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REVIEW–DISCUSSION

POLYBIUS, THE GREEK WORLD, AND ROMAN IMPERIAL EXPANSION

Christopher Smith and Liv Mariah Yarrow, edd., *Imperialism, Cultural Politics, & Polybius*. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Pp. xiv + 351. £75.00 / $150.00. ISBN 978-0-19-960075-5.

This collection of essays is a *Festschrift* in honour of Peter Derow, the important Oxford historian of Rome, and a well-beloved teacher. Derow is best known for his depictions of Rome as an exceptionally brutal imperial predator, which sought to control the Hellenistic Greek states from almost its first encounter with the them, and to a large extent did control and indeed rule the Hellenistic Mediterranean from as early as 188 BC. In advocating such a reconstruction of events, Derow can be paired with W. V. Harris, both producing their major statements in 1979: a post-Vietnam *annus mirabilis* for the emergence of an extremely dark, cynical and bitter picture of Roman expansionism. This depiction has subsequently become hugely influential within classical scholarship.[1] It was inevitable that the thesis would eventually provoke an antithesis, in which the exceptional character of Roman imperialism was denied, and Rome was viewed as one predator among many predators, with its major targets being other powerful imperialists, rather than relatively inoffensive neighbours. The development of a response to Derow and Harris, however, took a generation.[2] One important aim of this book is for Peter Derow's students to re-assert their old teacher's fundamental position about the nature of Roman expansionism.

[1] P. S. Derow, 'Polybius, Rome and the East', *JRS* 69 (1979) 1–15; cf. id., 'Rome, the Fall of Macedon, and the Sack of Corinth, in *CAH* VIII[2] (Cambridge, 1989) 290–323; id., 'The Arrival of Rome: From the Illyrian Wars to the Fall of Macedon', in A. Erskine, ed., *A Companion to the Hellenistic World* (Oxford, 2003) 51–70; cf. W. V. Harris, *War and Imperialism in Republican Rome* (Oxford, 1979), Chs. I–III and V.

[2] See A. M. Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 2006); id., *Rome Enters the Greek East: From Anarchy to Hierarchy in the Hellenistic Mediterranean* (Oxford, 2008). But the first signs of dissent are already apparent in E. S. Gruen, *The Hellenistic World and the Coming of Rome* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1984).

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As with any *Festschrift*, articles reflect the personal interests of their individual authors, so not all of them deal directly with the controversy. With those that do, the result is—in my view—mixed at best. The quality of some essays in the collection is high. Significantly, these belong to the scholars who are pursuing subjects other than the one for which Peter Derow is most remembered.

I

As one might expect from a collection of essays where the Achaean historian Polybius (200–118 BC) appears in the title, several of the papers deal with historiographical issues. Three papers focus on the possible intellectual links between Polybius and his two great predecessors Herodotus and Thucydides. Some good points are made.

Polybius refers only once to Thucydides, and in passing (8.11: Theopompus as a continuator of Thucydides), hardly enough to indicate that Polybius was very familiar with him. But both Georgina Longley ('Thucydides, Polybius, and Human Nature') and Tim Rood ('Polybius, Thucydides, and the First Punic War') argue that the verbal echoes, textual allusions, and similarity of their principles of writing history do serve to demonstrate such a familiarity. The similarity of principles which the two ancient history-writers share is indeed intriguing: they both explicitly assert that history-writing should be useful rather than sensational or entertaining, and both root that usefulness in an emphasis on causal explanation—doing so in close to the same words (Thuc. 1.22.4 and 23.5–6; Pol. 2.56.11); they both declare, in similar language, that their work if well done will have value for all time (Thuc. 1.22.4; Pol. 2.56.11). Within issues of causation they both assert that the ultimate causes of events are human mental states (Thuc. 1.23.5; Pol. 3.6.6–7); they both employ a medical analogy in asserting that knowledge of history gives humans a means, like a physician treating the body, to diagnose 'diseased' situations (Thuc. 3.85.1 on revolutions, cf. 2.48.1 on the plague; Pol. 2.25d and 39.4.8). Longley also argues that they both regard human nature as the main dynamo of history; this is clear for Thucydides, and Longley argues that Polybius is similar: she downplays the historical role of *Tychê* (Fate; Fortune) in Polybius, a role which other scholars have emphasised, and makes a surprisingly good case (pp. 73–4). But Longley does not deal with Pol. 15.20, where in 201 BC *Tychê* as the deliverer of justice for the weak against the aggressors Philip V of Macedon and Antiochus III of Syria is the ultimate cause of the first decisive intervention of Rome in eastern Mediterranean politics. Since Longley believes that Polybius only deploys *Tychê* as a causal explanation as a last resort, when no predictable hu-

