Xerxes' tent, M argues that it imitated Apadana architecture—a view supported by, although not based exclusively on, the observation that its dimensions were very similar to those of the Hall of a Hundred Columns at Persepolis (237). Dismissing the view that it was built for Pericles’ Panhellenic Congress, and noting that if it had been intended as an indoor concert venue it would have been unique (since musical performances took place out of doors everywhere else), M says that ‘its purpose appears to have been purely semiotic’ (240)—what in another age we might call a ‘prestige project’.

This persuasive study deserves to make a great impact. At the end élite Lakonism is well explained as a reaction to the democratization of Perserie. M’s discussion of luxury culture integrates pictorial representations with literary evidence on a more ambitious scale than has been attempted before for this period. Produced to an excellent standard, this book must be welcomed unreservedly; it is certain to be influential for many years.

Paul McKechnie
University of Auckland


In introducing this collection of essays, which has been published as representative of the conference of the International Plutarch Society, 7-11 September 1994, Judith Mossman has downplayed the value of the collection, stating ‘... so versatile was Plutarch’s intelligence, and so great his intellectual energy,
that one collection of essays cannot hope to do full justice to him; there is still much scope yet for exploration of Plutarch and his intellectual world’ (xi). What Mossman says is valid. There is much work yet to be done on the life and work of Plutarch. This collection, however, demonstrates handsomely that although small, determined steps are being taken toward a greater understanding of the man and his intellectual world.

The collection has the pleasing effect of encompassing both Plutarch’s extensive range of interests, and the wider range of fields which comprise the modern curriculum of ancient scholarship. Philosophy, history and medicine lie alongside articles on women and the family. In the course of this collection many interesting questions are posed, and many intriguing theories produced for the reader to ponder, ranging from the distinction between disgracefully dominant women and respectably supportive ones, to the moral messages present in physical descriptions of people.

Karin Blomqvist provides, in her article ‘From Olympias To Aretaphila’, a thoughtful discussion of the means by which Plutarch draws a distinction between the respectably and nonrespectably politicised woman, whilst maintaining his support for the philosophical precept that women are cold, passive, and above all, subordinate receptors. Blomqvist distinguishes between two types of women apparent in the works of Plutarch—the unfeminine dominant and the respectably supportive—the motive being the sole determinant. Thus, it is the case that Plutarch’s perception of Octavia, for example, can be distinguished from that of Cleopatra on the grounds that Octavia’s political activity was for the sole purpose of reconciling husband and brother (78-9; 83-4).

Blomqvist acknowledges (75) that ‘... the women described do not seem to correspond well with our philosopher’s dicta, nor is it easy to reconcile the widely differing statements appearing in his texts.’ The argument that women can equal men in moral strength if they i) renounce all power after their extraordinary exploits,
and ii) accept that they are, as women, inferior to men, goes some way to bridging the seemingly disparate opinions of Plutarch. It does however, have the feel of an explanation deliberately left somewhat vague.

Ambiguity is also a feature of Tim Duff’s article ‘Moral Ambiguity in Plutarch’s Lysander-Sulla.’ In this instance, the ambiguity is rather more deliberate. Duff desires to take ‘... the renewed recognition that the Lives are, above all, moral tracts, and that Plutarch often shapes his narrative to privilege the moral import’ (169) and develop it by arguing that, in the case of Lysander-Sulla, Plutarch deliberately ‘problematized’ his moral message. Duff’s contention that Plutarch did not write his Lysander-Sulla biography with simple one-dimensional ‘good’ or ‘bad’ moral classifications in mind is well presented. Indeed, the tendency to view ancient biographies as strictly one-dimensional does perhaps need to be reviewed.

Space does not allow discussion of all thirteen articles. A cursory glance at but a few is an enforced evil. The book as a whole, however, does provide for interests in a diverse range of fields.

K.P. Houlahan
University of Auckland.


Wilfried Nippel’s compact book deals with a fundamental