

contributions were clearly first written without any thought of Said at all. In these, excerpts from the authors' projects are put on display along with a few cursory references to Said appended to the beginning or ending of the essays. This practice seems less a subtle statement of their own fealty to Said (or their inspired solidarity with him) than attempts to cut and paste current work onto a pre-designated theme. At least one exception can be found in Barbara Harlow's "Sappers in the Stacks: Colonial Archives, Land Mines and Truth Commissions." A Saidian to the marrow, she has so internalized his meanings, that in her case she perhaps considers it too unseemly to pay homage to a single man, however dear, while there is truth to be told to power. Her incisively written case for mastering the colonial archive is taken from a case-book she compiled for students, and perfectly complements her status as one of the very few postcolonial scholars to take Zionism on without blinking.

On that score, Rashid Khalidi's no-nonsense account of the torture of being Arab in the environs of the American media is similarly well-developed. Unlike many of the contributors here, Khalidi speaks with a passion that is possible only away from the academic backbiting that often attends Saidian interpretation in literary critical circles. For his part, Mustapha Marrouchi gives us an insightful and compelling reading of Camus the colonial *stranger*, as well as an account of what "escapes Said" in the latter's reading of Camus in *Culture and Imperialism*. Marrouchi's earlier work on Derrida's unresolved "Algerian" identity forecasts some of his rhetorical fire here in pursuit of a plainspeaking that is never gratuitous (he writes unguardedly, for example, of "Bhabha's verbosity," Camus' "lies," and Said as a "Mr. Fixit" in the eyes of his acolytes). If there are odd slips from time to time — he considers poststructuralism a "method of reinterpreting texts within their historical contexts" (195) — his writing is also confident, acerbic and original, and it is only one reason to consult this volume for its occasional insights.

It is instructive to think of how comparatively little attention in postcolonial circles is likely to go to another anthology published this year — Naseer Aruri and Muhammad A. Shuraydi's *Revising Culture, Reinventing Peace. The Influence of Edward Said* (Olive Branch Press, 2001, introduced by Richard Falk). The book does not have the same glossy production quality as the Bové volume, but it represents perspectives and information unavailable elsewhere to critics in the humanities. More important, it speaks truth to power.

TIMOTHY BRENNAN

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James Romm. *Herodotus*. With a forward by John Herington. Princeton, NJ: Hermes Books, 1998. Pp. xiv, 212. \$40.00, \$16.00 pb.

This is a rather precious little book in an utterly pretentious series, the brainchild of C. J. Herington, who begins his "Forward" by quoting

Nietzsche: "It would be a pity if the classics should speak to us less clearly because a million words stood in the way" (p. ix). Hence we must infer that, if words are to introduce the classics, they should be published in the Hermes sense by a special breed of authors. These will have "a love for literature in other languages, extending into modern times; a vision that extends beyond academe to contemporary life itself; and above all an ability to express themselves in clear, lively, and graceful English, without polysyllabic language or parochial jargon" (p. x). The recipe is simple: take a quotation from Michael Ondaatje's *English Patient*, throw in a few references to Derek Walcott, James Joyce, and *The Clash of the Titans* (the "contemporary life" component, no doubt), and suddenly a very ordinary book on Herodotus becomes *Chicken Soup for the Pseudo-Intellectual Soul*.

Although the book is in places highly readable, it often falls far short of the stylistic elegance that Herington envisions. Instead, we read, for example, that "Herodotus's characters, in other words, stands [sic] in relation to their Homeric counterparts . . ." (27); "a segment sometimes referred to as the Xerxiad because *they* [my italics] tell the story of King Xerxes' expedition" (24); "plunk us down" (24); "the narrative moves eastward to the Medes and to Cyrus, the Persian leader who seizes Median power and founds the dynasty that will lead to its greatness" (35, where the antecedent of "its" appears to be Median power); "to further unite" (45); "none have" (206) and the unfortunate "A series of invasions by Assyrians . . ." (42). Furthermore, the sophisticated reader to whom this series caters will no doubt need to have the expression "he arrived in Lydia as his own messenger" glossed by the words "that is, he appeared before any of Croesus' scouts had time to forewarn the Lydians" (39). But Romm can relate Herodotus to Second Isaiah and Second Isaiah to Handel's *Messiah*, and that is surely what counts!

Where Romm's account is least informative and potentially damaging is in the discussion of the historical background. The claim (35) that Egypt was once powerful enough to dictate terms to areas like Lydia and Babylon is dubious; and the implied Persian origin of satrapies (44) fails to take into account the Median origin of the term *satrapeia* (*Khshatravan* = 'satrap:' see How & Wells i.281; cf. Cook, *Persian Empire* 242). Although I would agree with Romm that Darius introduced "official Zoroastrianism" (44: the intelligent reader might wish to know how the *Behistun Inscription* relates to Herodotus' narrative), this is far from the standard view,<sup>1</sup> and Herodotus fails to mention the fact because he clearly did not know it was so: for this reason he faults Cambyses with offending against Persian religion by placing the corpse of Amasis in the fire (Hdt. 3.16). And, why else would Cyrus the Great attempt to burn Croesus alive, if the founder of the dynasty had been a practising Zoroastrian? On pp. 50-51 we get the absurd observation that Herodotus "reports quite casually that his curiosity about the cult of Heracles led him to sail to Tyre,

the site of a great temple dedicated to that god — as though there were nothing remarkable about making such a lengthy journey for the sake of researching a single point.” No one, not even Herodotus himself, says he made “a lengthy journey” for this single purpose: he happened to be in the neighborhood for other reasons and decided to make a slight detour to Tyre. Also, there is a little too much liberal *indignation* in the rejection of the claim by Ps.-Plutarch in *On the Malice of Herodotus* that Herodotus was *philobarbaros* (a ‘barbarian lover’): “it being the fate of broad-minded people throughout history to be branded as traitors by ultra-nationalists” (97-8). The author of this attack on Herodotus is in fact reacting to Herodotus’ own depiction of the Thebans as “Medizers” and, hence, traitors.<sup>2</sup>

