

Plutarch's Life of Crassus and the Roman Lives¹

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Thirty years ago, C.B.R. Pelling persuasively argued that six of Plutarch's *Roman Lives* of the Late Republic — Brutus, Caesar, Pompey, Cato, Antony and Crassus — were composed simultaneously as a single project and that in so doing Plutarch relied primarily on a single source, Pollio, or a narrative based upon him ('the Pollio Source').² T.W. Hillard and Wolf Steidle³ presented contrary views: Hillard, in particular, observed that the case for the *Life of Crassus* as part of this group is not strong, since it 'sits awkwardly with Pelling's thesis whenever he refers to it'.⁴ Others have also expressed doubt over the place of *Crassus* in this group.⁵

This paper endeavours to refine Pelling's thesis slightly in order to satisfy Hillard's concerns vis-à-vis *Crassus*. As Pelling himself states in his reply to Hillard: to leave *Crassus* out of the group of the six later *Roman Lives* raises problems.⁶ This paper adopts a primarily positivist approach, arguing in favour of the inclusion of *Crassus* as part of this group, with a caveat of sorts: that Plutarch composed *Crassus* last, having decided upon its inclusion possibly late, during, or even shortly after, the composition or publication of the other *Lives*.⁷ Closer inspection of this 'peculiarly lightweight and anecdotal Life'⁸ provides a context for developing a hypothesis on its relationship to the other five *Lives*, and better understanding of the complementary nature of the later

¹ I warmly thank the anonymous reviewers and editors for their suggestions on improving this paper. All dates are BCE. *Cato* indicates *Cato Minor*. Translations from *Crassus* come from the Loeb Classical Library edition (ed. Bernadotte Perrin).

² Pelling (1979), reprinted in (2002), 1-44. The order of the *Lives* presented here is suggested by Nikolaidis (2005), 309.

³ Hillard (1987) and Steidle (1990). Steidle disagrees with Pelling's argument that the six later *Lives* showed evidence of Plutarch's increasing knowledge when compared to *Lives* thought to have been written early in the *Parallel Lives* project (for example, *Cicero* and *Lucullus*).

⁴ Hillard (1987), 21.

⁵ Konrad (1994), xxviii n. 17.

⁶ Pelling (2002), 29.

⁷ Jones (1966) positions *Crassus* as one of the final *Lives* to have been written. So too Nikolaidis (2005). Delvaux (1995) places *Crassus* in a middle position, as part of the third 'group' ('série').

⁸ See Pelling (1986), 161, where he also states that 'Plutarch evidently decided — wisely enough — that it was simply impossible to write a serious biography of Crassus'. If so, why did Plutarch write about Crassus? I set out my case in section 2 below.

Roman Lives as a whole and of the various ways in which Plutarch constructs parallelism across his biographies.

1

Two aspects of *Crassus* would seem to distinguish it from the other later *Roman Lives*: (1) its extreme brevity and unevenness; and (2) its probable sources. Its brevity is particularly noticeable when compared to *Caesar*, *Pompey* or *Antony* (the latter two are almost twice as long); but it is this imbalance which makes *Crassus* the odd *Life* out. However, this work is not unique if one considers the *Parallel Lives* as a whole (for example *Aemilius Paullus* and *Lucullus* with their heavy focus on the Third Macedonian War and the Third Mithridatic War respectively): the first 'half' of this work (1-16) covers the entirety of Crassus' life down to his departure for Syria in 55. His early life is rushed through, making the early chapters appear 'generalized and feeble'⁹ while the two decades of his political career constitute only nine chapters (8.1-16.8), half of which consist of a single narrative episode, the Servile Revolt (8.1-11.11). There is much that is omitted: for instance, there is no reference to Crassus' political career between his participation in Sulla's assault on Italy and the outbreak of the Servile Revolt. Instead one finds Plutarch's assessment of the political situation between the triumvirs (7.7-9), which clearly appears out of place.¹⁰ There is also much 'telescoping' of material:¹¹ the author devotes less than two chapters to the period from Crassus' first consulship to his censorship (14.1-15.7).¹² This perceived shortcoming is fortunately absent in the other later *Roman Lives*; the rushed narrative of the first half would at least partially seem to weaken Pelling's thesis that Plutarch benefitted from increased knowledge of the Late Republic in the period between writing, say, *Cicero* and the later *Roman Lives*.