man reasons can be adduced (36.17), this would indicate that Polybius at least sometimes thought this crucial Roman intervention was unexpected and inexplicable. Such a finding has interesting implications for Polybius' understanding—and our own—of Roman imperial expansion.

Thus there is much to be said for seeing Polybius as consciously seeking a 'return to Thucydides' in opposition to what he saw as the shallow and sensationalist historical writing prevalent in his own day. And direct verbal echoes here can be a powerful argument: in their shared focus on human emotional states as causative, one verb (the passive of *ἐπιρρώννυμι*) appears only and repeatedly in Thucydides and Polybius—and nowhere else in all of Greek literature (Rood, p. 59). Similarly (p. 55), at the crucial decisions leading to escalation of crises in 433 BC and 264 BC, the Athenians choose to act in order not to let Corcyra slip from their grasp, into the power of the Corinthians (*μὴ προέσθαι*, Thuc. 1.44.2), and the Romans choose to act in order not to let Messana slip from their grasp, into the power of the Carthaginians (Pol. 1.10.9: *μὴ προέσθαι* again).

Both Longley and Rood miss one crucial parallel, and it is worth pointing it out here. In discussing the Achaean war with Rome in 146 BC, Polybius condemns it as folly, since the Achaeans could not hope to win. Compassion is due those who suffer disasters because of *Tychê*, he says (38.3.1), and those cities or kings receive sympathy rather than reproach if they contend reasonably for independence or for great power but lose; they are said to have suffered misfortune (*ἀτυχία*, 38.3.6). But those whose own folly (*ἡ ἰδία βουλία*, 38.3.7) brings on disaster suffer reproaches (ibid.) and create for themselves a disaster as disgraceful as can be (*αἰσχρὰν ὡς ἔνι μάλιστα*, 3.9). Similarly, at the end of the Melian Dialogue, one of the most famous of all passages in Thucydides, we find the Athenians pleading with the Melians to listen to reason; given the imbalance of power between the Athenians and themselves, they cannot hope to resist (5.111.3): 'Lured on by the power of a seductive word—disgrace (*τὸ αἰσχρόν*)—many men are plunged by their own action into calamities, and thus incur a disgrace that is more disgraceful, because it is associated with folly rather than bad luck (*αἰσχύνην αἰσχίω μετὰ ἀνοίας ἢ τύχῃ προσλαβεῖν*).' It is hard to believe that the specific sequence of thought here, and even the parallel wording, is coincidental; it strongly suggests (though it cannot prove) that Polybius had read the Melian Dialogue.

