

PLUTARCH'S ADAPTATION OF HIS SOURCE-MATERIAL

In an earlier article, I argued that six of the Roman Lives—*Crassus*, *Pompey*, *Caesar*, *Cato*, *Brutus*, and *Antony*—were prepared as a single project, and rest upon the same store of source-material.¹ If this is so, it affords a unique opportunity to investigate Plutarch's techniques. There are substantial variations among these six versions, both crude inconsistencies of fact and subtler differences of interpretation. It no longer seems adequate to assume that these are simply inherited from differing source-material; they must arise from Plutarch's individual literary methods. Their analysis should therefore illuminate those methods. How much licence did Plutarch allow himself in rewriting and manipulating detail for artistic ends? And what considerations would lead him to vary his treatment in these ways?

In the first part of this paper, I examine the literary devices which Plutarch employed in streamlining his material: conflation of similar items, chronological compression and dislocation, fabrication of circumstantial detail, and the like. In the second, I turn to the differences of interpretation and emphasis among these Lives. These suggest some wider conclusions concerning Plutarch's biographical practice, which are developed in the final section: in particular, the very different aims, interests, and conventions which are followed in different Lives, and the flexible nature of this biographical genre.

I. COMPOSITIONAL DEVICES

I start with some devices for *abridging* the narrative: first, various forms of simplification.

A characteristic technique here is the *conflation* of similar items. (i) At *Caes.* 7.7 Plutarch found it tedious to distinguish the three final senatorial debates on the Catilinarians. He was, after all, concerned with Caesar's role, and that was confined to the final session. He thus gives the impression that the culprits were exposed (3rd Dec.), and their punishment decided (5th Dec.), at the same debate. But he certainly knew that the sittings of 3rd and 5th Dec. were distinct (*cf.* the earlier *Cicero*, 19.1–4 and 20.4–21.5), and he seems also to have known of the sitting of the 4th (*Crass.* 13.3).

(ii) At *Cato* 43 Plutarch clearly distinguishes the *lex Trebonia* of 55 B.C., giving Crassus and Pompey their provinces, from the subsequent *lex Licinia Pompeia*, which continued Caesar in Gaul. In that Life Plutarch needs to keep the bills separate, for they brought different reactions from Cato:² he publicly opposed the *lex Trebonia*, whereas the *lex Licinia Pompeia* provoked his personal appeal to Pompey, warning him of the dangers which Caesar threatened. *Pompey* 52.4 makes much less of this: *ἔπειτα νόμους διὰ Τρεβωνίου δημαρχούντος εἰσέφερον . . .*, giving commands to Caesar, Crassus, and Pompey. *Pompey* thus associates Trebonius with all three commands; in *Cato* Plutarch links him with the grant to Crassus and Pompey, but correctly omits him from the continuation of Caesar's command. *Pompey* groups all three commands together, naming Caesar first; *Cato* gives the correct sequence, with Caesar's command being granted after the other two. *Crass.* 15.7 similarly takes all three commands together, though Plutarch does not there mention Trebonius.³

Similar is Plutarch's technique of chronological *compression*, the portrayal of distinct events as closely linked in time. When two items were linked causally or thematically, it would have been clumsy to point to a long interval between them; hence Plutarch often connects such events in a

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¹ 'Plutarch's method of work in the Roman Lives', *JHS* xcix (1979) 74–96 (cited in what follows as *Method*).

² *Caes.* 14.2 and *Cato* 32–3 form a similar case, which I discuss at *Method* 77 (with n. 21). *Caesar* treats two bills together; *Cato* has to distinguish them, as Plutarch there wishes to trace Cato's reactions to both. (In this paper, *Cato* refers to the *Cato minor*.)

³ For similar conflations, *cf.* e.g. *Ant.* 5.8, conflating at least two meetings of the senate in early 49 (Plutarch knows better at *Caes.* 30–1); *Ant.* 14.3, with *Method* 77; *Caes.* 30.6, where the outburst of 'Lentulus' combines two remarks made by Marcellus, *Pomp.* 58.6 and 10 (below, p. 140); and *Cic.* 15.4–5, combining (i) the two reports from Etruria and (ii) the *tumultus* decree and the *s.c.u.* Note also that in *Coriolanus* he appears to combine details of the battles of Regillus and of the Naevian meadow: Russell, *JRS* liii (1963) 23–4.

way which suggests chronological closeness. There are many examples, and only two need be mentioned here.⁴ (i) At *Cato* 51 he treats Cato's proposal to surrender Caesar to the Germans. He tells the same story, with less detail, at *Caes.* 22.4–5. In *Caesar* he places the item in its correct chronological position, the year 55; *Cato* delays it to the context of the outbreak of the civil war, where it can conveniently be linked with Cato's further attacks on Caesar's command. The vague sentence at *Cato* 51.6 conceals a time-lag of five years: ἐκυρώθη μὲν οὐδέν, ἀλλ' ἐλέχθη μόνον ὅτι καλῶς ἔχει διάδοχον Καίσαρι δοθῆναι. (ii) At *Caes.* 21.8 Plutarch explains why Cato was absent from a debate in spring, 56 B.C.:⁵ ἐπίτηδες γὰρ αὐτὸν εἰς Κύπρον [the triumvirs] ἀπεδιοπομπήσαντο. That naturally suggests a tactic to safeguard this specific piece of legislation, and one would conclude that Cato had only recently departed. In fact, Plutarch knew that Cato had been despatched during Clodius' tribunate, 58 B.C. (*Pomp.* 48.9, *Cato* 34, and the earlier *Cic.* 34.2). But, as those passages show, Plutarch thought that Cato's removal was designed to protect any legislation which the dynasts might introduce. Here he again wrote as if this logical link corresponded to a chronological closeness.

Such telescoping is similar to simple chronological *displacement*; and this brings us to techniques which, without necessarily abridging the narrative, serve to organise it in a more elegant and pleasing manner. Displacements may serve to organise into logical compartments, or to give smooth transitions: (i) At *Pompey* 62.1 Plutarch briefly tells the story of Caesar and the tribune Metellus: Metellus refused to allow Caesar to open the treasury, and Caesar bluntly threatened him with death. In *Pompey* the story is placed before Caesar's pursuit of Pompey to Brundisium (62.2 is explicit on the chronological sequence). The same story is told at greater length at *Caesar* 35: there Plutarch puts it in its correct chronological place, after Pompey has sailed from Brundisium and Caesar has returned to Rome. *Caesar* can afford to be accurate: its narrative is here controlled by Caesar's own movements, and the episode fits neatly into the narrative shift from Brundisium to Spain (36). *Pompey* organises its narrative around Pompey's person: it is there convenient to group together all Italian events and place them before Brundisium. Pompey's embarkation then moves the narrative decisively to the East.

(ii) The early chapters of *Caesar* show a more elaborate reordering. It is elegant and pleasing to group together Caesar's early foreign adventures: the trip to Nicomedes (1.7), the pirate adventure (1.8–2.7), the study in Rhodes (3). The return to Rome (4.1) can then restore the reader to an uninterrupted treatment of domestic politics. But two separate antedatings were necessary to produce this. Plutarch associates the pirate adventure with the trip to Nicomedes (80/79); a later date, in 75 or 74, is certain.⁶ The journey to Rhodes is then dated τῆς Σύλλα δυνάμεως ἡδη μαραινομένης—presumably 79/8; in fact, a date of 76 or later is very probable.⁷ Both episodes therefore belong after the Dolabella and Antonius trials, datable to 77/6, which Plutarch treats in ch. 4. He doubtless knew the true sequence, for Suetonius' account, clearly resting on similar source-material,⁸ is correct. But Plutarch's arrangement is more elegant, and it has one further effect. Caesar's rhetorical successes at Rome are now placed after the study in Rhodes, and it is natural to infer that they are the result of that teaching: a theme which alike suits Plutarch's

⁴ Similar instances are collected in A. N. Sherwin-White, *CQ* xxvii (1977) 177–8; cf. also T. J. Carney, *JHS* lxxx (1960) 26–7, for similar cases in *Marius*.

⁵ The debate concerned the grant of *stipendium* for Caesar's troops. It presumably took place after Luca, but before the debate on the consular provinces in (?) June: cf. *Cic. prov. cons.* 28. Plutarch's notice of Cato's absence is often regarded as a blunder: so e.g. Garzetti *ad loc.*, and C. Luibheid, *CPh* lxxv (1970) 89 n. 13. But Cato seems to have returned from Cyprus at almost exactly this time, in spring or early summer, 56 (S. I. Oost, *CPh* l (1955) 107–8). There is no reason to think that he reached Rome before the *stipendium* debate, and Plutarch's version can stand.

⁶ See now A. M. Ward, *AJAH* ii (1977) 26–36 (correcting *CPh* lxx [1975] 267–8). Suet. *Div. Iul.* puts the pirate episode after the Dolabella trial, and this is confirmed by

the precise reference of Vell. ii 42.3. Caesar there refers the matter to the proconsul of Bithynia and Asia, who seems to be called *Iuncus* or *Iunius Iuncus* (both emendations are due to Nipperdey: *Iunium cum* codd.). This can only be the *Ἰουγκος* of *Caes.* 2.6, who apparently held this unique combination of provinces for the first part of 74. (See Ward, *AJAH art. cit.*; Broughton, *MRR* ii 98, 100; D. Magie, *Roman Rule in Asia Minor* (Princeton 1950) 1126–7, 1204.) Caesar was held by the pirates for 38 days: his capture should therefore be late 75 or 74.

