. An ancient stone theatre was excavated in the 1950s at Sevastopol (a city built on the site of ancient Doric colony of Tauric Chersonesos, the setting of Euripides' tragedy *Iphigenia in Tauris*). Another theatre has recently been discovered further east round the Crimean peninsula towards Kerch.

The main claim made by these essays is that in the classical period south Italian and Sicilian Greeks were theatre mad. Having always enjoyed a high level of cultural sophistication, they produced, imported and relished diverse genres of drama. They also surrounded themselves and their dead with artefacts to remind them of theatre. By putting back this enormous piece in the jigsaw of ancient theatre, Bosher's team have also helped to define the shape of some of the other missing pieces, such as the precise process by which, in the third century BC, the comedian Plautus fused plots from Greek New Comedy with a developed set of quite different comic conventions to produce his hilarious, fast-moving Latin plays. For all the ink that has been expended on his use of mysterious genres of "indigenous Italian farce", perhaps we should take more notice of Horace's implication in *Epistle* 2.1 that the forerunner from whom Plautus had learned about frenetic comic speed was actually Epicharmus. The popularity of tragic theatre in southern Italy in the fourth century BC also needs reconsidering in relation to the lost first wave of tragedies in Latin, written by authors born in the third century; Livius Andronicus (a Greek-speaker) and Ennius both came from near Taras, and Pacuvius was Apulian. Anne Duncan's essay on Dionysius I is forced to use such late and anecdotal sources on this notorious figure that the role played by earlier Sicilian literary culture in Roman and Second Sophistic sources emerges as a topic for future research. Benjamin Acosta-Hughes's study of Theocritus and Sicilian mime provides an excellent conclusion because it also establishes links with the subsequent poetic tradition, especially Virgil.

This is the first substantial interdisciplinary statement of the scale and significance of Greek theatrical activities outside "Greece". Kathryn Bosher has not turned away from the Athenocentric reading of Greek drama in order to restore the sublimely "universal", ahistorical Greek drama of the days before the late twentieth-century critical watershed; instead, she has done something more important. She has brought together a world-class team to insist that studies of ancient theatre henceforward respect the regional variety of theatrical performance, which was, after all, along with Homeric epic, the most instrumental medium in the expansion of Greek culture across the Mediterranean world.

Without restraint

TIM ROOD

Katherine Harloe and Neville Morley, editors

THUCYDIDES AND THE MODERN WORLD

Reception, reinterpretation and influence from the Renaissance to the present

266pp. Cambridge University Press. £60 (US $99).

978 1 108 01920 1

Edith Foster and Donald Lateiner, editors

THUCYDIDES AND HERODOTUS

416pp. Oxford University Press. £75 (US $150).

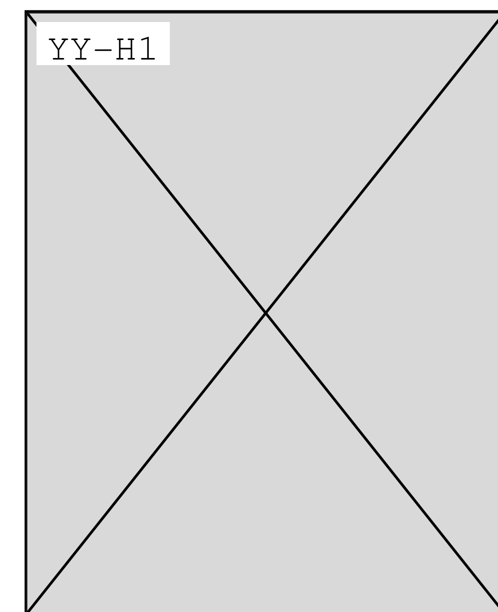
978 0 19 959326 2

Thucydides and the Modern World – a collection of essays based on workshops held in 2007 – is the first book to emerge from a major project on the reception of Thucydides based in the Classics department of Bristol University. It is a good time to be investigating the remarkable influence that Thucydides continues to exercise. In the academic world there has been a striking split in the past couple of decades between two Thucydidean camps. On the one hand, scholars working on International Relations have pored over the arguments used by Thucydides' Athenians to justify an unprovoked attack on the neutral island of Melos. They seem sometimes to have relied on tenuous translations of Thucydides' contorted Greek and sometimes to have been content to muse on the Melian Dialogue without remembering what happened next – the Athenians' disastrous invasion of Sicily. Or that, at least, has been the perception among Classicists, who have pursued their own historical and literary investigations into Thucydides without bothering to read much of what the IR people actually write. After all, by 2003 one political theorist, David C. Welch, felt so disillusioned by the selectivity of the readings of Thucydides offered in his field that he wrote a polemic suggesting that IR theorists should stop reading Thucydides altogether (though what he meant was that they should start reading Thucydides well).