But while direct verbal echoes or exact parallels in thought are impressive, the use of alleged textual allusions involving general situations is much more speculative. This is especially so because Thucydides himself emphasised that situations were going to occur in the future similar to the ones he himself was describing (1.22.4). Exactly: and that means that similarity of general situation need not mean textual allusion. Rood is far more specula-

tive than Longley here, and therefore less convincing. After all, the Spartan general Xanthippus really did come to aid Carthage against a possible Roman siege in winter 256/5, just like the Spartan general Gylippus came to aid the Syracusans against the Athenian siege in 414, and both were successful; but that hardly suggests the imposition of a Thucydidean pattern in Book 1 of Polybius (pp. 59–60), and Polybius' depiction of the defeated Roman general Regulus is far more unsympathetic than Thucydides' depiction of Nicias. Brian McGing, 'Polybius and Herodotus' has an even more difficult task in adducing Polybian situational echoes of Herodotus. For one thing, Polybius never mentions Herodotus; and descriptions of similar military situations (Xerxes bridges the Hellespont, Hannibal bridges the Rhone) do not indicate conscious or unconscious allusions to him (despite pp. 39–42): Xerxes' bridge is different in structure, more difficult to build, over a strait not a river, far more successful in keeping the army's livestock dryshod, and—after all—Hannibal had to get his elephants across the Rhone in *some* way. Polybius is obviously drawing on a technically-detailed source (not Herodotus) for his description of the building of the bridge over the Rhone, and he probably could not resist putting it into his text because he was a person—as we see in many other passages—highly interested in military technology (see, e.g., 10.43–6, the long description of coded fire-signalling).

II

By contrast to the literary analysts, John Ma ('Honorific Statues and Hellenistic History') offers an analysis of the social and political role played by honorific statuary in the Hellenistic period, especially in the second century BC, when Greek polities were having to confront more and more the presence of Rome. His theme, as one might expect given his previous work, is that the statues, expressing gratitude for benefactions, do not only reflect the politics dominated by kings or leagues, or the Republic; they also reflect local agency.[3] Thus the erection of a large statue honouring Arsinoë, the sister of Ptolemy II, in the town of Arsinoë on the Saronic Gulf ca. 290, was also a signal that the town enjoyed the protection of the powerful Ptolemaic thalassocracy (p. 234). The statue that the Laconian town of Gytheum set up to honour the proconsul T. Quinctius Flamininus as its 'saviour' performed a similar function: it was an assertion of the independence of the town from King Nabis of Sparta, after Flamininus and his Greek allies defeated Nabis in 195 BC (pp. 234–5). Ma might have mentioned that Gytheum had a hard time maintaining the independence from Nabis celebrated by the Flamin-

[3] The theme of J. Ma, *Antiochus III and the Cities of Western Asia Minor* (Oxford, 2002).

inus statue (see Livy 35.27–30, from Polybian material). The example of Amphipolis in Macedon receives an intriguing discussion: soon after the Roman destruction of the Antigonid state in the Third Macedonian War (171–168 BC), Amphipolis set up a statue honouring a Roman, P. Cornelius Scipio, the son of Publius. This is either Scipio Aemilianus or his relative P. Cornelius Scipio Nasica, both of whom served with Scipio's father L. Aemilius Paullus in the campaign that led to the Macedonian disaster at Pydna, 168. Because the Macedonian cities had previously been under centralised royal control, however, honorific statues were not a tradition in Macedon (they were not needed to symbolise relations with the Antigonid king). The Amphipolitans therefore, were adapting quickly to a confused and complicated post-war political situation (pp. 235–6).

