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In: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Tome 73 fasc. 1, 1995. Antiquité - Oudheid. pp. 91-104.

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Harrison George W.M. The Semiotics of Plutarch's Συγκρίσεις : The Hellenistic Lives of Demetrius-Antony and Agesiaus-Pompey. In: Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire. Tome 73 fasc. 1, 1995. Antiquité - Oudheid. pp. 91-104.

doi : 10.3406/rbph.1995.4005

http://www.persee.fr/web/revues/home/prescript/article/rbph_0035-0818_1995_num_73_1_4005

The Semiotics of Plutarch's Συγκρίσεις: The Hellenistic Lives of Demetrius-Antony and Agesilaus-Pompey

George W.M. HARRISON

The recent publication of the first Plutarch volume in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (II. 33. 6) ⁽¹⁾ has greatly advanced Plutarchan studies. Two studies especially, that of Brenk on the 'Life of Antony' (4347-4469; 4895-4915) and that of Hamilton on the 'Life of Agesilaus' (4201-21), have distinguished themselves by the acuity of their observations on the nature and purpose of Plutarch's characterizations. They have amply demonstrated the truth, too often over-looked, that if Plutarch's 'Lives' were written to a format as part of an over-all preconceived plan, they were not nevertheless churned out to some semi-automated, facile formula. The amount of variety of patterns, details, and selectivity ⁽²⁾ shows just how very much Plutarch was the master of his material.

As for the *synkriseis* ⁽³⁾, one can argue persuasively for a thesis that, just as there is no one pattern for the *Lives*, each *synkrisis* is shaped by two factors: first, the contribution a *synkrisis* is expected to make to an understanding of a pair of *Lives* and, second, the ethical position each pair of *Lives* holds in the interconnected over-all plan of the *Lives*, a plan which never-

(1) Ed. Wolfgang HAASE (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1992). A preliminary version of this paper was presented at the 1991 Annual Meetings of the American Philological Association in Chicago. I should also wish to thank Rebekah McComb for her advice and suggestions. Greek quotations and translations are adapted from the Loeb series. The Alexander-Caesar, Agesilaus-Pompey, and Demetrius-Antony pairs were all translated by Bernadotte Perrin.

(2) On Plutarchan selectivity, see two articles by David H. LARMOUR, "Plutarch's Compositional Methods in the *Theseus* and *Romulus*", *TAPA* 118 (1988) 366-68, 371-72 and "Making Parallels: *Synkrisis* and Plutarch's 'Themistocles and Camillus'", *ANRW* II. 33. 6 (1992) 4162-74.

(3) For an overview and discussion of the scholarship on the *synkriseis*, see Larmour (1992) 4154-74.

theless developed as the *Lives* were written (4). Each *synkrisis*, as the summation of each pair of *Lives*, illustrates and weighs, among other things, one preeminent virtue, which might loosely be termed its 'moral focus'. If for the Pericles-Fabius Maximus book that virtue is *πραότης* ('even tempered') (5), for Demetrius-Antony it is *ἀγκράτεια* ('self-control') (6) and for Agesilaus-Pompey it is *πιθανότης* ('political acumen').

A possible extrapolation from such a proposal is the recognition of two nodes in the *Lives* to which all the others are fastened and against which all of the other pairs are weighed. Stadter (7) has already noted that the Pericles-Fabius Maximus pair provides an anchor for the other fifth century Greek *Lives*. It would seem equally just to assert the centrality of the Alexander-Caesar pair for the post-Classical *Lives*. The truth of this observation is not lessened by the knowledge that the Pericles-Fabius Maximus book was the tenth written and that the Alexander-Caesar pair was among the last to have been composed (8). Nor is it lessened by apparent connections between individual lives in different nodes. Thus the charge that Demetrius Poliorcetes slept with the wives of citizens on the Acropolis (*Synk.* 4. 2-3) is clearly meant to echo 'Pericles' 13. 9-10 where Phidias arranged amorous *rendez-vous* for Pericles on the Acropolis (9). In a sense all figures after Pericles but before Alexander and Caesar can be viewed as somehow leading up to their lives and all figures chronologically later are compared, implicitly as well as explicitly, to the standards they established. Their *res gestae*, thus, are loom-

(4) For the continual development of Plutarch's thought, see S. SWAIN, "Plutarch: Chance, Providence and History", *AJP* 110 (1989) 272-302. Just as one can see development between the *Quaestiones Platonicae* and Plutarch's *Symposium*, so one infers that the connections among the paired *Lives* (necessarily excluding the 'Aratus', 'Artaxerxes', 'Galba', and 'Otho') was not predetermined from the start but manifested itself later.

