

James Romm, ed., *Plutarch, Lives that Made Greek History*, trans. by Pamela Mensch. Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 2012. Pp. xv + 295. ISBN: 978-1-60384-846-6. Paperback. \$12.95.

James Romm's *Plutarch. Lives that Made Greek History* offers an alternative to the Penguin Classical series of collected Greek *Lives* arranged around chronological periods for those who primarily wish to use Plutarch's *Lives* as historical source material to augment readings in Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon. The *Lives* are not given *in toto*, but in excerpted form with a focus on the passages that cover historical events and especially the political interactions of Sparta and Athens. Romm has selected fifteen of Plutarch's Greek *Lives* that focus on statesmen from Athens, Sparta, and Thebes, mainly from the fifth and fourth centuries, although shorter selections from *Theseus*, *Lycurgus*, and *Solon* open the book. In an attempt to create a narrative that centers on the political and military activities of mainland Greece during the Classical Age, Romm omits portraits of Greek statesmen who fall outside these geographic or chronological boundaries. The fifteen included *Lives* are arranged chronologically in the text in the following order: Theseus, Lycurgus, Solon, Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, Pericles, Nicias, Alcibiades, Lysander, Agesilaus, Pelopidas, Demosthenes, Alexander, and Phocion.

Romm opens each *Life* with an introductory paragraph that provides historical context as well as brief comments on Plutarch's sources or thematic agenda for the given *Life*. These introductions are successful in orienting the reader within the chronological leaps from one portrait to the next and additionally provide insight into Plutarch's unique literary technique that may spur the curious student to more in-depth reading of the biographer. Frequent footnotes, although not overwhelming in number, pepper each *Life*. These notes, coupled with the introductory paragraphs, makes this text a welcome addition to reading lists in Greek History courses taught to undergraduates who may be approaching this subject for the first time. The footnotes explain social customs, identify individuals named in the text, and offer historical notes to those who have little knowledge of Greek history or have limited experience reading ancient sources. Often Romm provides in these notes a handy reference to relevant passages in Herodotus or Xenophon for comparison, which will undoubtedly be useful to students and instructors alike.

Romm has preserved chapter numbers for the *Lives*, which will aid those who wish to find a passage in the full text for comparison. Additionally, most cuts within the chapters are marked with an ellipsis to highlight the omission. When several chapters are excised completely, Romm provides a very short summary to maintain narrative unity. It should be noted that much is indeed omitted, including most philosophical discussions, moral exempla and anecdotes. To many, these are what give Plutarch his essence and the omissions will be painful. Romm's goal, however, is to create a historical narrative out of Plutarch's biographical portraits, and he achieves this successfully.

Pamela Mensch's translations of the *Lives* are clear and lively. Readers will find her prose lucid while preserving aspects Plutarch's elegant style. The translations are not

always precisely literal; often more lengthy Plutarchan sentences are broken into shorter segments and passivity is almost always avoided. This serves to make Plutarch's thoughts more accessible to native English readers who desire to focus on what the author is saying rather than the style in which he says it. Students will undoubtedly appreciate how Mensch has rendered Plutarch's style easily accessible.

Short ancillary materials accompany the texts at the front and back of the volume. Following the Introduction (vi–ix), a Short Bibliography (x) provides a selection for further reading that centers on Plutarch, and with Momigliano's *Development of Greek Biography* in addition. A handy "Life Spans of the Subjects to Plutarch's *Lives*" (xi) illustrates the periods of life for each of the historical subjects (that is, without the more mythical Theseus or Lycurgus) on a timeline that also indicates the dates for the Persian Wars, Peloponnesian War, Theban Hegemony, and Reign of Alexander. Additionally, there is a two-page map of "The Greek World" that shows mainland Greece and western Asia Minor (xii–xiii). While it is conveniently placed, there are surprisingly few places names given and Asia Minor looks practically uninhabited. Following this are two more maps (xvi–xv). The first shows the routes taken by Darius and Xerxes in the "Persian Invasions of Greece, 490-480 BCE" and again few places are marked, and Marathon, Thermopylae and Salamis are all curiously omitted. The fourth and final map shows "The Persian Empire and the Route of Alexander's Campaigns," but without battles or dates given, which would have been useful additions. Overall, the maps are handy for quick, broad reference to general geography, but more detailed maps will have to be supplemented for closer study when needed. At the back of the volume is a thorough Glossary of Names, Places, Peoples, and Military Terms. Included are short entries ranging from geographical regions such as the Gedrosia desert crossed by Alexander to identifying individuals such as Leonidas to the practice of ostracism. Each of the subjects in the *Lives* is also given an entry for quick reference. Finally, an exhaustive Index closes the text.

Overall, this volume offers instructors of Greek History an alternative to the Penguin series for those who would rather not have students read the *Lives* in their entirety, do not wish to choose excerpts themselves, or would like a single text for Plutarch's Greek *Lives* to use in class. Those who want to read Plutarch as a biographer or philosopher will need to look elsewhere as most of the moral or philosophizing passages that give Plutarch his unique flavor have been extracted. Likewise, this continues the long trend of separating the *Parallel Lives* from their other half and those who wish to study the literary genre or the scaffolding that comparison lends to his writings are still left only with the Loeb series or John Dryden's translations, if the reader needs the texts in English. That said, Romm betrays his deep knowledge of Plutarch and his literary agenda at several points throughout the text and alerts readers to the complexity of Plutarchan biography as an enticement to read more.

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