Andrew Erskine ('Polybius Among the Romans: Life in the Cyclops' Cave') contributes a useful piece on the treatment of foreign detainees at Rome. There were hundreds of Greeks in that situation after the Third Macedonian War, and one of them was Polybius (between 167 and 150 BC), detained on suspicion of anti-Roman activity during the war. Erskine argues that detention in Italy was generally strict and that the foreign detainees, like foreign hostages (such as Punic aristocrats), were normally not allowed to travel outside the towns where they were being quartered. Erskine underlines, however, the ambiguous status of the detainees: Polybius calls them 'the summoned' (30.21.10; 31.23.5; 32.6.4; 33.1.7; 33.14), so they had come to Rome on their own, not transported there under guard by Roman troops; but summoned for what? They are 'the accused' (Pol. 30.32.3 and 11; 32.14–7)—but there were never any trials. They are, finally, 'the retained' (33.1.3–8; 33.3). Erskine is right that Polybius indicates openly his feeling that Roman policy towards his colleagues and himself was unjust; it is not an accident that he apparently recounted a saying of Cato the Elder which equated the Roman Senate with the cave of the Cyclops (Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 9 = Pol. 35.6). But his bitter depiction of the detainees' plight in turn suggests how much freedom he had in writing. To be sure, the material on the detainees, which is attached to much other criticism of Roman policy, comes from Books 30–33, written when Polybius was back home on his estates at Megalopolis in the central Peloponnese. But his freedom of expression is repeatedly shown early in his *Histories* as well, that is, in those parts written when he was still a detainee in Rome. Thus he offers criticism of ancestors of his own friend and protector Scipio Aemilianus (cos. 147), one of them for acting in a cowardly manner in 260 (Pol. 1.27.7), another for leading a Roman war fleet recklessly to destruction in 255 (1.36.10–37.10). Even more striking is Polybius' criticism of the Roman seizure of Sardinia in 237 BC, which he overtly calls a theft from the Carthaginians (3.30.4).

But the dominating geopolitical situation of Rome in the Mediterranean in 150 BC was hardly the same as 80 years previously, nor was Roman culture. The two weakest entries in this collection are the two that take up the cudgels most directly to support Derow's depiction of intrusive and stern Roman domination over the coast of Illyria from the time of the First Illyrian War in 229 BC. This stern domination would in turn be the first step in the calculated, intentional and relentless expansion of Roman domination over all of European Greece and then the entire eastern Mediterranean.

Nikola Casule ('"In Part a Roman Sea": Rome and the Adriatic in the Third Century BC')—admitting the sparseness and uncertain historicity of official contacts between Rome and northwest Greek polities before 229—seeks to show that the archaeological evidence demonstrates that Romans, or at least Italians, had a greater commercial interest in the Adriatic by the mid-third century BC than previously thought. These connections below the official level would then have implications for the origins and motivation for Rome's two Illyrian Wars (229 and 219), as well as for the nature of Roman diplomatic arrangements in Illyria (pp. 206–7).

It is good to have the results of very recent archaeological work—much of it published in Croatian—all collected here. But does Casule make his case? In fact, he proves the opposite—a lack of third-century Italian and, even more clearly, Roman archaeological remains on the Adriatic coast. Take the cult-site of the hero Diomedes (sacred to sailors) recently excavated at Cape Ploca, 50 km north of the important island of Issa. Most of the 23 coins found at the site are from Greek cities on the Adriatic (Issa, Apollonia, Corcyra), some are from Greek polities as far away as Argos and Cyprus, and there are coins even from Carthage and Numida. The majority of these date from the third and second century BC. There are also five Roman coins—but not only are they a small minority of the find, they all date from the late first century BC (p. 212). This hardly constitutes evidence of intense Roman or Italian participation in commerce in the region around Issa in the third century BC. The absence of any evidence of Romans at Cape Ploca in the third and second century BC is all the more striking since Casule shows that it was a crucial point for commercial navigation in the Adriatic (p. 214).

Similarly, the fact that some third-century Roman *aes grave* coins appear as a small minority in coin hoards found in inland Croatia hardly provides evidence of intense Roman (or even Italian) commerce in the region—not nearly as intense, for instance, as the much larger number of Punic and Ptolemaic coins found in these same hoards (p. 219) indicate. Other coin hoards from northern Croatia (for instance, from Kula on the coast opposite Issa) have Italic bronze bars but no Roman coins (ibid.). And Italic coins but no Roman coins occur in early- or middle-third-century hoards found at