(5) See P. STADTER, *A Commentary on Plutarch's 'Pericles'* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989), xxx-xxxi. *Φρόνημα* is given as much credit as *πραότης* in enduring the stupidity of the mob in Stadter's earlier article, "Plutarch's Comparison of Pericles and Fabius Maximus", *GRBS* 16 (1975) 85.

(6) The self-control is specifically placing business before pleasure; cp. *Synk.* 3. 1-2, and Plato *Rep.* 390B. Greek, however, does not have an equivalent for Latin *officium* ('duty'), just as it does not have word for word synonyms for *dignitas* and *auctoritas*; cp. C.B.R. PELLING, "Plutarch and Roman Politics", in I. MOXON *et al.* (edd.), *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 177.

(7) Implicit in his remarks in *A Commentary on Plutarch's 'Pericles'*, xxix (§1. 3) and xxix-xxx (§2. 1).

(8) The order of composition of the *Lives* is uncertain. A statement in 'Theseus' 1. 1 makes it clear, however, that the fifth and fourth century *Lives* were written before the earlier ones; cp. C.P. JONES, "Towards a Chronology of Plutarch's Works", *JRS* 56 (1966) 68-73. For the date of the Alexander-Caesar pair, see P. STADTER, "The Proems of Plutarch's Lives", *ICS* 13 (1988) 277.

(9) Cp. P. STADTER, "Pericles among the Intellectuals", *ICS* 16 (1991) 119.

ing presences throughout all of the post-Classical *Lives*: the majority of references in these *Lives* to other leaders are to Alexander and to Caesar. Similarly, Alexander is by far the figure most often at hand in the *Moralia*, followed distantly, but nonetheless followed, by Caesar.

In establishing a web of interconnectedness for the *Lives* one could do far worse than postulate that this pair is the centripetal hub from which all of the other later *Lives* radiate and to which parts of the *Moralia* spin in elliptical orbit⁽¹⁰⁾. Put in another way, the Demetrius-Antony pair, as the Agesilaus-Pompey pair, provides a riposte and a frame of reference to Alexander and to Caesar. It is in this regard that the application of semiotics to the *œuvre* of Plutarch is most intriguing and offers an exceptional opportunity for further enlightenment. One can, for example, generalize Brenk's observation, applied solely to the 'Antony', that a life must have literary and cultural components⁽¹¹⁾ in addition to a moral position and color. The color he used to characterize the Demetrius-Antony pair is 'baroque', a term which he essentially derived from definitions of Hellenistic art in Pollitt and Charbonneau⁽¹²⁾. Such a descriptive label should be taken to imply that Plutarch's plan for the 'Life of Antony' intended to suggest that Antony in many ways was very representative of Hellenistic exuberance, theatricality, flamboyance and the endless posturing of his Greek analogues, such as Pyrrhus, Demetrius Poliorcetes and Aratus. 'Antonios Dionysos', as he was known in the Greek East, at once represented a continuation of Greek traditions dating back to Alexander and the further importation of such practices into Roman society, ones which received their first significant prompting with the deification of Julius Caesar⁽¹³⁾.

That is to say, if the life of Antony is baroque it is not baroque independently and of its own accord, but is purposely so for the contrast it provides to Alexander-Caesar and thus takes its tone from the function it serves to the over-all plan. There are very many parallels between the Alexander *roman* and the puffery of several later Roman figures, who hoped by aping his mannerisms to reproduce his genius⁽¹⁴⁾. Not surprisingly most of the parallels

(10) The assumption that the *Lives* are more important than the *Moralia* and were intended to be so is a subjective one, and datable at its earliest to the Renaissance; cp. Brenk *ANRW* II. 33. 6 (1992) 4457. All of the citations of Plutarch from antiquity come from the *Moralia*.

(11) *Ibid.*, 4426. 'Moral position' is used rather than 'moral point' since Plutarch seems to have fixed his subjects on a scale, similar to Plato's column of light (*Rep.* 616B-619B), or perhaps (less probably) how far each had emerged from the cave (*Rep.* 516C-521B).

(12) Much of what follows although foreshadowed in Brenk's *ANRW* article was discussed in detail at the 1991 Annual Meetings of the American Philological Association in Chicago.