⁷ Suet. *Div. Iul.* 4 again places this after the Dolabella trial, connecting it with the pirate adventure. If that connexion is historical, the date should again be 75/4.

⁸ H. Strasburger, *Caesars Eintritt in die Geschichte* (Munich 1938) 72–3. Strasburger demonstrates the uniform nature of the tradition for Caesar's early years.

Hellenism and his interest in *παιδεία*. (We might compare the emphasis on Cicero's Greek teachers at *Cic.* 3-4.)

(iii) This last instance suggests that displacements may also make, or reinforce, a causal or logical point; this, too, is frequent. *Cato* 30.9-10 puts great stress on Cato's rejection of a marriage-connexion with Pompey: in this Life, it is that which began the train of events which led to war. When, immediately afterwards, Plutarch comes to the affairs of 59 B.C., he places Pompey's betrothal to Julia at the beginning of the account (31.6). This emphasises the point, but is another displacement: *Caes.* 14.7 and *Pomp.* 47.10 put this later, and a date in spring or early summer is confirmed by *Cic. Att.* ii 17.1 (*ista repentina adfinitatis coniunctio*).⁹

I pass to a different form of displacement, the *transfer* of an item from one character to another: this is an extreme form of a technique often visible elsewhere, the suppression of the role of a complicating extra character.¹⁰ (i) At *Ant.* 5.10 Antony and Cassius are given the speech to Caesar's troops before the crossing of the Rubicon; at *Caes.* 31.3 Plutarch says that Caesar incited the troops himself. Comparison with Appian (ii 33.133) and Caesar (*B.C.* i 7) suggests that the *Caesar* version accurately reproduces the source. (ii) At *Pomp.* 58.6 Marcellus is given a proposal which Plutarch knows to be Scipio's, and a remark (Caesar as a *ληστής*) which he elsewhere gives to Lentulus (*Caes.* 30.4, 6). This last instance seems only one of several such transfers in the accounts of the outbreak of war. These are discussed in the excursus at the end of this paper.

We have so far been concerned with ways in which Plutarch has streamlined his narrative. The effect has usually been to abbreviate his source-material, or at least to arrange it in as simple and elegant a manner as possible, avoiding duplications, side-tracks, or distracting explanations. The opposite technique is also visible: the *expansion* of inadequate material, normally by the fabrication of circumstantial detail. Russell's analysis of *Coriolanus* has demonstrated how much licence Plutarch allowed himself in introducing such inventions.¹¹ The present group of Lives do not lend themselves so conveniently to this investigation: when one Life has more detail than another, it is rare that we can be *certain* that it is the leaner, not the fuller, account which accurately reproduces the source. But some instances of fabrication seem adequately clear. (i) At *Caes.* 9.2-10.11 Plutarch tells of Clodius and the Bona Dea. He had already told this story in *Cicero* (28-9), and there are great similarities between the two versions: as I have argued elsewhere, it is likely that he based the *Caesar* account on his earlier version.¹² But *Caesar* does have many picturesque details absent from the *Cicero* model. The doors of the house are open; the maid runs off to fetch Pompeia; Clodius is too nervous to stay where he is left; Aurelia's maid is playful—*ὡς δὴ γυνὴ γυναικα παίζειν προὔκαλείτο, καὶ μὴ βουλόμενον εἰς τὸ μέσον εἴλκε* . . .; Aurelia is formidable and decisive; the wives return and gossip to their husbands, and it is the menfolk who cry out for vengeance. Yet none of this new detail is very substantial, and the main lines of the account remain unmistakably close to the *Cicero* version. Plutarch *may* have had good information for this new detail, but it is much more likely that he is using his imagination to supplement an unsatisfactorily spare original.

(ii) In my earlier article I discussed Plutarch's use of the *Second Philippic* in the early chapters of *Antony*, and tried to show how he has revised that material to bring out points important to the Life: for instance, Antony's susceptibility to the wiles of others.¹³ We can also see him supplementing the *Philippic* with circumstantial detail, for which it is hard to believe that he has any independent authority. *Ant.* 9.6 has Antony vomiting on his *tribunal*, an item in which the

⁹ Ch. Meier, *Hist.* x (1961) 69-79.—Such displacements are very frequent. For further examples, cf. e.g. *Ant.* 12.6 and *Caes.* 60.6, discussed at *Method* 86 n. 88; *Ant.* 21, where material from the *Second Philippic* is delayed to a point after Cicero's death (*Method* 90); *Pomp.* 64.5, where Plutarch displaces the arrival of Labienus in order to include him in his survey of Pompey's new supporters (contrast *Caes.* 34.5); *Caes.* 11.5-6 and 32.9, using material which the source apparently attached to Caesar's quaestorship (cf. Suet. *Div. Iul.* 7-8); *Pomp.* 48.9-12, where the *amoibaia* material is brought forward from 56 B.C. (cf. Dio xxxix 19, *Cic. Q.fr.* ii 3.2), as Plutarch wishes to connect it

with events two years earlier; and apparently several displacements in his account of senate-meetings before the outbreak of war (see excursus, p. 139 f.).

¹⁰ For instances of this, cf. *Method* 77; for transfers, *Method* 79 n. 41. Add *Brut.* 24.7, where the watchword 'Apollo' at Philippi is transferred from Antony to Brutus.

¹¹ *JRS* liii (1963) 21-8, esp. 23-5. For similar instances in *Marius*, cf. Carney, *JHS* lxxx (1960) 28-9; in *mul. virt.*, P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods* (Cambridge Mass. 1965) 138-9.

¹² *Method* 90, with n. 120.

¹³ *Method* 89-90.

Philippic had revelled (63): Plutarch adds, discreetly, τῶν φίλων τινὸς ὑποσχόντος τὸ ἱμάτιον. *Ant.* 11 has the squabbles between Antony and Dolabella, and clearly rests on *Phil.* ii 79 ff; again, circumstantial detail is added (e.g. τότε μὲν αἰσχυνηθεὶς τὴν ἀκοσμίαν ὁ Καίσαρ ἀπηλλάγη. μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα προελθὼν ἀναγορεύσαι τὸν Δολοβέλλαν . . .). The unexpected night-time return of Antony to Fulvia is similarly elaborated (*Ant.* 10.8–9 ~ *Phil.* ii 77–8). Finally, *Ant.* 13 repays examination. Antony has just failed in his clumsy attempt to crown Caesar at the Lupercalia. That episode strengthened the conspirators' hand, and they considered approaching possible allies. Some suggested inviting Antony, but Trebonius opposed this: he mentioned an earlier occasion on which he had himself sounded Antony. His remarks again seem based on the *Second Philippic* (34): (Antony), quem et Narbone hoc consilium cum C. Trebonio cepisse notissimum est et ob eius consilii societatem cum interficeretur Caesar, tum te a Trebonio uidimus seuocari. In Plutarch, the passage is transformed. Antony now shares a tent with Trebonius as his travel-companion; Trebonius broaches the subject ἀτρέμα πως καὶ μετ' εὐλαβείας; and Plutarch stresses (what was a very easy inference) that Antony neither joined the plot nor revealed it to Caesar. The details give the anecdote conviction and interest, but they are again not very substantial. They are much more likely to come from Plutarch's imagination than from any independent authority.

This instance brings us to a final category, which we may call the *fabrication of a context*: the devices by which Plutarch sought to incorporate additional details, often those which sat awkwardly with his principal version. (i) The whole context in *Ant.* 13 is interesting. This is a poor piece of narrative, and the Trebonius item fits uneasily into its context.¹⁴ The explanation of the awkwardness is clear enough: Plutarch is fitting the item from the *Philippic* into the framework drawn from his main Pollio-source, and the joints creak. The main source had described the conspirators' approaches to possible allies (*App. B.C.* ii 113 ff., *Brut.* 11–12, etc): this was the best peg he could find for Trebonius' sounding of Antony, and he inserted the item here. But the insertion involved fabrication of detail. The *Philippic* mentioned the Narbo conversation, and Trebonius' distraction of Antony on the Ides; that is all. Neither the *Philippic* nor any other source confirms that the conspirators *now* considered sounding Antony, nor that Trebonius told his colleagues of his earlier conversation. Those items seem to be Plutarch's fabrication, as he developed a context for the startling item of Antony's knowledge of the plot.

