REVIEW–DISCUSSION
A CONVERSATION WITH PLUTARCH

Frances B. Titchener and Alexei V. Zadorojnyi, edd., *The Cambridge Companion to Plutarch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023. Pp. x + 502, figs 4. Paperback, £29.99. ISBN 978-0-521-17656-9.

Scholars of Plutarch and his corpus—dare I generalise—would welcome a conversation with the man who left behind so many extant texts that not only illuminate aspects of the ancient Greek (chiefly the Classical and Hellenistic) and Roman (mainly the Republican period) worlds, but also of the milieu in which Plutarch himself lived (the first and second centuries CE). The editors of the *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch* suggest that the reader do just that (4): engage in a 'leisurely dialogue' with Plutarch, learning about him and taking a 'tour' of his macrotext (9) by exploring various subjects, characters, and contexts. In general, it makes sense to take this approach to Plutarch in a companion, since, as the authors make clear (3), Plutarch has a vast array of interests and written works. By taking a varied approach throughout the volume, then, the reader gets a glimpse into what it may have been like to be a guest at one of Plutarch's dinner parties. The question is: does the volume live up to this expectation of a conversation with Plutarch?

Published in 2023 by Cambridge University Press, the 502-page *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch* offers nineteen chapters, a brief introduction, a helpful appendix of Plutarch's *Moralia*, as well as an *index locorum*, and a general index. While the volume offers the reader so much help in other ways, it seems out of place to include an appendix for the *Moralia* but not for the *Lives*. Perhaps the choice is explained in the *Introduction*, 'While Plutarch is most renowned as the author of the *Parallel Lives*, he also bequeathed to us the *Moralia* …' (3). Although the popularity of the *Lives* perhaps suggests that they do not require as extensive an introduction as the treatises of the *Moralia*, the prolific nature of Plutarch's writing means that it can be challenging to even name the counterpart for one of the *Lives*. The lack of such an appendix is by no means a damning criticism, and it does not take away from the overall value of the volume, but a simple observation of something that would require minimal effort and pages to maximise the effect.

Conversely, the editors should be commended for choosing to use translations from the Loeb Classical Library, since this common resource increases accessibility for students and scholars alike. The editors are well

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known to the Plutarchan community: Frances B. Titchener, Distinguished Professor of History and Classics at Utah State University, has written extensively and influentially on the works of Plutarch. Similarly, Alexei V. Zadorojnyi, a Senior Lecturer in Greek Language and Culture at the University of Liverpool, has added valuable contributions not only to the study of Plutarch, but to Greek and Roman authors of the Imperial Period more generally. This powerhouse team combined efforts to produce a volume of contributions from many well-established scholars, including the welcome addition of chapters by the late Françoise Frazier, Donald Russell, and Philip Stadter. What a wonderful opportunity to hear their learned voices again.

The editors and contributors include as many Plutarchan discussions as possible to give the reader that tour experience. Starting with the basics in the *Introduction*, the *Companion*'s first chapter is Christopher Pelling's contribution on 'Plutarch and Biography'. The volume then moves onto identity (Manuel Tröster's 'Romanness and Greekness in Plutarch'), philosophy (Timothy Duff's 'Plutarch as Moral and Political Educator', Jan Opsomer's 'In the Spirit of Plato', John Dillon and Alexei V. Zadorojnyi's 'Plutarch as a Polemicist'), religion (Robert Lamberton's 'Religion and Myth in Plutarch'), the symposium (Katerina Oikonomopoulou's 'Plutarch at the Symposium'), language (Donald Russell's 'Language, Style, and Rhetoric'), history (Philip Stadter's 'Plutarch and Classical Greece', Mark Alexander Beck's 'Great Men: Leadership in Plutarch's *Lives*'), a miscellaneous collection of themes found in Plutarch's works (Françoise Frazier's 'Thinking "Private Life": Plutarch on Gender, Sexuality, and Family', a second contribution by Christopher Pelling: 'Wealth and Decadence in Plutarch's *Lives*', Eran Almagor's 'Plutarch and the Barbarian "Other"', Judith Mossman and Alexei V. Zadorojnyi's 'Plutarch and Animals'), and finally, case studies on the reception of Plutarch (Noreen Humble's 'Plutarch in Byzantium', Marianne Pade's 'Plutarch in the Italian Renaissance', Aurelio Pérez Jiménez's 'Plutarch and the Spanish Renaissance', Julia Griffin's 'Plutarch and Shakespeare: Reviving the Dead', and Katherine MacDonald's 'Plutarch in France: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries'). I will take a moment to summarise each of the contributions below.

