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Plutarch on the Rise and Fall of Pompey.

JEFFREY BENEDER
University of Iowa, USA

In his survey of male sexual behavior in Plutarch’s Lives, Philip Stadter begins with an anecdote from the second chapter of the Pompey: early in his career, the Roman general was involved with the courtesan Flora, but he willingly surrendered her to his friend Geminius, who had become infatuated with her (2,5-8). In relating the story, Plutarch describes Pompey’s passion for Flora, writing that he surrendered her “even though he seemed to love her” (2,7) and that she used to boast that whenever she lay with him, she never came away without bite marks. Flora, too, was very much in love with Pompey, and Plutarch reports that she reacted to her rejection not as a hetaira would, but she became physically ill after he set her aside. Pompey’s gift to Geminius seems noble, but as Stadter observes, his sacrifice creates a tension early in the Life: “One senses that Pompey has made a mistake, though his action appears admirable.” The mistake that Stadter has in mind is Pompey’s willingness to benefit a friend to his own detriment, an error that he will repeat, with serious political consequences, while assisting Caesar in his rise to power. But as Stadter further observes, Pompey’s action also reveals a lack of good judgment in a sexual relationship (in this case, he destroys the relationship and injures his beloved), and this, too, will be a repeated behavior. Both implications of this introductory anecdote reveal important aspects of Pompey’s character. The first, Pompey’s lack of selfishness when aiding his friends, and especially his ally Caesar, has been discussed by others. This essay will attempt to demonstrate the importance of the second implication, Pompey’s mishandling of his sexual relationships,

1 P. A. Stadter, 1995.
3 In addition to Stadter, see W. Steidle, 1990; T. P. Hillman, 1992 & 1994.

A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ & F. TITCHENER (Eds.), Historical and Biographical Values of Plutarch’s Works. Studies devoted to Professor Philip A. Stadter by the International Plutarch Society, Málaga-Utah, I.P.S., 2005, pp. 69-82.
not only for understanding his character in general, but also for the role it plays in his rise to political preeminence and his subsequent fall. As it turns out, the spheres of politics and sexual relations are closely intertwined for Plutarch’s Pompey. His sexual relationships, we shall argue, will be both an immediate cause of his political trouble as well as a symptom of a more general weakness.

Before embarking on an analysis of the Life as a whole, we may observe the emphasis that Plutarch has placed on sexual self-mastery at the beginning of the Pompey. The anecdote about Flora in the second chapter signals a certain awkwardness in Pompey, but it also demonstrates, as Pompey coolly passes his lover to his friend, that he is able to govern his eros. A second anecdote continues this theme. According to Plutarch, the wife of Pompey’s freedman, Demetrius, was irresistibly and famously beautiful, and Pompey, wary of her beauty, kept his distance so that he would not appear to have fallen under her control (2.9). As a result, he escaped reproach with respect to Demetrius’ wife; nonetheless, Plutarch continues, his enemies will later charge him with neglecting his public duty in order to gratify his own wives (2.10). Once again there is a downside: Pompey controls his eros, but his relationships will cause political problems in the future. In the second half of the biography, we shall find that Pompey’s erotic attraction to his wives will become a significant distraction for him, diverting him from his public responsibilities and weakening him in his contest with Caesar. At the heart of this distraction is the issue of self-mastery in the face of eros.

Plutarch also explores sexual self-mastery in the Agesilaus, which is the first half of the Agesilaus-Pompey pair and so would have been read just prior to the Pompey. In that Life, the hero contends with his eros for Megabates, the son of the Persian Spitarrates (Ages. 11.5-10). Megabates attempts to greet him with a kiss, which was the usual Persian custom and, under normal circumstances, sexually neutral, but Agesilaus, overcome with passion, leans away in an act of self-restraint. The boy, embarrassed by the rejection, ceases to approach him, which causes Agesilaus to regret his reticence. However, when his friends offer to intercede and convince Megabates to resume contact, Agesilaus declines: “There is no need for you to persuade him, since I think it would be more pleasurable to fight that battle against the kiss over again than to have all the gold that I have ever seen.” One senses in this anecdote a tension similar to that observed by Stadter in Pompey’s rejection of Flora: Agesilaus has acted nobly by restraining his eros, and yet he seems to have made a mistake in causing both himself and Megabates to suffer.