(ii) The battle with Vercingetorix, shortly before Alesia, provides a second example. *Caes.* 26.7–8 comments on the ferocity of the battle: (Caesar) ἔδοξε δὲ κατ' ἀρχάς τι καὶ σφαλῆναι. καὶ δεικνύουσιν Ἀρβέρνοι ξιφίδιον πρὸς ἱερῷ κρεμάμενον, ὡς δὴ Καίσαρος λάφυρον. Caesar himself smiled at the sight of this dagger, and would not allow it to be removed. Plutarch's narrative of the Gallic Wars is mostly drawn from Caesar's *commentarii* (though he certainly did not know Caesar's work at first hand).¹⁵ But Caesar's account of this battle (*B.G.* vii 66–7) does not include the ξιφίδιον anecdote, nor does it suggest that the Romans at first had the worse of the fighting. Hence some have assumed that Plutarch's notice goes back to an early and independent source.¹⁶ But the ξιφίδιον item must be derived from a source (perhaps an oral source) much nearer to Plutarch's own day: note the present δεικνύουσιν.¹⁷ That anecdote was hard to reconcile with Caesar's own version, which left no room for such a 'spoil'. Plutarch needed to find a stage in the battle when Caesar ἔδοξε . . . τι καὶ σφαλῆναι, and it was natural to put this at 'the beginning'. The revision of his material again arises from the need to find a context for a disparate item.¹⁸

So much for the compositional devices. We should not, of course, assume that their employment was always a wholly conscious process. Sometimes, doubtless, Plutarch did revise his narrative in the most calculated manner, struggling to reshape the source-material before his

¹⁴ The suggestion that Antony should be approached comes awkwardly after his subservient antics at the Lupercalia; disturbingly little is made of the astonishing item of Antony's knowledge of the plot; the 'renewed discussions' at 13.3 are also clumsy; and it is odd that Trebonius is not named in the final sentence (*ἐνίους*: cf. *Method* 79 n. 41).

¹⁵ Cf. *Method* 84 n. 69, 89 with n. 108. The contact with Appian's *Celtica* suggests that Plutarch drew his account from the Pollio-source: *Method* 84–5.

¹⁶ Especially Gelzer, *RE* viii A (1912) 998, and E. Thevenot, *Les Éduens n'ont pas trahi* (Coll. Latomus 1950) 132, 151.

¹⁷ *Method* 90.

¹⁸ A further 'fabrication of a context' seems to be *Brut.* 19, where Plutarch alone attests a senate-meeting for 18th March, 44. He appears to have introduced this separate session in order to include disparate material from a secondary source: *Method* 86 n. 90.

eyes. At other times, the flow of his narrative would carry him on more quickly, and it seems that he sometimes relied on his memory.¹⁹ Conflation, compression, and imaginative embroidery would then arise easily and unconsciously: such is the nature of story-telling.

II. DIFFERENCES OF INTERPRETATION

The most straightforward differences of interpretation among these Lives concern the *motivation* of actions. For instance, *Pomp.* 57.7 tells of the rumours spread in Italy in 50 B.C., when Caesar returned to Pompey the troops he had borrowed three years earlier. These were brought by Appius Claudius, who encouraged Pompey to believe that, if it came to war, Caesar's troops would immediately desert to the republican side. Here there is no suggestion that Appius had been bribed by Caesar to do this: he is simply mistaken, reflecting the false Italian confidence which the context in *Pompey* is stressing. *Caes.* 29.5 has the same item, though Appius is not here named; but here there is a clear hint that οἱ τούτους Πομπηῖω κομίζοντες *deliberately* spread false rumours, and were acting in Caesar's service.²⁰ That fits the themes of the *Caesar* context, which is making much of Caesar's ubiquitous corruption. Pollio may have mentioned both possible explanations, for the parallel passage in Appian has the men acting εἴθ' ὑπ' ἀγνοίας εἴτε διεφθαρμένοι (ii 30.117). In each Life Plutarch selected the interpretation which suited the run of his argument.

A more elaborate variation concerns Pompey himself during the fifties: how alert was he to the dangers which Caesar threatened? Different Lives give different answers. *Cato* stresses Pompey's blindness to the menace: that is not surprising, for in that Life he provides the foil to Cato's own mantic foresight.²¹ At 43.10, for instance, Cato 'often warned Pompey' of the danger: ταῦτα πολλάκις ἀκούων ὁ Πομπηῖος ἡμέλει καὶ παρέπεμπεν, ἀπιστία τῆς Καίσαρος μεταβολῆς διὰ πίστιν εὐτυχίας τῆς ἑαυτοῦ καὶ δυνάμεως. It is only after the consulship of 52 B.C. that Pompey becomes alert, and wistfully recalls Cato's wisdom (49.1–2)—but even then he is ὄκνου καὶ μελλήσεως ἀτόλμου πρὸς τὸ κωλύειν καὶ ἐπιχειρεῖν ὑπόπλευς. *Caesar* passes quickly over the politics of the fifties, but its summaries seem to reflect the same analysis: here, too, Pompey is blind. 'For the entire time of his campaign' Caesar deceived him, and he did not notice the growth of Caesar's political strength (20.3); as war approached, he had 'recently' come to fear Caesar, having until then despised him (28.2).

Pompey itself has a different, more subtle analysis. There, too, Pompey is certainly outsmarted (51.1): he does not possess Caesar's grasp of urban politics, and Caesar ἐλάνθανεν ὑπὸ δεινότητος ἐν μέσῳ τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τοῖς κυριωτάτοις πράγμασι καταπολιτευόμενος Πομπηῖον. But Pompey here realises the danger earlier, even if he does not meet it. By the time of Crassus' death, he too ὑπαλείφεται τῷ χεῖρέ θ' ὑποκονίεται (53.9); in those years τότε δὲ τὸν Καίσαρα δοκῶν οὐ προήσεσθαι τὴν δύναμιν, ἐξίηται ταῖς πολιτικαῖς ἀρχαῖς ὄχυρὸς εἶναι πρὸς αὐτόν, ἄλλο δ' οὐδὲν ἐνεωτέριζεν, οὐδ' ἐβούλετο δοκεῖν ἀπιστεῖν, ἀλλ' ὑπερορᾶν μᾶλλον καὶ καταφρονεῖν (54.2). Plutarch goes on to narrate the events of 54 B.C. In other words, Pompey's alertness to the danger is put several years earlier than in *Cato*, and his neglect is now a matter of conscious policy rather than political blindness. It is then only in the last months before the war, with his joyful reception in the cities of Italy, that he genuinely comes to misjudge the danger: he then lays aside caution, and comes to unqualified disdain of Caesar's strength (57.5–6). This enthusiasm of the Italian cities is consequently given extraordinary emphasis: οὐδενὸς μέντοι τοῦτο λέγεται τῶν ἀπεργασαμένων τὸν πόλεμον αἰτίων ἔλαττον γενέσθαι (57.5). This whole reading is quite individual to *Pompey*, and no other Life gives such emphasis to that moment.²²

The different emphasis here is partly to be explained by biographical relevance, for the complexity of Pompey's changing views is naturally most apposite in his own Life; equally naturally, the other versions may simplify. But there is more to it than this. His alertness to the

¹⁹ *Method* 91–6.

²⁰ I defend and elaborate this interpretation of the *Caesar* passage in a forthcoming article in *RhM*.

²¹ Cato's foresight is stressed at *Cato* 31.7, 33.5, 35.7, 42.6, 43.9, 45.7, 49.1–2, 51.4–5, 52.1–3; it is given a divine tinge at 35.7, 42.6, and 43.3, and is contrasted with Pom-

pey's blindness at 43.9, 49.1–2, and 52.3.

²² *Caesar* (28.2, 29.5, 33.5) and *Cato* (49.1, 52.4) make related points much less extravagantly; in neither Life does Plutarch think this Italian joy worth mentioning. To judge from Appian (*B.C.* ii 28.107–8), Pollio did not make much of it.

menace suits the Life's stress on his *εὐλαβεία*;²³ it also contributes to the tragic texture of the second half of the Life. The outbreak of war is presaged by this joy in Italy, an elegant contrast to the bleakness which will be Pompey's fate: this *θέαμα κάλλιστον . . . καὶ λαμπρότατον* will eventually yield to the very different tableaux of the final chapters.²⁴ 'Garlands and flowers' now introduce the events which lead to Pompey's fall, and, as *Pompey* has recast matters, they also causally contribute to that fall. A false confidence is produced in Pompey, and he casts off that *εὐλαβεία* which has hitherto protected him. He is now utterly vulnerable to *Τύχη*, another of the Life's major themes.²⁵ Some of this could be formally stated in Aristotelian terms—the *ἀμαρτία*, the events following *παρὰ τὴν δόξαν δι' ἄλληλα*, and so on; but there is no need to labour the point. The tragic elements are manifest.²⁶

There is a further aspect to Pompey's tragedy, and this may be introduced by another question of interpretation, Plutarch's treatment of Clodius. Was he acting independently, or was he a triumviral agent? In particular, the exile of Cicero, which is treated in several Lives: was that simply, or largely, Clodius' own desire, or was it a matter of triumviral policy? There is no clear and consistent answer, but the differences among the Lives are illuminating.²⁷

Pompey does imply some arrangement between Clodius and Pompey, but in this Life, surprisingly, Clodius seems the dominant partner. Pompey needs support to defend his eastern *acta* (46.7), and is forced to flee to 'demagogues and youths': *ὡν ὁ βδελυρώτατος καὶ θρασύτατος Κλώδιος ἀναλαβὼν αὐτὸν ὑπέρριψε τῷ δήμῳ, καὶ παρ' ἀξίαν ἐν ἀγορᾷ κυλινδούμενον ἔχων καὶ περιφέρων, ἐχρήτο τῶν πρὸς χάριν ὄχλου καὶ κολακειᾶν γραφομένων καὶ λεγομένων βεβαιωτῆ* (46.8)—and he even demanded and obtained a reward, the sacrifice of Cicero, as if he were doing him service rather than bringing him shame. 'As if' he were doing him service—but all these demagogic acts are done on Clodius' initiative, who uses Pompey merely as a *βεβαιωτής*. Nor has Pompey any wish of his own for Cicero's exile; it is solely Clodius' pressure which achieves this. The analysis evidently represents Pompey as more powerful than Clodius, and Pompey's backing is needed to secure what Clodius desires. But the moving and active spirit is quite clearly Clodius, not Pompey. By ch. 48, Clodius is quite out of hand. He has cast out Cicero, he has sent Cato to Cyprus, and he then turns on Pompey himself. In this Life he is, most certainly, an independent agent.