The introduction provides the information necessary to appreciate the volume fully, including its overarching objective (1): to place Plutarch within the discursive and sociocultural context of his milieu as well as to explore the main themes, arguments, and significance of his corpus. These overarching topics set the table perfectly for the dinner conversations that follow. The brief surveys of the introduction include the changing reception of Plutarch and his works, an overview of his life that includes a summarised view of his religious beliefs, and a discussion on the importance of considering the macrotext (and, briefly, its relationship to his representation of tragedy and drama) to fully appreciate and understand the inter- and intratextual links that enrich the Plutarchan corpus. Finally, the editors provide an explanation of the

composition of the companion itself as a '*tour d'horizon*', where the reader can explore a variety of specific interests to get a taste of what Plutarchan studies has to offer (including the final paragraph of the introduction which, this reviewer can personally attest, is a fine representation of the conviviality and generosity among Plutarchan scholars).

Chapter 1, 'Plutarch and Biography' (11–28) by Christopher Pelling tests Plutarch's approach to writing a *Life* against each of the 'ten rules for biography' that Hermione Lee sets out for modern biography.[1] Pelling does an expert job of analysing how Plutarch fits within the rules laid out by Lee, but only, as Pelling warns, if we place Plutarch in the context of his own time to balance the potential anachronistic nature of the evaluation method. With this approach, Pelling finds that Plutarch generally follows the rules set out by Lee, if approached in a flexible and unique manner, and emphasises the importance of Plutarch to later and modern biography. Ultimately, Pelling finds, Plutarch's apparent choices in his methods and their relationship to the context of his time is complex and can be understood from a variety of lenses that alter how his *Lives* can be read and interpreted.

Where Pelling places Plutarch within and outside modern biography, Manuel Tröster's 'Romanness and Greekness in Plutarch' (29–46) helps to situate the ancient Boeotian within the cultural context of his time. Tröster unravels Plutarch's representation of 'being Greek' and 'being Roman', not through a competitive lens, but rather, through a 'universal ethico-political perspective' (31). In this chapter, Tröster explores how Plutarch represents both the Greek and Roman worlds, explaining that the nature of Plutarch's world—one of fusion and identity code-switching—necessitated a view that was centered on understanding and conversation. Notably, and a challenge to miss after Pelling's warning about the complexities of the word 'identity' (23), Tröster uses the term (30) and speaks to its fluid nature in Plutarch's milieu without discussing or referencing the associated lively scholarly debate.[2] Nevertheless, this minor observation does not detract from Tröster's overall argument that Plutarch's representation of 'Romanness' and 'Greekness' is Hellenocentric. He also posits that this demonstrates Plutarch's ambivalence to Roman rule and limited interest in really understanding Roman traditions and culture (32, 42). While readers will most certainly agree with the Hellenocentric focus of Plutarch's lens (be it unconscious or conscious (as Tröster believes and as I am inclined to agree)), the use of 'ambivalent' and

[1] See H. Lee, *Biography: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2009).

[2] For example, K. Hall and C. Nilep provide a good and brief starting place for any reader on the ideas of identity and identity code-switching, including a discussion on the associated scholarship (see their 'Code-Switching, Identity, and Globalization', in D. Tannen, H. E. Hamilton, and D. Schiffrin, edd., *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*[2] (Malden, Mass. and Chichester, 2015) 597–619).

