



teases his readers with reusing the same names (e.g. Comatas, Amaryllis, Tityrus). Should we take this as evidence of continuity or not? T. shows that sometimes this technique can offer interesting perspectives (p. 125). If they do not derive from Theocritus himself, several of the pairs (especially 5–6, 14–15, 16–17) on which T. bases his arguments reflect the attempt of an editor-reader to condition the production of meaning by placing particular poems close to each other. As a result, readers need to strike a balance between reading poems autonomously or in sequence.

It is debatable, though, whether such connections provide a safe foundation for some of the generalisations attempted. The avoidance of labour in the bucolic *Idylls* makes it very difficult to see a Ptolemaic background in all of them. At best, it remains an unacknowledged potentiality. To say that the story of Hylas relates to Ptolemaic self-representation because Ptolemy II was an *erōtikos* man (*Idyll* 14.62) is pushing allegorical reading to the limits. Unlike the Amycus episode in *Idyll* 22, it is very difficult to assign *Idylls* 13 or 24 to the narrative of acculturative Greek expansion. Although mobility and interethnic relations are prominent in the urban mimes and some of the mythological poems, it is hard to accept Lycidas' lack of belonging (or Simichidas' for that matter) as representative of the migrant position of Theocritus' contemporary readers. But these represent possibilities that do not detract from the quality of the individual readings.

Space does not feature equally in the various discussions included in the monograph. Readers follow its inflection from concrete spatial readings to the metaphorical imaging of encomiastic and mythological space. Since desire is normally for something absent, there is a spatial dimension to it. The same can be said of the juxtaposition of genres (e.g. victory or work songs) or activities (e.g. sports, fishing or harvesting) that cannot be combined with bucolic leisure. However, not all poems employ spatial terms to articulate desire (as does *Idyll* 10, for instance) or delineate boundaries (e.g. *Idyll* 21 avoids spatial references). In the end, four elements clearly emerge to build connections between Theocritus' poems (p. 154): concern about the production of poetry; interplay between presence and absence in the context of desire; structural relations; and presence of bucolic elements in non-bucolic poems.

T. has authored an elegant and sensitive study that repays close engagement. It is a necessary read for anyone seriously interested in the study of Theocritus.

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POLYBIUS AND LEADERSHIP

MILTSIOS (N.) *Leadership and Leaders in Polybius. (Trends in Classics Supplementary Volume 145.)* Pp. xvi + 176. Berlin and Boston: De Gruyter, 2023. Cased, £91, €99.95, US\$109.99. ISBN: 978-3-11-123947-7.

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Recent decades have witnessed a remarkable surge of interest in Polybius, particularly with regard to his literary qualities and sophistication as a writer (some examples of this trend are: C. Champion's *Cultural Politics in Polybius's Histories* [2004], B. McGing's *Polybius*

[2010], F. Maier's 'Überall mit dem Unerwarteten rechnen': *Die Kontingenz historischer Prozesse bei Polybios* [2012], N. Miltsios's *The Shaping of the Narrative in Polybios* [2013], D. Moore's *Polybios: Experience and the Lessons of History* [2020]). M.'s new book examines the representation of leadership behaviours in the *Histories*, focusing on the narrative techniques, patterns and motifs employed by Polybios in his attempt to illustrate how his characters succeeded or failed in their ventures and ultimately, given the prominence of this theme throughout his work, shedding light on significant aspects of Polybios' approach to leadership and his literary technique. The analysis also takes into consideration the extent to which Polybios' representation of leadership seems to have been influenced by literary depictions of the history of Alexander the Great. The book consists of an introduction, five thematically organised chapters and an epilogue, followed by a bibliography, a general index and an *index locorum*.

Chapter 1 focuses on Polybios' representation of Philip V's leadership qualities. M. identifies several patterns and motifs, which are exploited to underscore the military genius of Philip and are also used in a similar way by Arrian in his *Anabasis* in the case of Alexander the Great. As M. acknowledges, many of these elements are to be found in other leadership narratives too, for example in Xenophon's *Anabasis*. Moreover, since Philip was particularly concerned to portray himself as a worthy continuator of Alexander, themes and motifs associated with his legendary predecessor may well have entered Polybios' narrative through his sources on Philip, which undertook precisely to achieve this goal. Again, of course, they would owe their origin to Alexander's history, but only indirectly. M. goes on to show that the same patterns and themes recur in Polybios' portrayal of successful leaders generally, arguing that 'the simultaneous presence of multiple motifs connected with Alexander in various sections of the *Histories* indicates that the history of Alexander has a particularly prominent place among the narratives that influenced the way in which Polybios presents successful leaders' (p. 23).

