

# No Time for Love: Plutarch's Chaste Caesar

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IN THE SOURCE TRADITION, Alexander is quite often depicted as relentless in his pursuit of empire but self-controlled in most nonmilitary situations, and especially in his amorous relationships. Julius Caesar, on the other hand, when his love life is discussed, is rarely presented as moderate. In his *Alexander-Caesar*, Plutarch for the most part follows the tradition for Alexander, but for Caesar he has deliberately minimized the role played by Caesar's lovers and his sexual appetite, making him more like Alexander and concentrating on his single-minded quest for political and military domination. This paper will attempt to explain why Plutarch's Caesar is essentially sexless, suggesting that Plutarch has purposely de-emphasized the erotic aspect of Caesar's nature in order to accentuate his relentless ambition and that this presentation is influenced by Plutarch's characterization of Alexander.

In Plutarch's biography, Caesar is undistracted by love affairs. We see this illustrated in the very first chapter, where Caesar visits Nicomedes (*Caes.* 1.6–8):<sup>1</sup>

Next he was moving by night to another dwelling on account of sickness, and he fell in with Sulla's soldiers, who were search-

<sup>1</sup>The beginning of the *Caesar*, along with the end of the preceding *Alexander*, has most likely been lost. See P. A. Stadter, "The Proems of Plutarch's *Lives*," *ICS* 13 (1988) 276–277; C. Pelling, "Plutarch's Method of Work in the Roman *Lives*," *JHS* 99 (1979) 85 n.81 (= B. Scardigli, ed., *Essays on Plutarch's Lives* [Oxford 1995] 289 n.81), now revised in C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History* (London/Swansea 2002) 36 n.82.

ing that area and arresting those in hiding. He bribed their leader Cornelius with two talents and was set free, and immediately he went down to the coast and sailed to King Nicomedes in Bithynia. Then, after staying with him only a short time, he sailed away and was captured off the island of Pharmacusa by pirates, who already at that time were controlling the sea with large fleets and countless boats.

According to this passage, Caesar's encounter with Nicomedes has absolutely nothing to do with love or sex. When we compare Plutarch's version with that of Suetonius (*Iul.* 2), who allows Caesar more time with the king, we uncover what Plutarch might have left unsaid:

Caesar did his first military service in Asia as an aide to Marcus Thermus, the praetor. Sent by Thermus to Bithynia to retrieve a fleet, Caesar settled at the court of Nicomedes, not without generating the rumor that his chastity had been surrendered to the king. He strengthened this rumor by returning to Bithynia a few days after leaving, with the alleged purpose of collecting a debt that was owed to a certain freedman, one of his clients. The rest of his military service brought him a better reputation, and at the capture of Mytilene, Thermus awarded him the civic crown.

Having read both of these passages, we might wonder whether or not Caesar really did surrender himself to Nicomedes. In Plutarch's version the king appears only as a passing reference in the first chapter. Suetonius, however, refers to Nicomedes again in chapter 49, where he "omits" and "passes over" the insults that were hurled at Caesar on account of the affair, but he nonetheless provides for the reader a sample of what he has left out: the verse insults of Licinius Calvus, the title "Queen of Bithynia" employed by Caesar's colleague Bibulus, and even Cicero's open reproach on the floor of the Senate, among several other examples.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Cassius Dio reports that Caesar was especially vexed by taunts about his relationship with Nicomedes made during his triumph (43.20.4). T. Duff, *Plu-*

In addition to providing further comment on Caesar's relationship with Nicomedes, chapter 49 also introduces into Suetonius' biography the topic of sexual adventure, and the subsequent three chapters are all devoted to accounts of Caesar's intrigues with various women.<sup>3</sup> Like chapter 49, these chapters are filled with anecdotes and quotations that bring to light Caesar's various affairs, both at home and in the provinces. But Caesar's sexual adventures, highlighted by Suetonius, are passed over by Plutarch in his biography, although we know from the *Cato Minor*, for example, that he was not ignorant of or shy about Caesar's affairs. In that *Life*, Cato discovers that Caesar has seduced his sister Servilia when a love letter from her is delivered to Caesar while the Senate is in session (*Cat.Min.* 24). This incident, which also appears in the *Brutus*, along with the suggestion that Caesar might actually have been the father of Brutus (*Brut.* 5), is absent from the *Life* of Caesar.<sup>4</sup> Absent as well from the *Caesar* are all the women on