(13) It is relevant here that Augustus once quipped that Caesar would have adopted Antony if only he had not claimed divine descent for himself from Herakles.

(14) See D.R. CUNNINGHAM, *The Influence of the Alexander Legend on Some Roman Political Figures*, diss. University of Washington, 1971. The Romans were Scipio, Pompey, Caesar, Antony, and Octavian.

between Alexander and his *deteriores* come from the *Lives* and there is a considerable cluster around Antony. Plutarch himself stated that he intended the Demetrius-Antony pair to be a negative contrast when he wrote in his preface to the *'Life of Demetrius'*:

οὕτω μοι δοκοῦμεν καὶ ἡμεῖς προθυμότεροι τῶν βελτιόνων ἔσεσθαι
καὶ θεαταὶ καὶ μιμηταὶ βίων εἰ μὴδὲ τῶν φαύλων καὶ
ψεγομένων ἀνιστορήτως ἔχοιμεν.

So, I think, we also shall be more eager to observe and imitate the better lives if we are not left without narratives of the blameworthy and the bad.

Indeed, one might posit that Plutarch's prefaces and his *synkriseis* give a code for how he wished a particular life, or pair, to be interpreted. They would thus also perforce lend a balanced closure to a pair of lives, a closure which nevertheless need not be symmetrical since proems most often highlight congruences while the *synkriseis* tend to stress differences⁽¹⁵⁾.

Consistency with similar statements or moral investigations in the *Moralia* supplies confirmation of the code at which point one can be assured that their interpretation is the one Plutarch intended and is not idiosyncratic. Negative evidence can be confirming on this point: if Plutarch within the context of the collection of the *Parallel Lives* merely wished to have recorded the lives and deeds of the twenty-two most famous or important Romans, Augustus surely could not have been left off the list⁽¹⁶⁾. But the twenty-two best known Romans was not his purpose; rather, he seems to have wanted to investigate a series of lives which moved towards the incredible career of Alexander or was later to be lived in thrall to it.

In fact, it is in the single paragraph preamble to the *'Life of Alexander'* that Plutarch most cogently set out his purpose:

οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους ... οὕτως ἡμῖν δοτέον
εἰς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα μᾶλλον ἐνδύεσθαι καὶ διὰ τούτων
εἰδοποιεῖν τὸν ἑκάστου βίον.

(15) Cp. STADTER (1975, 77). This pattern may in part have developed since the proems generally justify the choice of men paired while the *synkriseis* assess them; cp. C.B.R. PELLING, *Plutarch: 'Life of Antony'* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 18-19.

(16) A Life of Augustus is listed in the Lamprias Catalogue but was part of a collection of the *Lives of the Emperors* and not part of the *Parallel Lives*. There is no indication that the *Lives of the Emperors* had a comparative or parallel structure or that different imperial lives were intended to illustrate different virtues/vices.

We are not writing history, but biography ... thus it becomes incumbent upon us to flesh out⁽¹⁷⁾ the signs of the soul and through these to form a facsimile of the life of each.

When Plutarch examined these '*signs of the soul*' within the context of an individual life, it is surprising how often it is done by an overt comparison to Alexander or Caesar. The illustrations which follow are drawn from the *Agesilaus-Pompey* and *Demetrius-Antony* pairs; the other post-Classical *Lives* would reveal the same pattern. For Demetrius and for Antony, for example, it would appear that the main question for Plutarch was why Demetrius failed to be another Alexander and why Antony did not become like Caesar.

In the *Life of Demetrius Poliorcetes* all of the mentions of Alexander the Great are used in apostrophes to demonstrate how very petty were the reigns of his successors and how their quarrels diminished all of Hellas. The first notice can be taken as indicative of all⁽¹⁸⁾. When discussing an incident in which it was counted as remarkable that the young Demetrius appeared in the presence of Antigonos with a hunting spear in his hand, Plutarch opined (3. 3):

ὥστε ἀγάλλεσθαι τὸν μέγιστον τῶν Ἀλεξάνδρου διαδόχων καὶ πρεσβύτατον ὅτι μὴ φοβεῖται τὸν υἱὸν ...

Thus [as a result] the greatest and oldest of the successors of Alexander gloried in the fact that he need not fear his son ...

The climatic moment of the life of Demetrius (29. 1) came when Alexander appeared to him in a dream before the battle of Ipsus in 301 B.C. Alexander asked Demetrius what the watchword was to be to which Demetrius replied «Δία καὶ Νίκην», at which words Alexander went over to the other side, presumably taking his *Τυχή* with him⁽¹⁹⁾.