The second 'half' of *Crassus* (17-33) constitutes a single narrative episode: the protagonist's Parthian misadventure, which spans approximately eighteen months (November 55 to June 53), in contrast to the first half which covers a period of more than sixty years. This is not to say that *Crassus* lacks Plutarch's artistry: there is a delightful anecdote concerning Crassus hiding in a cave in Spain when he fears persecution by Cinna (5-6); facing defeat at Carrhae, Crassus demonstrates heroism (26-27); and the final chapters of the *Life* contain the exquisitely crafted but very disturbing dénouement in which Crassus' head is delivered to the Parthian royal court and is used as a theatrical prop in a performance of Euripides' *Bacchae* (30-33).¹³

⁹ Pelling (1979), 85; cf. Schmidt (1999), 303: 'dans l'ensemble, il s'agit d'un amalgame un peu artificiel d'anecdotes de tout genre, qui fait croire à un exercice de remplissage de la part d'un Plutarque embarrassé par la rareté et l'insignifiance des renseignements dont il disposait sur son personnage'.

¹⁰ Pelling (1986), 161-63.

¹¹ On 'telescoping', see Pelling (1980), 127-28.

¹² Pelling (1986), 161, labels it 'woolly'.

¹³ Schmidt (1999), 303: 'sa narration est particulièrement soignée'. On this episode, see Wardman (1974), 175; Braund (1993); Zadorojnyi (1997); Schmidt (1999), 307-311; Schettino (2003), esp. 272-80; Chlup (2009), 185-187. The presence of Euripides nicely

To reflect upon the sources of *Crassus* might also serve to indicate the relationship (or lack thereof) between this *Life* and the other later *Roman Lives*.¹⁴ While Pelling suggests Pollio or the ‘Pollio-source’ as the likely main source for the other five *Lives*, this historian would seem to have very limited utility for *Crassus*. Opening his narrative *ex Afranio et Metello consulibus*, i.e. the year 60, means that Pollio did not cover Crassus’ career prior to the formation of the triumvirate. Pollio also did not cover foreign wars,¹⁵ which means Crassus’ Parthian campaign would not have featured in his work, apart from the historian’s mention of its conclusion.¹⁶ Unlike the other later *Roman Lives*, therefore, Plutarch had to draw upon primarily other sources for the vast majority of *Crassus*.

Plutarch cites two of his sources in *Crassus*: Fenestella, in the anecdote on Crassus’ youth mentioned above (5.6),¹⁷ and Cicero with reference to the Catilinarian conspiracy (13.4). Other probable sources include Livy, Sallust, and Dellius.¹⁸ Plutarch cites Livy in *Caesar* (47.6 and 63.9) and Dellius in *Antony* (25.3).¹⁹ It is these sources, especially Dellius, and not Pollio, that connect *Crassus* to the other later *Roman Lives*.

It is clear that Pollio was not the main source for *Crassus* and this serves as the first piece of evidence that this *Life* stands apart from the other later *Roman Lives*. If he had indeed started working on these *Lives* using Pollio as his main source, it seems unlikely that Plutarch would then *in medias res* put Pollio aside in order to turn to the sources that he would need for *Crassus*. Rather, Plutarch had most likely established exactly which *Lives* would benefit the most from Pollio — and then methodically wrote those *Lives* one after another availing himself of this single source. But this does not mean that Pollio was of *no* use in the writing of *Crassus*, since in following Pollio closely for the other *Lives* Plutarch no doubt familiarised himself thoroughly with the period covered by the

links *Crassus* with *Nicias*, where in the latter Plutarch notes that some of the Athenian war prisoners in Syracuse are able to avoid death by being able to recite the poet: *Nic.* 29.5.

¹⁴ On Plutarch’s sources for *Crassus*, see also Scardigli (1979), 108-109, and Angeli Bertinelli (1993), xli-xlvi. Although discussion of sources can be highly speculative, it does allow for exploration of possible relationships between *Lives*, and consideration of why Plutarch wrote a particular *Life* in the way he did. In this author’s view such discussions are about opening up lines of enquiry rather than shutting them down.

¹⁵ Although Pollio appears to have covered Caesar’s Gallic campaign in detail: Pelling (1984).

¹⁶ Pelling (1979), 15: ‘Pollio, whose concern was the civil wars, is unlikely to have been so detailed on Crassus’ war: it is more likely that Plutarch consulted at least one supplementary source, though it is hard to suggest names’.