Cato is rather different. Here Clodius serves the interests of the triumvirs, and receives the exile of Cicero as his part of the bargain: *ἐπὶ μισθῷ τῇ Κικέρωνος ἐξελάσει πάντα πρὸς χάριν ἐκείνοις πολιτευόμενον*, 33.6. In *Pompey* (48.9) Plutarch made Cato's mission to Cyprus the work of Clodius himself (. . . *καὶ Κάτωνα προφάσει στρατηγίας εἰς Κύπρον ἀπέπεμψε*), and that mission even worked against Pompey's interest. *Cato* 34.3 agrees that this was Clodius' idea, but the

²³ *Pomp.* 57.6 stresses that it was his *εὐλαβεία* which had earlier guided his *εὐτυχήματα* to safety. Plutarch presumably has in mind such instances as 8.5, 13.2–3, 13.9, 19.8, 21.5–7, 22.4, 26.1, 27.3, 33.5, 36.3, 40.8–9, 43.3; cf. also 2.10, 20.8, 39.2, 42.4.

²⁴ Especially the scenes of Pompey's death, 78–80; Plutarch's technique is there extremely visual, describing events from the viewpoint of Cornelia and the rest of Pompey's followers, still at sea.—The Italian reception is also intended to evoke the procession of ch. 45, a previous turning-point of Pompey's life.

²⁵ Esp. 21.3, 21.8, 41.4, 42.12, 46.2, 50.3, 53.8–10, 57.6, 73.8, 74.5–6, 75.1–2, 75.5, 82(2).1.

²⁶ Talk of 'tragic influence' is of course facile and problematic. Sensitivity to the 'tragic' elements of the human condition has never been confined to one genre of literature, nor any single art-form, nor even to art itself. Truly 'tragic' elements in a writer spring from his humane sensibilities and sympathies; literary allusiveness is secondary. (When the stylistic elements become primary, we are close to 'tragic history' in the debased Hellenistic sense.) I here suggest only that, in Plutarch's best writing, his tragic sensibilities are given literary depth

and resonance by the adoption of motifs from Tragedy, the literary genre. Cf. esp. P. de Lacy, *AJP* lxxiii (1952) 359–71; note also the cautious remarks of Russell, *Plutarch* (London 1973) 123, and A. E. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London 1974) 168–79.

²⁷ In using terms such as 'triumvirate' or 'independent agent', I do not suggest that these categories are appropriate for illuminating historical fact; I do suggest that it was in categories such as these that Plutarch approached and understood the period.—I omit the earlier *Cicero* from this analysis; the later Lives are better informed on the fifties than *Cic.*, and we need not assume that Plutarch then had the same view of events. *Cic.* in fact represents Clodius as largely independent, with his hostility to Cicero dating from the Bona Dea affair. That emphasis suits the Life's interest in Cicero's private affairs, especially gossip relating to Terentia (e.g. 20.3, 29.2–4, 30.4, 41.2–3). The triumvirs are at first friendly to Cicero, and their feelings change only when Caesar is offended over his offered *legatio* (30.4–5). Caesar then 'strengthens' Clodius, and dissuades Pompey from helping Cicero. There is no more extensive deal between the triumvirs and Clodius, only this casual backing for Cicero's exile.

context (33.6, 34.1) again makes it evident that he was serving the policy of the triumvirs.²⁸ The exile of Cicero remains the result of Clodius' pressure rather than the dynasts', but that is all. Later in the fifties, Clodius temporarily detaches himself—but he soon 'slips back to Pompey', *ἀδθις εἰς Πομπήϊον ὑπορρυεῖς* (45.2). This is a much more subservient figure than the Clodius of *Pompey*.

The brief notice of *Caesar* 14.17 is different again. This time only Cicero's exile is in point, and there is no mention of any other services. But here, and here alone, Cicero's exile is not only the wish of Clodius: Plutarch's language strongly suggests that Caesar wanted this as much as Clodius. 'The worst deed of Caesar's consulship was the election of Clodius to the tribunate, and he was elected ἐπὶ τῇ Κικέρωνος καταλύσει. Caesar did not leave Italy before, in company with Clodius, he had defeated Cicero and forced him into exile.' Again, there is no hint of this reading in *Pompey* or *Cato*.²⁹

It is not hard to see why *Caesar* and *Cato* take the lines they do. *Caesar* is denouncing the acts of 59 B.C., and the disapproval has a crescendo: Clodius' election, especially shameful after the Bona Dea affair, marks the climax. It is natural to blacken Caesar still further by suggesting that Cicero's exile, too, was his doing. *Cato* controls a great deal of its narrative by polarising the struggles of the fifties: Cato is always the champion of the republic, the triumvirs (especially Pompey and Caesar) are always the threat.³⁰ It is natural to fit Clodius, too, into this scheme.

The *Pompey* rewriting is more interesting. The Life has just begun an important new movement. 46.1–4 has stressed that Pompey's earlier career enjoyed success to match Alexander: how fortunate, if he had died now! For the future brought him envy in his successes, and irretrievable disaster. He came to use his power οὐ δικαίως for others, and gave them strength while reducing his own glory: ἔλαθε ῥώμη καὶ μεγέθει τῆς αὐτοῦ δυνάμεως καταλυθείς. For Caesar rose through Pompey's strength to challenge the city, and eventually he destroyed Pompey himself.

Clodius is then introduced (46.8), and, thanks to Plutarch's rewriting, he plays out in miniature much of what is to come. Pompey gives strength to Clodius, and is the βεβαιωτής of his measures; but Clodius 'uses' Pompey (46.8), as shortly Caesar will 'use' him (47.8), for sheer demagoguery. This weakens Pompey's reputation (e.g. καταισχύνων, 46.8), and finally the strength given to Clodius is used against Pompey himself (48.9–12). Pompey himself is slow to see what is happening (48.8, cf. ἔλαθε in 46.3). Here there is a more specific foreshadowing of later events, for Pompey is too wrapped up in his marriage with Julia to notice the political currents (48.8), and this is what leaves him vulnerable to Clodius. Just so will he neglect affairs later in the fifties, first with Julia (53.1) and then with Cornelia (55.3–4, cf. 2.10). With Clodius, events do not go too far; with the help of the senate, Pompey can retrieve his position. Against Caesar, too, he will need the senate's help, and he will return to their side. But Caesar will not be so manageable.

The treatment of Clodius is one of several passages in the Life which bring out Pompey's passivity. In the politics of the fifties, he is seldom in control: it is extraordinary how little in the Life's narrative is initiated by Pompey himself. We hear a good deal of his advisers, both good and bad (49.4, 54.5, 54.9, 57.7–8); his friends, too, are emphasised, excusing his blunders (47.8), discussing his policy with him (49.3), or giving some indication of his wishes (54.4). He himself reveals little; he is a man to whom things happen.³¹ Commands are voted to him; he is not said to press for them, or even to desire them.³² When pressed, he may answer questions (47.6–7, 51.7–8, 60.6, 60.8)—but normally his answers reveal a further lack of sureness, and he has little dignity or control. After the outbreak of war, no-one allowed him to think for himself; all men rushed to Pompey and filled him with their own transient emotions and fears. καὶ πάναντία τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας ἐκράτει βουλευματα (61.4–5), for Pompey was the prey to every false rumour; hurriedly, he left the city to its fate. For ten years, we have seen this indecisive man, one who is out of his

²⁸ So S. I. Oost (n. 5) 109 n. 3: 'Plut. *Cat. min.* 34 surely can only mean that the triumvirate was behind the silencing of Cato'.

²⁹ Though the *Caesar* version is closer to that of *Cicero* (n. 27), and may be a simplification of that Life's account.

³⁰ For an instance of this, cf. *Method* 77.

³¹ There is of course considerable historical acumen in Plutarch's portrayal: 'nosti hominis tarditatem et taciturnitatem' (*Cic. fam.* i 5b.2), and cf. e.g. Gelzer, *Pompeius*²

(Munich 1959) 158–9, 170–1, 175. Gelzer (164) also finds it useful to contrast Pompey's phlegmatic conduct of politics with 'die alte Energie' on campaigns. But such matters are beyond the scope of this paper.