'limited interest' is less convincing, especially since the argument can be made that the representations and comparisons are deliberate (the complexities are acknowledged by Tröster, 41). For example, might it be possible that the evidence Tröster pulls for the Greek lens and ways of evaluating Rome was a deliberate construction not just for his Greek readers to understand their Roman counterparts, but also as lessons for his Roman readers and as moral standards that explicate how to lead, including leading Greece? In this case, 'ambivalence' would not be the appropriate word. Despite this minor criticism, Tröster's chapter provides an interesting survey of how Plutarch's world, his place within it, and the cultural milieu of his times influenced his approach and evaluation of the spheres of Rome and Greece.

The third chapter, 'Plutarch as Moral and Political Educator' (47–78) by Timothy Duff explores the influences of philosophy on Plutarch and his works. Duff argues that Plutarch acts as a moral guide for his reader, using examples (*paradeigmata*), Plato and the Platonic soul, the practicality of philosophic wisdom, and the importance of thinking for oneself. Duff investigates Plutarch's moral lessons in both the *Moralia* (explicit) and the *Lives* (more implicit and requiring active reader interpretation). He emphasises the practical nature of Plutarch's works and explores some of the common themes that occur throughout his corpus (e.g., passions requiring control in the face of challenging situations, 53). The practical nature of Plutarch's writing, Duff shows, is a direct result of his philosophic belief that all men can improve morally if they take an introspective look at their virtues and vices (54). However, Duff cautions (54–5, 60), it would be generous to think that Plutarch was writing for men beyond the elite who were involved in political life. Duff's chapter provides a clear and detailed understanding of some of the moral underpinnings of Plutarch's works and how these were meant as a guide for his reader not only in leading a good and honourable life, but also in political endeavours.

Where Duff gives us the overarching moralising themes and an exploration of the influence of Plato and Platonic conceptions of the soul, Jan Opsomer takes us into the details of Plato's influence on Plutarch, seen through the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, in the fourth chapter: 'In the Spirit of Plato' (79–100). While Plato's influence may have been doubted once (79–80), Opsomer takes great care to outline clearly Plutarch's Platonic leanings. From his analyses of instances where Plutarch uses his own voice (especially in the *Moralia*), the interpretation of both the *Lives* and *Moralia* by late antique authors, and the nature of Platonism during Plutarch's lifetime, Opsomer concludes that Plutarch was first and foremost a Platonist, as made evident in the advice that he provides in his texts as well as through his practical ethics.

A different analysis, but one that complements Opsomer's chapter, is detailed in Chapter 5, 'Plutarch as a Polemicist' (101–21) by John Dillon and Alexei Zadorojnyi. The authors outline Plutarch's critiques of previous

historians, his censure of certain poets, and (the focus of this chapter) his polemics against rival philosophical schools (particularly the Stoics and Epicureans) and rival Platonist traditions. They explore these themes chiefly in Plutarch's *Moralia*, but citations from the *Lives* are also found to support the argumentation. They posit that Plutarch was not just an 'even-tempered' moral guide, but someone who engaged in controversial debates on a spectrum of genres and issues that fall outside the bounds of his usual moralising tendencies. In this chapter we discover that Plutarch's work is more complex than being simply labelled as 'Platonist' philosophy. Rather, Plutarch actually engaged in debates within this philosophic tradition and outside it, demonstrating a wide-range of reading and expertise that helps to enlighten some of the debate and currents of thought from Plutarch's time.

Moving from philosophy to inquiries of Plutarch's views on religion and myth, Chapter 6, 'Religion and Myth in Plutarch' (122–37) by Robert Lamberton offers the reader another way to interpret Plutarch's dialogues and questions. Lamberton explains (122–3) that, while Plutarch may have been the priest of Apollo at Delphi, it does not inherently mean that Plutarch discusses at length the roles or responsibilities of such a position, nor the beliefs of some of the followers. Instead, Lamberton postulates (123) the possibility that, as a priest at Delphi, Plutarch had to maintain a level of secrecy that subsequently leaves the modern scholar wanting. Furthermore, Lamberton points out that the dialectical nature of Plutarch's works actually places doubt upon what may be considered 'Plutarch's beliefs' (123–4). He thus argues that Plutarch's own beliefs concerning religion and myth cannot truly be identified as a strict sequence or list of understandings. Instead, in order to entertain and instruct, Plutarch presents questions that leave more questions than answers. As a result, much of what we find in terms of dialogues on religion and myth can be interpreted in a multiplicity of ways. In and of itself, these varied interpretations point to an understanding of these matters as pluralistic, often obscure, and without closure. Lamberton argues that Plutarch does not provide a logical analysis of religion or myth, rather, he lets the reader '…stand in awe before the vast questions of being' (136), in which Plutarch masterfully stirs together religion and rhetoric as a means of exploration.