¹⁷ See Pelling (1979), 85 n. 80. On Fenestella in Plutarch, see Delvaux (1989). Marshall (1976), 178, argues that this anecdote is so personal, that Fenestella must have used an earlier collection of anecdotes (possibly Crassus’ own writings, or those of someone with intimate knowledge of Crassus).

¹⁸ Pelling (1979), 88 n. 96, identifies Livy as a possible source for *Crassus*. Sallust’s *Histories* would have been especially useful for the Servile War and Crassus’ activities under Sulla; Plutarch probably read Sallust when writing *Lucullus* and *Sulla*, if these *Lives* indeed predate *Crassus*.

¹⁹ Pelling (1988), 28, 185, 221.

historian, including learning about other sources. If *Crassus* was indeed the final *Life* of the group to be composed, then the wide-range of reading Plutarch undertook for researching the previous five *Lives* would have left him with a very broad and thorough understanding of this historical period and its sources.

2

Besides excessive selectivity, perceived unevenness, and the question of Plutarch's sources, *Crassus* contributes to the later *Roman Lives* in two important ways. First, it fits into the subcategory of broadly "negative" *Lives*, if one assumes that Plutarch conceived such a classification.²⁰ In the introduction to *Demetrius*, Plutarch implies that to study the life of a bad man can provide insight on how to be a good man (1.2). These are *Lives* not of men who are necessarily without *some* merit, but who have one or more negative characteristics which Plutarch believes cause their undoing. *Crassus* clearly fits this category. To be sure, *Crassus* is not the only negative *Life* of the later *Roman Lives*, since *Cato* also can be classified as such.²¹ Second, *Crassus* allows Plutarch to cover the history of the Late Republic more thoroughly.

In a substantial chapter early in the biography, Plutarch describes some very positive aspects of *Crassus* (almost as if he is trying to deal with the positive information at the beginning, so that he can focus on what is less positive): *Crassus*' reputation for abstemiousness with respect to dinner parties;²² his intellectual predilections; and his willingness to serve as advocate when others refused (3.1-7). But these positive attributes are mentioned *after* Plutarch introduces *Crassus*' overarching negative characteristic:

Ῥωμαῖοι μὲν οὖν λέγουσι πολλαῖς ἀρεταῖς τοῦ Κράσσου κακίαν μόνην ἐπισκοτῆσαι τὴν φιλοπλουτιαν· ἔοικε δὲ μία πασῶν ἔρρωμενεστέρα τῶν ἐν αὐτῷ κακιῶν γενομένη τὰς ἄλλας ἀμαυρῶσαι.

‘The Romans, it is true, say that the many virtues of *Crassus* were obscured by his sole vice of avarice; and it is likely that the one vice which became stronger than all the others in him, weakened the rest’ (2.1).²³

Plutarch immediately follows up this statement with a discussion of how *Crassus* accumulated his wealth: the acquisition of substantial land holdings in Rome through the purchase of buildings while on fire (2.2-5). It is also clear that Plutarch intends that the

²⁰ My use of inverted commas should be taken as acknowledgement that there is not total agreement that such a subcategory exists in Plutarch's oeuvre. On the categorising of *Lives* as "positive" or "negative", see Duff (1999), 53-65, and 62-63, on *Nicias-Crassus* specifically. Nikolaidis (2005) uses the subcategory of "negative" in his attempt to determine the order of the *Lives*.

²¹ See Duff (1999), 131-58, on *Phocion-Cato*.

²² On this chapter, see Chlup (2009).

²³ Philip Stadter, in his introduction to the edition of the *Greek Lives* in the Oxford World's Classics series, summarises *Crassus* thus: 'greedy, a powerful orator, irreligious, ambitious, reckless' (180). On wealth in Plutarch, see Wardman (1974), 79-86. See also Frazier (1996), 151-52.

Parthian episode be read as an extended exploration of *philoploutia*, exposing its deleterious nature.²⁴ Thus, from a purely psychological perspective, *Crassus* affords Plutarch the opportunity to explore the negative consequences of such a characteristic yet further, building upon and amplifying its exploration in *Lucullus*.²⁵ Whereas *Lucullus* devotes himself to excessive luxury in his later years, Plutarch establishes *Crassus* as someone whose *philoploutia* was a dominant characteristic throughout his whole life.