(17) Ἐνδύω literally means 'to put on [clothing]'; a transformed sense is 'to enter into' as in 'penetrate'. Xenophon, *Cyr.* 8.1.13, and Plato, *Rep.* 620c, use the middle to indicate intellectual penetration of one's soul. 'Flesh out' would seem to be the best inadequate translation of the complexity of this term.

(18) Cp. also 5. 1, 5. 2, 10. 3, 14. 2, 25. 3, 27. 3, 29. 1, 37. 2, 41. 3, 44. 1, and 44. 4. These mentions fall into three distinct clusters: (1) those dealing with the beginning of the career of Demetrius under the tutelage of his father; (2) those viewing Demetrius at the height of his power; and (3) those delineating the forces of Alexander's successors who coordinated their attacks against Demetrius.

(19) A striking parallel is found in the '*Life of Antony*' 75. 3-4) when the θίασος of Dionysus abandoned Antony on the midnight before the battle of Alexandria. In many ways Dionysus stood in the same relationship to Antony as Alexander did to Demetrius. A similar relationship is to be found between Theseus and Herakles; cp. Larmour (1988) 363.

One final example is especially illustrative since it contains themes dominant in the life of Demetrius (41. 3-4):

καὶ πολλοῖς ἐπήει λέγειν τῶν Μακεδόνων ὡς ἐν μόνῳ τούτῳ
[i.e. Πύρρῳ] τῶν Βασιλέων εἶδωλον ἐνορῶτο τῆς
Ἀλεξάνδρου τόλμης, οἱ δὲ ἄλλοι, καὶ μάλιστα Δημήτριος,
ὡς ἐπὶ σκηνῆς τὸ βάρος ὑποκρίνοιτο καὶ τὸν ὄγκον τοῦ
ἀνδρός [i.e. Ἀλεξάνδρου].

And to many it came into their minds to say that in this one only of the Macedonian kings did one see the image of the daring of Alexander, but all the others, and especially Demetrius, rehearsed as on a stage the *gravitas* and majesty of Alexander.

It is facet of the baroque that one self-consciously views oneself as continually on stage⁽²⁰⁾. In section 28 Plutarch noted, again just before the battle of Ipsus, that he (Plutarch) in a rare intrusion as an external narrator had to go from the comic to the tragic stage. Most significantly, Plutarch's final words of the life make clear his feeling that it was all but a play:

Διηγωνισμένου δὲ τοῦ Μακεδονικοῦ δράματος, ὥρα τὸ Ῥωμαικὸν
ἐπεισαγαγεῖν.

Having narrated the Macedonian drama, it is time to turn to the Roman one.

The opening of the *Life of Antony* shows him to have been a character drawn from the stage. Like a *miles gloriosus* (2. 5):

κομπώδη καὶ φρυαγματίαν ὄντα καὶ κενοῦ γαυριάματος καὶ
φιλοτιμίας ἀνωμάλου μεστόν.

He was boastful and arrogant, full of empty exultation and self-contradictory ambitions.

In order to make sure that his readers understand that his own assessment of Antony was the contemporary one, Plutarch quoted a *môt* of the Alexan-

(20) To this extent the subject (i.e. actor) of each life serves also as a narrator, thereby affording the reader two views of each action upon which the reader can choose to make an interpretation; cp. E. BLOCK, "Narrative Judgement and Audience Response in Homer and Vergil", *Arethusa* 19 (1986) 155-67.

drians that “Antony wore his tragic mask with the Romans, but his comic mask with them” (29. 2). Theatricality entered even his relations with Cleopatra. One particular public audience (54. 3) in which he distributed kingdoms to his children by Cleopatra and to Caesarion was termed «τραγικήν καὶ ὑπερήφανον» (theatrical and arrogant). The end of Antony is recounted in section 77, but the life does not end for another ten sections. Like a tragedy there is an exodos in which one sees Caligula, Claudius, and Nero in the wings, more satyr play than tragedy, but a reminder that the later Julio-Claudians were more closely related to Antony than to Augustus ⁽²¹⁾.

