

This relatively thin book holds many key developments in the study of Iran. And the editors did a magnificent job of bringing so many views together in this short volume. As a resource for scholars, it is a massive help, even to the person who is looking only for one specific reference. Whether you are a graduate or post-graduate student this compilation will be of help to you in furthering your studies or focusing your research. The ideas are many and the conclusions profound but most of all it shows the world the possibilities of great research undertaken without any foregone conclusions and the love of a culture that transcends national boundaries; like the Persian Empire itself.

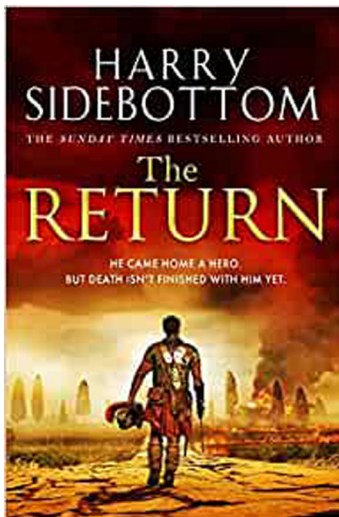
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The Return

Sidebottom (H.) Pp 304, map. London: Zaffre, 2020. Cased, £14.99. ISBN:978-1-785-76963-4.
<https://www.zaffrebooks.co.uk/books/the-return/>

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The Return's protagonist, suitably and ironically named, Gaius Furius Paullus arrives home in Temesa after three years of military service, decorated by the *corona civica*. Polluted by a killing just as he arrives home, he is also pursued by the Furies on account of his experience and actions during his time in the army. The story alternates between flashbacks to Paullus' military life, presented in chapters entitled *Militia 608/607 Ab Urbe Condita* (147–146 BC) and the murder mystery he is solving in his

present existence, presented in chapters entitled *Patria 609 Ab Urbe Condita* (145 BC).

Generally speaking, as someone who has striven endlessly over the years of my career to make the ancient world a lively and relevant place for the students I teach, I would recommend this book both to high school teachers and students of the ancient world, as another resource for adding colour and life to the study of this time period. Sidebottom is clearly well-versed in Roman history and culture and the inclusion of many small details (*lares, genius, mos maiorum, ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia* to list just a few) combines with action and adventure to build a vivid big picture of that world.

As a middle-school Latin teacher with a strong background in Aegean pre-history, I didn't feel I knew much about the

historical background to this book and found myself having to research the sack of Corinth in 146BC and the demise of the Achaean League, as well as the geographical setting of the Sila and Temesa in the murder-mystery aspect of the plot. I presume most school students reading this book would have to do the same but it was not an obstacle to my enjoyment of the plot by any means.

Again, as a middle-school Latin teacher, I probably wouldn't recommend this book to any of my 6th-8th grade students due to occasional language and descriptions of violence, but I could see it being a useful addition to a high school library as well as an ancillary tool to high school units on the Roman military. Sometimes, units on the Roman military can prove a little dry and I think using extracts from *The Return* would provoke interesting class discussions and provide the opportunity to make connections with the modern world as Sidebottom's hero experiences combat stress and guilt as a result of his time in the army. Moreover, I think students would enjoy reading or hearing about the different components of the legion such as *hastati, principes, triarii* or *velites* in the context of a story rather than lists of jobs soldiers could do which is how most text books present them. In addition, extracts from the book could be used to illuminate student knowledge of Roman agriculture and animal husbandry. I, for one, now have a clearer idea of what the practice of winnowing involves!

In conclusion, I enjoyed *The Return* sufficiently to hope that Gaius Furius Paullus makes a reappearance in a sequel at some point. After all, surely something noteworthy was occurring somewhere in the Roman world in the aftermath of *The Return's* conclusion in 612 *Ab Urbe Condita* (142 BC)? Paullus could next participate in the Third Celtiberian war perhaps? Whatever he may do, this Latin teacher looks forward to reading about it.

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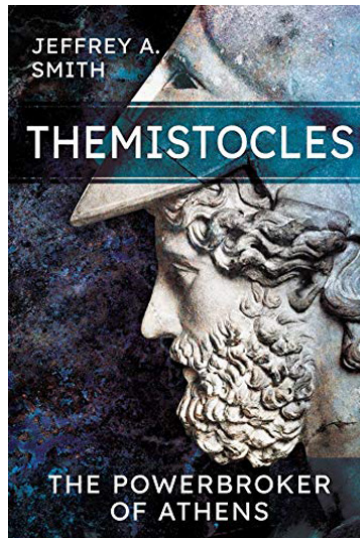
Themistocles. The Powerbroker of Athens

Smith (J.A.). Pp. xxviii + 284, maps, colour pls.
 Barnsley: Pen & Sword Books, 2021. Cased, £20.
 ISBN: 9781526790453

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At the opening, the author's stated aim is 'to understand the mythos of Themistocles' (pp.x). Whether this book is successful in achieving the stated aim of its author, is open to debate. Clearly an admirer of his subject, Smith offers the reader a Themistocles who is blessed with a political acumen far above his contemporaries; however, this does, at times, in my opinion, afford Themistocles too much credit. Smith ends the introduction of his work by noting that Themistocles was a man who transcended a typical political career to end Greek mythology as a hero in the vein of Odysseus, Achilles or Theseus, yet the historical Themistocles is a man who made mistakes and died ignominiously, despite his once glittering political career.