Chapter 7, 'Plutarch at the Symposium' (138–56) by Katerina Oikonomopoulou, traces the importance of symposia as a literary setting in Plutarch's works. The symposia serve both as a literary device for moralistic purposes and as a means to reflect the tensions of Plutarch's day, particularly between Greece and Rome. Oikonomopoulou explains that the symposia, as depicted by Plutarch, continue the literary tradition of symposia as scenes of rich philosophic debate, but also as a showcase for the importance of eating and drinking together as key for societal bonding. Within Plutarch's representations, we can cautiously (remembering the literary motivations focused on the moralistic nature of his works) trace aspects of cohesion and

distinction that existed within his day. For example, Oikonomopoulou shows that Plutarch was—as demonstrated throughout the *Companion*—heavily influenced by Plato and his philosophy, where banquets were meant for philosophic dialogue. But Plutarch was also a man of his times and certainly experienced Roman *convivia* as well, which were full of luxuries and represented a tension between these two worlds that is sometimes evident in his writing (though his Roman examples are characteristically confined to the Republican period). It is also, unsurprisingly, a place for Plutarch to explore the morality of the guests in terms of their habits during a symposium: how they eat, how they interact, what they discuss, etc. This allows for a broader comparison of cultural differences in feasts between, for example, Romans, Egyptians, and Celts. Plutarch—consistent with his contemporaries—uses these cultural comparisons to illustrate the exemplary Greek model of conviviality.

Plutarch's relationship with Greek models is evaluated in relation to language by the late Donald Russell in Chapter 8, 'Language, Style, and Rhetoric' (157–75). Here, Russell surveys Plutarch's use of rhythmic patterns, rhetoric, and allusions to give the reader a better understanding of how Plutarch relates to and differs from the Atticising movement and from Classical and Hellenistic Greece. Russell thus provides a greater appreciation for Plutarch's unique style, which, he argues, is by no means Atticising. Instead, Russell points to Plutarch's affinity for variety, richness, abundance, imagery, and allusion, akin to what Erasmus called a 'mosaic' (*opus musaicum*). As a result, speaking of Plutarch's style is challenging. Nonetheless, Russell's detailed study convincingly shows that Plutarch favoured balance, rhythm, and echoes, even outside of what would traditionally be called 'rhetorical' works.

Adjacent to Russell's Atticising discussion is the late Philip Stadter's 'Plutarch and Classical Greece' (176–96). Stadter outlines Plutarch's use of Classical sources, the importance of Chaeronea, Delphi, and Athens to Plutarch as *lieux de memoire*, and the contemporary Roman mentions of Greece. Russell argues that, although Plutarch admired the Classical Age and used it as a model for Greek greatness, he was not afraid to criticise and point to its faults, especially within the *Lives*. Plutarch, Stadter demonstrates, uses the Greek *Lives* as a '… backdrop to the performance of their Roman counterparts …' (185). Plutarch also often contrasts popular and conservative leaders as part of his preference for an aristocratic government, as well as to caution against ambition. All of this was meant for Plutarch's contemporary reader, not simply as an ideal, but, as Russell argues, as universal principles by which men should live and strive for greatness (195).