The study of an exception to the contemporary substantial military successes (*Lucullus* in the East, *Caesar* in Gaul, *Pompey* almost everywhere) serves to bring into sharper focus the complexities and apparently the contradictory historical processes of Roman imperial expansion and domestic discord.²⁶ This is especially true with *Crassus*, who in fact exquisitely encapsulates this apparent paradox, given that his objective in the Parthian campaign is imperial expansion, albeit with a happy byproduct of his personal enrichment and the improvement of his political standing. The latter would presumably heighten tensions within the triumvirate; but his death in Parthia removes what to Plutarch and others is the only obstacle to the conflict between *Pompey* and *Caesar* (*Pomp.* 53.6; cf. *Caes.* 28.1).

Crassus' failure in Parthia appears more poignant when read with an eye to the significant military successes of his fellow triumvirs, while their successes appear more impressive when considered against *Crassus'* failure. The account of *Pompey's* successes in his Eastern campaign (*Pomp.* 30-41), for instance, which builds upon earlier narratives of his efforts in Sicily and Africa (10-15), Spain (16-21), and against the pirates (24-29), establishes a (seemingly impossible) high standard to which *Crassus* feels he must aspire. The same may be said for the account of *Caesar's* successes in Gaul (*Caes.* 15-27). Both are relevant to *Crassus* and Plutarch's account in *Crassus*: Plutarch indicates *Crassus'* envy of the successes of *Pompey* and *Caesar* (*Crass.* 7.1 and 14.3, respectively); and when he reveals his intention to invade Parthia, *Caesar* writes to him supporting his decision (16.2-3). Reading *Pompey's* and *Caesar's* successes in their respective *Lives* powerfully underlines *Crassus'* insecurities and sets him up for failure as he hubristically envisages success in Mesopotamia and beyond.²⁷

We thus begin to see that *Crassus'* main contribution to the later *Roman Lives* comes through in its supportive role to the other *Lives*. While it is not directly connected to the

²⁴ Marshall (1976), 177. That *Crassus'* motivation for invading Parthia was financial gain as well as military glory is made clear when Plutarch notes that *Crassus* preferred to linger in Syria gathering money, neglecting to ensure that his army was adequately prepared (17.7-10).

²⁵ *Luc.* 39.1-41.6. Both Jones (1966) and Nikolaidis (2005) place *Lucullus* as an early *Life*.

²⁶ On Plutarch's attitude towards the Roman Empire, see Barrow (1967), 119-49.

²⁷ 16.2: τότε δ'ἐπληρμένος κομιδῆ καὶ διεφθαρμένος οὐ Συρίαν οὐδὲ Πάρθους ὄρον ἐποιεῖτο τῆς εὐπραξίας, ἀλλ' ὡς παιδιὰν ἀποφανῶν τὰ Λουκούλλου πρὸς Τιγράνην καὶ Πομπηίου πρὸς Μιθριδάτην, ἄχρι Βακτρῶν καὶ Ἰνδῶν καὶ τῆς ἔξω θαλάσσης ἀνήγεν ἑαυτὸν ταῖς ἐλπίσι. ~ 'But now, being altogether exalted and out of his senses, he would not consider Syria nor even Parthia as the boundaries of his success, but thought to make the campaigns of *Lucullus* against Tigranes and those of *Pompey* against Mithridates seem mere child's play, and flew on the wings of his hopes as far as Bactria and India and the Outer Sea'.

other *Lives*, it complements the *Roman Lives* in several ways. One way in which the *Crassus* does this is by covering historical events — the Servile War and the Parthian campaign, the ‘great narrative set-pieces’²⁸ — which Plutarch could not fit into the other *Lives*: thus Plutarch uses *Crassus* to fill in the historical gaps, providing a fuller narrative of the history of the late Republic.

Plutarch infers from his sources that Crassus’ role in Roman politics was a minor one, as the author seems to suggest when he covers the formation of the triumvirate without identifying Crassus at *Cato* 31.4-5. But it ought to be understood that the *Life* of a less important historical figure can enhance our appreciation of the *Life* of a more significant political actor. If *Lucullus*, *Cicero*, and *Cato* provide complementary information for *Crassus*,²⁹ then *Crassus* in turn complements *Caesar*, *Pompey*,³⁰ and *Antony*, especially if *Crassus* was read after these *Lives*.

