

# Tweaking the Real: Art Theory and the Borderline between History and Morality in Plutarch's *Lives*

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IS IT NOT TRUE that the closer the student gets to the intricacies and the opacities of biographical reality, the more refracted the moral entities become?"<sup>1</sup> It is true, and what Thomas G. Rosenmeyer has formulated as a problem in studying the openings of Plutarch's *Lives* in fact encapsulates the fundamental problem faced by anybody whose aim is to use reality in order to construct morality. Indeed, not only is the task of developing morality from true facts problematic, but the construction of reality into a narrative, as so often practised by historians is, as we have known at least since Hayden White's work, a much more difficult task than the naïve first glance would suppose.<sup>2</sup> And if, according to White, categories of beginning and end, of structure and order, or perhaps also of style and aesthetics, may be applied only cautiously to the real, how much harder will it be to force it into categories of good and bad, of paradeigmaticity and exemplarity?

Yet this is exactly the task Plutarch has set out to fulfil in his *Parallel Lives*: however divergent Plutarch's programmatic statements about the aims of his *Lives* are in detail,<sup>3</sup> there is no

<sup>1</sup>T. G. Rosenmeyer, "Beginnings in Plutarch's *Lives*," *YCS* 29 (1992) 205–230.

<sup>2</sup>H. White, *Metahistory. The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (Baltimore/London 1973), esp. 1–42.

<sup>3</sup>That a single statement cannot be taken as representative for the entire corpus has recently been shown by T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives. Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford 1999: hereafter "Duff"), esp. 13–51.

doubt that to announce, as he does in the *Alexander* (1.2), that he will make Alexander's biography a δῆλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας<sup>4</sup> poses exactly the problem that Rosenmeyer has formulated. How does a moralising account handle "the real" from which it is derived? How does such an account define its relation to reality? And this problem poses itself with vehemence to any reader of Plutarch's *Lives*; Rosenmeyer's blunt rhetorical question has been fleshed out by Christopher Pelling in demonstrating how Plutarch's *Lives* are pervaded by passages that relate to exactly this issue:<sup>5</sup> the author's occasionally astonishing historical accuracy is matched by an equally astonishing willingness to give in two *Lives* two different accounts of the same event, to disregard openly chronology, to bias narratives so as to fit the moral tendency of the respective *Life*. We may be uncertain to what extent this affects our appreciation of Plutarch,<sup>6</sup> and one might argue about how substantial the changes are that Plutarch employs in order to make history fit with reality. Nonetheless, the issue is too obviously important to be neglected, and how we react to it is likely to determine our reading of Plutarch's *Lives* substantially.

Our reaction will be different depending upon whether we find in the texts themselves any awareness of the problem they pose so conspicuously. For if we are left alone with this question in reading Plutarch's *Lives*, we may be inclined to mark such a lack of awareness as a fault in as much as he then disregards a fundamental problem inherent in their conception. But if we do find awareness, we gain an additional tool for

<sup>4</sup>I quote Plutarch from the Teubner edition.

<sup>5</sup>C. B. R. Pelling, "Truth and Fiction in Plutarch's *Lives*," in D. A. Russell, ed., *Antonine Literature* (Oxford 1990) 19–52; indeed, Pelling's article appeared before Rosenmeyer's study, who does not seem to have been aware of it. See also E. Badian, "Plutarch's Unconfessed Skill. The Biographer as a Critical Historian," in T. Hantos, ed., *Laurea Internationalis. Festschrift für Jochen Bleicken zum 75. Geburtstag* (Stuttgart 2003) 26–44.