A reader who notes the ambiguity in both Lives may also recall that later in the Agesilaus, the Spartan king shows judicial leniency in order to gratify his son’s eromenos and in doing so endures criticism for neglecting the city’s welfare (Ages. 25.1-26.1), a fate also forecast for Pompey. Thus the anecdotes of Pompey 2 acquire greater significance as they repeat themes already elaborated in the preceding Life. These themes are in fact integrated into the structure of the Pompey. In our analysis, we shall argue that the first phase of the biography, which documents Pompey’s rise, is also the period of an eros that is disciplined with respect to women. The second phase, that of his fall, is characterized by a loss of discipline and a voluntary submission to eros, which causes him to neglect his public duties. We begin by examining the rise of Pompey.

The Ascending Career

In tracing Pompey’s early career, Plutarch paints a favorable picture of the ascending statesman, shying away from examples of brutality and instead emphasizing his great deeds. Nor does Plutarch include any evidence of unrestrained eros; in fact, he creates the opposite impression. In his interactions with women, Pompey displays virtuous, even heroic, discipline, and his wives, far from being politically liabilities, are important assets. His first wife is the daughter of Antistius, who, according to Plutarch, was the presiding prætor when Pompey was prosecuted for theft of public funds. Pompey conducted himself so well at the trial that Antistius became enamored of him (ὦ γὰρ Ἀντίστιον... ἐρωτηθηκαί τοῦ Πομπήλου)

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4 To quote Stadter again: “In sexual relations as in politics he is unable to achieve the harmonious balance and noble self-assurance which his excellent qualities promised” (1995, p. 234).
5 As implied by the qualification, καίνερ ἐρῶν δικοῦτων (2.7).
6 I take τοῖς γαμητοῖς as referring to the wives of Pompey, following the translations of R. Flacelière and R. Waterfield. See R. Flacelière & É. Chambry, 1973, p. 168, n. 1, for justification. The translations of B. Perrin and R. Warner, on the other hand, refer to these women as the wives of others. H. Heftner, 1995, p. 73, assumes that the wives are Pompey’s without discussion.
7 Cf. the Alexander-Caesar, which Plutarch refers to as a single βίβλοι (Alex. 1.1).
8 A slightly different version of this anecdote appears in Plutarch’s Ap. Lac. 209d-e.
10 There is disagreement over the Greek text of this sentence (see I. Bos, 1947, p. 85; D. R. Sheley, 1997, p. 179), but in any reading, Agesilaus prefers to resist rather than submit to his eros.
11 M. Beck, 1998, pp. 165-73, analyzes this anecdote more fully but concludes that it does not demonstrate Agesilaus’ self-mastery.
12 See P. Stadter, 1995, p. 232. Agesilaus also bends the rules at Olympia in order to help the eromenos of his guest-friend’s son, but Plutarch reports no criticism of the act (Ages. 13).
13 See B. X. de Wet, 1981.
14 Antistius was actually aedile or iudex quaestionis (T. R. S. Broughton, 1952, p. 54; H. Heftner, 1995, p. 70).
and offered him his daughter, Antistia, in marriage (4.4). Given that we are expecting future problems associated with Pompey's eros for his wives, it is ironic that his first marriage is arranged because Antistius has an eros for him. At this stage, however, Pompey is taking a wife for her political connection and responding to expediency rather than passion, a point underscored when the people greet his acquittal by shouting, "tulias", as is the custom at weddings.

Pompey's divorce of Antistia will equally represent an important step forward in his career. She is put aside when Sulla proposes that Pompey marry his step-daughter, Aemilia, once again because of the impression Pompey has made on the woman's father (9.1-2). This marriage demonstrates the scale of Pompey's achievements and the high level to which he is ascending: the family of Sulla the dictator is a much more powerful connection than that of Antistius the praetor. Moreover, the union is once again free of eros on Pompey's part. Pompey will marry again, but he divorces his third wife, Mucia, for her licentious behavior while he was away in the East (42,13). He apparently would not allow her to cause damage to his reputation at such a critical moment. In managing his first three marriages, Pompey has maintained an undistorted focus on his career. The disruption caused by his fourth and fifth wives, already foreshadowed by Plutarch in the introduction, will be examined below.