Chapter 2 explores the ways in which Polybios describes the leadership behaviours of the two most successful generals in the *Histories*, Hannibal and Scipio Africanus the Elder. As M. demonstrates, Hannibal and Scipio are depicted as accomplishing their strategic objectives by means of rational analysis involving observation, accurate assessment of the situation and careful weighing up of the available options. M. challenges the view that Polybios' main criterion for expanding on his characters' rational processes is their cultural identity. He rather sees this tendency of Polybios as part of the rhetorical strategy he consciously employs in his attempt to elucidate how the outcomes of the military operations were brought about – and as a further indication of the influence of Alexander's history, which must have played an important part in the development of this tendency. M.'s analysis manages to capture an essential and pervasive feature of Polybios' narrative, while at the same time serving as an eloquent reminder of the literary quality of the *Histories* and ancient historiography in general.

Chapter 3 turns to negative portraits of leaders in the *Histories*. M. shows that, in contrast to successful leaders, Polybios' characters who fail have only a limited, if not distorted, understanding of the circumstances at hand and do not make decisions based on reason, absorbed as they are in their own plans. Moreover, they often try to compensate for their lack of leadership skills by resorting to theatricalised behaviours, which prove ineffective or backfire. Throughout his analyses M. pays particular attention to the manner in which Polybios approaches the relationship between bad leaders and the led. These negative characters, solely preoccupied with their own (political) survival, are generally indifferent to the fate of their subordinates; and, rather than restraining the irrational impulses of the people, they tend to arouse their basest instincts, leading them to destruction.

Chapter 4 addresses the much-debated issue of the role of fortune in the *Histories*, investigating ‘the possibilities of successful action that Polybius discerns against a background of high complexity and uncertainty’ (p. xv). M. points out that, in Polybius’ view, historical knowledge, when combined with practical experience, is essential to helping aspiring leaders prepare for what they may face, so as to perform their duties more effectively. This does not mean that Polybius is over-optimistic about human capacities for prediction and anticipation. As is repeatedly stressed, Polybius is perfectly aware that the implementation of his characters’ plans is always subject to a variety of unpredictable factors. In M.’s interpretation, however, Polybius is more concerned with exploring ways to cope with the mutability of fortune than with highlighting fortune’s astonishing workings.

Finally, Chapter 5, centred on the collective dimensions of leadership, discusses key aspects of Polybius’ presentation of the Romans. M. begins by identifying in the narrative of the First Punic War and in the analysis of the Roman constitution characteristics of the mentality and behaviour of the Romans that played a major role in the expansion of their dominion. He then turns to Polybius’ last ten books and makes a compelling case about the criticism often levelled against the Romans in this part of the work. M. argues that the history of Alexander has influenced Polybius not only in the descriptions of successful leadership but also in the way in which he handles the more problematic aspects of Roman rule. Thus, by pointing out similarities and parallels with the history of Alexander and also with Herodotus and Thucydides, M. offers an interpretation of this critical distance from Rome ‘which is not based on the details of Polybius’ life or his intentions with regard to his various audiences, but rather on his familiarity with central themes and ideas of the literary tradition to which he belongs’ (p. 137).

Overall, the book is well written and contains many interesting insights. M. combines thorough close analysis of individual episodes with broader-scale considerations of the *Histories’* overarching themes. His attempts to dissolve seeming (and actual) contradictions between different passages are usually convincing and reveal his excellent mastery of Polybius’ narrative. The volume thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the *Histories*, leading readers to appreciate Polybius’ work afresh. It is expected that all scholars and students of Polybius and Greek historiography will profit from this book.

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PLUTARCH’S VIEWS ON GENDER

WARREN (L.) *Like a Captive Bird. Gender and Virtue in Plutarch*. Pp. xiv + 365. Ann Arbor: Lever Press, 2022. Paper, US\$26.99. ISBN: 978-1-64315-039-0. Open access.

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One of the most common questions beginner students of Greek and Latin literature will ask, when they are working with a text in which women appear, is where the author falls on a spectrum from ‘feminist’ to ‘misogynist’. The question is problematic, given the inherent difficulty of applying modern theoretical (and political) constructs to ancient sources and individuals; while it may not be a helpful heuristic tool for understanding