

BOOK REVIEW

Plutarch & His Roman Readers. By PHILIP A. STADTER. Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015. Pp. x + 394. Hardcover, \$175.00. ISBN 978-0-198-71833-8.

Any scholar of Greek Imperial literature or history reading Plutarch in the last forty years has benefitted from Stadter's contributions. The bibliography here alone records almost forty books and articles concerning the Roman connections, interests, and learning of the multifaceted Boeotian author and his epoch. This collection assembles twenty-three articles, with few revisions, published or (three) soon-to-be. Four parts discuss "Two World—or One?," "Writing for Romans," "Statesmen as Models and Warnings," and "Post-Classical Reception." An introduction examines how Plutarch's significance has grown over the last half-century and the last section, the shortest, considers Addison's Cato, Alexander Hamilton's interest in Plutarch's "founding fathers," and an essay entitled "Should we imitate Plutarch's heroes?" originally published in Italian. No, is the answer, but one may search by them into our own lives, seeking integrity, vision, and self-possession (340).

Stadter has mastered Plutarch's Delphic roles and connections, the epigraphical as well as the prosopographical evidence. This enables him to connect the Chaironeian's personal experiences as priest and neighbor with the *Lives* and the *Moralia*. Sometimes the critic gently identifies Plutarch's silences: but one Delphic oracle reported for the Romans (*Fab.* 18.3; Stadter deems *Cic.* 5.1 an invention). Sulla's Delphic depredations are described in detail (*Sul.* 12.6-9; cf. *Sul.* 29.11-13: Sulla Felix at the Colline gate kisses a Delphic image of Apollo!), but Plutarch never mentions Nero's Delphic depredations (94-6). Plutarch identifies no consultation of the Pythia for the many detailed *Lives* of the late Republic—*Caesar*, *Pompey*, *Cicero*, *Cato Minor*, *Brutus*, *Antony*--but Stadter shows a general leniency towards his author where other critics might dig deeper for reasons. Are there no Delphic oracles because of Plutarch's congenial relations with Julio-Claudian, Flavian, and post-Flavian Roman overlords, or because of fear that they might react badly against the sanctuary's interests? The "*Pythian Dialogues*" glorify Apollo; the *Lives* minimize the god's impact on human affairs--even the Greek ones that emphasize human manipulation and machinations, e.g., Themistocles'

and Lysander's. The Roman *Lives* vivify insistent generals of the Roman republic employing the distinguished locale merely to showcase their own power (*Flam.* 12, *Aem.* 28)—not to consult the divine channel. Although consultations of other oracles are attested, was Delphi no longer worth a publicity event? Stadter mentions “Plutarchan discretion” but did the Romans ignore Delphi's vaunted foreknowledge, or did officers of the shrine fear a new dynasty's punishment, or has Plutarch suppressed historical consultations? Stadter suggests in “Plutarch and Apollo of Delphi” (94) and citing Augustan Strabo's questionable panorama of desolation (9.3.8: *νυνί γέ τοι πενέστατόν ἐστι τὸ ἐν Δελφοῖς ἱερὸν χρημάτων γε χάριν*), stating that the post-Sullan, pre-Claudian century was a time of Hellenic, specifically Delphic desolation.

Among other standouts I mention “Paradoxical Paradigms: Plutarch's *Lysander* and *Sulla*. Both, activated like many Plutarchan subjects by *philotimia*, had roguish and murderous streaks, milder in the Spartan than the Roman: melancholic (2.5) Lysander (under orders) executed 3,000 prisoners at Aegospotami, 800 Milesians later (13.1, 19.2), and never discouraged partisan massacres in the ‘liberated’ cities. Lysander's statue stood at Delphi, but someone reinscribed the dedication as the work of the more palatable liberator Brasidas in this Panhellenic *lieu de mémoire*. Plutarch the Delphic priest and Stadter open with this peculiar anecdote; but neither pursues its cause or meaning. Plutarch often mentions statues to describe or verify alleged appearance but also to derive character from portraits. The “dual portrait” of these two sinister figures in the first ten pairs of *Parallel Lives* progresses from disturbing in the first to horrifying in the second (265, a point credited to Chris Pelling). Stadter observes acutely that at the same time Plutarch was composing with shared themes the pairs *Theseus-Romulus* and *Themistocles-Camillus*. Both the later lives analyze the perils of ruthless ambition, political strife, and unfettered power, but in these yoked biographies' conversation Sulla's resources and damage dwarfed the violent Spartan's (massacres of 6,000 here, 12,000 there (*Sul.* 30.2-4, 32.1). With big-shot Roman friends but in a world of Greeks under the thumb or heel of Romans, this quiet approach to famous men beset with great flaws is one facet of the advisable art of subtle criticism. Plutarch, it has been noted, wants his Hellenic audience to realize the narrow limits of their self-governance and ‘freedoms’. He celebrated Epaminondas' *πραότης* (*Phil.* 3.1-2; his life, the first of the twenty-four pairs, is lost), but he cannot deny that other alleged statesmen and heroes often show *χαλεπότης*.

This essay precedes a fine contribution analyzing *philonikia* in the *Lives* from the distant past and Plutarch's own contemporaries and philological confusions

with the overlapping but more negative love of conflict—*philoneikia*. The desire for victory and Hellenic autonomy produced salutary consequences in long-past crisis situations, but the passion, now and even in the past, more often led and leads to negative results—e.g., the “hyper-Lycurgan competitiveness” of Agesilaus (279-80—eleven instances in this life, five in the parallel *Pompey*, and again in the *syncrisis*, n.40).

None of these collected papers first appeared in a regularly appearing journal; all first saw light in *Festschriften*, *Atti*, Proceedings, and book collections. This sign of the migration of scholarship to often obscure formats, Plutarchan studies not least, deserves attention. Some of the Spanish, Italian, and Belgian volumes will be hard of access for many, making this volume all the more essential to obtain for students and libraries with limited budgets. The fifty pages of bibliography and four indexes increase the book’s value, even if the price remains beyond most scholars’ wallets.

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