<sup>6</sup>Pelling's rather favourable account finds a much more concerned counterpart, e.g., in A. D. Momigliano's *The Development of Greek Biography* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1971).

understanding the *Lives*. Pelling is ambivalent on the question of awareness: on the one hand, when discussing Plutarch's rather "creative" order of events at the beginning of the *Caesar* which results in a nice sequence of first acquiring rhetorical skills and then using them, he writes that Plutarch at *Caes.* 3–4 "was adapting the truth for literary purposes, *and he knew it.*"<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, at both the beginning and the end of his discussion of Plutarch's manipulations, he is more cautious: "it is hard to think that Plutarch would have drawn a hard-and-fast line between cases where he was sacrificing the truth and cases where he was reconstructing it" (36), matched by "it is hard to believe that he thought he was doing anything totally different in the two cases" [*i.e.* reconstructing the truth and sacrificing it] (42). It seems then that this question requires some further discussion. What I address in this paper, however, is not just the question whether Plutarch was aware of the fact that he did tweak the real—the one passage Pelling cites for awareness proves this sufficiently. Rather, I focus on the terms in which this "tweaking of the real" is conceived in Plutarch's *Lives*. How precisely do the texts perceive what Pelling has labelled "adaptation"? It is fortunate for such a discussion that Plutarch very often compares his biographical trajectory to the visual arts, thereby opening up for us the possibility to make use of art theory in order to answer our question. The passage that I believe allows us an exemplary glance at the issue is one where Plutarch both is at his most programmatic and employs the visual arts as his point of comparison: the opening of the Alexander/Caesar pair.

The proem to the *Alexander* has come to be regarded as a core text for the understanding of Plutarch's biographical method as opposed to historiography. At the centre of the discussion have been the first two paragraphs, where Plutarch explains that for

<sup>7</sup>Pelling (*supra* n.5) 39 (my italics).

writing βίοι it is often less important to accumulate all or even only the famous events, than the small ones which enable him to display his hero's character.<sup>8</sup> After this, the third paragraph (1.3) introduces the method of a painter as a parallel for Plutarch's own method: painters, too, emphasise in their paintings those elements that display their subject's character. So the purpose of this passage is, at first glance, only to reinforce once again what had been established before: the focus on τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα which leaves μέγεθος and ἀγῶνες to others. Therefore, this latter sentence has seemed to be less important and has come to be overlooked; and what might also have contributed to its being relatively neglected is the obvious fact that comparing a technique employed in writing a text to painting is too frequent a feature in ancient literature to cause much excitement in modern critics.

But Plutarch in yet another core programmatic passage presents a work of art in order to explain his biographical method, and there the way the comparison works is not at all straightforward—so that perhaps the parallel comparison in the *Life of Alexander* is not so straightforward either. In the opening chapters of the *Life of Cimon*, Plutarch first relates a story about his home town Chaeronea: the inhabitants erected a statue in honour of Lucullus after he had, during the Mithridatic war, saved the city from a false accusation.<sup>9</sup> This statue then serves Plutarch as a starting point for a methodological statement that explains his motivation for writing the *Life of Lucullus*. On the one hand, he says, the then citizens' gratitude towards their saviour Lucullus extends to himself, and on the other hand he expresses his belief that an εἰκών which emphasises ἦθος and

<sup>8</sup>Secondary literature to this passage and its distinction between biography and historiography is mentioned in Duff 17 n.13; seminal still is A. Dihle, *Studien zur griechischen Biographie* (AbhGött 37 [1956]).

<sup>9</sup>On the initial narrative of this pair cf. J. Ma, "Black Hunter Variations," *PCPS* 40 (1994) 49–80, and C. S. Mackay, "Damon of Chaeronea. The Loyalties of a Boeotian Town during the Mithridatic War," *Klio* 82 (2000) 91–106.

τρόπος of a character is much more beautiful than one which merely imitates τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον—the latter, obviously, refers to the erected statue, and the former to the *Life of Lucullus* that Plutarch is about to write.<sup>10</sup> Thus he contrasts the way in which a work of art represents just the external characteristics of its object, with his own narrative, which brings out Lucullus' internal, ethical traits,<sup>11</sup> so that once again the moral bias of his biographies which he also had brought up in other introductions<sup>12</sup> is emphasised.