Greatness, and the men who possess it, are the subjects of Chapter Ten, 'Great Men: Leadership in Plutarch's *Lives*' (197–225) by Mark Alexander Beck. In his examination of Plutarch's representation of individual greatness,

Beck argues that Plutarch focuses on leadership. He finds that, in Plutarch's works, there is no one quality that makes a great leader, but rather, a multiplicity of contextual aspects and variables. Nevertheless, the examples that Plutarch provides enable the reader to self-examine their own moral fibre, to see possibilities, and to provide practical value. At its heart, this is because Plutarch conceives of character as something that can be improved over time. Beck demonstrates that Plutarch represented a strong leader as someone: who had enough self-awareness to control successfully his actions and emotions through the assertion of rational intellect (*logos*; only fully exercised with a proper early education (*paideia*)), who employed empathy, and who possessed passion and spirit. Beck argues that, 'His aim is to assist us in becoming leaders ourselves, to the extent that we are able' (224). Beck also makes Plutarch's conception of character relatable by comparing it to modern leadership and 'emotional intelligence' as defined in the works of Daniel Goleman.[3] He devotes part of the chapter to an interesting analysis of the idea of leadership as performance. Beck then moves onto the importance of comparison through Plutarch's uses of *synkrisis* and intertextual comparisons to enhance characterisation. Finally, he investigates the influence of Homer's heroes and Plato's Socrates on Plutarch's works. Beck's chapter is a masterful study that helps to outline some of Plutarch's potential motivations in writing: to improve moral character through practical advice on leadership and its necessary qualities.

Chapter 11, 'Thinking "Private Life": Plutarch on Gender, Sexuality, and Family' (226–42) by the late Françoise Frazier, continues the discussion of how Plutarch envisioned leading a proper life, this time through an examination of his representation of family and relationships. She examines the ideas of affection and family throughout the Greek corpus—particularly the philosophic one that so influenced Plutarch—and how they relate to Plutarch's representations of the same. Unsurprisingly, Plutarch uses the family sphere and what he understood as our innate affection for our family as another area to practice restraint and self-control of emotions. Frazier also explores the role of women and Plutarch's ideal that they be devoted to private life and to their father, husband, and children. Frazier then turns to married life and its goal of mutual respect and growth. Ultimately, Frazier argues that Plutarch did not evaluate family and relationships as we do through the lenses of gender and sexuality, but rather, through investigations of affection, love, marriage, and family.

In Chapter 12, 'Wealth and Decadence in Plutarch's *Lives*' (243–60), Christopher Pelling provides an interesting look at what else Plutarch may be

[3] Specifically D. Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence* (New York, 1995) and 'What Makes a Leader?' in W. Rosenbach and R. Taylor, edd., *Contemporary Issues in Leadership*[5] (Boulder, Colo., 2001) 5–18.

doing with the theme of luxury and wealth beyond the idea that wealth corrupts. Pelling links this to the Roman *topos* of wealth as a corrupting influence and to Roman historiography more generally in relation to the conquest of Greece and Plutarch's interpretation (or complete avoidance) of these topics. He considers *Lives* that pair a Spartan with a Roman (*Agesilaus-Pompey* and *Agis/Cleomenes-Gracchi*) because, notably, talk of riches and excess appears more in the Spartan *Lives* than elsewhere. Wealth, Pelling reminds the reader, is rarely a point of discussion for the Roman *Lives*, unless one takes an intertextual perspective, where Pelling finds that Plutarch often links Roman excess with pre-wealth flaws or characteristics. He argues that, while Plutarch sympathised with a moneyless and simple life, he also understood that money could be used well, provided that one did not become enslaved to it. Money itself, then, was not evil. Rather, what could be considered as vices fall within the acquisition, use, and influence of wealth. Pelling then evaluates how Plutarch adapts these ideas to Rome, a world where, Pelling argues, Plutarch was very aware of the *topos* of moral decline in relation to excess.

Another common theme, the 'other', is tackled by Eran Almagor in Chapter 13, 'Plutarch and the Barbarian "Other"' (261–81). Almagor explores the collective portrait of Plutarch's barbarians. He outlines Plutarch's use of barbarian stereotypes to characterise his heroes and how Plutarch plays between a two-fold (barbarian vs. Greek/Roman) and three-fold representation (barbarian vs. Roman vs. Greek). Almagor also explores the ideas of cultural confrontation and hybridity, and the allegorical role that barbarians play in Plutarch's works. In many ways, Almagor demonstrates, the cultural categories of barbarism and Greekness in Plutarch are dependent on education (272). Relatedly, Almagor also argues that, for Plutarch, the Egyptians are more Greek than the Romans, who simply use Hellenic education to mask their true natures (275–6). Overall, Almagor shows that, while Plutarch does use the traditional classical Greek stereotype of barbarians as a stock 'denigrated other', he also uses barbarians artistically to mould his hero's characterisation. At times, Almagor argues, Plutarch's barbarians appear more Greek than Roman by becoming 'acculturised', allowing them to move between worlds. As a result, Plutarch's representation of the barbarian 'other' is complex and multifaceted.