Jeffrey Beneker demonstrates the connection between many of the anecdotes in *Pompey*, *Caesar*, and *Crassus*, which can be fully understood only when these *Lives* are read together, and possibly in a specific sequence with the other *Lives* preceding *Crassus*. While the argument appears strongest with respect to Caesar and Pompey, Crassus is also relevant, where his position as the weakest of them is consistently portrayed: ‘Crassus is never allowed out of the shadow of his allies, even in his own biography’.³¹ His inferiority to, and as a consequence his dependency on Pompey and Caesar, and conversely their superiority, is something that can easily be missed in *Caesar* and *Pompey*, where Crassus ‘is introduced ... primarily, it appears, only to be dismissed’.³² Writing *Crassus*, therefore, enables Plutarch to bring this important point into a sharper focus, which in turn facilitates our understanding of Plutarch’s presentation of Caesar and Pompey in their respective *Lives* — that is, reading *Crassus* clarifies why Crassus’ role in *Caesar* and *Pompey* is exiguous. *Crassus* therefore emerges as a focused study of a seemingly politically insignificant character, endeavouring to highlight why the subject failed to achieve greater prominence in the political arena. If Beneker is correct that Plutarch had a particular view of certain historical events, in this case the first triumvirate, then *Crassus* serves as an additional confirmatory point.³³

The fuller historical narratives of the 70s to 50s provided by *Lucullus*, *Cicero*, *Pompey*, *Caesar*, and *Cato* suggest that *Crassus* at least partially depends on Plutarch’s readers having read the other *Lives* beforehand. To be sure, some events had to be covered both in *Crassus* and the other *Lives*, since they are clearly relevant in revealing aspects of the characters of both men. For example, in both *Lives* (*Crass.* 12; *Pomp.* 23) Plutarch relates the rivalry between Crassus and Pompey, including during their joint

²⁸ Pelling (1986), 161.

²⁹ Marshall (1976), 177. Note Beneker (2010), who shows how reading *Lucullus*, *Marius*, *Sulla*, *Pompey*, and *Caesar* fill in the gaps of *Sertorius*.

³⁰ Delvaux (1995), 109, strongly links *Caesar*, *Pompey*, and *Crassus*: ‘L’histoire du premier triumvirat s’achève avec ... *Nicias-Crassus*’.

³¹ Beneker (2005), 323.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ *Ibid.*, 323-25.

consulship and their apparent reconciliation at the behest of Gaius Aurelius, but the treatment in *Pompey* does not give the whole story. *Crassus* allows Plutarch to make this point about their rivalry more explicitly, showing how it adversely affected the weaker of the two men; in *Pompey* this runs the danger of being overlooked, as Plutarch moves on to Pompey's next military campaign.³⁴ If Beneker is correct in assuming that Plutarch intended for a cluster of *Roman Lives* to be read together, then perhaps *Crassus* indicates that one was expected to read some *Lives* in a specific sequence. For example, Plutarch covers the Catilinarian conspiracy in *Cicero*, *Cato*, and *Caesar*, but *Crassus* provides only the essential information relevant to that *Life* — Crassus' and Caesar's alleged knowledge of the plot.³⁵ Information of the conspiracy must be gleaned from the other *Lives* having been read before *Crassus*. It is highly probable that Plutarch intended that at least some — if not all — of the other accounts about the conspiracy be read first. In this instance *Crassus* provides information that is missing from *Caesar*, but it is possible that Plutarch learned this information after writing *Caesar*; otherwise it would have probably been mentioned there. Likewise *Crassus* allows Plutarch to add a narrative garnish that he probably forgot to include in an earlier *Life*: for instance, Caesar's remark at Crassus' alleged pleasure when learning that he had been captured by pirates (7.5).³⁶ These two details, which Plutarch presumably could have included in *Cicero* or *Caesar*, indicate the probability that *Crassus* was written after these *Lives*, and that he learned of these details in the intervening period before he decided to write *Crassus*. If one accepts this line of argument, then Pelling's suggestion that Plutarch's knowledge of Roman history increased as he worked on the *Parallel Lives* acquires further force. While Plutarch may have known about Crassus' alleged complicity in the conspiracy when he wrote *Cicero*, it is certain that he was ignorant of the origin of the allegation — Cicero's *De consulatu suo*. It seems clear that Plutarch did not know of, or had read, this text when he composed *Cicero*, and perhaps he still had not learned of it when he was assembling materials and composing *Caesar*; but he appears to have become aware of it by the time he wrote *Crassus*.³⁷ If *Caesar* had been published and was circulating amongst Plutarch's circle before or while the author was working on *Crassus*, he may have learned about Cicero's treatise, and only then did he (slightly) revise *Crassus* to reflect this additional source.