Unlike the opening of the *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch in this passage uses art not as a parallel but as a contrast to his own technique. What makes the opening of the *Cimon* so important for our context is that Plutarch here, after the comparison just mentioned, introduces the question of truth into the discussion: he emphasises that he sticks to the truth in his account (2.2, ἀληθῆ διεξιόντες). This statement is followed by another sentence which again raises the question of true representation: Lucullus himself surely would not deign to receive a ψευδῆ καὶ πεπλασμένην ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ διήγησιν in return for the true testimony he provided for Chaeronea's citizens. In the light of the contrast between the statue's purely physical representation and his own ethical account that Plutarch has just established, the new contrast between a true and a false account introduced in this sentence must strike readers as somewhat unexpected

<sup>10</sup>On this concept cf. e.g. E. C. Evans, "The Study of Physiognomy in the Second Century A.D.," *TAPA* 72 (1941) 96–108; A. E. Wardman, "Description of Personal Appearance in Plutarch and Suetonius. The Use of Statues as Evidence," *CQ* 17 (1967) 414–420; R. Hirsch-Luipold, *Plutarchs Denken in Bildern. Studien zur literarischen, philosophischen und religiösen Funktion des Bildhaften* (Tübingen 2002) 44–45.

<sup>11</sup>Cf. A. Blamire, *Plutarch. Life of Kimon* (London 1989) 84.

<sup>12</sup>Cf. e.g. *Aem.* 1.1–4, *Nic.* 1.5. Important is *Per.* 2, as here what narrative can do is contrasted with what physical representations can do, but the focus of Plutarch's argument is not on his own technique, but on the reader's reaction on his *Lives*. For an analysis of the subtle and difficult argument of this passage see L. Van der Stockt, *Twinkling and Twilight. Plutarch's Reflections on Literature* (Brussels 1992) 32–37, and Duff 34–45.

and logically insufficiently connected to the previous line of thought. But, showing the elusive and subtle rhetoric Plutarch employs in this passage, it is through a play on words that readers are enabled to link this second contrast with the first. Of course, we can in the second sentence, and in fact do, understand *πεπλασμένην*, next to *ψευδῆ*, in its metaphorical sense of “forged.” But in a context that discusses statues a reader cannot fail to ponder the word’s literal meaning as well—which refers to a sculptor forming a statue.<sup>13</sup> This is a play on words, but it is a meaningful one: it enables us to link the first contrast with the second and by doing so insinuates that the purely physical representation of the statue is a less accurate tribute to Lucullus’ help than Plutarch’s ethical representation.<sup>14</sup>

Having read the account of Lucullus’ life, a reader is very likely to be retrospectively surprised by Plutarch’s claim for greater truth in his ethical representation. Duff points out that Plutarch credits Lucullus with “a more favourable treatment than he might have done” (60). The *Life of Lucullus*, that is, is an exemplary case for Plutarch’s tweaking; and yet it is precisely here that Plutarch claims adherence to the truth. Is he trying to lull us into false beliefs?

The next paragraph, I argue, provides an answer (*Cim.* 2.4). Interestingly it is again a comparison between text and visual arts—painting, this time<sup>15</sup>—that helps Plutarch to make his point: just as a painter should neither over- nor underemphasise the flaws of his object, so a biographer should, when dealing

<sup>13</sup>Cf. LSJ s.v. *πλάσσω* v and i. Pl. *Resp.* 510E shows a nice contrast between *πλάττειν* and *γράφειν* that fits well with our passage.

<sup>14</sup>That the word *διήγησιν* by which the sentence closes cannot easily be applied to a statue does not to my mind invalidate my argument: the play on the word *πεπλασμένην* is sufficient to make the reader think about statues, which is all Plutarch wants.