This is not to say that this book is without its merits. In fact, there are some excellent sections, particularly when Romm treats Herodotus’ technique and his world, philosophical and physical. His chapter on “The Downfall of Greatness” (59-76) is one of his best and, not surprisingly, the author of an excellent book on *The Edges of the Earth in Ancient Thought* (Princeton, 1994) produces a splendid chapter on “The Structure of the Earth” (77-93). Commendable too is “The Kingdom of Culture” (94-113). By contrast, “Herodotus as Storyteller” (114-31) is somewhat disappointing, especially when one considers that the reader who is attracted to the Hermes series is probably going to read *The Histories* first and foremost as a story. Romm might have benefited from the recent work on “orality” by Rosalind Thomas, conspicuously absent from the “Bibliographical Note.” Similarly, although not many scholars of this generation bother to read J. B. Bury’s lectures on the Greek Historians,<sup>3</sup> these too deserve mention, not least because Bury treats Herodotus’ methods and sources much better and more succinctly. More could be said about the Hellene-Barbarian dichotomy, and surely the work of Edith Hall should inform any serious attempt at understanding Herodotus in the context of the Fifth Century B.C.

In the end, we come back to Herington’s quotation from Nietzsche and wonder what purpose this book serves. If the so-called “classics” speak for themselves, then the reader should go directly to Herodotus. If historical background is needed to enlighten the reader, it will not be found in sufficient detail or with the necessary precision in the Hermes series. Romm could have put his talents to better use by moulding the best chapters of this book (roughly the middle third, mentioned above) into a stimulating introduction to a translation of *The Histories*.

WALDEMAR HECKEL

#### NOTES

- 1 See, for example, Richard N. Frye, *History of Ancient Iran* (Munich, 1983) 120-24.
- 2 On p. 95, Romm remarks that the *Iliad* makes one passing reference to the linguistic gulf between the two sides” (for example, the Greeks and non-Greeks), the de-

piction of the Carians as *barbarophonoi*. This may be true, but there is at least the possibility (noted by Leaf, *The Iliad* i 120) that at the beginning of Book 3 Homer's contrast between the silent dignity of the Achaeans and the Trojans who come on with the "clamour of cranes" (iii 3) "appears to mark a national difference between the two enemies." And, although it is tempting to regard the "clamour" as a remark upon the cacophony of the barbarian tongue, elsewhere the two sides speak the same language, and at xi 50, the "clamour" is attributed to the Greeks.

- <sup>3</sup> The lectures were given in the spring of 1908. The most recent publication, as far as I know, is the Dover edition: J. B. Bury, *The Ancient Greek Historians* (New York, 1958). See Lecture II for Herodotus.

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Gayatri Spivak. *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Towards a History of the Vanishing Present*. Harvard UP, 1999. Pp. 448. \$24.95 pb.

In response to the question "whither Marxism?" the work of Gayatri Spivak has persistently revised and modified the terms of Marxist and feminist thinking in order to account for the global restructuring of capital and labour. If the proletariat once stood as redemptive figures in the political culture of twentieth-century Europe and the former Soviet Union, the labour conditions for many contemporary South Asian women and immigrant workers have become so deregulated and geographically dispersed to prevent any unified labour movement, or class struggle. As Spivak suggests, the conditions for such radically disempowered social groups present a crisis in the cognitive abilities of Western critical theory and cultural politics. For this reason, Spivak's work does not adhere rigorously to the institutional strictures of critical theory; rather it has moved increasingly towards "a setting to work of deconstruction" that takes place outside the disciplinary calculus of philosophy, literature, or history. Such a move does not simply weaken the theoretical rigour of Spivak's thought, but accentuates a crucial concern in her thought: to trace an ethical and rhetorical space for articulating the social agencies and everyday lives of disempowered women, without falling into an epistemological double bind that represents or speaks for different subaltern women.

At first glance, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason* seems to reassemble much of Spivak's earlier published work from the eighties, including for example, "The Rani of Sirmur," "Imperialism and Sexual Difference," "Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism," and a rewritten version of "Can the Subaltern Speak?" as well as later essays such as "Diasporas Old and New" and "Love, Cruelty and Cultural Talks in the Hot Peace." Yet, through the re-framing of these earlier arguments, Spivak interrogates the conceptual and geopolitical ground of postcolonial studies, at a time when nation states are losing political and economic control to multinational corporations and global organisations. By doing so, Spivak attempts to change the object of politicised interdisciplinary work and to trace the historical ruptures, as well as the repetitions between the histories of colonialism and the current phase of global electronic finance capitalism, which inflect contemporary cultural production.