³² Esp. 49, 54, 55.12, 61.1: contrast the Life's earlier stress on his φιλαρχία, esp. 30.7–8. Pompey of course wants to retain his pre-eminent position (53.9–10), but the nearest approach to desire for a specific ἀρχή is the hint of 54.8, where he thanks Cato for his support.

depth in the political currents: he is a general lost in politics (a theme introduced earlier in the *Life*, 23.3–6). It is, indeed, only on campaign that he acts with his old briskness and success. His *cura annonae* (50) shows a different, stronger Pompey than the man we have just seen humiliated by Clodius; his swift departure from Brundisium (62) shows him a match for Caesar, again different from the man who has just been the feeble victim of others' emotions (61). In Rome and at peace, he is fully himself only with his wives, Julia and then Cornelia, who themselves distract him from public affairs. It is a powerful and sympathetic psychological portrait—and the other *Lives'* accounts of the fifties have little hint of it.³³

Pompey's lack of decision is reflected in the *Life's* treatment of his motives, and here again there is a difference of interpretation between *Pompey* and the other *Lives*. *Caesar* and *Cato* stress his calculated ambitions in the years from 54 to 52 B.C. *Caes.* 28.7 is explicit, ἔργω παντὸς μᾶλλον ἐπέραινεν ἐξ ὧν ἀναδειχθήσοιτο δικτάτωρ; while *Cato's* speech at *Cato* 45.7 shows his usual foresight, . . . ἐξ ὧν οὐ λέληθε δι' ἀναρχίας μοναρχίαν ἑαυτῷ μνηστευόμενος. Pollio seems to have had something to say about this, for Appian has a similar passage (*B.C.* ii 19.71, 20.73). But such calculation is foreign to the *Pompey*, and that *Life* cuts the analysis away: simply ἀναρχίαν ἐν τῇ πόλει περιεΐδε γενομένην (54.3), he let it happen—though he himself has just been said to rely on the city's ἀρχαί, not on ἀναρχία (54.2). There is no suggestion of any conscious plotting. And, as we saw earlier, Pompey's view of Caesar in Gaul is fairly similar: he realises the danger, and yet he does nothing. He is, indeed, a man to whom things happen—and he lets them.

In all this there is a pervasive contrast with Caesar. Pompey is politically inert; Caesar is always at work, even when men do not realise. His furtive δεινότης undermines Roman politics, even when he is absent in Gaul (51.1); he shows a deviousness quite alien to Pompey's simple and generous nature (*cf.* 49.14). Caesar's flair for urban politics quite outwits Pompey (. . . ἐν μέσῳ τῷ δήμῳ καὶ τοῖς κυριωτάτοις πράγμασι καταπολιτευόμενος Πομπηΐον, 51.1). This contrast is again a peculiarity of the *Pompey* (though this is a matter of technique rather than interpretation). In *Caesar* Pompey is certainly outwitted (20.3), but that *Life* concentrates more on the similarities than the differences of the pair. Both aim at μοναρχία (*cf.* 28.5–7), and both aim to destroy the other (28.1). *Pompey* has something of this (53.9–10, *cf.* 67.2, 67.4–5), but states it less sharply: the points of contact are here much less emphatic than those of contrast.

More important is the preparation which all this affords for the tragedy of Pharsalus. When the war begins, Pompey again seems to have regained his stature. His strategy of leaving Italy is correct: Plutarch elaborately defends it.³⁴ The army admires him, and he inspires all with his own vigour (64.3). At Dyrrhachium, he outmanoeuvres Caesar, and forces him into all manner of hardship; meanwhile 'every wind blows' for Pompey, bringing provisions, reinforcements, and funds (65.6–7). His strategy of delay, avoiding a pitched battle, is again evidently correct (66.1); Plutarch defends it in the concluding *Comparison* (84[4].6). All this is consonant with Pompey's history of decisive generalship and unbroken military success. But now, fatally, his two worlds of politics and warfare are coming together. Even in this decisive campaign, his political failings are felt, and it is these which bring him to defeat. He is destroyed by his inability to lead or persuade his senatorial lieutenants. In politics, he has never been able to manage men like these, and he cannot manage them now. He still sees things more clearly than they (66.6), but he cannot resist them. He abandons the task of a general, and, conscious of the folly, leads his army to its fate: the moment inspires Plutarch to great eloquence, 67.7–10 and *Comparison* 84(4). His political unsureness becomes his decisive failing, and leaves him vulnerable to Fortune: he has no control, and events bear him inexorably to his fall.

We are, once again, close to tragedy; and Plutarch's style and imagery adopt an appropriate

³³ The other *Lives* reflect the dilatoriness and indecision at the outset of the war (*Caes.* 33.4–6 and, less strongly, *Cato* 52.4, 53.3); but there is no similar attempt to prepare this theme in the accounts of the fifties. The psychological depth of *Pompey* contrasts with the crude passage at *Cato* 49.1, where in 52 B.C. Pompey ἦν ὄκνου καὶ μελλήσεως ἀτόλμου πρὸς τὸ κωλύειν καὶ ἐπιχειρεῖν ὑπόπλεως.

³⁴ *Pomp.* 64 treats the forces which Pompey gathered during 49 B.C., and Plutarch's argument seems intended

to justify the strategy of leaving Italy. Some praised Pompey's departure, though Caesar and Cicero uttered dismissive remarks (63.1–2); but Caesar showed in his actions that he particularly feared τὸν χρόνον (63.3–4); ἐν δὲ τῷ χρόνῳ τούτῳ μεγάλη συνέστη Πομπηΐῳ δύναμις (64.1). The strength which Pompey now acquired contrasts forcefully with his initial weakness (57.6–9, 60.6–8). Plutarch's approval of the strategy seems clear; though, in a different train of thought, he later criticises the decision to abandon Rome (*Comparison* 83[3].6–8, *cf.* 61.6–7).

tone. The Caesarian troops take their positions ὡσπερ χορός (68.7)—and indeed the startling ch. 70, where participants reflect on human blindness and greed, is very much in the manner of a choral ode. Pharsalus itself is later said to be the θέατρον (*Comparison* 84[4].6)—there, a theatre which Pompey should have avoided.³⁵ It is a theatre where the armies play out events to an inevitable conclusion. The Pompeian dandies are no match for Caesar's veterans (69.4–5, 71.7–8). The empty luxury found in Pompey's camp closes the account of the battle (72.5–6), elegantly returning to the vital theme, the manic optimism of Pompey's staff: οὕτω ταῖς ἐλπίσι διεφθαρμένοι καὶ γέμοντες ἀνοήτου θράσους ἐπὶ τὸν πόλεμον ἐχώρου. And Pompey the Great, now μάλιστα δ' ὁμοιος παράφρονι καὶ παραπλήγι τὴν διάνοιαν (72.1), is involved inescapably in their fate.

III. BIOGRAPHICAL THEORY AND PRACTICE

Plutarch introduces the pair *Alexander and Caesar* with one of his clearest programmatic statements. The reader of those two Lives should not expect a detailed narrative of all the well-known historical events. 'For it is not histories we are writing, but Lives. Nor is it always his most famous actions which reveal a man's good or bad qualities: a clearer insight into a man's character is often given by a small matter, a word or a jest, than by engagements where thousands die, or by the greatest of pitched battles, or by the sieges of cities' (*Alex.* 1.1–2). The point recurs elsewhere: Plutarch feels no responsibility to give a continuous history of events, which the reader can find elsewhere.³⁶ His interest is character, ἦθος. Compare the first chapter of *Nicias*: Plutarch is 'not as stupid as Timaeus, who tried to rival Thucydides': he has merely tried to collect some less familiar material, οὐ τὴν ἄχρηστον ἀθροίζων ἱστορίαν, ἀλλὰ τὴν πρὸς κατανόησιν ἡθους καὶ τρόπου παραδιδούς.³⁷ Why this interest in character? Plutarch's answer is again clear: he hopes that his readers might be led by examples of virtue to become better men themselves.³⁸ He hopes that a few examples of wickedness, carefully introduced, may deter his audience from evil.³⁹ And he has himself tried to become a better man for his biographical studies, 'using history like a mirror, and somehow improving and moulding my own life in imitation of their virtues' (*Aem.* 1.1). The theory is clear and consistent. Biography will often concentrate on personal details, and may abbreviate its historical narrative; its concern will be the portrayal of character, and its ultimate purpose will be protreptic and moral.

That is the theory; and the practice often closely corresponds. *Pompey* itself is one example. Everything centres on Pompey's own character, on motifs such as the tension between home life and public affairs or between politics and warfare; on the strengths and weaknesses which bring success and then defeat. The explanations of such matters are sought in Pompey's own personality, and there is no attempt to relate them to any wider historical background. It is also a moralistic Life: Pompey's good qualities—the σωφροσύνη of his personal life, or his diligent provincial administration—receive due praise; his political unscrupulousness seldom escapes censure.⁴⁰ Passing morals are intrusively pointed (the most striking example being the 'choric' reflections before Pharsalus).⁴¹ And the insight into the vulnerability of a great man carries an awareness of human fragility which is 'moralistic' in the deepest sense.

³⁵ At 84(4).6 the θέατρον image is also woven into the texture of the athletic imagery which pervades the Life (cf. esp. 8.7, 17.2, 20.2, 41.2, 51.2, 66.4, 84[4] *passim*): Pharsalus is 'the stadium and theatre for the contest'; 'no herald called Pompey to come and fight, if he would not leave the crown for another'. A good example both of the systematic elaboration of Plutarch's imagery, and of the interaction of different systems. For the 'theatre' motif, we might compare the theatrical imagery in another Life rich in tragedy, the *Antony*: *Dtr.* 53.10, *Ant.* 29.4, 45.4, 54.5. *Antony* here echoes and develops the imagery of *Demetrius*: cf. de Lacy (n. 26) 371.