Issa and Pharos, farther south at Phoenice, Oricum and even at Corcyra (ibid.). Casule finds great significance in the appearance of a Πόπλιον Ἀρέλλιον in a mid-third century proxeny decree from Eresus on Lesbos—among numerous Greek names, of course (p. 220). No conclusion can be drawn from the four individuals with fathers with Roman-type names whom we see granting manumission in decrees at Buthrotium south of Phoenice. One of these people is a Greek (as Casule admits); moreover, although the inscription could be as early as ca. 230 BC (not before that, though), it might also date from 148 BC, or even 100 BC; we cannot tell (pp. 220–2). The same holds true for four individuals with Greek or Roman names and/or with Latin-named fathers found on funeral *cippi* in Greek at Epidamnus: we cannot be certain of the date of these artefacts either, and most scholars see them as likely to be mid-second century or even first century (though Casule protests this). In any case, they are hugely outnumbered at Epidamnus by Illyrian names (pp. 223–4). Despite Casule (p. 226), the occasional Italic merchant is simply not the same as a Roman Senate knowledgeable and concerned about the Adriatic. In any case, Polybius already indicates that it was pleas from merchants about Illyrian pirates that led the Senate to investigate matters in the Adriatic—but Polybius also says that previous similar complaints had always been ignored (2.8.3: οἱ δὲ Ῥωμαῖοι, παρακούοντες τὸν πρὸ τοῦ χρόνον ἐγκαλούντων τοῖς Ἰλλυριοῖς). Despite himself, Casule's collected evidence tends to show precisely why the Senate might ignore them.

The eminent David Potter ('Old and New in Roman Foreign Affairs') focuses on Peter Derow's thesis of a stern Roman domination over Illyria at the official level, via formal treaties of alliance, from 229 BC.[4] This reconstruction has been doubted, on grounds that Derow's main evidence for formal treaties of alliance on the Illyrian coast after 229 is a fragmentary, ambiguously phrased and not well-datable inscription concerning Pharos (an inscription that could be as late as 160). The alternative other scholars propose is that the Romans were not much interested in Illyria militarily at this early date, so it is more likely that Rome made do with informal friendships with the small polities along that wild coast. These relationships of *φιλία* are abundantly attested in the ancient sources, but *φιλία*/*amicitia* was a flexible relationship, with few obligations on either side.[5] Potter now pushes the Derow thesis even farther than Derow himself, arguing that since most of the towns and tribal people along the coast performed *deditio* (absolute

[4] P. S. Derow, 'Pharos and Rome', *ZPE* 88 (1991) 261–70.

[5] Against Derow see A. M. Eckstein, 'Pharos and the Question of Roman Treaties of Alliance Overseas in the Third Century BC', *CPh* 94 (1999) 395–418. On the flexibility of relations of *φιλία*/*amicitia*, see Gruen, *Coming of Rome* (above, n. 2), Ch. 2.

surrender) to the Romans in 229, their territories from that point on were legally *ager publicus populi Romani* (as, he writes, we can see from the recently-discovered inscription from Spain in 104 BC concerning the *deditio* of the Seaenoci). Perhaps these Illyrian states were forced to lease back their own territories from the Senate, but in any case the Romans simply expanded into Illyria the alliance system in Italy, and, like Italy, this included swatches of *ager publicus* (pp. 137–9).

There are severe problems here. Polybius' discussion of the Illyrian campaign of 229 (2.2–11), indicates that many polities in 229 did perform voluntary *deditio* to the Romans out of fear of the Ardiaei, the local pirate-kingdom which Rome was seeking to restrain—that is, they were not surrendering to Rome because they themselves were at war with Rome (as the Seaenoci in Spain were). As a rule, such voluntary *deditiones* out of fear of a third party turned out well for the polity seeking protection; hence we are repeatedly told that the result of the diplomatic interactions in Illyria was the creation of friendship (*φιλία*). No formal alliances are ever mentioned, let alone transformation into *ager publicus*.[6] Similarly, Appian (*Illyr.* 8) says that the result of the interactions of 229 was that the Illyrian polities were all declared to be free (*ἐλευθέρας*). Indeed, Epidamnus, though it was strategically crucial for the Adriatic crossing, was still a *civitas libera*, that is, a legally independent polity with informal *amicitia* with Rome, in the mid-first century BC (Cic. *Fam.* 14.1.7). On this basis one might talk about a Roman 'sphere of influence' emerging in Illyria in the late third century, but nothing more: no formal treaties of alliance, let alone a significant portion of Illyria as Roman public land.

