

EDITORIAL

The puce and flamingo clouds made her think with a pleasurable anguish, which proves that she was insensibly afflicted with the damp already, of dolphins dying in Ionian seas.

Virginia Wolf, *Orlando* (Chapter 5)

Emotion. What a word. I can hardly find anything more human than emotions. Indeed, lack of empathy (the most human emotion) can be observed, if we follow the opinion of physicians and psychiatrists, as a symptom of mental issues. Even though our world, in the most Western cultural construction (and I write it here with Saïd clearly in mind), is defined through the prescriptive filter of rationality, no such rationality seems to be available if we are not perfectly sane in our way of feeling emotions. Actually, emotion, a modern word (from French), can be linked directly to the more commonly word ‘feeling’, which seems to be clearly related to the sense of touch and what it can provoke, i.e. feeling is the answer our bodies obtain by touch. I very much enjoy the fact that emotion is also closely related to motion, so what we feel is something that moves us, something that can make us change from a previous state (at least in a sensorial field) to a new one.

Since the invention of the *Altertumswissenschaft* and Classical Philology in the 19th century, History on the Ancient World has been driven by the rational strictness of scholarship. The aim of seeking a scientific episteme of the works on History, and the dream of reducing any Human dimension to just one and no more than one, rationality, ultimately excludes emotions from the Historians’ approaches, starting a path to an impossible achievement, as it would be a History with no emotion. I am afraid that such a History can be inhuman. Of course, the uncanny unemotional history is far from what we expect when approaching the past. History, however, tries to step aside emotions by trying to be just, but this is also one of its main failures, because we, Historians, are not here, in my opinion, to be the judges of any other human being in the past, but to accompany people in our times to offer them solutions, perspectives, and stories that can make them think or even amend their own reality and problems. I am probably just naïve, but once again, as in many other Editorials here (in each *Karanos*’ first pages), I find myself dreaming that maybe a better world can be done, and can be done by us, and for ourselves. Let me be even more naïve, and dream that Historians have something to do with this chance of improving our world, too. Even Historians on Ancient History. Even us.

Of course, we are not judges. However, we can claim to do some justice with historical memory, and we can condemn someone in the past, but the impact of this disapproval would probably be poor, if we have to change the general opinion on that historical character. And, of course, History is arbitrary, as far as not many Historians have raised their voices in favour of the Persians to be in the main role against the Greeks, or even wished that the Greeks were defeated in Marathon, Salamis or Plataea.

No one cares about the Persians, with the recent exception, of course, of the Achaemenid Studies and the Iranists, but my point is more related to the idea of justice and historical views than with scholarships. As long as the Greeks are considered a key stage in Western's historical development, how can anyone even dare to doubt the fact that they deserved to defeat the great invaders that came from the East? Emotion is here gambling with our rational sense of History.

In fact, the most prestigious historian of Antiquity, Thucydides, who tried to explain one of the greatest wars in Ancient History, places an emotion (fear) as the cause of that bloody conflict. Thucydides, praised by Modernity as the model of rational historian, uses emotions as valid historical explanations. As far as I am concerned, as humans, emotions need to be accepted and included in our descriptions and reflections on the past, somehow. Likewise, many of the approaches Historians usually try to offer to the audience are related to topics that portray a clear present concern to the people of their/our own days. So, maybe this is the clearest form of how emotion takes part in the task of the Historians. Karl Popper's famous statement that every history is a contemporary history can also be continued, so every history is related to a contemporary concern. To me, these contemporary concerns are clearly related to emotions, both collectively and individually.

History, however, has also been used, in its more frequent task, as the justification of the present through the lens of the past. I have already stressed elsewhere that, following this idea, History can also offer new models and interpretations in order to help people to justify changes in the present by reflecting on different, challenging perceptions of the past. As I did before, in the pages of Editorials at previous issues of this journal, I cannot help but stand in front of the fact that we all are living challenging times. War is widespread, and victims, as in the past, are usually forgotten. A week ago, in a casual conversation with a student in the hallways of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities of the Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona, in the context of the 'celebration' of the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women (November 25th), I realised that many times, when I think about violence against women, I focus on the violence, and not on the cause of this violence, i.e. power. I need to review my perspectives in order to be aware about what produces violence and from where the victims came from.

Despite the distance from emotion provided by rational history from the 19th century onwards, reception and pop culture still try to keep people involved into emotions when recreating a historical event. This is what we find in each of these [No Comment] movies that, with the excuse of adapting the ancient world to the screen, are productions that usually want to raise an emotion in the audience. Emotion, then, is more linked to (historical) fiction than to the rational study of the past. I can see how risky this is. As I already mentioned, Emotion is the most human thing, so a history without emotion is not completely human; rationality, on its side, can help us to see and understand the unintelligible, like when we observe violence and we study it so that we are able to understand violence and its victims, how it works, and from where it came, but we can still be unable to see or to understand the power beneath this violence and how it works on the victims.

Despite my responsibility as co-director, I cannot say if *Karanos* is helping to do so. The present issue shows a clear, continued, and strengthened effort by the whole community of those who study Ancient Macedonia and the Hellenistic (and its legacy in Roman times) world to make this journal a place to meet and discuss. Actually, interdisciplinarity is *dating* more and more in the pages of our journal, as can be seen in this issue where art, archaeology, history, and classical philology meet their space.

We are also glad to honour, in our ‘Main Voices’ and ‘Flashback’ sections, the work and career of Prof. Olga Palagia, who has been a leading figure in our field during the last decades. I still remember that she was one of the first authors I read when starting my earliest research, time ago, and how inspiring it was to read her. This issue finishes with the usual reviews: I wish we can have more place and time for the many books of great interest that deserve review, but we have to wait at least to the next volume of this journal to keep discussing them. However, not everything in this issue is like peaches and cream, and we sadly introduce the pages of this volume with a great loss: Richard Stoneman, a gentleman and a wise man, a beautiful human being many of us met in person, enjoying his awesome knowledge and kindness, passed away in 2025, and we will miss him. In order to honour him, we start the volume with some very close words by Guen Taietti.

History, then, so close to emotion, so rational since Thucydides, is also related to power. I cannot say here that we are responsible of how, as Historians, we explain the world and the powers that operates in there. But we are responsible at least of keeping the victims within our concern. If Ancient History is somehow usually a history richly framed through the account of wars, the challenge through those words is to still keep the emotions, memories of the victims, and humanity’s responses to mass violence alive.

Then, some strange ecstasy came over her. Some wild notion she had of following the birds to the rim of the world and flinging herself on the spongy turf and there drinking forgetfulness, while the rooks' hoarse laughter sounded over her.

Virginia Wolf, *Orlando* (Chapter 5)

BORJA ANTELA-BERNÁRDEZ
Co-Director of *Karanos*

Somewhere in a random Coffee-Bar
Campus of the UAB (Barcelona), December 2025