Though Pompey's marriages are free of eros, the passion is nonetheless important to Plutarch's narrative of this period. During Pompey's ascent, Plutarch presents him in a positive light, even quite Alexander-like. Plutarch has previously reported, in the introduction to the Life, that some Romans were likening Pompey to Alexander and that Pompey did not discourage them (2.1-4). Plutarch is skeptical, however, and will eventually reject the comparison, but for the time being he allows it to stand and uses it to characterize Pompey. For instance, while Pompey is pursuing Mithridates, he shows great restraint in dealing with captive women: "Of all the concubines of Mithridates who were brought to him, he was intimate with none (οὐδεμίαν ἔγνω), but he restored them all to their parents and families" (36.3). In this statement, Plutarch makes no explanation of the hero's self-mastery; that is, he does not comment on how Pompey is able to resist the concubines or why he chooses to do so. However, a passage from the Alexander helps us to understand the character that lies behind such an act, and a recollection of that episode encourages a favorable comparison between the two men. After the battle of Issus, Alexander learns that Darius' wife and daughters are among the captive women, which presents a special challenge to his virtue:

The finest and most kingly favor was given by him to the women, who were noble and chaste, that, although they were prisoners, they neither heard, nor perceived, nor anticipated anything shameful, but as if they were not in the camp of their enemies but protected in sacred and holy women's apartments, they lived separate and unseen by the others. And yet it is said that the wife of Darius was by far the most beautiful of all the royal women, just as Darius was the most handsome and greatest of the men, and that the daughters took after their parents. But Alexander, as it seems, believing mastery of himself more kingly than conquering enemies, neither touched these women nor was intimate with any other woman before marriage except for Barsine (οὔτε ἀλλὰν ἔγνω γυναῖκα πρὸ γάμου πλὴρες μακρότητος, Alex. 21.5-7).

The description of Pompey's treatment of Mithridates' women may well refer directly to this passage in the Alexander. The similarity continues when Pompey captures Stratonice, another of Mithridates' concubines, who was commanding one of his fortresses. Pompey treats her with privileges similar to those given by Alexander to Stateira and her daughters when he accepts only a few of the gifts she offers and allows her to keep and enjoy the rest (36.9). In the next chapter, Pompey takes the stronghold of Caenum and discovers some letters which had been exchanged between Mithridates and a lover (37.3). Plutarch calls the letters ἀκολουθίας and thus creates a sharp contrast between Mithridates' behavior and Pompey's, highlighting the latter's self-discipline during this period of the Life. This scene reminds one once again of Alexander: upon capturing Darius' tent, he observes the great luxury of the king's abode and exclaims, "This, so it seems, was what it meant to rule!" (Alex. 20.13). The ascending Pompey is very much in the mold of Alexander.

The early period of the Life does contain one important example of Pompey's own eros. Plutarch includes it, significantly, following the anecdotes about

15 However, Plutarch does not ignore the irregularities. Antistia has just lost her father to anti-Sullan violence and her mother to suicide, and Aemilia is pregnant with her former husband's child. The exchange reflects badly on both men, exposing the tyranny of Sulla and Pompey's relaxed principles, but it nonetheless advances Pompey's career (9.2-4). Pompey probably used Sulla's desire for the marriage as leverage when demanding a triumph (A. KEENEN, 1982, p. 195; R. SAGGER, 2002 (1979), p. 174).

16 Plutarch does not include any other details of this marriage. Cicero mentions the divorce in a letter to Atticus (1.12,3), writing that the act was well received and including the comment with a brief report on the scandal of Clodius and the Bona Dea; an indication that the divorce was a public as well as a personal matter. S. P. HALEY, 1985, pp. 50-3, argues that the marriage was dissolved for purely political reasons; E. S. GREVEN, 1969, p. 77, sees Pompey creating an opportunity for an alliance with Cato; see below.

17 Other authors report a more active emulation of Alexander, cf. Sull., Hist. 3.88; App., Mith. 117 (with skepticism); see also E. S. GREVEN, 1974, p. 62; P. GREVEN, 1978, pp. 4-5.