Even more problematic is Potter's discussion of the text he believes indicates the widespread existence of Roman *ager publicus* in Illyria in the late third century: Pol. 7.9.13–14. The Greek historian records here two clauses of the treaty of alliance between Hannibal and King Philip V of Macedon struck against Rome in 215 BC. Potter translates:

> [13] The Romans should not be masters of the Corycreans, the Apollonians, the Epidamnians, Pharos, Dimale, the Parthini nor of Atintania. [14] They will restore all the properties to Demetrius of Pharos that are public property of the Romans.

For Potter, this passage demonstrates that because the Romans as a result of *deditio* were masters (*κύριοι*) of the places named in §13, this means that large

[6] See Pol. 2.11.5–6 (Corcyra: *φιλία*); 2.11.7 (Apollonia); 2.11.8 (Epidamnus), 2.11.11 (the Parthini: *φιλία*, and the Atintanes: *φιλία*), and 2.11.12 (Issa).

swatches of their territory were *ager publicus*, as we can see in §14 in the reference to the property of the dynast Demetrius of Pharos.

But the first sentence (§13) is hardly evidence of the specific legal status of the Illyrian coastal polities in relation to Rome; it is merely Hannibal's and Philip V's negative propagandistic version of political conditions in Illyria in 215. As for the second sentence (§14), no scholar, as far as I know, has ever translated it the way Potter does. The Greek (which Potter does not give fully) is: *ἀποδώσουσι δὲ καὶ Δημητρίῳ τῷ Φαρίῳ τοὺς οἰκείους πάντας, οἵ εἰσιν ἐν τῷ κοινῷ τῶν Ῥωμαίων*. This has always been translated as 'they [the Romans] shall return all the friends (*οἰκεῖοι*) of Demetrius of Pharus who are in the dominions of Rome."[7] Potter is free to argue that what is meant in 7.9.14 is *ager publicus*, but he *ought* to have argued for it (which he does not), rather than simply substituting his radical translation for the traditional one without any warning to the reader that it is a radical translation.

III

One final point. In their Introduction, Christopher Smith and Liv Mariah Yarrow are generally respectful of Peter Derow's critics, but then we are told that the application of modern international-relations theory to the anarchic Mediterranean world of the third century—which subverts Derow's view of Rome as an exceptional predator—is merely the cover for an advocacy of certain foreign policies (p. 9). I am not sure what policies Smith and Yarrow mean, but if they mean the American adventure in Iraq, the fact is that in the winter of 2002/3 the three most prominent modern international-relations theorists, the Neo-Realists Kenneth Waltz, Robert Jervis, and Richard Ned Lebow, went to U. S. National Security advisor Condoleezza Rice, and strenuously argued against a war against Iraq. Rice herself had a Ph.D. in Political Science, so one might have expected her to listen seriously; instead, she brusquely dismissed them.[8] Realist theory is not a cover for aggressive policies; it is, in fact, a mode of academic analysis.

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[7] So it is translated, e.g., in F. W. Walbank, *A Historical Commentary on Polybius* II (Oxford, 1967) 56; many other translations could be cited. The primary Polybian meaning of *οἰκεῖος* is 'friend, familiar': A. Mauersberger, *Polybios-Lexikon* I.4 (Berlin, 1975) col. 1687 = I.4² (Berlin, 2006) cols. 1712–3.

[8] Personal oral communication from R. N. Lebow to the author, October 24, 2004.