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*tarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford 1999) 94–97, also compares Suetonius' and Plutarch's versions of Caesar's visit to Nicomedes when arguing for Plutarch's reluctance to include sexual material in the *Lives* except when sexual relations have personal or political consequences beyond the affair itself. However, as we have seen from chapter 49 of Suetonius, the incident with Nicomedes did have political implications for Caesar, and so by Duff's criterion the full story could have been useful to Plutarch. Therefore, he must have had other reasons for ignoring the rumors and their repercussions. Duff does not seem to think, nor do I think, that Plutarch could have learned about the visit to Nicomedes without having also learned about the rumors it generated. Suetonius may also be referring to the incident obliquely at 22.2, where Caesar is called effeminate, according to H. E. Butler, M. Cary, and G. B. Townend, *Suetonius: Divus Julius* (Oxford 1927, Bristol 1982) 70, 158. In contrast, Plutarch's Caesar does not engage in any homosexual activity at all, a fact which also separates him from the Caesar we meet in Catullus 57, a poem which Suetonius knew and mentioned (*Iul.* 73).

<sup>3</sup>On Suetonius' presentation of material by topic, see A. Wallace-Hadrill, *Suetonius*<sup>2</sup> (London 1995) 66–72. In these chapters, Suetonius mentions Caesar's involvement with both Roman women and foreign queens, giving only a partial list of names: Postumia, wife of Servius Sulpicius; Lollia, wife of Aulus Gabinius; Tertulla, wife of Marcus Crassus; Mucia, wife of Gnaeus Pompey; Servilia, mother of Marcus Brutus, and her daughter, Tertia; Eunoe the Moor, wife of Bogudes; and (*maxime*) Cleopatra (*Iul.* 50, 52).

<sup>4</sup>The relationship is reported as fact by Suetonius: "But most of all he loved Servilia, the mother of Marcus Brutus" (*Iul.* 50.2).

Suetonius' list of paramours, with the exception of Cleopatra.<sup>5</sup> And even in his dealings with her, Plutarch's Caesar seems barely interested in love.

In fact, Plutarch's handling of the relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra, when compared with that found in other accounts, allows us to observe how he has selected and shaped his material in order to present a Caesar who is undistracted by love. Ancient authors, in describing Caesar's Alexandrian war, approach the relationship in a variety of ways: some omit it altogether, some characterize it in terms of military or political expediency, while others include a romantic or even an erotic dimension. For example, in Caesar's own report, Cleopatra is named simply as the queen and heir to the throne (*B.Civ.* 3.103). Blaming the conflict on Ptolemy's eunuch Pothinus and his ally Achillas, Caesar wishes to settle the matter only "as a mutual friend and arbiter" (3.108–109). In the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, written perhaps by Caesar's lieutenant and friend Aulus Hirtius, there is also no mention of any feeling for Cleopatra.<sup>6</sup> Other authors ascribe some romantic, or at least emotional, feelings to Caesar. Appian reports that there was in fact a romantic relationship between the couple: after defeating her brother and establishing Cleopatra on the throne, "Caesar took four hundred ships up the Nile with Cleopatra, observing the country and in other respects enjoying himself with her" (*B.Civ.* 2.90). Appian then refers the reader to his (lost) Egyptian history. Florus describes in some detail the events in Alexandria, noting that Caesar was moved to pity because of Cleopatra's beauty

<sup>5</sup>As noted by C. Pelling, "Plutarch's Adaptation of his Source-material," *JHS* 100 (1980) 137 (= *Essays* [*supra* n.1] 147), revised in *Plutarch and History* 104–105.