³⁶ *Galba* 2.5, *Fab.* 16.6.

³⁷ On the *Nicias* passage, cf. Wardman, *CQ* xxi (1971) 257–61, and *op. cit.* (n. 26) 154–7. For the interest in ἦθος,

cf. esp. *Pomp.* 8.6–7, *Demosth.* 11.7; for Plutarch's terminology, Russell, *G&R* xiii (1966) 139–54.

³⁸ Cf. esp. *Per.* 1–2, *Aem.* 1.

³⁹ *Dtr.* 1, cf. *Cim.* 2.2–5.

⁴⁰ Personal life: *Pomp.* 18.3, 40.8–9, 53.2. Administration: 39.4–6, cf. 27.6–7, 28.5–7. More praise: 10.10–14, 20.6–8, 49.14. Criticism: esp. 10.3–5, 29, 30.8, 38.1, 40.6, 44.4–5, 46.3, 47.8, 53.9–10, 55.6–10, 67.7–10. And the *Comparison*, as always, is rich in praise and blame.

⁴¹ 28.5, man as naturally responsive to kindness; 29.5, the culpable φιλοτιμία of Achilles; 53.10, Fortune cannot meet the demands of human nature, for greed is insatiable; 70, blindness and greed; 73.11, φεῦ τοῖσι γενναίοισιν ὡς ἅπαν καλόν.

Cato is also close to the theory. The Life underlines Cato's unbending and upright character, ἡθος . . . ἀρεπτον καὶ ἀπαθὲς καὶ βέβαιον ἐν πᾶσιν (1.3). Cato's austere and energetic demeanour on campaign, his ostentatiously just administration, his immaculate conduct as a candidate for office, his magnanimity in accepting a personal defeat: these are the points which are stressed.⁴² The tradition richly illustrated Cato's courageous resistance to unscrupulous and violent opponents: Plutarch revels in it. There were a few bad points, too, and Plutarch, true to his theory, observes them carefully: his unbending opposition to Pompey's agents was perilous, although well-intentioned (26.5); his unpretentious dress and demeanour detracted from his dignity as praetor (44.1); his divorce and remarriage of Marcia was at least questionable (52.8). But the general picture is altogether favourable. The climax is reached with Cato's last days. He is determined on suicide, but his first thought is for the safety of the people of Utica.⁴³ They doubt the wisdom of resisting Caesar; but even they come to understand and marvel at the constancy of Cato's virtue (64.3).

'Small matters', too, receive the stress which the *Alexander* prologue suggests. The Life is studded with anecdotes: the infant Cato's meeting with Poppaedi Silo, the triumphant entry of Demetrius into Antioch, the circumstances in which Cato received Ptolemy, the complicated snub of Juba.⁴⁴ Cato's quarrel with Munatius is described at length (37), and Plutarch concludes in language very reminiscent of the *Alexander*: 'I have treated this episode at length because I think that this, no less than his great and public deeds, reveals and illustrates his character' (37.10). This is indeed a very 'personal' Life. Cato's love for his brother is emphasised; the difficulties of his womenfolk are a recurrent theme; his fondness for drink is not concealed.⁴⁵ There is little interest in the historical background: he can relate the formation of the first triumvirate without even mentioning Crassus.⁴⁶ Cato's resistance to the dynasts is not brought into any political scheme: he is one man working on his own. The controlling interest is ethical, not political, and passing ethical truths are duly pointed.⁴⁷

Cato, then, and *Pompey* are all Plutarch's theory could demand: personal, moralistic, non-historical. They are also not very typical. Consider, for instance, *Caesar*. Plutarch there generates a great interest in the historical background, and is particularly careful to keep the theme of the coming tyranny before our eyes.⁴⁸ The early chapters introduce the theme. 3.2–4 digresses to mention the later period in Caesar's life when, 'striving to become first in power and in armed conflict', he allowed the highest rank of eloquence to escape him.⁴⁹ Abusive political opponents charge him with challenging the state and aiming at tyranny (4.8, 6.3, 6.6); but the people encourage his ambitions, and promise their support (5.8–9, 6.9). Later in the Life, little touches show Plutarch's careful emphasis. At 29.5 the rumour spreads in Italy that Caesar's men are likely to desert: οὕτως γεγρονέναι τὸν Καίσαρα πλήθει στρατειῶν λυπηρὸν αὐτοῖς καὶ φόβῳ μοναρχίας ὑποπτον. The parallel passage in *Pompey* (57.7) does not mention μοναρχία; nor, to judge from Appian (*B.C.* ii 30.116), did Pollio make much of this. At *Caes.* 30.1 Caesar accuses the optimates of building Pompey's tyranny while they destroy Caesar himself; the parallel *Pompey* 58.5 does not mention 'tyranny'. The affair with Metellus (*Caes.* 35.6–11) is also brought into the scheme: Plutarch ventures into *oratio recta* to bring out a vital point, Caesar's outburst ἐμὸς γὰρ εἶ καὶ σὺ καὶ πάντες ὄσους εἴληφα τῶν πρὸς ἔμε στασιασάντων. Plutarch does not need to labour the point:⁵⁰ these are the words of a tyrant. Such hints thoroughly prepare the way for the final chapters. Caesar's rule became 'an acknowledged tyranny' (57.1); and yet the pressures of that rule forced

⁴² Campaigns: *Cato* 8.2–3, 9.5–10, 12.1. Administration: 16–18, 21.3 ff., 35–8, 44, 48.8–10. Candidatures: 8.4–5, 20–21, 42.3–4, 49.2–6. Rebuff: 50.

⁴³ *Cato* 58.5, 59.4–8, 65.2, 65.6–7, 70.6–7.

⁴⁴ 2.1–5, 13, 35.4–6, 57.

⁴⁵ Brother: 3.8–10, 8.1, 11.1–8, 15.4. Women: 24.4–25.13, 30.3–10, 52.5–9; cf. 73.2–4, on the sexual predilections of Cato's son. Drink: 6.1–4, but cf. the rejection of the slander at 44.2.

⁴⁶ 31–3; cf. *Method* 95.

⁴⁷ 7.3, 52.7–9, on married life; 9.10, on 'true virtue';

44.12–14, on justice; 46.8, on senseless extravagance; 50.3, on the wise man's constancy.

⁴⁸ Cf. W. Steidle, *Sueton und die antike Biographie* (Munich 1951) 13–24, echoed by C. Brutscher, *Analysen zu Suetons Divus Julius u. d. Parallelüberlieferung* (Bern/Stuttgart 1958) 27–31, 89–91; Garzetti's comm. on *Caesar*, xliii–xlix.

⁴⁹ I discuss the precise interpretation of this sentence in the forthcoming *RhM* article.

⁵⁰ The pedestrian Dio xli 17.2–3 makes the same point more crudely.

him to his death.⁵¹ He had spent his life in seeking absolute power, and saw only its name, and the perils of its reputation (69.1).

Caesar became tyrant; Plutarch asks himself how it happened. His answer is again clear and emphatic. From the beginning, Caesar is the champion of the *demos*. They support him, and he rises; he loses their favour, and he falls.⁵² Early in his life, it is the people who encourage him to become first in the state (6.9). He fosters them with shows and games, and they seek 'new commands and new honours' with which to repay him (5.9). This generosity to the *demos* indeed purchases the greatest of prizes cheaply (5.8, cf. 4.8); and the optimates are quite deceived (4.6–9, 5.8). The theme continues through the Life: even the brief notices of the politics of the fifties are underpinned by references to the *demos*.⁵³ It is when Caesar loses this popular support that his fortunes waver, and the reactions of the *demos* are important in explaining his fall; but, after his death, the popular fervour again erupts.⁵⁴

This *demos-tyrannis* analysis dominates *Caesar*, and it is essentially a *historical* interest. Other Lives occasionally differ in detail from this analysis,⁵⁵ and, more important, they are simply less interested in offering *any* such explanation of events. This interest leads in *Caesar* to the suppression of themes and emphases which elsewhere typify Plutarch's work. Caesar's own *ἦθος*, for instance, remains rather shadowy: there is none of the psychological interest of *Pompey*, and there are few personalia of the type we see in either *Pompey* or *Cato*. Pompey's home life was stressed in his Life, and Cato's womenfolk in his; here there is very little on Caesar's three or four marriages. And Caesar's personal, especially sexual, habits might afford vast scope for a biographer: one need only glance at Suetonius' *Divus Iulius*. Plutarch welcomes such material elsewhere, but here he suppresses it.⁵⁶ Even Cleopatra is treated rather perfunctorily (49.1–3). There are indeed remarkably few of those 'small matters which illustrate a man's character' which the preface to *Alexander and Caesar* had promised.⁵⁷

Nor is it a very moralistic Life: we can indeed see Plutarch avoiding points he elsewhere thinks important to an estimate of Caesar. In other Lives he gives Caesar credit, the *πρώτατος ἰατρός* of the evils of his generation (*Ant.* 6.7, *Brut.* 55[2].2): not a word of this in *Caesar* itself. Little stress is given to Caesar's *ἐπιεικεία* in the Civil Wars:⁵⁸ for instance, his generous treatment of the troops of Afranius and Petreius is stressed at *Pomp.* 65.3, but omitted at *Caes.* 36.2. Other obvious merits are neglected: Caesar's *φιλευταιρία*, for instance, or his devotion to his troops. Nor does Plutarch make negative moral points. There is not a breath of disapproval for Caesar's vulgar demagoguery, or his extravagance, or his debts.⁵⁹ The moralist does occasionally show through, but these hints are sparse, and seldom important.⁶⁰

⁵¹ Here, once again, there are elements of tragedy: cf. *Method* 79. As so often, a major Shakespearian theme may be seen as a brilliant elaboration of a Plutarchean idea.