18 The use of ἔγνω to refer to sexual intimacy (Pomp. 36.3, Alex. 21.7) is another link between these two passages, as noted by R. FRAELIE & É. CHAMBRY, 1973, p. 299.

19 On the relationship between the Pompey and Alexander, see J. BENNEKER, 2005.
Mithridates’ concubines and his ἄκολογοι letters, demonstrating where, if not toward women, Pompey’s eros was directed. Upon arriving at Amisos, Pompey suffers a dreadful passion fired by his ambition (38,1). He begins to arrange a settlement of the territories of northern Asia and to grant gifts, even though Mithridates has not yet been captured. His ambition even leads him to offend the Parthian king by refusing to address him with the title “king of kings”. Then Plutarch elaborates his passion: “And he was held by a certain eros and zeal to recapture Syria and cross through Arabia to the Red Sea [i.e. the Persian Gulf], so that he would by his conquests join the known world on all sides to the encircling ocean” (38,4). Pompey’s timing is wrong since Mithridates is still at large, but the eros is appropriate for a man in Pompey’s position, as we may deduce by comparing this passage to similar comments about Caesar and Alexander. In Caesar 58, Plutarch describes the hero’s ambitious plans for conquest in the East, plans that resemble Pompey’s, and ascribes their motivation to Caesar’s eros for new glory (Caes. 58,4). Likewise, in the Antony, Plutarch describes Caesar’s eros for power, comparing him to Alexander and even Cyrus the Great, who both possessed a similar passion (Ant. 6,3). While Plutarch can be critical of unrestrained eros for power and glory, this is in general the sort of passion that keeps a man focused on his objectives and allows him to advance militarily and politically. Pompey will not be able to maintain his focus, however; he will fail partly because of his inability to keep his eros directed towards public accomplishments. This becomes evident in the next phase of his Life.

**Climax and Descent**

Pompey’s career ascended through a series of military achievements, reaching its climax in his campaign in the East. In Plutarch’s narrative, Pompey’s return from Asia is glorious, but his fortune quickly changes: Plutarch lifts Pompey to the peak of success, then quickly topples him. To set him up, Plutarch emphasizes the splendor of the Asian accomplishment, the crown on Pompey’s career, by describing his magnificent third triumph (45,1-5), taking special care to note the uniqueness of his glory:

But it was the greatest credit toward his glory and something that no other Roman had ever done, that he celebrated his third triumph coming from a third continent. Indeed others before had triumphed three times, but because Pompey celebrated his first coming from Libya, his second coming from Europe, and this final one coming from Asia, he seemed, so to speak, to have yoked together the known world by his three triumphs (45,6-7).

Then Plutarch undercuts this lofty scene with his very next sentence:


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Those who compare him in all matters to Alexander, and even push the likeness, think that he was younger than thirty-four years old at that time, but in truth he was almost forty. How blessed he would have been had his life ended then, since up to that point he was still enjoying Alexander’s fortune (46,1-2).

Pompey’s greatest achievement thus converts immediately to the beginning of his demise. According to Plutarch, he brings about his own fall through the aid that he provides to Caesar, repeating on a much larger scale the mistake he made when he transferred Flora to his friend Geminus. In this case, his ally becomes his opponent and uses his own generosity against him. The rest of the Life will document Pompey’s decline. This is a long process, spanning thirty-four chapters, in the course of which Pompey is attacked, both politically and militarily, and fights back with some success. However, also important is the damage Pompey does to himself through his weak response to eros.

Plutarch has forecast that Pompey’s neglect of public business on account of his wives will eventually earn the reproach of the Romans. Up to this point, however, Pompey’s marriages have caused him no distraction. They have been political arrangements which, in the case of Antistia and Aemilia, advanced his career, and, in the case of Antistia and Mucia, were dissolved when they presented an obstacle. After Pompey returns to Rome, he will contract a fourth political marriage, to Caesar’s daughter, Julia (47,10). However, this marriage will follow a new course.

As soon as the marriage is made, city politics become heated, and Pompey fills the forum with soldiers. Then Bibulus (Caesar’s co-consul), Cato, and Lucullus are attacked and withdraw, allowing Caesar to pass a law distributing land to Pompey’s soldiers and whatever other acts he and Pompey desire (48,1-6). When Bibulus withdraws from the forum, he does so permanently, staying in his house for the rest of his term; Lucullus avoids politics, too, preferring to spend his old age in luxury.