At this same time, as Katherine Harloe and Neville Morley recall in the Introduction to this volume of essays, the IR obsession with Thucydides was felt to percolate beyond academic circles. Interviews with Colin Powell, then the American Secretary of State, in the run-up to the Iraq War would repeatedly draw attention to his fondness for a saying attributed to Thucydides: "Of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most". And that "quotation" would be reeled out even after it had been pointed out that no such words were to be found in any translation of Thucydides' work – though the odd classicist leapt to Powell's defence by suggesting that it was a reasonable paraphrase of an argument one speaker in Thucydides had used in opposing Athens' grandiose plan to invade Sicily.

If the communication gap between classicists and IR theorists working on Thucydides is to be narrowed, that development will owe much to the Bristol project – and it will be (on the whole) a very positive turn of events. As the stock of the seemingly more pluralist Herodotus has risen in recent decades, the reductive readings of Thucydides offered by some IR "realists" have found occasional echoes in the writings of classicists. But "constructivists" such as Richard Ned Lebow (one of the contributors to *Thucydides and the Modern World*) have offered nuanced interpretations of a Thucydides who is alert to how social conventions shape the behaviour of political agents and is not just bent on exposing the workings of fear and of the drive for power. Some of these readings deserve wider exposure among Classicists.

One great virtue of Harloe and Morley's volume is its generous interpretation of "the modern world". A fascinating chapter by Emily Greenwood relates Eleftherios Venizelos's translation of Thucydides to the Asia Minor Disaster of 1922: again the Sicilian expedition looms. Other strong chapters look at the influence of Thucydides' analysis of Athenian democracy in nineteenth-century Britain and America. And one of the volume's highlights goes all the way back to the Renaissance. Kinch Hoekstra's study of how Thucydides shaped "the bellicose beginnings of modern political theory" has the great advantage of looking beyond the usual big names (Machiavelli, Hobbes) in the genealogy of realism. At the same time, his discussion of how Thucydides was used to justify pre-emptive strikes chimes with the bellicose use of political theory in the present day.



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Another splendid chapter, "Receiving Thucydides Politically", by Geoffrey Hawthorn, strays beyond reception to offer a remarkably sensitive account of the texture of Thucydides' analysis of human nature. Hawthorn is a political theorist who should be read by every classicist tempted to see Thucydides as a reductive thinker.

Thucydides and Herodotus is also a timely collection. The editors, Edith Foster and Donald Lateiner, set out their stalls by reversing the title of Georg Friedrich Kreuzer's volume *Herodot und Thukydides* (1798). Not for Foster and Lateiner the Hegelian developmentalism that saw Herodotus as a halfway house between epic poetry and the rigorous historical method of Thucydides. The excellent team they have assembled is concerned rather with comparative readings of the two historians and with Thucydides' own reading of Herodotus. The title also draws attention to the surprising fact that, despite the existence of dozens of books on the two historians separately, this is the first book on the two of them together since Kreuzer's short monograph. Foster and Lateiner can be congratulated for assembling a lucid series of discussions by both experienced and younger hands on the two historians' combined debt to epic, on shared themes and techniques, and on their reception by writers later in antiquity.

Reading these two books together prompts a number of reflections. Some of the contributors to *Thucydides and Herodotus* treat "Herodotean" as a transparent term despite the incredible variety of Herodotus himself. Our sense of the "Herodotean" is profoundly shaped by our reading of Thucydides' reaction to Herodotus. And our response to Thucydides' reading of Herodotus is shaped in turn by the loss of so much of the works of other contemporary historical writers. Whose Herodotus and whose Thucydides are we talking about?

If *Thucydides and Herodotus* could do with more reception, perhaps *Thucydides and the Modern World* could do with more Herodotus. It is worth asking why IR theorists have not adopted Herodotus as their foundational text. The pre-emptive strike doctrine is after all itself pre-empted in Herodotus' account of Xerxes' decision to invade Greece: the Persian King argues that the Athenians will attack Persia if the Persians do not attack Greece. Xerxes' appeal to expansion as Persian custom also speaks to the concerns of modern-day constructivists. Perhaps, then, it is the style of Thucydides' writing and not his thought that explains his modern appeal: his difficulty, his reserve, his refusal to include silly stories about dreams.

The importance of historical style leads me back finally to the Colin Powell mystery. As the questionable Thucydidean origin of the Powell doctrine was picked up in these pages in 2004, readers may like to know that Morley's Bristol team has discovered that "Of all manifestations of power, restraint impresses men most" was attributed to Thucydides in *The Practical Cogitator* (1945), a book of quotations which itself confessed that the best scholars could not find the words anywhere in Thucydides. Before that, it had appeared as an unattributed quotation in the introduction to the Loeb Thucydides. And in its original context, it had nothing to do with International Relations at all. It was actually a comment on the impressive restraint of Thucydides' narrative manner. We live, then, with the consequences of Powell's Thucydidean doctrine succumbing to George W. Bush's Herodotean desire to finish the work of his father. But we do now know that the ultimate source of the Powell doctrine is F. B. Jevons in *A History of Greek Literature* (1886).