Comparisons with Alexander and Caesar abound everywhere, both implicit and explicit ones ⁽²²⁾. Τυχὴ is often cited in the proems ⁽²³⁾ and Plutarch is not able to think of fortune independently of Alexander, even if he is not mentioned overtly. One of the longest essays in the *Moralia* is on the ‘*Fortune of Alexander*’, and Alexander’s τυχή is the canvas upon which everyone else’s is painted. Further, the point of Antony’s presumed descent from Hercules, for example, was not just the contrast to similar Julian claims in regard to Venus, but also to the statue of Herakles Epitrapezios which travelled with Alexander ⁽²⁴⁾. More of the comparisons in the ‘*Life of Antony*’ naturally are with Caesar. Antony’s mother was a Julia, and Antony was in fact as closely related to Caesar as was Octavian. Plutarch’s study of Antony was in part a search for the reasons why Antony did not become Caesar’s successor. Antony’s association with Cleopatra is a simplistic answer and was more effect than cause, as Plutarch himself was surely aware since he called her Antony’s δεινὴ συμφορὰ (36. 1). The ‘*Life of Caesar*’ 6. 3-6 encapsulates neatly Plutarch’s assessment of both Caesar and Antony:

(21) Here, however, Brenk’s view (*ANRW* II. 33. 6 [1992] 4348-75) that Plutarch was projecting back his own distaste for the reign and personality of Nero into its ancestor, Antony, is less than compelling. It was surely not Tacitus’s opinion and even Lucan (so *Pharsalia* 7) thought to apply the tragic curse no further back than Domitius Ahenobarbus. For retrojection in Plutarch, see T.P. HILLMAN, “The Alleged *Inimicitiae* of Pompeius and Lucullus: 78-74 [B.C.]”, *CP* 86 (1991) 316. Surely Pelling (1988, 16-18) is right that the point of the closing chapters is the revelation of Cleopatra’s real love for Antony and refusal, after a lifetime of intrigue, to come to a political accommodation with Augustus.

(22) One has a further sense of closure since Antony could justly be termed the last, great Hellenistic figure. His life is chronologically the latest of the paired lives.

(23) Cp. STADTER (1988) 285-86; see also, in general, S. SWAIN, “de fortuna Romanorum”, *CQ* 39 (1989) 504-16.

(24) Further one of his sons was named Alexander Helis (36. 3) and Antony made his capital Alexandria, the last of Alexander’s foundations (80. 1).

ἤγε δὲ αὐτὸν ἐπὶ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἅ καὶ πρότερον Ἀλέξανδρον καὶ πάλαι Κῦρον, ἔρωσ ἀπαρηγόρητος ἀρχῆς καὶ περιμανῆς ἐπιθυμία τοῦ πρῶτον εἶναι καὶ μέγιστον ... οἱ φίλοι διέβαλλον, ὧν Ἀντώνιος ἀπ' ἐξουσίας μεγίστης ἀμαρτάνειν μέγιστα δόξας τὴν πλείστην αἰτίαν ἔλαβεν.

An uncontrollable love of dominion and raving mad desire to be first and greatest led him against all men as it had Alexander and Cyrus long ago ... his friends brought him down, of whom Antony received the greatest blame being thought to cause the most trouble since he had the greatest authority.

Antony, who had been so unlike Caesar in his fortune, resembled him more closely in adversity, for Antony's pronouncement upon himself (69. 4-70. 1) contains echoes of Plutarch's judgement of Caesar:

τὸν Τίμωνος ἀγαπᾶν καὶ ζηλοῦν βίον φασκεν, ὡς δὴ πεπονθῶς ὁμοιαῖ καὶ γὰρ αὐτὸς ἀδικηθεὶς ὑπὸ φίλων καὶ ἀχαριστηθεὶς, διὰ τοῦτο καὶ πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἀπιστεῖν καὶ δυσχεραίνειν.

He said that he was drawn to and sought to imitate the life of Timon, since they had both suffered similarly: he likewise had suffered injustice from his friends and had been unappreciated, as a result of which he was not trusted and was held in disgust by all men.

It is incredible how many of the pronouncements made upon Antony are comparative and ones in which he is deemed lesser than the comparand.

The reader had been conditioned to look for these themes and for threads common to Antony and Demetrios Poliorcetes from the preface (1. 7-8) to the "*Life of Demetrius*" (25). The controlling word is ὁμοίως — they were very much alike:

(25) For topics of proems and which *Lives* have them, see STADTER (1988) 275-76, 284.