<sup>6</sup>On the contrary, in the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, Caesar is actually moved to pity by the deceitful tears of Ptolemy, who pretends to prefer captivity with Caesar to freedom and return to his own people (24). Upon leaving Alexandria, Caesar turns power over to Cleopatra, who "had remained loyal and helpful to him" (33).

and her predicament, although his account goes no further than that (2.18.56–57).<sup>7</sup>

Two other authors, however, narrate the relationship between Caesar and the queen with even more detail. The fullness of their versions hints at what Plutarch admits to having known but chose to exclude. The most explicit, and the most embellished, is Lucan's account, where we find not a simple romance or a man moved to pity, but instead a Caesar who is consumed by passion: "And in the midst of his madness and his rage / in the court inhabited by the spirit of Pompey / the adulterer, soaked with the blood of Thessalian slaughter / allowed Love into his anxieties and mixed with his weapons / an illicit affair and illegitimate children" (10.72–76). In Lucan's account, there is no doubt about Caesar's feelings for the queen: Caesar's passion is described in a style reminiscent of Virgil's portrayal of Dido's violent affliction.<sup>8</sup> Especially significant is Cleopatra's attempt to mold Caesar's opinion. She desires his support in order to regain the throne in Alexandria, and so she trusts in her beauty (*formae confisa suae*, 10.82) and states her case. After presenting Cleopatra's appeal, Lucan re-emphasizes the role played by her appearance, explaining that she would have been unsuccessful if not for her beauty (10.104–105).<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>In addition, Strabo and Orosius report simply that Caesar established Cleopatra as queen of Egypt but do not describe any other relationship (Strab. 17.1.11, Oros. 6.15.29–16.3). Velleius Paterculus includes only a brief mention of Caesar's time in Alexandria and leaves Cleopatra out entirely (2.54.1).

<sup>8</sup>The fire which has consumed Caesar's heart (*durum cum Caesaris hauserit ignis pectus*, 10.71–72) and the Love added to his anxieties (*admisit Venerem curis*, 10.75) evoke the opening of *Aeneid* 4. S. Braund, *Lucan: Civil War* (Oxford 1992) xxx, notes the similarity of the situations and also comments on the important difference between the two couples: "In contrast with the naïve Dido, victim of the gods, and the travel-weary Aeneas, Caesar and Cleopatra are both resourceful, enterprising characters who are prepared to use any opportunity presented them to further their personal objectives, chiefly of gaining power."

<sup>9</sup>*Nequiquam duras temptasset Caesaris aures: voltus adest precibus faciesque incesta perorat*; compare Dido's complaint about Aeneas' "hard ears" when her entreaty goes unheeded: *cur mea dicta negat duras demittere in auris?* (*Aen.* 4.428).

Thus the cynical Lucan presents a Caesar who can be controlled through his passions and a Cleopatra willing to manipulate him.<sup>10</sup>

This serious weakness of Caesar for the beauty of women is also the basis for Cleopatra's appeal in the history of Cassius Dio, who likewise presents a controlling queen who wishes to return to the throne and who is perfectly endowed to dominate Caesar. Cleopatra had at first attempted to entreat Caesar through intermediaries, but when she realized his flaw—he was “quite amorous (ἐρωτικώτατος) and slept with every woman who came his way” (42.34.3)—she changed her tack and decided to approach him in person. Cleopatra is well aware of her attributes, according to Dio, and not reluctant to enlist them in gaining her desired goal (42.34.4–5). Without the hyperbole of Lucan, Dio still manages to transmit the same pair of characters: a general susceptible to manipulation because of his weakness for sex, and a queen able and willing to manipulate him. And perhaps “manipulate” is even too weak a term, for Dio says that Caesar was “enslaved” (ἐδουλώθη, 42.35.1), and he further describes how the relationship made Caesar a target for the attacks of Pothinus. In any case, Dio omits any further description of their affair. Suetonius, in contrast, uses the relationship to close his chapters on Caesar's love life, discussing in some detail the controversy surrounding the legitimacy of Cleopatra's child (*Iul.* 52).

Another important similarity between the accounts of Lucan and Dio lies in the role of Pothinus, who was also featured in Caesar's own account. Both authors describe how Cleopatra manipulated Caesar so that he would become her ally and reconcile her to Ptolemy, but they also make Pothinus plot an attack against Caesar after the reconciliation in an effort to

<sup>10</sup>Cf. the similar assessment of O. Zwierlein, “Cäsar und Kleopatra bei Lucan und in späterer Dichtung,” *AuA* 20 (1974) 55.

support Ptolemy.<sup>11</sup> Thus in these versions there are really two reasons for Caesar's involvement in the Alexandrian war: his love for Cleopatra, which made him an enemy of the king's supporters, and the machinations of Pothinus, which drew him into the actual fighting.<sup>12</sup>