⁵² Cf. *Method* 78.

⁵³ Thus Caesar's meddlings in Rome are 'demagoguery' (20.2): the unprecedented fifteen-day *supplicatio* was largely the response to *ἡ πρὸς ἐκείνον εὐνοία τῶν πολλῶν* (21.2); the reaction of *τὸ πλῆθος* to Favonius' outburst is traced (21.8–9); the popular emotions at Julia's death are embraced (23.7). Other Lives differ: see n. 55.

⁵⁴ I have said something of this at *Method* 78–9, and tried to show that this reading involved some reworking of material.

⁵⁵ For instance, *Pompey* is more interested in Pompey's relations with the senate (above, pp. 133–5). Thus *Pomp.* 51.1–3 gives no stress to the *demos* in its account of Caesar's urban machinations: it is there 'aediles, praetors, consuls, and their wives' who are stressed. The *Pompey* account of Luca closes with Pompey's clash with Marcellinus (51); the parallel *Caes.* 21 ends by stressing the reaction of the *demos*. *Pompey* gives no hint that the *demos* theme is important for an understanding of the period, and there are other places where it cuts away references to the people: *Cato*, for instance, has more of the popular, as well as the senatorial, opposition to Pompey (e.g. *Cato* 42.3–4, 42.7, 43.6–7). *Cato* itself has material which

would be a great embarrassment to the tidy account of *Caesar*, particularly some popular enthusiasm for Cato himself and the optimate cause (e.g. 44.12–14, and the passages mentioned above). That again suits the emphasis of *Cato*, for the popular reaction reflects Plutarch's own enthusiasm for Cato. Once again, Plutarch has in each Life selected the political analysis to suit his interests and themes.—For the different emphases of *Brutus* and *Caesar* in describing Caesar's death, cf. *Method* 78–9.

⁵⁶ Cf. e.g. *Caes.* 8.2, where Plutarch suppresses the *ἐπιστόλιον ἀκόλαστον* brought to Caesar during the Catinarian debate: contrast *Cato* 24.1–3, *Brut.* 5.2–4. *Caes.* 49.10 makes little of Caesar's affair with Cleopatra; and the initial mention of Nicomedes (1.7) is very tame. Contrast such passages as *Sull.* 2.2–7, *Pomp.* 2.5–10, *Cim.* 4.6–10, *Crass.* 1.2 ff.

⁵⁷ But there are a few: esp. 17, and e.g. 38, 49.7–8.

⁵⁸ Plutarch does make something of this (34.7, 48.3–4, 54.5, 57.4–6), but might easily have made more.

⁵⁹ Contrast Plutarch's disapproval of vulgar demagoguery at *Cato* 46.8, 49.6, *Aem.* 2.6, *praec.reip.ger.* 802d al., *Brut.* 10.6; of extravagance and debt at *praec.reip.ger.* 802d, 821f, 822c–823e, and *de uitando aere alieno*.

⁶⁰ Cf. 14.16–17, 29.5, 48.5, 56.8–9. Note 54.6, a much more measured description of Caesar's *Anticato* than the vituperative *Cato* 11.7–8, 36.5, 54.2.

But *Caesar* is no more typical than *Cato*. Consider another Life, the *Antony*. In many ways this is closer to Plutarch's theory. There is certainly little interest in the history, and the struggle of Antony and Octavian is not related to any wider background. The origins of the war of Actium are described in terms of antagonistic personalities: in particular, the antagonism of Cleopatra and Octavia.⁶¹ The battle itself is narrated very hazily, and all centres on the personal demeanour of Antony and Cleopatra. It is, indeed, a very personal Life. The narrative often stops for powerful characterising surveys: not just of Antony, but also of Cleopatra, of Fulvia, of Octavia, even of the incidental Timon of Athens.⁶² A fund of anecdotes illustrate Antony's character, *κομπῶδη καὶ φρυαγματίαν ὄντα καὶ κενοῦ γαυριάματος καὶ φιλοτιμίας ἀνωμάλου μεστόν* (2.8). His luxurious private life is a dominant motif, and 'small matters' figure as prominently as the *Alexander* preface would suggest.⁶³ The Life is also at times extremely moralistic, as indeed the introduction to *Demetrius and Antony* leads us to expect.⁶⁴ Antony's private luxury is criticised; so is his autocratic behaviour in public.⁶⁵ The proscriptions are strongly stigmatised (19–20). The final *Comparison* is heavy with 'crude and prudish' moralism.⁶⁶ And it is tempting to characterise the entire Life as 'basically . . . a simple cautionary tale'.⁶⁷

Yet it is perhaps not so simple. Most of these instances have been drawn from the first third of the Life, before the entrance of Cleopatra (25.1). Cleopatra herself is introduced as Antony's *τελευταῖον κακόν*—but the story is immediately seized by a new narrative and descriptive vigour, and the nature of Plutarch's moralism becomes rather different. There are no more intrusive moralising remarks; no more explicit denunciations of the actions he describes. Antony and Cleopatra vie with each other in the extravagance of their entertainment (26–8); Plutarch might have done more than mildly rebuke Antony for time-wasting (28.1, *cf.* 30.1). Cleopatra is the mistress of every type of *κολακεία* (29.1), and contrasts tellingly with Octavia's *σεμνότης* (31.4, 53.5); but it is an essentially *artistic* contrast, and no moral is drawn. Cleopatra and Antony behave disgracefully at Actium, 'betraying' the whole army (*cf.* 68.5). Plutarch makes little ethical capital of it: contrast his remarks on Pompey's behaviour at Pharsalus (*Pomp.* 67.7–10). By the end of the narrative, the interests of writer and audience are far from crude moralism. Octavian is allowed no praise for his noble conduct towards Cleopatra (82.2, 84.3, 86.7); and it is indeed a surprise, when we come to the *Comparison*, to discover that Plutarch disapproved of the manner of Antony's death.⁶⁸ Praise and blame are alike irrelevant to the narrative: Plutarch, like his readers, is quite carried away by the vigour and splendour of the death-scenes.

Plutarch is here doing more than pointing the fate of the *κόλαξ*, or noting the effects of the corruption of *ἔρως*. His concern is the tragic depiction of a noble and brilliant nature, a man torn by psychological struggle and cruelly undone by his flaws: by his weakness of will, by his susceptibility to others, by his sad and conscious submission to his own lowest traits. There is moralism here, certainly, just as there is usually moralism in tragedy; but it is a subtle and muted type of moralism. It is the moralism of a sympathetic insight into human frailty; the moralism which, like the tragic aspects of *Pompey*, points a truth of human nature. We are some way from the ethical colouring of *Cato*, with its crude and explicit protreptic and censure.

One further point is important. Antony disappears from the narrative at 78.1 (his death is never explicitly stated). The last ten chapters are all Cleopatra's. Plutarch often concludes a Life with a brief death-notice, giving the hero's age when he died and summarising his achievement. Here there are two heroes, and they are given a joint notice (86.8–9). In the last analysis, *Antony* fits Plutarch's biographical theory only a little better than *Caesar*. Its moralism soon becomes more subtle and less strident, as it is overlaid by the interest in literary artistry; and, by the end, it is not really a biography at all. After the entrance of Cleopatra, the Life becomes a dramatic set-piece.⁶⁹

⁶¹ *Ant.* 35.2–4, 53–4, 56.4, 57.4–5, 59.3, 72.3. Other ancient accounts make far less of Octavia, and this theme seems to be Plutarch's own elaboration.

⁶² Antony: 4, 9.5–9, 24.9–12, 43.3–6. Cleopatra: esp. 27.3–5, 29.1–7. Fulvia: 10.5–10. Octavia: *cf.* 54.3–5. Timon: 70.

⁶³ E.g. dress and demeanour, 4.1–5, 17.3–6; dream, 16.7; comment on Megarian *bouleuterion*, 23.3; comment on the repeated tribute, 24.7–9; detail of the feasts, 28;

fishing anecdote, 29.5–7; dice and fighting cocks, 33; etc.

⁶⁴ *Dtr.* 1, esp. 1.6.

⁶⁵ 9.5–9, 21.1–3, *cf.* 56.8; 6.6–7, 15.4–5, 24.5–10.

⁶⁶ Russell (n. 26) 142.

⁶⁷ Russell (n. 26) 135.

⁶⁸ 93(6).4. What little ethical colouring there is in the narrative is favourable to Antony: 67.9–10, 75.3.

⁶⁹ The Life is correspondingly rich in theatrical imagery: see n. 35.