<sup>15</sup>The genre as such—painting or statue—is not at stake in this sequence. See Hirsch-Luipold (*supra* n.10) 49 n.37: “Es kommt [Plutarch] offenbar nicht auf die Bildgattung an, sondern allein auf die Art der Darstellung” in the visual arts in their relation to biography.

with generally good objects, round out and fill out (*ἀναπληρωτέον*) the truth. What precisely does he mean by *ἀναπληροῦσθαι*? Illuminating for this is a passage from the *Life of Fabius* where Plutarch uses the same word to refer to the senate's returning to its full complement;<sup>16</sup> that is, to the deficient number of senators more members are added, so that the senate is again fully a senate. Returning to the image in the *Cimon* with this meaning in mind, we understand that while the statue's mimetic representation is deficient like an under-staffed senate, only the biographer's account achieves full truth. The biographer adds positive features to the real Lucullus, just as senators are added to the senate: but precisely because of that, biography achieves greater truth than the mimetic statue.<sup>17</sup>

With this disavowal of mimetic representation in mind, let us now return to the opening of the *Life of Alexander* where I suggest we find an equally subtle but more full treatment of the same issue.

For this, we have to read on in the *Alexander* to discover that the first mention of the visual arts (1.3), described above, is not isolated in the Alexander/Caesar pair; and even if Judith Mossman has noted and analysed the importance of statues in this pair,<sup>18</sup> it has not been pointed out that that first mention of the visual arts in this biographical pair is qualified by the next mention, in chapter 4 (4.1–3):

τὴν μὲν οὖν ἰδέαν τοῦ σώματος οἱ Λυσίππειοι μάλιστα τῶν ἀνδριάντων ἐμφαίνουσιν, ὑφ' οὗ μόνου καὶ αὐτὸς ἤξιον πλάττεσθαι. καὶ γὰρ (ὁ) μάλιστα πολλοὶ τῶν διαδόχων ὕστερον

<sup>16</sup>9.4, καὶ γὰρ τότε ἐπὶ τῶν στρατοπέδων Μάρκος Ἰούνιος ἦν δικτάτωρ, καὶ κατὰ πόλιν τὸ βουλευτικὸν ἀναπληρῶσαι δεῖσαν. ἅτε δὴ πολλῶν ἐν τῇ μάχῃ συγκλητικῶν ἀπολωλότων, ἕτερον εἴλοντο δικτάτορα Φάβιον Βουτεῶνα. The same usage for instance in *Publicola* 11.2.

<sup>17</sup>For Plutarch's usage of mimesis as "the reference to reality, as a simple matter of fact," see Van der Stockt (*supra* n.12), 47.

<sup>18</sup>J. Mossman, "Plutarch's Use of Statues," in M. A. Flower and M. Toher, edd., *Georgica. Greek Studies in Honour of George Cawkwell* (London 1991) 98–119, esp. 115–119.

καὶ τῶν φίλων ἀπεμιμοῦντο, τὴν τ' ἀνάτασιν τοῦ ἀυχένος εἰς εὐώνυμον ἡσυχῇ κεκλιμένου καὶ τὴν ὑγρότητα τῶν ὀμμάτων, διατετήρηκεν ἀκριβῶς ὁ τεχνίτης. Ἀπελλῆς δὲ γράφων (αὐ)τὸν κεραυνοφόρον, οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο τὴν χροάν, ἀλλὰ φαιότερον καὶ πεπινωμένον ἐποίησεν. ἦν δὲ λευκός, ὡς φασιν.

The contrast set out in this passage is as follows. There are, on the one hand, the statues by Lysippus, and these are characterised by representing Alexander with great care in preserving features of his physical appearance. On the other hand, Plutarch makes the reader recall the way Apelles the painter represented Alexander: his works, on the contrary, do not preserve the king's physical appearance, but represent his skin as too dark, though in reality his complexion was white. The contrast between the two artists, then, is conceived in terms of the respective accuracy with which they imitate their object or otherwise. It is worth observing that the issue of imitation is, in this passage, emphasised in yet another way: before the works of art are compared, Plutarch mentions Alexander's friends and followers who imitated him not in art, but in reality. Interestingly, ἀπεμιμοῦντο is an imperfect which can as well be understood in a conative sense,<sup>19</sup> so that, right from the beginning, the reader's attention is directed not only to the issue of μίμησις, but to the potential failure inherent in it as well. Here, then, Plutarch addresses the very same features we know from the *Life of Cimon*, now asserting that one art gives a faithful representation, whereas the other does not.

