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of a series of both geometric and figurative motifs in the city. Some are mythological scenes of Hellenistic origin, which not only survived during 500 years of use, but were also gradually assimilated to new cultural and religious circumstances.

To conclude, the great impact of this book is in illustrating the importance of the motifs as results of a dynamic process of evaluation and re-evaluation of standards and beliefs over time. Here the focus is on the role played by the Roman mosaics in the important societal changes in Late Antiquity. Their complexity and number, and the fact that they were obviously deliberately used to serve as identity markers and messengers of sometimes subversive nature, places demands on both the viewers (read interpreters), and not least, the producers. Great knowledge is required to decipher the messages, as they were there not only to impress, but to distinguish between those who could decipher them and those who could not. There is a double purpose of both including and excluding, which thus constitutes an excellent testimony of the identity-shaping capacity of images. In addition, it is worth emphasizing that all the contributions in this publication provide us with proof of how the rich heritage of Roman mosaics, with their vast and complex visual representations, attest—in beautiful pictures—the strain and the complicated processes of a society during periods of transition and turmoil.

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Joseph E. Skinner, *The invention of Greek ethnography: From Homer to Herodotus* (Greeks Overseas), Oxford: Oxford University Press 2012. 343 pp. ISBN 978-0-19-979360-0.

The invention of Greek ethnography: From Homer to Herodotus by Joseph E. Skinner is the third volume to appear in the book series *Greeks Overseas* by Oxford University Press. Like the two previous volumes I find this one to be stimulating, thought-provoking and original. Skinner and the editors of the book series, Carla Antonaccio and Nino Luraghi, deserve congratulations.

The main argument of *The invention of Greek ethnography* is that the Greeks had extensive contacts with Others, and that they were self-consciously aware of differences between themselves and Others far earlier than the 5th century BC: "this study sets out to emphasize the role that ethnographic interests played in a wider discursive process–a process through which Greek culture and identity were both invented and defined" (14).

The invention of Greek ethnography is organized in five chapters. The first chapter is a sensitive presentation of the relevant theoretical foundations and of the history of scholarship concerning these matters. It can also be read as an argument for the need to abandon the normative essentialism that has been governing in Classical Studies so far. Skinner identifies fundamental problems of the epistemological foundations of previous scholarship, both in normative scholarship during the 20th century and in the recent cultural turn of the 1980s and 1990s. Chapter 2 consists of a short account of Others with whom the Greeks were in contact. Greek perceptions of for instance the Hyperboreans, the Scythians, the Amazons, the Thracians and the Phoenicians are accounted for. Skinner does not distinguish between real and imaginary Others, nor between past and present. In Chapter 3 Skinner discusses various discursive strategies that the Greeks used to conceptualize the Others, such as stereotyping and listing. This is followed in Chapter 4 by various micro-histories from around the ancient Mediterranean: Olbia, southern Calabria, Delphi and Olympia. The micro-histories elaborate encounters between Greeks and Others. Skinner emphasizes the contribution of the Others on Greek culture. What we often regard as Greek culture was, in effect, hybrid cultures. A profound difference between Chapter 2 and Chapter 4 is the elaborate use of archaeology in the latter. The last chapter is a sort of conclusion. It summarizes the arguments, draws conclusions, and points to issues that remain to be addressed.

Skinner's main argument is formulated in a self-conscious dialogue with, and in contrast to, a model of ancient Greek culture which has emerged during the last decades. According to this perspective, a Hellenic identity emerged only after the Persian Wars, and in opposition to the Persians. Although the Persians were the Others *par excellence* in Greek culture, Skinner omits the encounters between the Greeks and the Persians in his book; this self-imposed limitation remains enigmatic for me. Skinner not only identifies problems with the above-mentioned model, but he also argues that there is evidence of Greek encounters with Others, and a Greek consciousness about Self and Other, earlier than the Persian Wars. In other words, Greek self-consciousness—in effect, Hellenic identity—existed before the 5th century BC, according to Skinner. He emphasizes the plurality of Greek identities. The Greek experience differed since it was shaped by different encounters and experiences in different places; Greek identity is a heterogeneous phenomenon.