A writer's programmatic statements can sometimes be a poor guide to his work, and some Lives fit Plutarch's theory better than others. Any account of the Lives must bring out their *versatility*. It must find room for *Caesar*, which is not moralistic, nor personal, but is certainly historical. It must include Lives which break away from the constrictions of a single man's Life, as *Antony* moves its attention to Cleopatra, or as *Brutus* often divides its interest between Brutus and Cassius.⁷⁰ It must find room for different *types* of moral interest: the explicit praise and blame of *Cato*, or the subtler and more tragic insights of *Antony*. Other Lives again—*Crassus*, perhaps, or *Sertorius*, or even *Cicero*—are simply less ambitious and less richly textured. This biographical genre is an extremely flexible one, and admits works of very different patterns.

It is arguable that these different emphases go deeper, and illuminate more puzzling aspects of Plutarch's work. He is, indeed, a curiously uneven writer. Sometimes he is impressively critical of his sources, sometimes absurdly credulous. His historical judgments are sometimes sensible and sophisticated, sometimes childlike and innocent. His characterisation often impresses with its insight; it sometimes irritates with its triviality and woodenness. His style and imagery are usually sober and restrained, but occasionally florid, extravagant, even melodramatic. Might such irregularities be related to the different directions and interests of the Lives? That inquiry would indeed be delicate and complicated; and yet, perhaps, it would have its rewards.

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EXCURSUS

The most bewildering example of Plutarch's simplifications and displacements is seen in his accounts of the senatorial debates at the outset of the war: *Caes.* 30–1, *Pomp.* 58–9, and *Ant.* 5. The historical accuracy of these accounts has been thoroughly examined by K. Raafaub,⁷¹ and only a few points need be considered here.

The *Pompey* account mentions the debate of 1st Dec., 50, but omits that of 1st Jan., 49: *Caesar* and *Antony* have the 1st Jan. debate, but not that of 1st Dec. Plutarch seems quite clear that these are different sessions, in different years. Thus at *Pomp.* 59.2 he explicitly notes that Lentulus was *consul designatus*, and then at §5 marks the moment when he assumed the consulship; at *Caes.* 30.6 and 31.2, Lentulus is consul throughout. In *Pompey* it is Curio (tribune until 9th Dec., 50) who proposes that both Caesar and Pompey should disarm: this proposal is of course historically well-attested for the 1st Dec. debate. But in *Antony*, and apparently in *Caesar*,⁷² it is Antony, tribune from 10th Dec. onwards, who makes this proposal. No other ancient source suggests that this proposal was made on 1st Jan., nor that Antony put it forward at any time. Some features of the chronology seem to be distinguished in consequence of the Lives' focus on different sessions. Curio's enthusiastic reception by the *demos* follows the *Pompey* session (58.9), but precedes that in *Caesar* (30.2); the same is true of Antony's insistence on reading a letter from Caesar to the *demos* (*Pomp.* 59.3–4, *Caes.* 30.3, *Ant.* 5.5).⁷³ It does seem probable that Plutarch, in selecting these different sessions for emphasis in the three Lives, was not simply confused. His choice was deliberate, and we shall examine his reasons in a moment.

Yet the course of the debates themselves is extraordinarily similar. All three Lives have the sequence of votes (though *Pompey* simplifies a little): first, those who wished Pompey to disarm;

⁷⁰ 'This *Life* is, to a large extent, the story not of one man but of two, Brutus and Cassius', Wardman (n. 26) 174. The complexities of this *Life* are well analysed in J. L. Moles' dissertation, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Life of Brutus* (D.Phil. thesis Oxford 1979).

⁷¹ *Chiron* iv (1974) 306–11. Further references, both to ancient sources and to secondary literature, may be found in Raafaub's paper.

⁷² *Caes.* 30.5 has τὼν περὶ Ἀντωνίου, but this seems the

later Greek usage, equivalent merely to 'Antony': cf. Holden on *Them.* 7.6, Hamilton on *Alex.* 41.5. Antony is certainly already tribune at the time of the *Caesar* debate (30.3).

⁷³ Though there may well be further confusion (or conflation) here. Raafaub (309) may be right to suspect that Plutarch's notice in *Pompey* combines Caesar's terms of 1 Jan. 49 with the occasion, some weeks earlier, of *Ant.* 5.3–4.

then those who wished this of Caesar; finally, those who preferred the disarmament of both.⁷⁴ Both *Pompey* and *Caesar* have similar *apophthegmata* of the presiding consul: Caesar as a *ληστής*, and the need for arms rather than words.⁷⁵ In both cases, the senatorial reaction is to change their clothes as a mark of grief (*Pomp.* 59.1, *Caes.* 30.6). It is natural to suspect that these similarities arise from some deliberate conflation and displacement by Plutarch, and, in the case of the consular *apophthegmata*, some conscious displacement seems clear: in *Caesar* Lentulus is the consul, and he is given the remarks which in *Pompey* belong to Marcellus. It is likely enough, too, that the change of clothes belongs after the *Caesar–Antony* debate, in early January, while *Pompey* has displaced this to a month earlier.⁷⁶

What are we to make of the rest, and particularly the similar sequences of votes in the two sessions, and the similar role of the two tribunes? No doubt, as Raafaub remarks, the two debates did cover similar ground, and no doubt the Caesarian tribunes were active in both.⁷⁷ But it requires great faith to believe that the *Caesar* account is accurate, and that Antony genuinely revived Curio's ploy a month later and gained a similar response. That is Raafaub's view; but what we have seen of Plutarch's technique shows that this is a flimsy structure to build on his evidence. It is easier to assume that, for certain reasons, Plutarch chose to stress different debates in different Lives; but, once he had made this choice, he felt free to select the most spectacular items from *either* debate, and exploit them in the single context he had imposed. Such transfers and displacements are anyway visible here, as we have seen: he has surely done the same with Curio's proposal and its fate. In *Caesar* and *Antony* he delays this to the new year, and this involved transferring it to the new year's tribune, just as the *apophthegmata* needed to be transferred to the new year's consul. Plutarch need have no historical basis for this, and provides no evidence for Antony's true behaviour on 1st Jan.

Why, then, did Plutarch stress different sessions in the three Lives? First, both *Antony* and *Caesar* make much of the tribunes' flight to Caesar's camp (*Caes.* 31.2–3, *Ant.* 5.8–9): in both Lives, this flight gives the transition to the crossing of the Rubicon. (*Pompey* omits this flight, and Plutarch there prefers to link events by a different device.)⁷⁸ The transfer of Curio's proposal to Antony evidently tidies the sequence, and aids the focus on the tribunes of 49: not merely is their proposal rebuffed, they are even driven out of the senate-house and forced to the camp of Caesar. Secondly, *Pompey* makes much more of the republican opposition to Caesar, and particularly the relation of the optimate extremists with Pompey. In that Life the canvas is large enough to admit the role of Marcellus, Lentulus, and Cato; *Caesar* has only Lentulus. As Marcellus is given three speeches in *Pompey* (58.6, 58.10, 59.1), it is worthwhile to distinguish him from Lentulus; once that distinction is made, the marking of the separate consular years is no great cumbrance. *Caesar* conflates, and the concentration of all these events into a single consular year is a natural consequence. Thirdly, the suppression of the December debate in *Caesar* leaves, as the first events of the sequence, Curio's enthusiastic reception by the *demos*, and Antony's reading (*βία τῶν ὑπάρτων*) of Caesar's letter to the people: these are themes which cohere closely with that Life's emphasis on the *demos* of Rome.

⁷⁴ *Pompey* (the one Life which refers to the 1 Dec. 50 debate, when the triple sequence of votes certainly took place) in fact gives this sequence least clearly. There Plutarch mentions only two votes, first that Caesar should disarm, secondly that both should do so; and he makes Curio introduce both motions, suppressing the role of the consuls. But *Pompey* does correctly have 22 senators oppose the final motion; *Antony* and *Caesar* have all those present support 'Antony'.

⁷⁵ *Caesar* conflates the two *apophthegmata*, and gives them to Lentulus (30.6); *Pompey* keeps them separate (58.6, 10), and assigns them to Marcellus. See above, p. 129.

⁷⁶ So Raafaub 308–9. Dio xli 3.1 is a poor witness, but he confirms the *uestis mutatio* for the 1 Jan. 49 context: Raafaub (n. 71) 307.—Ed. Meyer, *Caesars Monarchie*³

(Stuttgart/Berlin 1922) 284 n. 1, assumed that the *Caesar–Antony* and *Pompey* versions were doublets, and this has been the general view: *contra*, T. R. Holmes, *Roman Republic* (Oxford 1923) ii 330 n. 2.

⁷⁷ Raafaub (n. 71) 307.

⁷⁸ The device of the false rumour (60.1–2), followed by the truth (60.2ff.). False rumours are important in *Pompey*: above, p. 131, 133 f. The importance of the tribunes' flight in *Caesar* and *Antony* explains a fact which puzzled Raafaub (307), that Antony's proposal (in *Caes.–Ant.*) failed while Curio's (in *Pomp.*) succeeded. Curio's ploy *must* be successful, for Plutarch there wishes to pass to an exulting sequel, the joy with which the *demos* greeted him (58.9). Antony's proposal *must* fail, for the sequel there is the humiliating flight.