Another way that Plutarch explicates human nature and builds his characterisations is found in Chapter 14, 'Plutarch and Animals' (282–302) by Judith Mossman and Alexei Zadorojnyi. Here, we find an alternate means to read Plutarch's texts by looking at his references to animals as potential commentaries on human nature and, in particular with the *Lives*, on the character of Plutarch's heroes. The authors argue that Plutarch, while often seen as 'a champion of the animal cause', was not alone in his employment of animals in Greco-Roman literature. Plutarch, the authors point out, also often envisaged animals in an anthropocentric worldview akin to that of Plato, as a

useful resource for exploring human nature. Despite the prime importance of humans for Plutarch, he still shows that it is possible not to be complacent towards animals and to treat them with kindness (though this is, for the most part, a way to practice kindness towards other humans). In a general sense, the authors argue, animals in Plutarch are used to illuminate human characters and human nature.

The remaining five chapters all explore case studies of the reception of Plutarch. Each considers how Plutarch's works survived to reach modern readers within their particular place and time, and what may have influenced the transmission and survival of his texts. This is an important area of study because the transmission of texts—choosing to copy one text over another—leads to what is extent in the modern Plutarchan corpus.

In chapter 15. 'Plutarch and Byzantium' (303–22), Noreen Humble argues that Plutarch was transmitted and received positively in the Byzantine era largely because his moral outlook compares closely to that of Orthodox Christianity. Humble clearly articulates the transmission of Plutarch's corpus and its reception from the ninth to fourteenth centuries and surveys the organisation of Plutarch's texts during this period. She points out that much of what was lost (over half of the corpus, if we follow the Lamprias Catalogue), went missing between the sixth and early ninth centuries, which she attributes to the political situation, war, the subsequent decline in access to education, and a lack of opportunity for learning and philosophising (305–6). Later in the chapter she chooses six elite figures, all with different stations, to investigate the reception of Plutarch during this period. Her investigation brings to light the relationship between the surviving texts and the interests of these six figures, emphasising how modern scholars are at the mercy of the interests of those of the past to bring antiquity to the present.

In Chapter 16, Marianne Pade explores Plutarch in the Italian Renaissance (323–39). Looking closely at Plutarch's letter to Trajan, Pade shows (like Humble) how the interests of certain individuals may help to preserve specific ancient texts and bring them once again to popularity. Other societal factors may have also influenced the preservation and popularity of certain Plutarchan texts in the Italian Renaissance, such as the renewed interest in learning Greek, or the interpretation of the return of the popes to Rome as the second founding of the city (leading to an interest in, for example, *Romulus* and *Theseus*). She also investigates the translations of Plutarch by various humanists and their pupils, and how these may have helped in the circulation of Plutarch's texts. Finally, Pade surveys Plutarch's influence on Renaissance Italy's biographies and ethico-political thought.

How Plutarch was transmitted and survived in Spain is the focus of Aurelio Pérez Jiménez in Chapter 17, 'Plutarch and the Spanish Renaissance' (340–56). As in the previous two chapters, this one investigates individuals and the context of their time to help explain the transmission and survival of Plutarch's

works. Plutarch's morality, Jiménez shows, was appealing to the Spanish Renaissance as a source of education, partially as a result of the rise in the interest of ancient Greek, but also, unsurprisingly after reading the previous two chapters, because of its acceptance by the Catholic church.

Moving beyond the church to the stage, Julia Griffin explores 'Plutarch and Shakespeare: Reviving the Dead' (357–82) as the topic of Chapter 18. Griffin explains that while Plutarch's influence on Shakespeare and his plays is not denied, it is less certain to what extent and even what editions Shakespeare used. Griffin examines the Roman Republican *Lives* and their undeniable influence on Shakespeare's works, showing where he derived some details but also where they differ.

