The Interplay of Textual References in Plutarch’s *Life of Phocion*
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Abstract
The pair of *Vitae Phocion/Cato* contains a kind of anticipated *synkrisis*. This anticipation has implications on the speech strategy. Signs that Plutarch prefers Phocion are to be understood — he highlights the text with clues which organize the interpretation of the macrotext. This is to be seen in the way he resorts to comparing with models or to playing with the same hypotexts differently in the case of Phocion or of Cato, both of them close to the Socrates’ model. It is already said that the ostentatiousness of the Socratic model in the reading of *Phaedo* by Cato permits the reader to glimpse a misunderstood appropriation of it. But in the *Life of Phocion*, on the contrary, the reader must find out the hypotext and its paradigmatic dimension — either Herodot (Solon before Croesus’s treasure/Phocion before Alexander’s treasures) or Plato (*Ap., Phd., Cri.*) in the placid and soft attitude of Phocion in his last moments, where some coincidences of episodes before his death and that of Socrates are to be seen, or in Phocion’s behaviour throughout his life.


Phocion is one of the great examples of longevity and *constantia* of character and behaviour that has lasted from Ancient times to the present. He lived during the turmoil of the 4th century B.C., in an Athens that was defeated and politically weakened and whose identity was badly shaken by a long civil war and by the impending loss of its freedom to the kings of Macedonia, then builders of a new empire.

Although Phocion’s political and private conduct was beyond reproach and in the interests of Athens, which both feared and respected him, he was condemned to death by ingestion of hemlock, in 318 B.C. This very same city, or rather, a crowd, manipulated by the representatives of the Macedonian...