But maybe here the question is just one of technical skills, and maybe the reason why Apelles is unfaithful is that he was simply unable to handle his colours properly. However, not only the parallel with the *Cimon* where technical skills play no role at all excludes such an answer. More importantly, the distinction Plutarch draws<sup>20</sup> can be well understood from ancient theories

<sup>19</sup>Indeed, it is translated as such in the Loeb edition.

<sup>20</sup>One should also notice that Plutarch in making this distinction differs from our other ancient sources: Cicero (*Fam.* 5.12.13), Horace (*Epist.* 2.1.239), and

on art and its representational techniques. An interesting discussion of Apelles' technique in Pliny the Elder is highly relevant for the *Alexander*:<sup>21</sup>

*inventa eius et ceteris profuere in arte; unum imitari nemo potuit, quod absoluta opera atramento inlinebat ita tenui, ut id ipsum, cum repercussum claritates colorum omnium excitaret custodiret-que a pulvere et sordibus, ad manum intuenti demum appareret, sed et luminum ratione magna, ne claritas colorum aciem offenderet veluti per lapidem specularum intuentibus et e longinquo eadem res nimis floridis coloribus austeritatem occulte daret.*

Pliny is here concerned with a pitfall of representational art. Apparently Apelles felt that colours may be too bright and vivid and could thus offend the viewer. That is, in order to make a painting not only true in a representational sense—and we remember that two chapters earlier Pliny had mentioned the famous anecdote that horses would start neighing when they saw Apelles' representation of horses (35.95)—but also pleasant for the viewer, the artist needs to develop strategies other than mere representation. Apelles' strategy (unique to him and not imitated by others), Pliny says, had been to cover his paintings with a very thin black varnish to add *austeritas* to too vivid colours. Consequently, the object represented in the painting comes to be perceived by the beholder more sombrely. The sombreness is not part of the initial rendering; nor in fact are sombre men in general darker in their physical appearance than men that are generally cheerful. Nonetheless, by adding the varnish Apelles achieves a pleasantness that Pliny valued very positively.

Ancient art employed this technique of adding even to the point where reality was actually distorted. Quintilian, for

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Pliny (*HN* 7.125) say that Alexander liked to be painted by Apelles just as he liked to be sculpted by Lysippus. What is Plutarch's point in differing from the main tradition?

<sup>21</sup>*HN* 35.97. J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch. Alexander – A Commentary* (Oxford 1969) 11, has already drawn attention to the passage.

instance, informs us that Polycleitus *humanae formae decorem addiderit supra verum* (12.10.7–8). More to the point of Plutarch's technique, however, are passages where reality is not distorted, but where such additions are conceived as art's ability to display by pictorial means even non-physical entities. Quintilian provides an example of this after the passage just quoted: Phidias created in Olympia a statue of Zeus, *cuius pulchritudo adiecisse aliquid etiam receptae religionis videtur* (12.10.9). The traditional sanctity bound to Phidias' Zeus certainly is not something that would lend itself to a pictorial representation; nonetheless, Phidias managed to display this non-physical feature of the statue.<sup>22</sup> Pliny has yet another example, again from Apelles' art: *pinxit et quae pingi non possunt, tonitrua, fulgetra fulguraque* (HN 35.96) Panofsky characterised, almost a century ago, the ultimate point of this alienation of art from representing models: "[es] bricht sich sogar die Überzeugung Bahn, daß eine höchste Kunst des sinnfälligen Vorbildes durchaus zu entraten, vom Eindruck des wirklich Wahrnehmbaren sich völlig zu emanzipieren vermöge."<sup>23</sup>