22. In fact he was forty-five years old (R. Flacciére & É. Chambry, 1973, p. 303).
23. The significant change in tone between chapters 45 and 46 is noted by T. P. Hillman, 1994, p. 259: “It clearly indicates to the reader not only by the powerful introductory words of 46, but also, and more importantly, by the very structure of the Life, that the second half of the Pompeius will be radically different from the first”. See also G. W. M. Harrison, 1995, p. 102; H. Heftner, 1995, p. 298.
24. During this period, Pompey was actually a serious rival to Caesar, if not superior to him (R. Seager, 2002 (1979), p. 142). Nonetheless, in Plutarch’s narrative, he engages in a losing battle with Caesar as soon as he returns from Asia.
25. Before turning to Caesar, Pompey first attempts to form an alliance with Cato by proposing marriage to his niece (one for himself, the other for his son); Cato declines, although the women are willing (44,2-3). Similar to the married Aemilia, Julia is already engaged to someone else when her father offers her to Pompey.
(48,7). When Pompey rebukes him for this unseemly behavior, Plutarch takes the opportunity to introduce unflattering details of Pompey's own home life with Julia:

Quickly, however, even Pompey himself was made docile by eros for the girl, and he turned most of his attention toward her and spent his days with her in the countryside and in gardens. He neglected his duties in the forum, so that even Clodius, who was tribune at that time, had contempt for him and undertook the most daring deeds (48,8).

The deeds undertaken by Clodius while Pompey is distracted are the most serious of this period: Cicero is exiled, Catiline is sent to Cyprus, Pompey's own acts are repealed, his friends are prosecuted, and his prisoner Tigranes, son of the Armenian king, is kidnapped (48,6). In Plutarch's analysis, however, the complexities of late-Republican politics are missing. In their place is the simple distinction caused by Pompey's eros for Julia. In addition to the attacks on others, Pompey himself is publicly mocked:

And finally, when Pompey himself came forward for a trial, Clodius, bringing with him a large group of men full of recklessness and contempt, situated himself in a conspicuous place and shouted out questions like these: "Who is a licentious emperor (τίς ἐστιν αὐτοκράτωρ ἀκόλαστος)? What man seeks a man? Who scratches his head with one finger?" And, while Clodius waved his toga, his men, as if a chorus well-trained in responsive singing, shouted loudly in reply to each question, "Pompey!" (48,11-12).

The examples of abuse are all related to sexual behavior. However, except for Pompey's retirement with Julia in 48,8, Plutarch has not included any anecdote about an affair or liaison since chapter two. In fact, as we have seen, he has represented his subject as sexually self-controlled up to this point. While insults related to sexual activity can be a regular part of political invective, the taunts of Clodius must also be read in light of Pompey's most recent behavior: his eros for Julia has provided a basis for the abuse. The tag "τίς ἐστιν αὐτοκράτωρ ἀκόλαστος," reminiscent of Mithridates' ἀκόλαστοι letters, seems directly related to his lack of discipline at such a critical moment; the fact that he was made docile by eros (ἐμπλασομένος τῷ τίς κόρης ἐρωτι) may have made him appear politically weak. More importantly, not only is he being abused when he goes out in public, Pompey has for the most part withdrawn and allowed his enemies to have their way.

Plutarch ascribes other significant decisions to Pompey's affection for Julia, enhancing the image of Pompey as sidetracked by passion. Following the conference at Luca, he and Crassus manipulate the consular elections to gain the office themselves (51.4-52.3). Once elected, they select their pro-consular provinces: Crassus receives Syria, and Pompey takes both Spain, with control of four legions as well (52,4). When their term expires, Crassus takes up his command as expected, but Pompey remains in Rome, dedicating his new theater with athletic events, musical contests, and animal fights (52,5). Then Plutarch explains why Pompey did not leave Italy:

For these things he was admired and loved, but he also attracted a great deal of envy because he handed over his armies and his provinces to legates, who were also his friends, while he himself traveled here and there, spending his time with his wife in the resorts of Italy, either because he loved her (ἐρώτωρ) or because he could not bear to abandon her, who loved him (ἐρωστήρ), for this is also reported (53,1).