In the final chapter, Chapter 19, 'Plutarch in France: Sixteenth to Eighteenth Centuries' (383–402), Katherine MacDonald analyses Plutarch's reception in France. She shows that Plutarch grew in prominence during the French revolution thanks to Jean-Jacques Rousseau and other revolutionaries. His *Moralia*, she argues, was valued by the French nobility as a 'mirror for princes' and by the non-royal for its practical value in polite society (384).

Overall, the *Cambridge Companion to Plutarch* is a valuable contribution to the field of Plutarchan studies and to the various topics explored throughout the volume. The chapters are all of a high quality, engaging with their respective sources in the dialogue that was promised in the introduction. However, there are some minor criticisms that I would like to address briefly here. First, most of the scholarly references in the footnotes point to scholarship that does not move beyond the early 2010s, and generally adhere to earlier studies. The authors mention 'frustrating delays' (x), which, I imagine, may be the cause. The reader will thus need to pay close attention to the 'further reading' sections at the end of each chapter for a fuller understanding of the evolution of the scholarship. Nevertheless, the arguments and scholarship of the companion remain strong.

This minor criticism could have also been resolved with a conclusion or afterword at the end of the text. Summarising similar themes, important conclusions, or overarching observations derived from the *Companion's* chapters could have illuminated the atmosphere of the dinner party conversations in which we were invited to partake. As it stands, the *Companion* leaves the reader in eighteenth-century France wondering what conclusions might be drawn from the conversations with Plutarch.

Lastly, and perhaps unfairly, it is very hard not to compare this companion with Mark Beck's edited volume *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester, 2014). The forty-two chapters of Beck's volume provide more discussions on a greater variety of topics, some of which would have been a welcome addition to the Cambridge *Companion.* Let me illustrate a brief example. The Cambridge *Companion* gives the audience an overview of some of the main themes that

Plutarch explores in his works and how his representations are influenced by his environment. This engages the reader in conversation at the dinner party, moving from subject to subject and hearing from various participants from Plutarch's known world. And yet, despite mentions of his context and the editors' statement that the best way to get to know Plutarch is through Plutarch (3), we glean little of the man himself. In what can perhaps be termed a characteristic feature of Plutarch's works, this *Companion* does not explore the potential lived experience of the Chaeronean. Yet, these experiences would help us to better understand the interpretations, arguments, and subjects that Plutarch introduces for discussion at his table. A chapter on Plutarch's context would better situate the *Companion* and its individual chapters in his milieu.

Another missing but welcome addition would be Plutarch's representation of other periods beyond Classical Greece (the only period that receives a devoted chapter). Or, perhaps, a reception study of Plutarch in the United States of America, especially since the editors mention Plutarch's importance to the United States Constitution (4) alongside his influence on Shakespeare's plays and Montaigne's essays, which are addressed by Julia Griffin and Katherine MacDonald in the volume (Chapters 18 and 19, respectively). The mention of the importance of Plutarch to the US Constitution next to two topics that are covered in this *Companion* unfortunately makes the omission of a study of Plutarch's influence on the United States more obvious.

However, just as each chapter rightly suggests that the way Plutarch engages with the theme of that chapter is complex and multifaceted, the creation of a *Companion* to Plutarch is much the same. There is no way that everything can be covered in one volume. Therefore, despite some of the omissions above, the editors can be praised for their choices of themes and contributions in this volume, which provide a strong, specialised look at some of the major themes covered in the Plutarchan corpus. The quality of each contribution is why the reader is left asking for more, rather than a feeling of relief at 'finally reaching the end'. We can thus easily adapt a statement from the introduction to the volume and its contributors as a whole: 'From the sheer scope and size of the manifold works Plutarch left behind we can deduce that he spent a lifetime of effort and energy not just writing but also reading and thinking' (1). Likewise, the *Companion*'s contributors and editors clearly devoted their time to producing a volume that prompts their audience to read and think. In this way, the discussions within the *Companion* succeed in capturing our attention and wishing that the conversation with Plutarch would continue.

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