However, not only *tonitrua* or *religio* could be seen in works of art when this technique came to be employed. One also wanted to construct works of art that displayed ethical and moral qualities. Already Xenophon's Socrates asked a painter how it is possible to express through colour and shape the soul's character (*Mem.* 3.10.1–5). An example is transmitted by Clement of Alexandria: Zeno sketched out an image of a young man with a *καθαρόν πρόσωπον* who is, amongst other things, characterised by an *ὀρθὸς νοῦς πρὸς τὸν λόγον*; and generally

<sup>22</sup>Indeed, in the case of gods the imitation of reality is entirely impossible, a question Apollonius of Tyana is mockingly asked by an Egyptian in Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius* (6.19).

<sup>23</sup>*Idea. Ein Beitrag zur Begriffsgeschichte der älteren Kunsttheorie*<sup>2</sup> (Berlin 1960) 8. More recent studies of this tendency in art criticism include A. Rouveret, *Histoire et imaginaire de la peinture ancienne* (Paris 1989) 382–423; G. Watson, "The Concept of 'Phantasia' from the Late Hellenistic Period to Early Neoplatonism," *ANRW II.36.7* (1994) 4765–4810.

he demanded that αἰδῶς ... ἐπανθείτω καὶ ἄρρενωπία (SVF I 246). But one does not have to resort to Stoics who sketch out prescriptions about the moral content of paintings,<sup>24</sup> since it is again Pliny who provides a convenient example: Zeuxis *fecit et Penelopen, in qua pinxisse mores videtur, by being grandior in capitibus articulisque.*<sup>25</sup>

In all these examples, artists “add” to their represented objects (*atramento in lineare, decorem addere, aliquid adiecisse, αἰδῶς ... ἐπανθείτω, enlarging of fingers*). Some distort reality by their adding. Most of them, however, bring out features that we would think are hard for representational art to bring out, for instance *religio*<sup>26</sup>—and it is this feature of ancient thinking on art that I suggest enlightens our understanding of Plutarch’s attitude towards truth in biographic writing.

From this excursus into ancient art criticism what have we learnt for chapter 4 of Plutarch’s *Alexander*? Normally, we would read the contrast between Lysippus and Apelles as a clear-cut distinction where Lysippus is simply better because he is mimetic, while Apelles made Alexander’s complexion too dark because he οὐκ ἐμιμήσατο. But the non-mimetical adding puts artists in a position to represent qualities that do not appear in the object’s physical shape. To these qualities belong things such as *religio* and *decor*. Crucial for understanding the relevance of this concept for the passage in the *Alexander* is that *mores* also come to be expressed by such “creative changes,” so that Plutarch, when he points to Apelles’ varnish, once more raises the issue of accuracy vs. biographical representation that

<sup>24</sup>Cicero (*Fin.* 2.69) has an example of another Stoic, Cleanthes, who used to sketch out a tablet with his words (*pudebit te illius tabulae, quam Cleanthes sane commode verbis depingere solebat*). The tradition of these tablets might be continued by the *Tabula Cebeis* (cf. for instance R. Joly, *Le tableau de Cébès et la philosophie religieuse* [Bruxelles/Berchem 1963] 50–51).

<sup>25</sup>HN 35.63; the Loeb translation suggests understanding *articulis* as “fingers and toes.”

<sup>26</sup>Other features may be expressed by this technique as well: cf. Rouveret (*supra* n.23) 342–344.

figured in the opening chapter of the *Life: mores*, if they are to be represented in art or in biography, involve an *additamentum* to the object's factual appearance. In the visual arts, Apelles' rather than Lysippus' technique can achieve an aim that is comparable to Plutarch's aim in the *Lives*: namely, to display a character's morality.<sup>27</sup> We may now recall that Plutarch himself presented his own biographic technique as "adding," saying in the *Cimon* that it is necessary to round out (ἀναπληρωτέον) the truth. Precisely at this point Plutarch aligns himself with the strategy of the painters which we have just discussed.