In Plutarch's *Caesar* we find an awareness of both explanations but also a conscious effort to create a distance between them and ascribe the war completely to Pothinus. In narrating Caesar's attraction to the queen, Plutarch describes an intellectual rather than an emotional interest, portraying a Caesar who is level-headed even in love. Plutarch describes the start of the relationship in chapter 49. While Plutarch does admit that Caesar was captured by Cleopatra, he includes nothing similar to the mad lover of Lucan or the eager philanderer of Dio. According to Plutarch, Caesar was not drawn to Cleopatra by her beauty; in fact, we find no description of her appearance or manner of speaking in the *Caesar*.<sup>13</sup> Instead, Caesar is attracted

<sup>11</sup>Lucan 10.332–433, Dio 42.36–37.

<sup>12</sup>These dual causes appear to reflect two attitudes toward Caesar's role in the war, one which had him restore Cleopatra to the throne because of love, the other which had him acting in self-defense and in the interests of Rome. For G. Zecchini, *Cesare e il Mos Maiorum* (Stuttgart 2001) 78–80, these two versions are not necessarily incompatible: Caesar may have been in love *and* acting in Rome's best interests. The incompatibility lies in the desire to take a pro- or anti-Caesarian stance and attribute to Caesar one motive or the other. M. G. Schmidt, *Caesar und Cleopatra: Philologischer und historischer Kommentar zu Lucan. 10,1–171* (Frankfurt 1986) 122–124, follows Zwierlein (*supra* n.10) 54–58, and suggests that attributing the war to Pothinus derived from Livy, while the presentation of Caesar's love for Cleopatra was based on the Augustan poets' depiction of the affair between Cleopatra and Antony. Lucan and Dio reflect both attitudes by presenting a serious love affair alongside the attacks of Pothinus.

<sup>13</sup>We read in Plutarch's *Antony* that (contrary to Dio's opinion) Cleopatra was not so much beautiful as charming: "For her beauty was, as they say, in itself not altogether incomparable, not such as to be striking to one who saw her, but interaction with her had an inescapable hold, and her appearance, along with her persuasiveness in dialogue and her character, which at the same time somehow enveloped her when in company, had a motivating effect" (27.3). C. Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge 1988) 190–191, supports Plutarch's opinion and discusses the varied descriptions of Cleopatra's appearance.

by the clever trick which she devised to smuggle herself back into Alexandria: she had her supporter Apollodorus tie her up in a sack and carry her into the palace through the door, and “they say that Caesar was first captured by this trick of Cleopatra, who was clearly a daring woman” (*Caes.* 49.3).

Caesar is finally overcome by Cleopatra’s charm and by interaction with her, but throughout the episode, Plutarch declines to describe in any detail their intimate relationship. The only confirmation of such a relationship is found in the last sentence of the chapter, where Plutarch has inserted the birth of their child between Caesar’s leaving Cleopatra and his setting out for Syria: “Caesar left behind Cleopatra, who was ruling Egypt, and who a little later had a son by him whom the Alexandrians call Caesarion, and he set out for Syria” (49.10). In this sentence, Plutarch has re-employed the device that he used to diminish the role of Nicomedes in the opening chapter. In the earlier passage, Caesar’s dalliance with the king is de-emphasized by its placement between his arrest while in hiding and his capture by the pirates. The chapter that follows narrates Caesar’s great bravery and audacity in dealing with the pirates and thus erases what little impression Nicomedes might have made. In the case of Cleopatra, the effect is the same. The briefly mentioned birth of Caesarion is quickly forgotten as the narrative moves on to Pontus and the swift victory over Pharnaces, son of Mithridates.

But Plutarch has also more explicitly minimized the amorous nature of Caesar and Cleopatra’s relationship. In describing the Alexandrian war, Plutarch admits that there are competing explanations for its cause. Some say that the war was not necessary, but that it was due to Caesar’s ἔρως for Cleopatra (48.5). Lurking behind the word ἔρως we can assume stories like those related by Lucan and later Dio. The report of this opinion is brief, however, and takes only two lines in Ziegler’s edition.