DEMETRIOS POLIORCETES

ANTONY

*ὁμοίως**Traits*

ἔρωτικοί amorous
 ποτικοί bibulous
 στρατιωτικοί warlike
 μεγαλόδωροι munificent
 πολυτελεῖς extravagant
 ὕβρισταί insolent

Actions

μεγάλα μὲν κατορθοῦντες great successes
 μεγάλα δὲ σθαλλόμενοι great reverses
 πλείστων δὲ ἐπικρατοῦντες innumerable conquests
 πλείστα δὲ ἀποβάλλοντες innumerable losses
 ἀπροσδοκῆτως δὲ πταίοντες unexpected falls
 ἀνελπίστως δὲ πάλιν ἀναφέροντες unhopd for advancements

The *synkrisis* to these lives, therefore, since an outline had already been furnished of how they were to be interpreted and what the major *Leitmotifs* were to be, merely recapitulates, but also serves to highlight a few important differences, such as the disparity in their origins and prominence of their families during their adolescences. There were, thus, some discrepancies among their apparent similarities.

The *synkrisis* of the Agesiluas-Pompey pair fulfills its normal function of supplying the standards against which these men's lives could be measured, and compared. For this pair, Plutarch envisioned the contrasts in ἀρετή they illumed. Διαφορά is in the very first sentence:

Ἐκκειμένων οὖν τῶν βίων ἐπιδράμωμεν τῷ λόγῳ ταχέως τὰ ποιοῦντα τὰς διαφοράς, παρ' ἄλληλα συνάγοντες.

Having strewn their lives, let us run quickly through the things that made them different, bringing them next to one another.

One assumes because of the last phrase that Plutarch had some kind of outline before him and that the *synkrisis* existed in nebulous form before the life was written and was filled out later. The point is an important one, and one not yet resolved: it makes a very great difference in how the reader is to approach a pair of lives whether the proems and *synkriseis* are structural underpinn-

ings that look in towards the lives, or whether the lives moved out toward poems and *synkriseis*, thereby controlling them ⁽²⁶⁾.

The outline for *Agésilau-Pompey* is remarkably different from *Demetrius-Antony* since the intent of this pair was strikingly different:

AGESILAUS

POMPEY

*διαφοράς**Private Vices*

sinning towards gods and men
insulted Lysander
took glory
committed wrong/supported wrongdoers
downfall foretold but hidden

Private Virtues

came to fame justly
showed honor to Sulla
conferred glory
wronged on behalf of relatives
downfall impossible to predict

Political Astuteness

suspended laws to save citizens

looked to good of Sparta

Political Shortsightedness

ignored laws for own self
interest
helped Rome only as far as
it helped himself

Military Leadership

bitter towards conquered
made a stand at Sparta
forced favorable terms of battle
not led by public criticism
went to Egypt for glory
and to help his country

Military Leadership

generous towards conquered
fled Rome, Italy, Pharsalus
fought at disadvantage
stung by public criticism
went to Egypt for asylum
as part of a civil war

There is little doubt that some of the parallels in this *synkrisis*, as in other *synkriseis*, are contrived ⁽²⁷⁾. Even so, the parallels are cross-revealing of character and circumstances, at which level the parallels actually function quite well ⁽²⁸⁾.

(26) For the former view see ERBSE in Larmour (1992, 4159); for the latter see PELLING (1986, 84-89).

(27) A good example is the different fates of Pompey and Agesilaus in Egypt; cp. Larmour (1988, 361).

(28) The same idea is contained in L. de Blois's view of 'geometric equality' (ισότης κατ' ἀξίαν) between pairs of *Lives*; cp. "Politics in Plutarch's Roman 'Lives', *ANRW* II. 33. 6 (1992) 4614.

Alexander and Caesar are the twin spectres, twin standards by which Agesilaus and Pompey are judged, and neither come off badly. Agesilaus (*Syn.* 2. 3) is given Plutarch's nod as second only to Alexander, while Pompey's downfall is attributed specifically to his marital relation first to Caesar and later to Scipio (*Syn.* 1. 3). Pompey and Agesilaus joined Alexander in being the only men who won victories on three continents. In the end their differences ended up being equally destructive to their peoples, the Spartans losing to the Boeotians at the battle of Leuctra and Rome losing its liberty to Caesar's monarchy.

