

REVIEWS OF BOOKS

HARMAN (R.) **The Politics of Viewing in Xenophon's Historical Narratives** (Bloomsbury Classical Studies Monographs). London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2023. Pp. 231. £85. 9781350159020.
doi:10.1017/S007542692300099X

This book deals with passages where a historical actor actively sees something or creates something for others to see and the reader is implicitly or explicitly invited to view a situation. Such passages inject visualization into the reader experience, and Rosie Harman's subject is the political significance of visual material thus defined. Visualization engages the reader specially powerfully. Engagement can be from differing viewpoints, because different visualizations are evoked, non-visual material clashes with a viewpoint encoded visually or evoking a viewpoint automatically evokes alternatives. Differing viewpoints create conflict for the reader who engages with more than one side and, since visual engagement is emotional, conflicts are felt strongly and may be identity-related. Visual engagement also folds past events into contemporary experience, making their contemplation a way of engaging with current political problems. Harman postulates a reader minded to admire and identify with effective leaders. If the reader looks through the leader's eyes, this admiration is stronger, and the dissonance of conflicting viewpoints more disturbing. The reader Harman envisages is an implied reader constructed by Xenophon's texts and her investigation disavows interest in authorial intention: Xenophon's writings reflect their world, whether or not he was aware of this, and what they illuminate is the ideological framework of elite Greeks who wanted their cities to be powerful and Greek power to be exercised against putatively inferior non-Greeks. The *oeuvre* problematizes this framework (revealing inconsistencies in contemporary conceptions of Greek identity and relations with Persia) and effectively becomes a proxy for a crisis in the political environment of Late Classical Greece.

Exposition of these propositions involves readings of numerous passages from *Hellenica*, *Anabasis* and *Cyropaedia*. These are consistently sensible, perceptive and illuminating, and they are the book's great strength. I cannot list them all, but there is good identification and discussion of passages where seeing is clearly deliberately and perhaps unexpectedly thematized (for example, *Hell.* 4.5.6–10, 5.2.6, 5.3.16–17, 7.2.15; *Cyr.* 5.1.26, 5.4.10–11, 5.5.6–23, 8.1.42), the visual content and contest in *Hell.* 3.2.14–20 is well brought out, and the failure to control sight is rightly seen as reflecting larger weakness in *Hell.* 6.5.17–21 and (specially interesting) *An.* 6.3.10–23. The way that tactical discussions between Cheirisophus and Xenophon consistently involve them 'seeing' the situation separately does tend to frame them as contestants rather than collaborators. More could sometimes be said, for instance, about the contrast between Spartan reactions to Leuctra and the 'Tearless Battle' or the way the absence of the trope in *Hell.* 7.5.26–27 (after a campaign narrative in which visualization is important) reflects the eventual situation's lack of clarity. Another case is Alcibiades' return to Athens. This is a spectacular event (though lightly marked as such: Xenophon *could* have done things very differently), but the verbal analysis of Alcibiades' history and the blunt contrast between verbose defence and succinct condemnation effectively, and surely deliberately, blow away the visual aspect: the text kills Alcibiades' attempt at visual manipulation. Sometimes one may reserve judgement. I am not quite convinced by Harman's claim that we are left outside the soldiers' celebration on Theches or that the Mysian's presentation of a female *purhikē*

(‘pyrrhic dance’) in *An.* 6.1.12 is an act of viewing that reveals the complexity of identities (though it is a joke at the Paphlagonians’ expense). Again, while relevant episodes properly vary in the prominence of visualization, it may sometimes be present to a lesser extent than Harman suggests: the dissension around Xenophon’s colony plan in *Anabasis* starts from his ‘seeing’ (ὁρῶντι) the number of soldiers assembled at Cotyora (5.6.15), but this hardly has much significance in what follows.

The fundamental proposition that elite Greeks yearned to identify with great leaders is one Harman does not argue for. It is not a prerequisite for understanding her discussion of individual texts nor does that discussion cumulatively prove the proposition correct: appreciation of the conflicts that Harman quite rightly finds in Xenophon does not demand a reader who is emotionally primed in this way. Similarly, dismissal of authorial intention and insistence upon an implied reader does not strike me as a necessary postulate. I also wonder whether the overlap between visualization and politics is inherent or contingent. Did Xenophon deliberately link them or is it an accidental conjunction of a favoured narrative trope and issues that mattered to Xenophon? Dismissal of authorial intent allows Harman to sidestep the question. But those with different tastes will ask it, and the persistence and variety of the discursive tools with which Xenophon’s text teases the reader about how to read it speaks in favour of accident. Finally, how distinctive is Xenophon’s exploitation of the trope? Harman’s discussion of Herodotus and Thucydides does not really address the question, and this time it is not just a matter of taste to want to have an answer. Still, Harman has done a service in making one ask it, and this is a lucid book that Xenophon watchers and students of ancient historiography need to read.

CHRISTOPHER TUPLIN
University of Liverpool
Email: c.j.tuplin@liv.ac.uk