Divided into four distinct sections, this work charts Themistocles' career: beginning prior to Marathon in 490 BC; Themistocles' elimination of his rivals and his rise to become the supreme political power in Athens; his impact on Greek victory against the Persians; and finally, his exile from Athens, association with the Persians, and eventual suicide, rather than lead Persian forces against his fellow Greeks. Smith's basis for the brilliance exhibited by Themistocles is the

ancient Greek concept of *arete*, or excellence. He refers to legendary figures such as Theseus, Achilles, and Agamemnon, who demonstrated their *arete* in the epics, which Themistocles would have read during his education. This constant drive for excellence leads Themistocles to achieve great things, yet Smith notes that he is no hero by modern standards (xvii). In only the second chapter, it is clear that Themistocles is a risk taker, albeit of the calculated kind. He deploys the law of ostracism – the exile of a citizen from their home state if a predetermined number of votes are received for that outcome – to deal with his political adversaries within Athens. Setting out Themistocles' rivalry with his great ideological adversary, Alcibiades, Smith demonstrates to the reader both the ruthlessness and political acumen of his subject. This chapter also highlights to the reader the political tensions within Athens in between the years of Marathon (490 BC) and Salamis (479 BC), where those like Aristides and Xanthippus, (who Smith notes were the champions of conservative Greek values) were outmanoeuvred and outthought by this most wily of political operators.

The ostracism of his political opponents is not the only occasion where Themistocles' political skills are noted. Throughout the work, Themistocles is seen as a politician of some guile, yet that is not to say that he always achieved his aim in every situation. For example, Smith suggests that during the Congress at Corinth in 480 BC, where 70 Greek city-states gathered to decide how to oppose the Persian invasion of Xerxes, Themistocles increased his public profile, but was not granted overall command of the Greek naval forces.

Despite the challenges which he faced, and as noted in the account of Herodotus, Themistocles is almost universally credited with a foresight and tactical acumen, which saved Greece from destruction at the hands of the Persian empire. This supports Smith's assessment of his subject and is backed by two major events. The first was the fate of the vast quantities of silver which Athens had discovered at their mines in Laurium in 484 BC. Aristides suggested that all the citizens of Athens should receive their share; Themistocles argued that after the events of Marathon, Athens needed a powerful navy with which to defend itself if the Persians were to return to Greece. In this debate, Themistocles was the ultimate victor. The Laurium silver financed the building of the largest navy of any Greek city state, making Athens the pre-eminent naval power in Greece. The second of Themistocles' great actions was the tactics at the naval battle of Salamis.

Although not in overall command of the fleet (see above), Themistocles was wise enough to see that the superior seamanship of the Greeks could be most effective in tight spaces, by drawing the Persian navy in close to the shore, and shallower waters; this superiority bore itself out.

This section of the work is clear in its praise for Themistocles, which makes the latter half of the work more poignant. For Themistocles life and career balances on the twin concepts of hubris and nemesis. As Smith notes in chapter 11, 'like the heroes of the Homeric poems, Themistocles had a fatal flaw in his hubris [...] And like those heroes, he would pay the price for his actions'. After the Greek victory in the Persian war, Themistocles had, at his own expense, commissioned a temple of the Goddess Artemis next to his own home. An inscription before temple read 'to the best counsellor'. This declared that he alone was the saviour of Greece. Despite the veracity of the statement, Themistocles was ostracised from Athens. Not content with his exile, his political enemies denounced him as complicit in Persian activities to destabilise Greece. In response, Themistocles fled to Persia and entered the service of Artaxerxes I. It is recounted that Themistocles lived well for several years as an honoured companion and advisor to the Great King. Once tasked with fighting his fellow Greeks however, this is where Themistocles cements his honour among the Greeks, committing suicide rather than fighting his city state. Like the Homeric heroes of his youth, Themistocles believed he had found his own brand of honour at the end of his life.

Overall, this is a well-balanced work. Whether the mythos of Themistocles can be understood at such a distance is an interesting discussion and one which Smith conducts both well and informatively. I believe this would serve as a fine text for the Ancient History modules on Democracy in Athens and should be read by both staff and students alike.

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How to Survive in Ancient Rome

Trafford (L.J.) Pp. xxxiv + 147, ills. Yorkshire and Philadelphia: Pen & Sword History, 2020. Paper, £10.49. ISBN: 9781526757869

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Divided into an eclectic mix of 13 chapters, *How to Survive in Ancient Rome* is part tourist manual and part of an introduction to ancient Rome. The author guides the reader through the guise of two members of the Roman hierarchy: Titus Flavius Ajax, the imperial secretary to the Emperor and Hortensia, a member of the patrician class. Set during the reign of the Emperor Domitian (AD81-96), Trafford first offers the reader a view of Rome in the year AD 95, which helps set the scene. Despite the immediate focus on a single year, Trafford soon carries us on a 'whistle-stop tour' of