Skinner uses the term ethnography in an abstract way. He does not aim to produce an exhaustive account of Greek perceptions of other peoples or of foreign finds in Greek culture. Ethnography is a discourse about foreign lands and peoples. It entails "thinking about culture from the point of view of an outsider" (16), a catchphrase Skinner repeats. Ethnography is

conceptualization of Others and a discourse which shapes the perception of one's own identity and culture. Skinner's sensitive understanding of ethnography is influenced by recent ethnographic models which emphasize the mutability of culture and negotiation of identities.

Skinner views analytical dichotomies as problematic, and conceptualizes the Greeks as a heterogeneous culture. His understanding of ancient Greece is very similar to current models which are based on network theories, not the least Irad Malkin's recent publication (48). However, unlike Malkin, Skinner does not present an explicit model for how Greek culture and identity works. Skinner identifies different discourses, cultural strategies, in the relations between the Greeks and the Others. Skinner's argument is very sophisticated. It takes a lot of courage to break away from the positivism that has impaired Classical Studies.

However, the perfect publication lies still ahead of us. I have also my quarrels with *The invention of Greek ethnography*. First, I was surprised to find the editorial quality sloppy; typographical errors occur in clusters in this book and they are particularly frequent in the footnotes and the bibliography. Occasionally, I find Skinner's choice of references odd; in some cases there are far better and more relevant publications than the ones Skinner cites (e.g. 20 n. 74).

The intellectual setting in which Skinner works is apparent and sometimes restrains his work. The discourse of the Other is crucial. It is widespread in the humanities and the social sciences. Basically, the Other is a discourse which stipulates that we need to be aware of another different person, culture, or identity in order for our own identity to crystalize. Identities are formulated in relation with our surroundings. There is a mutual interdependence between Us and Them—no Self without the Other. Skinner argues that Greek culture was shaped by encounters with Others. I find it, therefore, enigmatic that Skinner, like several other scholars in Classical Studies, applauds Gruen's misconception of the Other. Gruen argues for the abandonment of the Other since it, in his view, emphasizes differences and divides and does not acknowledge mutual influences (22). Gruen's argument goes against the core of Skinner's main argument. *The invention of Greek ethnography* illustrates how Others, crucially, influenced and shaped ancient Greek culture.

My most serious quarrel with *The invention of Greek ethnography* concerns the inability to identify and organize the narrative around theoretical perspectives. Skinner does not hold back criticism, which I find to be a strength. He discusses every publication individually. For instance, Skinner's criticism of Felix Jacoby (31) is on the same level as his criticism of Jonathan Hall or François de Polignac (211). However, on an epistemological level Skinner's account is founded on the same discursive foundations (i.e. the cultural turn) as Hall's or Polignac's publications. Also Skinner emphasizes the notions of negotiation and hybridity. To share certain epistemological foundations does certainly not mean a wholesale endorsement of another scholar's position. Accordingly, the criticism Skinner raises against other scholars in the cultural turn concerns often their tendency to construct bipolar models. This is, in my view, a criticism which has emerged during the last decade and we can view it as a criticism articulated by a "second" generation of scholars in the cultural turn against the "first" generation. I think that *The invention of Greek ethnography* would have benefited if theoretical perspectives, groups and schools had been made more visible in it.

I am very sympathetic to Skinner's agenda. I think that *The invention of Greek ethnography* shows a possible way out of the epistemological deadlock that Classical Studies often exhibit. It is a book which challenges widespread assumptions about the ancient Greek culture. Skinner contributes to further our understanding about ancient Greek culture in two ways: first, he illustrates the heterogeneity of ancient Greece by showing how Others shaped the Greeks, and, second, through the profound criticism of the conceptual model of ancient Greek culture and identity which is commonly accepted. Skinner is not only repeating the criticism against the normative compartmentalization and its effects, but introduces also a criticism of the cultural turn scholarship of the 1980s and 1990s. A general problem in current scholarship is that the criticism of the late 20th century has faded away. Skinner has produced a publication which builds on current theoretical ideas and retained the critical discourse of the cultural turn. He has chiselled out a position which holds great promise for the future; I am impressed.

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