Those with another story receive seven and a half lines in the same sentence, in which they blame the king's men, and especially the king's eunuch Pothinus, for exiling Cleopatra and attacking Caesar (48.5–6). After setting out the alternative explanations, Plutarch devotes the rest of the chapter to describing the attacks of Pothinus, thus endorsing the second opinion and vigorously suggesting that Caesar was, perhaps unwittingly, caught up in a *coup d'état*. Plutarch does not deny Caesar's attraction to Cleopatra, but he effectively argues against attributing Caesar's involvement in the war to ἔρωζ. Even in chapter 49, where Plutarch notes Caesar's captivation with Cleopatra, he immediately redirects the narrative back to the struggle with Pothinus. Plutarch's Caesar has no time for love.<sup>14</sup>

It appears, then, that where Caesar's love affairs are concerned, Plutarch has chosen to omit them or to minimize their influence. We may fairly ask why he has presented a nearly sexless Caesar in this biography when he was at other times willing to take into account a subject's love-life and even wrote about Caesar's affairs in other *Lives*.<sup>15</sup> One natural place

<sup>14</sup>Plutarch's brief handling of the affair with Cleopatra and the war with Pothinus also creates the impression that Caesar stayed only briefly in Alexandria. In this way he is similar to the author of the *Bellum Alexandrinum*, who hints that Caesar left Egypt soon after the war; see E. Rawson, "Caesar: Civil War and Dictatorship," in *CAH*<sup>2</sup> (1989) 434. We may contrast this quick exit with Appian's account of Caesar's cruise with Cleopatra along the Nile and the comments of M. Gelzer, *Caesar: Politician and Statesman* (Cambridge [Mass.] 1968, transl. P. Needham) 252: "Caesar had spent, or rather wasted, over half a year in Egypt in this way; for it was a time during which he was unable to exert any influence on the conduct of the war or imperial politics." J. H. Collins, "Caesar and the Corruption of Power," *Historia* 4 (1955) 462–465, surveys modern attempts to explain or rationalize this "waste of time" and remarks upon Cleopatra's influence in Caesar's later career. In doing so, he reminds us that Plutarch is silent about Cleopatra after the Alexandrian war and fails to mention her later visit to Rome while Caesar was dictator.

<sup>15</sup>We need not assume that Plutarch viewed all sexual behavior as shameful or damaging to a hero's reputation. For instance, he describes how Agesilaus, who was inclined toward falling in love, instructed his younger co-ruler, Agesipolis, in the ways of love and even helped him in spotting potential male lovers. In this case Plutarch takes care to point out that there was nothing dis-

to look for an answer is the first chapter of the *Alexander*, the Greek *Life* that is paired with the *Caesar* and precedes it. There Plutarch asks his readers not to fault him if he does not include all the details from the lives of the two men (*Alex.* 1.2):

For I am not writing histories but lives, and the revelation of virtue or vice is not always contained in a man's greatest deeds, but often it is the slight thing, a saying or a jest, that creates an impression of one's character, rather than battles with myriad casualties or great commands or the besieging of cities.

This is a concise programmatic statement, but at first glance, it does not appear to explain why the *Life* of Caesar is in fact filled with battles and casualties and sieges, while Caesar's promiscuity, which one would expect Plutarch to examine in order to understand Caesar's character, is left out. However, Plutarch is not claiming that he will exclude military episodes altogether, but only that he will make no attempt to narrate them completely and that he will often relate "slight things" instead when they are able to reveal character. The critical aspect of his program, then, is the ἔμφασις ἥθους, the "impression of one's character," and therefore we should read the extensive battle narratives, along with the more personal anecdotes, in order to observe what sort of hero emerges from the *Life*.<sup>16</sup> The impression that Plutarch sought to create for his Caesar was not that of a powerful man with an unrestrained sexual appetite, but rather that of a man with an unwavering determination to dominate Rome. This picture of Caesar is presented throughout the *Life* in anecdotes from his military and political career, and

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graceful in this sort of behavior among the Spartans (*Ages.* 20.9). He also describes in a neutral tone how Vibius kept Crassus comfortable while he was hiding in a cave by supplying women for companionship along with abundant food (*Crass.* 5). For a discussion of positive sexual behavior in Plutarch's *Lives*, see P. A. Stadter, "Subject to the Erotic': Male Sexual Behaviour in Plutarch," in D. Innes, H. Hine, C. Pelling, edd., *Ethics and Rhetoric: Classical Essays for Donald Russell on his Seventy-fifth Birthday* (Oxford 1995) 228–233.