Just like the preface to the lives of Demetrius and Antony, the assertions postulated in the *synkrisis* are demonstrated in the body of the two lives⁽²⁹⁾, often in apostrophes involving Alexander or Caesar. First and foremost Plutarch believed that if the Greeks of Agesilaus's generation had not squandered their blood in internecine struggles, the conquest of Persia would not have had to wait until Alexander (15. 3). The successors to Alexander, among whom Pompey deserved a special place, were similarly upbraided for not pursuing to accomplishment the vision of Alexander⁽³⁰⁾. The allusions are much more frequent in the *'Life of Pompey'*. At the very beginning an unacknowledged parallel is drawn to Antony, for both Pompey and Antony had widely despised and only moderately successful fathers, yet Pompey clearly rose far above Antony in stature and esteem. Pompey, like Alexander, combined σωφροσύνη in private affairs, ἄσκησις in military affairs, and πιθανότης in political affairs, again in an unacknowledged parallel. In section 2. 2 mention is made of Pompey's physical resemblance to known portraits of Alexander in language reminiscent of Antony's resemblance to images of Herakles Epitrapezios. Yet unlike the megalomania of Alexander and Antony, Pompey never claimed descent from a god. Pompey's conquest of the Caspian Iberians elicited the comment that not even Alexander had accomplished this feat (34. 5).

Most noteworthy is section 46. 1, placed at the thematic center of the life. In section 23. 5-7 in the *'Life of Agesilaus'* it is remarked that the events of 383 B.C. changed the character of Agesilaus⁽³¹⁾. The conclusion of the Great

(29) C. HAMILTON has already observed that the character of Agesilaus is delineated in comments and digressions rather than in special sections; cp. "Plutarch's 'Life of Agesilaus'", *ANRW* II. 33. 6, 4204. The same *ANRW* volume contains similar statements by E. Valgiglio (4023-26) on the use of the comparative method within individual essays in the *Moralia* and by Larmour, who posits (4174-4200) the operation of an 'internal *synkrisis*' for lives which do not have a formal comparison at the end.

(30) See A. BARIGAZZI, "Plutarco e il corso futuro della storia", *Prometheus* 10 (1984) 264-86.

(31) This mid-point in his career does not obviate Hamilton's pattern of alternating praise/blame in the *'Life of Agesilaus'*, *ANRW* II. 33. 6 (1992) 4206-4207. Rather, the cycle of praise/blame intensifies after the events of 383 B.C.

Peace and the illegal seizure of the Cadmeia in Thebes by the Spartan Phoebidas turned Agesilaus to φιλοτιμία (ambition) and φιλονεικία (contentiousness). The crucial year for Pompey was 61 B.C. He had just celebrated his third triumph over his third continent, and contrary to all rumors in Rome had disbanded his army. At this point Plutarch interjected:

ὥς ὄνητό γ' ἂν ἐνταῦθα τοῦ βίου παυσάμενος, ἄχρι οὗ τὴν Ἀλεξάνδρου τύχην ἔσχεν.

how useful if he (Pompey) had died right then, until then he had the fortune of Alexander.

The cause of Pompey's misfortune was not far to find: in the same section Plutarch noted that:

οὕτως διὰ τῆς Πομπηίου δυνάμεως Καῖσαρ ἐξαρθεὶς ἐπὶ τὴν πόλιν, ᾧ κατὰ τῶν ἄλλων ἴσχυσε, τοῦτον ἀνέτρεψε καὶ κατέβαλεν.

Thus reared up against the city through the power of Pompey, Caesar overturned and threw down the man from whom he became strong against all others.

The verbs are taken from wrestling as those in Demetrius-Antony come from the theatre. The *'Life of Pompey'* separates at this point into two halves; Alexander is never adduced in the second half, Caesar rarely in the first. Likewise the verbs in the first half are nearly all active, and most in the second are half middle or passive. Section 46. 1 revolves around a mention of the *τυχή* of Alexander and ends with the word *δυστυχίας*. With that Pompey ceases to be the protagonist in his own life, a rôle Agesilaus never ceded even in his last campaign, waged at the age of eighty-four.

Important to a study of the *Lives* is an appreciation of their original presentation, since the form of presentation is important for interpretation. Γράφω, its compounds, and its synonyms occur often in the preliminary and concluding sections of individual *Lives*. That is to say, the *Lives* in their conception and initial presentation were written, rather than oral. This distinguishes the *Lives* from most of the *Moralia*, parts of which were epideictic speeches, some of which were literary *consolationes*, others were philosophical tractates, which are probably written versions of oral lectures, and there are several dialogues conforming to the genre established by Plato. Only the several classes of *dicta* and *quaestiones* were undeniably originally written and their status as abstracts from the *Lives* for the former, and research notes or *notes sur lecture* for the latter remove them from the literary intent of the *Lives*.