But is it not paradoxical, then, that in the *Alexander* it is explicitly said that Alexander himself wanted to be represented by Lysippus only? Did Alexander prefer a purely mimetic representation to one that was able to bring out his *mores*? In fact, in *De Alexandri Magni fortuna* (*Mor.* 335A–C) Plutarch describes Lysippus' statues as conveying Alexander's ἦθος, contradicting thereby the contrast he sets up in the *Life of Alexander*. But rather than assuming carelessness on the part of Plutarch in order to explain such a contradiction, we should ask whether it does not have a point: why is the contrast set up in the *Life* as it is? Pelling has observed that Plutarch was capable of giving two different accounts of the same event in two different *Lives*, according as the narrative demanded;<sup>28</sup> the explanation of the specific contrast in the *Alexander* then may also be due to the specific needs of the passage. And I suggest that what Plutarch wants us to perceive here is precisely the biographer's ability to add to his represented object—even if that is not what the object itself deems right.

In the first paragraph of the *Alexander*, Plutarch describes his method in composing the following biography.<sup>29</sup> He should not

<sup>27</sup> *Mores*, which are, according to Pliny, expressed in Zeuxis' painting, are a key term in Latin biography as well: cf. *Nep. praef.* 2–3.

<sup>28</sup> Pelling (*supra* n.5) 39.

<sup>29</sup> Duff (20) states that it does not relate so much to the Caesar, but "belongs specifically to the *Life of Alexander*; it is tailored to this context and to Plutarch's rhetorical agenda at this point."

be criticised for not mentioning πάντα nor καθ' ἕκαστον ἐξειργασμένως τι τῶν περιβοήτων nor for leaving out the major part of the material available to him. The method according to which he refuses to write becomes, at the beginning of the following paragraph, associated with ἱστορία, and the often quoted contrast between historiography and biography is established. Historiography in this introduction, thus, is mainly associated with two characteristics: (1) completeness (πάντα, ἐπιτέμνω, ἐξειργασμένως), (2) famous events. The completeness historiography aims at is thus constructed by Plutarch as a full rendering of famous events; historiography concentrates on complete rendering of important facts. Plutarch then goes on to say that, as for the factual side, biography is less complete: it leaves out most of those facts and focuses rather on events of less impact. But how can it be that Plutarch here espouses lack of completeness as the central feature of biography, while in the *Life of Cimon* he demanded to ἀναπληροῦσθαι the truth? What the mention of Apelles' art in the following section of the *Alexander* suggests is that Plutarch's biographical completeness is a different one from the historian's: it consists of "adding" as in the visual arts, which alone enables a biographer to bring out *mores*.

Let us now see how, once the reader has noticed the link between the proem and the discussion of Lysippus' and Apelles' art, the latter passage qualifies the former. In the proem, Plutarch contrasts two ways of dealing with a historical subject. The point of reference that serves for judging both is "how to bring out ἦθος." In other words, what determines the way in which he constructs the relation between an object and its—in this case, textual—representation is the moral purpose of the text: the text's subject is so construed as to serve the text's purpose. From this perspective, it is natural that the biographical method appears superior and is consequently used by Plutarch in the following pair of *Lives*; in fact, if we recall the *Cimon* once again, this method was for Plutarch truer than the

purely mimetic representation achieved by Lucullus' statue. I have argued that this very problematisation takes place in the second passage. In chapter 4, Plutarch introduces a second point of reference for the object-representation relation: the reality of the object and the claims that this reality has on its representation. Lysippus' statues are superior since they are simply more accurate in representing the object. And now Plutarch's reader finds himself faced with exactly the tension between both points of reference: moral intention on the one hand and mimetic truth on the other. What we are to learn from the juxtaposition is not, as Alexander held, that mimetic representation is to be preferred. Rather, we are made to ponder the functioning of each way of representation: but we should not approach biographies with a conception of truth as mimetic representation of real objects. Plutarch does not conceive of his work in this category.<sup>30</sup>

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