<sup>16</sup>Duff (*supra* n.2) 16 n.7, explains that the term ἔμφασις can often signify the "'suggestion' or 'impression' of a latent truth."

in several places, Plutarch provides explicit descriptions of Caesar's character.<sup>17</sup>

In chapter 3, early in the *Life* and before Caesar's career is underway in Rome, Plutarch describes Caesar's nature and his designs on power. The opening sentence of the chapter provides the historical context: Sulla's power was waning and Caesar's friends were calling him back to Rome, but rather than go directly to Italy, Caesar stopped in Rhodes to study under Apollonius, an instructor in rhetoric. The rest of the chapter is an essay on the nature of Caesar (3.2–3):

And Caesar is also said to have been naturally very talented in political speaking and to have exercised his natural talent very ambitiously, so that he undeniably held second place. But he let the first place go so that he might instead expend his efforts and become first in power and arms, and he did not arrive at the degree of eloquence to which his nature would have led him because of his campaigns and political activity, by which he seized supremacy.

If we recall that chapter 2 contains a lengthy description of Caesar's dominance of the pirates, and add to it this account, where he deliberately withdraws from a certainly successful career in rhetoric in order to become *πρῶτος* in Rome, we can better understand Plutarch's de-emphasis of Nicomedes back in chapter 1. From the very beginning, Plutarch is representing Caesar as a man who is determined to rise to the highest position in Rome, and he seemingly does not want his picture clouded with tales of alleged promiscuity.

Chapter 4, which finds Caesar back in Rome, is a complement to chapter 3 and contains a corresponding description of Caesar's character. At this point in his career, Caesar is only beginning to acquire political and popular influence through his

<sup>17</sup>For the general interpretation of *Alex.* 1.1–2, see Duff (*supra* n.2) 14–22; Pelling (*supra* n.5) 102–107 (of the revised version) and “Plutarch's Caesar: A Caesar for the Caesars?” in *Plutarch and History* 259–261.

eloquence and his lavish hospitality. Most of his enemies thought that his popularity would fade; Cicero alone was able to perceive what Caesar really intended: "Having comprehended his cleverness of character, hidden beneath his generosity and cheerfulness, [Cicero] used to say that he detected a tyrannical intention in his schemes and political maneuvers" (4.8). But even Cicero, when he observed Caesar's carefully arranged hair, could scarcely believe that he would be planning to overthrow the Roman constitution (4.9). By introducing Caesar's clever character and Cicero's concern for the Roman state, Plutarch has revealed that Caesar had more in mind than his opponents imagined, foreshadowing again his eventual ascent to the dictatorship. In this and the preceding chapter, Plutarch has drawn a stable rather than a developing picture of Caesar's ambition: his intentions were already present, and were even evident to the observant, while he was in the early stages of his career. Furthermore, a similar observation is made earlier in chapter 1: "While Sulla was deliberating about putting Caesar to death, some were advising him that there was no reason to kill such a young boy, but he said that they were foolish if they did not recognize many Mariuses in the child" (1.4). Caesar's ambitious plans and his consistency of purpose are important revelations, for they expose the essence of the character that Plutarch sought to portray: between these early episodes and the acquisition of the dictatorship, Caesar hesitates only once, as he is about to cross the Rubicon (32), but even there he is more awed by the magnitude of his enterprise than doubtful about his purpose.<sup>18</sup>

The middle chapters of the *Life* document Caesar's rise to power through his daring in battle and his cleverness in outwitting his political opponents. In chapter 58, once Caesar has

<sup>18</sup>Duff (*supra* n.2: 79–80) interprets the hesitation at the Rubicon as a struggle between Caesar's reason and passion.

attained the dictatorship and overcome his enemies, Plutarch reflects again on his nature, stating in succinct terms what he foreshadowed in the early chapters and demonstrated throughout the *Life* (58.4):

Since he possessed in his nature great achievement and ambition, his many accomplishments did not move him to rest from his toils, but they were fuel and encouragement for the future, and they inspired plans for greater achievements and an *eros* for new glory (καινῆς ἔρωτα δόξης), as if he had used up the glory he already had.