In this analysis, Plutarch has again greatly simplified matters in order to account for Pompey's decision not to go to Spain. He offers no explanation other than Pompey's devotion to Julia and thus makes him appear lovesick and politically inactive. In reality, by taking a pro-consular assignment, Pompey retained imperium and gained control of an army, which supplemented the forces he had received when commissioned to protect the grain supply. By remaining in Rome, he kept himself at the center of politics during a period of increasing uncertainty. Thus he was available two years later when the state required a sole ruler. The decision to govern Spain through legates was a tactical move in his contest with Caesar. Plutarch, however, is presenting Pompey in decline and is anxious to attribute his demise to personal weaknesses. Pompey's retirement to the resorts of Italy is in the character of his withdrawal in the face of Clodius' attacks. Eros has become a liability, and Plutarch sees its influence as pervasive and fundamental to Pompey's political miscalculations.

In the same chapter where Plutarch describes the couple's affection, he reports Julia's death in childbirth, which breaks Pompey's bond with Caesar but does not change his behavior. In the next chapter (54), he is made sole consul, thus becoming the most powerful man in Rome. But once again, Plutarch immediately undercut his accomplishment with criticism, and once again, affection for a wife...

26 Cf. Cic., Phil. 2.15: Adeone pudorem cum pudicitia perdidisti ut hoc in eo templo dicere aseus sis...
27 Cf. Caes. 4.9, where Cicero cannot believe that Caesar would be plotting against the state on account of his neatly arranged hair and the way he scratches his head with one finger.
28 Plutarch writes that Pompey also received Libya, but this is an error (R. Seager, 2002 (1979), p. 229, n. 22).
29 R. Seager, 2002 (1979), p. 125; E. S. Gruber, 1974, p. 112, p. 451. Cassius Dio plainly states Pompey's pragmatic reasons for staying: "For he had immediately sent out lieutenants, and as if prevented from going and especially obliged to be present on account of his supervision of the grain supply, he himself gladly remained at home so that he might control Iberia through his men and manage affairs in Rome and the rest of Italy for himself" (39,39,4).
becomes a weakness. The very next chapter (55) opens by introducing his fifth and final wife, Cornelia, the daughter of Metellus Scipio. Cornelia is well educated and has an agreeable nature, but Pompey's relationship with her causes a familiar problem:

Those who were more insightful thought that Pompey had overlooked the plight of the city while it was in difficult circumstances. They had selected him as its physician and had turned it over to him alone, but he was putting on garlands and celebrating his marriage, while he ought to have considered the consulship itself to have been troubling, since it would not have been granted to him in such an illegal way if the city had been flourishing (55.4-5).

The timing of Pompey's distraction could not have been worse. As often, the opinions of other characters reflect Plutarch's own criticism. They also demonstrate the discontent that Pompey was creating, even though he had been handed the opportunity to generate consensus and support for his own position.

Although Pompey is by no means weak in comparison to Caesar, Plutarch has, with his final defeat always in mind, narrated the progression of events with a view toward explaining where he went wrong. In his management of Roman politics while Caesar was in Gaul, one of Pompey's principal mistakes was his submission to his eros for his wives, losing his focus during the most critical phase of his career, the showdown with the only man who challenged him. Pompey declined to dominate Rome by means of force, although he had ample opportunity. The political route to power was noble, but it meant that he would have to win his battles in the forum. Plutarch explains his failure partly in terms of eros.

Defeat

In Plutarch's narrative, Pompey's best opportunity to oppose Caesar, the sole consulship, was neutralized by his neglect of duty. The rest of the Life documents Pompey's retreat from Italy in the face of Caesar's invasion and his eventual defeat at Pharsalus. Having deserted his home, his wife no longer provides a distraction. Even so, Pompey experiences a succession of setbacks, caused both by his own mistakes and by those of the men around him. His defeat is due in large part to the impatience of his supporters and his own inability to assert his authority. His eros,