³⁴ Hillman (1992), 125-6, notes that Crassus in his *Life* is said to have had superior political ability, but that the rivalry with Pompey was personal rather than political as seen in *Pompey*; see also Seager (2008), 323-25 and 327.

³⁵ On Plutarch and the Catilinarian conspiracy, see Pelling (1985); and *idem* (2011), 160-71, on its presentation in *Caesar*. Pelling (1979), 76-77, notes that '*Crassus* understandably has the briefest treatment. Crassus had the smallest (or least public) role in these events, and Plutarch is by then hurrying on to the more rewarding theme of the Syrian command'.

³⁶ *Pace* Pelling (2011), 138, who suggests that this detail was possibly gleaned from preparing *Caesar*, but would have been 'distracting' in Caesar's biography.

³⁷ Cf. Pelling (2002), 27, although, based on *Cic.* 20.3, he raises the possibility that Plutarch knew about Cicero's *De consulatu suo*. On Cicero as an historical source for *Crassus*, see Marshall (1976), 173-74.

To perceive the relationship between *Pompey*, *Caesar* and *Crassus* in the best manner, one needs to accept the assumption that Plutarch wrote these *Lives* together or within a very close proximity. If Plutarch wrote them together, they would presumably also have been published together. Had he composed and published each *Life* separately, the complementary nature of the *Lives* would surely have risked the chance of being missed. *Crassus* would then have to stand on its own meager merits *prima facie*.

The complementary nature of subgroups of *Lives* is a feature of Plutarch's work which is increasingly gaining recognition, since it allows for the detection of relationships which extend outside the narrow confines of a pair of *Lives*. John Marincola demonstrates how, taken collectively, three of Plutarch's *Greek Lives* — *Themistocles*, *Aristides*, and *Cimon* — provide a substantial and complex portrayal of the Persian Wars.³⁸ With reference to the *Roman Lives*, Hans Beck reveals the relationship between, and complementary nature of, the *Lives* of *Fabius Maximus* and *Marcellus*.³⁹ Within the narrower context of the later *Roman Lives*, George Harrison argues for the symbiotic relationship between the pairs *Demetrius-Antony* and *Agesilaus-Pompey*.⁴⁰ Pelling takes this line of enquiry to its logical (maximalist) conclusion, suggesting that what Plutarch creates in the *Parallel Lives* as a whole is a global history of Classical Greece and the Roman Republic.⁴¹ In other words, each *Life* is one part of a larger, interdependent whole. *Crassus* is connected to other *Lives* in two ways: first, its relationship to *Caesar* and *Pompey*, and to a lesser extent *Cato* and *Cicero*, all of which cover the first triumvirate thoroughly; and secondly, its connection to *Lucullus*, *Pompey*, and *Antony*, where Plutarch delved into Roman military efforts in the East.⁴²

Another example of parallelism may be found in the relationship between *Crassus* and *Alexander*. Philip Stadter suggests that the later *Roman Lives* are linked to one another in that all are connected in some way to *Alexander*. If true, then *Crassus* has additional relevance for Plutarch, since *Alexander* brilliantly succeeds where *Crassus* so very badly fails (in an attempt, it should be noted, to recast himself as a Roman *Alexander*).⁴³ *Crassus* is the anti-*Alexander par excellence*, providing Plutarch with an additional, distorting sideways glance at this important figure of Greek history. Plutarch mentions *Crassus* in relation to *Alexander* once:

οἱ δὲ τὴν μὲν τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου στρατείας ὀρμὴν ἐπαινοῦντες, τὴν δὲ Κράσσου ψέγοντες, οὐκ εὖ τὰ πρῶτα κρίνουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν τελευταίων.

³⁸ Marincola (2010); see also Seager (2008), 348-58, on the *Lives* from Classical Athens and Sparta.

³⁹ Beck (2002) and (2003), to which one might add Scipio, if the Scipio in *Epaminondas-Scipio* is Scipio Africanus. See also Seager (2008), 344-48.