The ἔρωσ of Caesar, as Plutarch views it, is directed toward new glory. He was, Plutarch continues, in a rivalry with himself, always driven by what he had accomplished to attempt something greater (58.5). This description of Caesar's nature expands the one found in chapter 3. There, Plutarch revealed the sphere in which Caesar would excel, making him leave behind rhetoric so that he could be first in power and arms. The desire to be πρῶτος might have implied a limit or a goal, but here Plutarch reveals that Caesar knows no limit, and his goal is always adjusted so that it lies beyond his latest success. This is the single-mindedness which Plutarch perceived in Caesar and which he sought to reveal in his biography, from the very first chapter, where Sulla sees the "many Mariuses," to this assessment, where Plutarch asserts that Caesar's ambition had no limit. It is also the aspect of character which was so overwhelming that it forced Caesar's love life out of Plutarch's picture.

The presentation of an unlimited ambition is surely meant to remind the reader of Alexander, whose biography Plutarch expected would be read in conjunction with that of Caesar.<sup>19</sup> That

<sup>19</sup> As J. R. Hamilton, *Plutarch: Alexander* (Oxford 1969, London 1999<sup>2</sup>) 1, observes, Plutarch refers to this pair of *Lives* as a single βιβλίον (*Alex.* 1.1). On the importance of treating each pair as a unitary work, see R. Waterfield and P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch: Greek Lives* (Oxford 1998) xi–xii; Duff (*supra* n.2) 10, 249–252.

Plutarch exploits the pairing of *Lives* in order to underscore the character of both subjects is an established part of his biographical practice, as explained by David Sansone:

For, what Plutarch does in his Parallel Lives is to select subjects in such a manner that he can explore the ways in which similar personalities react to different circumstances and the ways in which similar circumstances are responded to by different personalities. This procedure inevitably focuses attention upon that intersection of character and environment that is the concern of the study of ethics.<sup>20</sup>

With respect to ambition, we can observe how the *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar reinforce one another. Caesar's ἔρωξ was directed toward new glory, and Alexander was driven by the same desire. In fact, in a third *Life*, the *Antony*, Plutarch has explicitly linked the two in this regard, when he explains that Caesar did not cross the Rubicon simply in response to the mistreatment of Antony and Cassius by the Senate: "But what led him to take on the entire world, and which also previously had led Alexander and, long before him, Cyrus, was an inconsolable ἔρωξ for power and a pervasive desire to be first and greatest" (*Ant.* 6.3). This assessment is borne out by the *Alexander-Caesar*. For example, as his Caesar will also do, Plutarch's Alexander reveals his eventual greatness while still a young man by stating that he would agree to compete at Olympia, "if I could have kings as my competitors" (*Alex.* 4.9–10), and also by taming Bucephalas, which causes his father to exclaim that he should seek a kingdom equal to himself (6.8): Macedonia is too small for Alexander, just as rhetoric will

<sup>20</sup>D. Sansone, *Plutarch: The Lives of Aristeides and Cato* (Warminster 1989) 9. See also C. Pelling, "Synkrisis in Plutarch's Lives," in *Miscellanea Plutarchea: Atti del I convegno di studi su Plutarco (QuadGiorFilolFerrarese 8 [Ferrara 1986])* 83–96, revised in *Plutarch and History* 349–363; S. Swain, "Plutarch's Philopoemen and Flaminius," *ICS* 13 (1988) 335–347; A. B. Bosworth, "History and Artifice in Plutarch's *Eumenes*," in P. A. Stadter, ed., *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (London/New York 1992) 56–89; P. A. Stadter, "Paradoxical Paradigms: Lysander and Sulla," *ibid.* 41–55.

be too limiting a career for the young Caesar. In fact, there will be no level of accomplishment that satisfies the ambitions of either man: Alexander desires to push beyond the Hyphasis and into India, but his men refuse to follow (*Alex.* 62); Caesar, having become dictator, plans an extensive new campaign (*Caes.* 58) and has a desire for kingship (ὁ τῆς βασιλείας ἔρωσ ἐξεργάσατο, 60), but his fellow Romans will not acquiesce.