having weakened him, does not take a direct part in his defeat, but neither is it entirely absent. Just before the two armies meet in battle, Plutarch remarks how, if Caesar and Pompey had wished to satisfy their eros for trophies and triumphs, they could have fought foreign foes rather than fellow Romans (70.3). This refers to the "old eros" of Pompey, however, the one he displayed during his ascent. Since his return from the East, his eros has been directed toward his wives, to the point of distraction. Plutarch reminds the reader of this fact just a few sentences later when he observes that the alliance between Caesar and Pompey is finally revealed at Pharsalus to have been a charade. Their cooperation was based on the union of Pompey and Julia, and Plutarch refers to it thus: "the tie of kinship, the love-charms of Julia (τὰ ξούλας καὶ χαρά), and that marriage" (70.7). The χαρά of Julia reminds us that Pompey was beguiled by affection for his wife, and their mention just before the armies engage at Pharsalus makes them accessories in Pompey's defeat.

Plutarch reasserts the role of marital affection again at the end of the Life. Having removed Pompey from Pharsalus, Plutarch returns him to Cornelia, the origin of his weakness but now his only source of comfort. When the defeated Pompey arrives at Mytilene, where Cornelia has been awaiting word of his victory, Plutarch gives her the following speech, by which he overtly associates her with Pompey's downfall:

"I look upon you, husband", she said, "not as a product of your own fortune, but of mine; you have been put aboard a single boat, who, before your marriage to Cornelia, sailed this sea with five hundred ships. Why have you come to see me rather than abandon me to my oppressive daemon, since I filled you too with such great misfortune? How fortunate a woman I would have been to have died before hearing that my husband Publius lay dead among the Parthians, or how prudent I would have been, even after the fact, to have taken my own life, as I started to do. But I was preserved to be a calamity also for Pompey the Great" (74.5-6).

Cornelia presents herself as bad luck for Pompey, but the reader knows that it was more than simply her presence that contributed to his demise. Both she and Julia diverted Pompey's energies at the crisis point of his career, and Cornelia's speech compels the reader to consider the effects of Pompey's private life in addition to the military struggle which has just taken place.

Plutarch concludes the Life by emphasizing the mutual affection of Pompey and Cornelia, underscoring her culpability not only in his defeat but also in his death. Pompey's final task is to find refuge. He selects Parthia but is dissuaded by the Theophanes, who cites the danger to Cornelia posed by the arrogance and licen-

31 Lucan, although his narrative has a much broader scope than Plutarch's, also notes the effect of marital love on public actions. In a speech to Cornelia, Pompey charges "iusta Venus" and "amor" with making him hesitant and fearful of battle (5.727-9).
32 See F. E. BIELENK, 1992, p. 4450; T. E. DUFF, 1999, p. 120.
33 For example, P. disbands his army rather than march on Rome as many feared (41.1-3). See R. STAGER, 2002" (1979), p. 142, on Pompey's attempt to keep Caesar in check without resorting to civil war, and E. S. GRUM, 1969, pp. 71-2, on his desire to acquire preeminence within the framework of the Republic.
34 Lucan has the ghosts of Julia and Cornelia express similar sentiments (3.20-3; 8.88-105).
35 Moreover, Cornelia's wish to have been fortunate and died earlier is reminiscent of Plutarch's statement that Pompey would have been better off dying while still enjoying Alexander's fortune (46.2).
tiousness of the Parthians (76). Once again choosing for his wife rather than for his own advantage, Pompey sails to Egypt, and to his death. Plutarch writes that concern for Cornelia's safety was the sole reason for choosing Egypt. Pompey is then assassinated in her sight (79,3-80,1). His body, however, is cared for by his freedman, Philip, and one of his former soldiers. The Life ends poignantly, but in a way that underscores the source of Pompey's ruin: "Cornelia received Pompey's remains, which had been transported to her, and buried them at his Alban estate" (80,10). This conclusion, which brings to a close both the entire Life and the period of Pompey's decline, stands in stark contrast to the conclusion of his ascent, vividly marking for the reader his drastic change in stature. At the apex of his career, Pompey returned from the East at the head of an army and entered Rome in triumph, having joined three continents by his victories (45,6-7); now he returns again from the East, this time in utter defeat, and he comes not to Rome, but to the countryside, where he is received by only his wife rather than by the entire city.