⁴⁰ Harrison (1995).

⁴¹ Pelling (2010).

⁴² Debevoise (1938), xxviii: 'The information furnished by Plutarch in his *Lives* ... provides us with some of our most extensive *connected* narratives in Parthian history' (italics are mine). See also Hartmann (2008), 426 n. 1 for additional bibliography.

⁴³ See Stadter (2010); cf. Spencer (2003), 245 n. 40.

‘those who have praise for Alexander’s expedition, but fault that of Crassus, unfairly judge of a beginning by its end’ (*Syn. Nic.-Crass.* 4.4).⁴⁴

If this interpretation of the multifaceted nature of Plutarchean parallelism holds true, then the above discussion of the interrelationship between *Crassus* and the various subgroups of *Lives* strengthens even further our understanding of the evolving complex nature in Plutarch’s project of biographical parallelism.

3

One way in which Plutarch could demonstrate the ‘parallelism’ between *Crassus* and the other later *Roman Lives* is through cross-references, which direct the reader’s attention back to the appropriate passages of, say, *Caesar* and *Pompey*; or by having one of these *Lives* refer to a passage in *Crassus*. Here a problem emerges. To be sure, there are not many cross-references in the later *Roman Lives*, and, in fact, most of the *Lives* lack cross-references; nonetheless, each of the other five *Lives* includes at least one cross-reference to another *Life* within the group.⁴⁵ Granted that in many instances a specific cross-reference appears arbitrary (for instance, the cross-reference at *Crassus* 11.11 to *Marcellus* 22.2 on the difference between a triumph and ovation, adding but little), they do however suggest that Plutarch thought of these *Lives* as part of a broadly interdependent group; and at the very least he wrote them at about the same time. Thus, it is plausible that *Caesar* contains two cross-references to *Pompey* and two to *Brutus*, both of which run at least in part chronologically parallel to *Caesar*, though the reference to *Numa* may seem superfluous.⁴⁶ As Pelling suggests, in the later *Roman Lives* the primary purpose of cross-references appears to be to excuse the condensing of the narrative at that particular point, and directing the reader towards a fuller narrative that the author provides.⁴⁷ In one sense a reference in *Crassus* to either *Caesar* or *Pompey* would surely allow the biographer to imply the dependence of *Crassus* on these *Lives*, referring the reader back to a previously read *Life*; but it would also indicate that the narrative ‘gaps’ were deliberate, since the author is aware that he had avoided narrating an event for a third or even a fourth time (if one adds *Cato*).

The absence of references to *Crassus* in the other later *Roman Lives* also merits attention. In *Pompey*, for example, one could have expected a reference in the account of the Servile War (22.1-23.2), since *Crassus* provides a more extensive narrative; or in *Caesar*, where Plutarch notes Caesar’s plans for a Parthian campaign (58.6). True, these might not have found their way into the first draft of the *Lives*, but if Plutarch had inserted cross-references later, then one might have expected them to have appeared in

⁴⁴ Aalders (1982), 24-25. Cf. Flacelière (1972), 197, who sees this comment as the author indicating his dislike for war in general.

⁴⁵ The appendix of Nikolaidis (2005) provides a complete list. Note the caution of Pelling (1979), 80-82, on using these cross-references as a means to determine the precise order of the *Lives*.

⁴⁶ Plutarch cites *Pompey* at *Caes.* 35.2, and 45.9; *Brutus* at *Caes.* 62.8, and 68.7; the reference to *Num.* appears at *Caes.* 59.4.

⁴⁷ Pelling (2011), 329.

the final version. The absence of the latter cross-references is especially surprising. Plutarch mentions Caesar's plans for a Parthian campaign without referring to Crassus,⁴⁸ though Caesar had probably advertised his planned campaign as a war of revenge to vindicate Crassus' defeat, and this surely would have appeared in the sources Plutarch read for *Caesar* (Livy, for example). This plausibly indicates that when composing *Caesar*, Plutarch had not yet decided to write *Crassus*.