The two heroes are connected, then, in their relentless ambition, but they also share self-control with respect to sexual relations. In the *Alexander*, Plutarch takes care to make this trait explicit: “While he was still a child, his prudence was revealed in that he was violent and excessive with respect to most things but unexcitable in the pleasures of the body and that he indulged in them with great restraint, and his ambition kept him serious and high-minded beyond his years” (*Alex.* 4.8). Plutarch later demonstrates the point, after Alexander has captured Darius’ mother, wife, and daughters: “But Alexander, as it seems, believing mastery of himself more kingly than conquering enemies, neither touched these women nor was intimate with any other woman before marriage except for Barsine” (21.7). Alexander’s affair with Barsine, Plutarch implies, was not based on ἔρωσ; rather, in response to her personal qualities (her Greek education, agreeable manner, and royal lineage), Parmenio urged Alexander to begin a relationship with her (21.8–9). Likewise for Roxane. Although Alexander loved her (τὰ περὶ Ῥωξάνην ἔρωτι μὲν ἐπράχθη), Plutarch is careful to add a political dimension to Alexander’s motives: “He thought that she, whom he saw lovely and in the prime of her youth in a dance at a banquet, fit well with the plans he had laid” (47.7). Plutarch even downplays Alexander’s relationship with Bagoas

to the point where it consists only of a public kiss at the insistence and to the delight of the Macedonian crowd (67.8).<sup>21</sup>

In the *Caesar*, self-restraint is taken for granted. As we have seen, Caesar's various affairs were well known, yet Plutarch ignores or minimizes them in his biography, without bothering to make a defense. There are perhaps two explanations for the omissions. First, we must allow for Plutarch's technique of *syncretism*. Christopher Pelling has shown that Plutarch will often follow similar patterns in both *Lives* of a pair. In his analysis of the *Philopoemen-Flaminius* and the *Demetrius-Antony*, he observes that themes established in the first *Life* are taken up in the second with the result that the heroes may be compared and contrasted, not on the basis of trivial or coincidental similarities, but in ways that expose their character or virtue. "All Plutarch's heroes are naturally individuals, but still the first *Life* often reflects an important *normal* pattern, the second *Life* exploits it with an interesting variation."<sup>22</sup> The case of the *Alexander-Caesar* is even more straightforward with regard to ἔρωϛ. In the *Alexander*, Plutarch first establishes two important characteristics of a conquering hero—an unwavering desire to dominate and the ability to remain undistracted by ἔρωϛ—and then applies them, in this case without any variation, in the *Caesar*. Having read the *Alexander*, we would not expect Plutarch's Caesar, who is determined to become πρῶτος from the beginning of the *Life* and whose success is already known to all readers, to spend any of his energy on distracting love affairs. And since Plutarch has made that point overtly in the *Alexander*, to have visited it again in the *Caesar* would have been redundant. He merely demonstrates it by his narrative.

<sup>21</sup>On Alexander as an example of sexual restraint, see Stadter (*supra* n.15) 228–229; for Plutarch's depiction of his self-mastery in relation to other accounts, see N. G. L. Hammond, *Sources for Alexander the Great* (Cambridge 1993) 167–172.

<sup>22</sup>Pelling (*supra* n.20) 94.



Second, we must look carefully at what Plutarch has done and what he has not done. When Plutarch describes Caesar's character and his nature, he does not mention sexual morality at all, neither praising nor reproaching him for the quality of his behavior. Nor does he defend him against the allegations that he must have known and indeed included in other *Lives*. In other words, Caesar's promiscuity never enters into Plutarch's assessment of his character. Plutarch certainly could have described a licentious man or one who fought wars because of ἔρως, but nonetheless, he has not sanitized Caesar in order to create a more decent and morally pleasing hero. He has instead followed his Alexander and set before the reader a model of a determined, powerful, and undistracted statesman. The presentation of ethical models is, after all, Plutarch's purpose in composing the *Parallel Lives*.<sup>23</sup> With its emphasis on the behavior of the two heroes, the *Alexander-Caesar* is in harmony with Plutarch's program, and the chaste Caesar who emerges serves as a paradigm for unwavering determination.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>23</sup>Cf. Sansone (*supra* n.20) 8–9. On Plutarch's moral program in general, see now Duff (*supra* n.2), who provides a thorough analysis but also a succinct précis: "For Plutarch, then, understanding character was less about what somebody was like, more about recognizing right and wrong deeds; its consequence was a desire to judge and evaluate" (14).

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