Cornelia's burial of her husband's remains is more than just the touching end to the life of a Roman hero. Pompey's response to eros also has larger implications which are in harmony with a basic aim of the Parallel Lives: ethical education through the presentation of exempla. By setting Pompey's acts before our eyes, Plutarch is asking us to draw a general conclusion about his character. One lesson of the Pompey can be illustrated with a passage from Plutarch's essay Ad principem ineruditum:

Just as among empty jars, you cannot distinguish the whole from the defective, but when you fill them, then the leak appears. Likewise, the cracked souls cannot hold their powers, but they leak with desires, anger, pretensions, vulgarities (782e-f).

In this passage, when Plutarch writes of powers (ἐξουσίας), he means the authority with which a political leader is invested. Thus, in the crucible of leadership, the true state of a man's soul is revealed by his outward actions. We have observed this in Pompey: while away from Rome on military campaign, he kept a sharp focus on his objectives, not allowing eros to deter him but creating the impression that he was a new Alexander; however, under the intense pressure of political and civil warfare, his incomplete self-mastery was revealed. This is perhaps the principal lesson of this Life, reminiscent of Solon's famous advice to

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36 Appian describes a more complex decision, citing both concern for Cornelia and Crassus' recent defeat as reasons for avoiding Parthia. Egypt was selected in the end for its power and wealth, and for the supposed friendliness of its rulers (BC 2.83). Dio has Pompey reject Parthia only on account of the hostilities generated by Crassus' campaign (42,2,5).

37 Cf. Dio 42.5.6.


39 For a similar conclusion, see B. X. de Wit, 1981, p. 129.

40 That is, that a man may be called fortunate but not blessed before the end of his life (Hdt., 1.32.7; also Plu., Sol. 27.9).

41 This essay is derived from a chapter of my doctoral dissertation, which I wrote under the direction of Philip Stadler. I wish to thank Professor Stadler for generously sharing his wisdom on that project and on countless other occasions. I owe thanks also to Geert Roskams for reading a draft of the essay and providing insightful criticism, and to Lieve van Hoof for her assistance with secondary literature in Dutch.
Heftner, H.,
Hillman, T. P.,
Keaveney, A.,
Pelling, C.,
Perren, B.,
Seager, R.,
Shipley, D. R.,
Stadier, P. A.,
Steidle, W.,
Warner, R.,
Waterfield, R.,

Plutarque, Dion Chrysostome et Phidias
Alain Billault
Université Paris-Sorbonne

Parmi les nombreuses et importantes contributions de Philip Stadter à la connaissance de l’œuvre de Plutarque, l’une des plus remarquables est certainement son commentaire à la Vie de Périclès. Dans cet ouvrage, il consacre une quinzaine de pages au chapitre 31 où Plutarque évoque les accusations portées contre Phidias par les adversaires de Périclès qui voulaient atteindre ce dernier en s’en prenant à son ami, ainsi que leurs conséquences pour le sculpteur. L’authenticité historique des faits relatés n’est pas toujours certaine, comme le montre Philip Stadter en citant et en commentant les éléments de ce dossier difficile. Parmi eux se trouve un passage situé au paragraphe 6 du Discours XII de Dion Chrysostome, l’Olympique. L’orateur attribué à Phidias une double représentation qui fut justement à l’origine des accusations rapportées par Plutarque. Il n’est peut-être pas inutile de comparer les deux textes. Leur rapprochement mettra en lumière deux façons d’envisager et d’utiliser l’histoire. Il fera ainsi apparaître dans sa singularité la démarche biographique de Plutarque en la distinguant du projet rhétorique de Dion.

Dans la dernière partie de la Vie de Périclès, Plutarque aborde la question de la responsabilité de son personnage dans le déclenchement de la guerre du Péloponnèse. Il rapporte qu’on l’accusait d’en avoir été la cause parce qu’il s’était opposé à l’abrogation du décret excluant les Mégrariens de tous les Marchés contrôlés par Athènes (29, 5). Il expose ensuite (31, 1) les différentes explications qu’on donnait de son intrangue : pour les uns, elle se justifiait sur le plan politique, pour d’autres, elle était le signe de son arrogance. Mais d’autres lui attribuaient des mobiles cachés :

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2 P. 284-297.


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