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Alexandra Lianeri, ed., *Knowing Future Time in and through Greek Historiography*. Trends in Classics, Supplementary Volumes 32. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016. Pp. viii+443. €25.95 (paper).

The first-century BCE historian and critic Dionysius of Halicarnassus criticized Thucydides for the projected ending of his *History* (projected, for Thucydides did not live

to complete his work) in 404 BCE, with the defeat of Athens in the Peloponnesian War: “It would have been better if, after describing all the events of the war, he had ended in a way that is most admirable and particularly pleasing to his readers, namely by relating the return of the exiles from Phyle, which marked the beginning of the city’s recovery of freedom” (*Epistle to Pompeius* 3.10).

Dionysius’s remark, which is mentioned in Jonas Grethlein’s contribution to the volume under review (62–63), nicely encapsulates its main themes. As Alexandra Lianeri explains in the introduction, the book, which has recently appeared in paperback, sets out to inventorize conceptualizations of “future time” in Greek historiographical theory and practice and to combine “the study of ancient cases with a theoretical reflection on time and history” (4). More concretely, chapters in the first two parts of the volume consider how temporal relations of “before” and “after” may be differently perceived and negotiated—or, as Lianeri would have it, are characterized by “polyphony”—and how this impacted interpretations of history and the shape of historiographical narratives. Thus, by consigning the restoration of the Athenian democracy to the “after” (or “future”) of his *History* instead of presenting it as the “true” end of the Peloponnesian War (as some other fourth-century BCE sources do indeed see it), Thucydides gave his history the shape of a tragedy, denying his readers a happy ending. Contributions to the third part home in on how posterity (itself, as Melina Tamiolaki’s engaging paper shows, part of the future time for which Greek historians wrote) engaged with Greek reflections on time and history. Thus, Dionysius’s wish for a happy ending reveals a distinctly first-century BCE perspective on Greek history: “the readers” to whom the alternative ending would be “particularly pleasing” are in the first place Dionysius’s contemporaries, for whom fifth-century democratic Athens was a shining example, deserving of praise and contrasted with the Greeks’ current lack of freedom under the Romans.

The volume as a whole is a fine addition to the growing number of books which reflect on time and temporality in Greek historiographical narrative (e.g., A. C. Purves, *Space and Time in Ancient Greek Narrative* [Cambridge University Press, 2010]; A. Lianeri, ed., *The Western Time of Ancient History* [Cambridge University Press, 2011]; J. Grethlein, *Experience and Teleology in Ancient Historiography* [Cambridge University Press, 2013]; T. Rood et al., *Anachronism and Antiquity* [Bloomsbury Academic, 2020]). The editor deserves praise for assembling such an impressive cast of scholars and for turning a collection of conference papers into a coherent and compelling volume with a clear outline. That having been said, the focus on “future time” in the title of the book and many of the contributions is to some extent misleading, as many chapters comprise much wider reflections on temporality and history; for instance, Emily Greenwood’s essay, “Futures Real and Unreal in Greek Historiography,” compares conceptions of time in Thucydides and symbouleutic oratory but has ultimately little to do with “future time.”

The fifty-six-page introduction is unfortunately also off-putting rather than engaging; it is densely written and the argument is conducted in the sort of Continental-philosophical idiom that does not translate well into English; little is gained, in my view, by the application of the Bakhtinian notion of “polyphony” to concepts that can be explained in more straightforward terms. Nor am I convinced that the chapters in the third part support Lianeri’s argument in the introduction that modern views of Greek history are marked by a replacement of “polyphony” with an increasingly “monologic poetics.”

A brief review like this cannot do justice to all chapters. Highlights can in any case be found in each part. The first (“Future Times and the Poetics of Greek Historiography”) focuses especially on differences in knowledge about the future between historical actors and the historian. Grethlein shows how Greek historians like Thucydides occasionally counter the teleological tendencies inherent in writing with hindsight by adopting a style of writing that allows readers to step into the shoes of the historical actors to whom the future was still open. Particularly illuminating is Emily Baragwanath’s discussion of the more or less successful efforts of leaders in Xenophon’s *Anabasis* to predict the future and her subsequent discussion of how the *Anabasis* plays off predicted and actual outcomes of events against each other. The second part (“Temporalities of the Future and the Times of Historical Action”) comprises essays that cover conceptualizations of temporal relations in prominent historians, ranging from Herodotus (Katharina Wesselmann) and Thucydides (Karen Bassi) to Polybius (Nicolas Wiater) and Plutarch (Paolo Desideri). Like other recent work on this historian, Luke Pitcher’s narratological analysis of Appian’s distinct and deliberate limiting of temporal horizons shows him to be one of the most interesting and theoretically savvy (or sly?) historians of antiquity. In the third part (“Towards the Modern Future of Greek Times”), finally, Tim Rood’s careful exploration of how modern eighteenth- and nineteenth-century writers take up Thucydides’s statement (1.10.1–2) about the misleading impression that future ruins of Athens and Sparta would give is particularly to the point. Whereas Thucydides’s statement points to the difficulty of correct historical reconstruction and interpretation and envisages an observer much like himself, later configurations of the trope are more wistful and anticipate very different observers in a future that is—to repurpose David Lowenthal’s famous phrase—“a foreign country.” In the final chapter, Oswyn Murray widens the scope of the volume by considering the presuppositions underlying the specifically Western traditions of ancient history and laying bare “the extent to which the modern western world has continually developed a myth of the past in order to justify contemporary preoccupations” (399). By glancing at different traditions, such as those of Israel and China, he reminds us that there are other ways to structure history. All historians and literary scholars, and not just classicists and ancient historians, have something to gain from this book’s thought-provoking analysis of how a sophisticated tradition of narrative

historiography like the Greek one codified, and reflected on, ideas about historical ruptures and continuities.

Luuk Huitink
