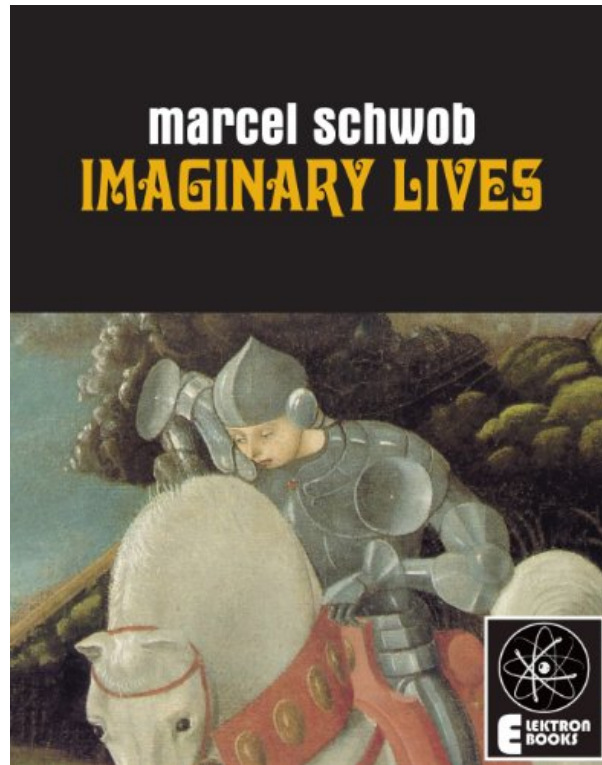


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Language Notes

Text: English (translation)

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About the Author

Marcel Schwob (1867 1905) was one of the key symbolist writers, standing in French literature alongside such names as Stéphane Mallarmé, Octave Mirbeau, André Gide, Léon Bloy, Jules Renard, Rémy de Gourmont, and Alfred Jarry. His best-known works are *Double Heart* (1891), *The King In The Gold Mask* (1892), and *Imaginary Lives* (1896). He was friends with Oscar Wilde and died prematurely, allegedly from rectal syphilis.

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History for Arts Sake

By Amazon Customer

Frida Kahlo read this while convalescing from the accident that shaped the rest of her life. I read a biography of Kahlo while convalescing from my life and thus discovered Schwob.

In minute, 10-page biographies, Schwob depicts "the unique existences of ... priests, criminals, or nobodies." Each is treated them all with an artistic verve that belies the notion: "minute records of great men or epochs or events of the past are not especially needed." Why say what's been said before? And yet, each of these tales is spun such that one may take them as a warning: beware that for which you ask! In describing one of

his subjects, the painter Paolo Uccello, Schwob wrote, he "was not concerned with the reality of things but their multiplicity and the infinity of their lines." So, too Swchob, who chose for us,

Empedocles, Supposed God

Erostat, Incendiary

Crates, Cynic

Septima, Enchantress

Lucretius, Poet

Clodia, Impure Woman

Petronius, Romancer

Sufrah, Geomancer

Fra Dolcino, Heretic

Cecco Angiolieri, Poet of Hate

Paolo Uccello, Painter

Nicholas Loyseleur, Judge

Katherine the Lacemaker, Girl of the Streets

Alain the Gentle, Soldier

Gabriel Spencer, Actor

Pocahontas, Princess

Cyril Tourneur, Tragic Poet

William Phips, Treasure Hunter

Captain Kidd, Pirate

Walter Kennedy, Unlettered Pirate

Major Stede-Bonnet, Pirate by Fancy

Burke and Hare, Assassins

Among them you're sure to find a kindred spirit--or hopefully not.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful.

Extraordinary Book

By Carolyn M. Weddell

Such a strange book of imagined biographies of both prominent and borderline unknown historical figures. Schwob was and is an uncanny writer, and he only came to my attention because of a rare edition, illustrated with exquisite artwork, that came up for auction. Someone posted the images online, with partial original French text. I was hooked. But I could not find a copy of the book for purchase. Thank God for Kindle.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

For me a bit of disappointment

By eig

I don't quite recall how I came across this book (probably at a book fair, a Hebrew edition). What enticed me was the foreword by Borges, who had been very much influenced by Schwob. Since I am a huge fan of Borges, I bought it.

However, for this particular reader it was a case of unfulfilled expectations. I've read 6 out of the 22 pieces so far and frankly I have little desire to go on. I do certainly feel an affinity to Borges's style (for example, his story "The Circular Ruins" or many others) but the mood is somehow too dark and too decadent for me. I failed to empathize with the characters the way I do with those of Borges.

Maybe I'll pick it up again at some point in the future. But right now I am putting the book away, to my own chagrin.

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