The frequency of the hortatory subjunctive in openings and closings of individual lives is conspiratorial⁽³²⁾. It invites the reader in as co-author and co-subscriber to the opinions and sentiments expressed. The intended readers were not, at least in the first instance, targeted to be schoolboys. Six of the pairs of *Lives* are dedicated to Sosius Senecio (*cos.* A.D. 99 and 107) and a passing remark in the dedicatory preface to Trajan to the *'Sayings of Kings and Commanders'* shows that Plutarch wrote the *Lives* for the leisure hours of men of action and responsibility⁽³³⁾. That is to say, their neat moral *exempla* were to be inspirational, rather than chalking in the *tabulae rasae* of ephebes. Plutarch's viewpoint, writing during the early Empire, could not have been that of Xenophon. Whereas, Xenophon wrote a highly personal *apologia* for consumption by an audience contemporary with the events, Plutarch's Greeks living under Roman domination could only derive value from them for their historical interest⁽³⁴⁾. Brenk is right to conclude that there are three realities in Plutarch: past history, the illusionistic present, and allegory⁽³⁵⁾.

Further, the regular appearance of verbs for "stretching out next to one another" or "comparing side by side" in the *synkriseis* guarantees that, unlike books of poems, Plutarch had it very firmly in mind that pairs were to have been read together in a single sitting, or at least on successive nights⁽³⁶⁾. The length of *Lives* vary but more often the Roman one is longer, perhaps a recognition that Plutarch was trying to educate a Greek audience about Romans but could presume a basic knowledge of the Greek personages. He is thus able to be selective in the *môts* and incidents which most revealed character. A helleno-centrism seems implicit since the Greek almost without exception comes off better than the Roman, even when they illustrate the same virtues and vices⁽³⁷⁾. A part of Plutarch's purpose may have been similar to that of Nepos in that he wished to show that "it is useful to study great men of other

(32) Plutarch also engaged the sympathy of the reader in several other ways; cp. STADTER (1988) 283-84 and also, in general, PEDRICK (1986) 194-96.

(33) STADTER (1988, 292-93) defines Plutarch's audience as male, upper-class, and leisured. He further characterizes the *Lives* as an "incitement to virtue" (284).

(34) So C. HAMILTON in "Plutarch's 'Life of Agesilaus'" (1992) 4209, 4221. Cartledge in his evaluation of the sources seems to have missed this essential point; cp. *Agesilaos and the Crisis of Sparta* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1987) 78-79, 400-401.

(35) Cp. (1992) 4402-4409. His triad is especially revealing for the light it sheds on Plutarch's use of Plato, here the Myth of Er (*Rep.* 616c-617b) where Lachesis = past, Clotho = present, and Atropos = future. The substitution of allegory for Atropos would seem to entail an implicit acceptance of the Stoic position.

(36) Cpo. C.B.R. PELLING, "Synkrisis in Plutarch's Lives", in *Miscellanea Plutarchea* (Ferrara, 1986), 83-96 and STADTER (1975) 77. More recently Stadter has commented upon Plutarch's presumed working methods (1989, xliv-li).

(37) One notable exception is the Pelopidas-Marcellus pair; cp. also Larmour (1988) 368-71.

nations, even though their customs and habits are often alien". For the rest, he paired a Greek life so that the familiar would aid in understanding the unfamiliar.

What one can say in summation is that the *Lives* of Plutarch were never intended to be read in isolation. Each life indubitably spills into other lives, and for one life of a pair to derive its full meaning one must read it closely and comparatively with its spear mate. Further, each pair of the post-Classical *Lives* derives final meaning and impact from its relationship to the Alexander-Caesar pair, and has at its core an interconnectedness never even envisioned by any of the other ancient writers of series of biographies (38) .

(38) Brenk, who believes strongly that Plutarch was deeply influenced by Platonic metempsychosis (4359-63, 4377-80), sees the *Lives* rather as "an expansion on the choice of lives in the Myth of Er" (1992) 4457. This would seem to run counter to Plutarch's avowed goal for the *Lives* of activating the reader to ethical self-improvement since Orpheus, Odysseus, Atalanta, and the others chose new existences morally similar to what they had been before. Not one of the eight chose τὸ ἀγαθόν; cp. S. BENARDETE, *Socrates's Second Sailing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989) 227-29.