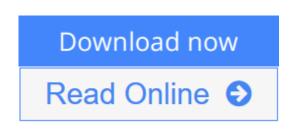


# The Passionate Statesman: Eros and Politics in Plutarch's Lives

By Jeffrey Beneker



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*The Passionate Statesman* explores the intersection of passion and politics in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, with special emphasis on how he represents the influence of *eros*, or erotic desire, on the careers of some of the most prominent statesmen from Greco-Roman antiquity.

Using Aristotle's notion of friendship and Plato's conception of the soul to describe the ideal marriage as based on a mutual love of character (*philia*), supported by an enduring erotic attraction, Beneker examines how Plutarch applied his system of ethics both to his reading of history and to his writing of biography.

With close readings focusing on the three pairs of biographies from *Parallel Lives*, namely the Greek kings (Alexander the Great, Demetrius "the besieger," and Agesilaus) and Roman statesmen (Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Marc Antony), the book draws a general conclusion about how Plutarch uses the narration of his subjects' private erotic affairs to interpret their historical deeds.

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#### **Editorial Review**

#### Review

eminently readable and mercifully concise ... Beneker presents a convincing analysis of Plutarch's treatment of eros in the Lives, with careful judgements on his treatment of source material, enlightening philological comments on individual passages, and, above all, an innovative, illuminating interpretative framework. As such, he has proven himself to be a worthy disciple of his supervisor Philip Stadter. \* Lieve Van Hoof, sehepunkte \* I recommend Beneker's book as an excellent resource not just for scholars and students of Plutarch, but for anyone interested in Greek politics and ethics. \* Sophia Xenophontos, CJ-Online \* One of the great strengths of the book is the clarity with which the arguments are developed, particularly when negotiating episodes already well examined in scholarship. By pursuing the angle that Plutarch viewed erotic relationships as a weathervane for the psychological disposition of his subjects, Beneker has illuminated further Plutarchs historical-ethical approach to writing lives, has added greatly to an understanding of his method, his use of sources, and his practice of inventio, and has presented new and important readings of episodes in the Lives. \* Noreen Humble, Phoenix \*

#### About the Author

**Jeffrey Beneker** is currently Associate Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin. He has published several articles on Plutarch's *Lives* and on other aspects of the ancient biographical tradition.

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