

"The Rise and Fall of Alexandria", Howard Reid and Justin Pollard

Post by "Joshua" of November 19, 2020 at 7:26 PM

I've been listening to this audiobook in the car, and on the whole I've been very pleased with it. It is one of the better popular histories of Classical Antiquity that I've read, and it has really helped to fill in some gaps in my historical knowledge. The authors' method is to let ancient texts do a good deal of the talking, and to fill in the blanks with narrative and commentary. I've found it incredibly engaging.

Unfortunately, I'm posting this thread in "celebration" of coming across the first mention of the Epicurean school—in Chapter 14. It really makes me appreciate what Stephen Greenblatt has given us in *The Swerve*. The story simply isn't told elsewhere.

I had thought that Democritus would get a mention in the chapter on physics and cosmology, but he did not. I had thought that Lucian would get a mention in the chapter on Oracles and their various frauds and mechanical deceptions in the ancient world, but he did not. The book is constantly tracing ideas back to their roots in Athens and the Aegean, but the story of atomic materialism and the pursuit of pleasure doesn't seem to the authors to warrant the treatment.

The lament of Palladas over the fate of Hellenism is too good not to use; but at this point I'm not counting on any mention of the Epicurean connection to his epigrams.

Quote

Is it not true that we are dead, and living only in appearance,

We Hellenes, fallen on disaster,

Likening life to a dream, since we remain alive while

Our way of life is dead and gone?