The absence of cross-references to *Crassus* in the other later *Roman Lives* allows us now to consider seriously the possibility that Plutarch did not originally intend to write this *Life*. To be sure, Plutarch knew about Crassus, but his knowledge was presumably confined to the essential facts, the "Crassus Tradition" which was probably formed in the late Republic and carried on unchallenged into the first century AD. Plutarch may have first learned about Crassus when he saw the Temple of Mars the Avenger, and learned that the temple contained Crassus' standards which were recovered by Augustus.⁴⁹ Pollio, if not the instigator of the "Crassus tradition", was very probably an early adherent to that tradition, confirming at least its basic particulars indirectly through his discussion of the actions of Crassus' more prominent contemporaries.

4

Planning the late *Lives*, then, Plutarch may have originally envisaged the other five to which at some point during, or just after, their composition, he decided to add *Crassus*. The introduction to *Aemilius Paullus* (1.1-2) reveals that the author did not have a strict list of *Lives* when he began, but rather added (or perhaps deleted) *Lives* as he proceeded.⁵⁰

So when exactly did Plutarch decide to write *Crassus*? While the idea to write *Crassus* may have sprung when Plutarch was writing *Pompey* or *Caesar*, it is more probable that the notion occurred to him as a result of writing *Antony*, which may have been the last of the other five *Lives* to be composed. That *Antony* precedes *Crassus* seems fairly certain: of the three "negative" pairs, the introduction to *Demetrius* suggests that *Demetrius–Antony* comes first, as mentioned above. That this is the case, and that each *Life* depends to a degree on the other is clear when one considers the *Lives*' respective Parthian narratives.⁵¹ If the Parthian disaster was the most noteworthy event of Crassus' career, then the absence of a cross-reference to *Crassus* in *Antony*, and vice versa, is especially significant. As Fred Brenk notes, 'Plutarch's Antonius is sublimely

⁴⁸ Pelling (2011), 436.

⁴⁹ Augustus, *Res Gestae* 29.2. See Cooley (2009), 242-43.

⁵⁰ It is possible that Plutarch had several *Lives* in mind when he started his project, but he probably omitted some in the process of writing. It seemed peculiar that there are no *Lives* of Lucius Junius Brutus, Publius Cornelius Scipio Aemilianus (if the Scipio of *Epaminondas–Scipio* is indeed Scipio Africanus), Gaius Cassius Longinus, Lucius Cornelius Cinna, Publius Clodius Pulcher or Lucius Sergius Catilina. The last three would surely have made excellent negative *Lives*. On Plutarch's choices of subjects, see Geiger (1981) and (1985).

⁵¹ On the Parthian campaigns in these *Lives*, see Hartmann (2008), 430-32; on Parthians in *Crassus*, see Schmidt (1999), 307-14.

unaware of either the life or Life of Crassus'.⁵² And yet it is probable that in writing *Antony*, or through his readers' reactions to it, Plutarch was made aware of the potential — or necessity — of adding *Crassus*. Crassus indeed has a presence in *Antony*: first, Antony mentions Crassus when he requests the return of Crassus' standards and the surviving Roman captives (37.2); later Mithridates invokes Crassus as an *exemplum* (46.7) while speaking to Antony's general Alexander.⁵³ Crassus, therefore, earns the dubious honour of serving as a negative *exemplum* in a *Life* of a Roman who is himself thus presented by Plutarch. Such a reference would surely have been more relevant for Plutarch's readers if they could then read a biography of *Crassus*.

The two *Lives* probably also share the same source: Dellius, cited in *Antony* (25.3), but not in *Crassus*.⁵⁴ If — and surely this need not be a big 'if' — Dellius' narrative included a summary of Crassus' campaign as a digression prior to narrating Antony's Parthian campaign, then it is possible that it was during writing *Antony* that Plutarch became fully aware of the potential of a *Life* of Crassus.⁵⁵ That Plutarch used the same source for the Parthian campaigns in both *Antony* and *Crassus* seems likely when one considers that the Parthian narrative in the former begins immediately after the latter's Parthian narrative ends.⁵⁶ Or — to look at it in another way — *Crassus* continues past its subject's death, covering events in Parthia up to the point where the Parthian narrative in *Antony* begins (*Crass.* 33.7-9). *Crassus* thus complements *Antony* nicely, covering material necessary for understanding the Parthian narrative in that *Life*, but which may have looked out of place had it been inserted there (that is, it would have appeared as an unnecessary digression in what was already a very long *Life*).

The highly-polished nature of the second half of the *Life*, compared to the uneven nature of the first half, suggests that the second half follows one source very closely, while the first part was compiled (perhaps hastily) from multiple sources: for example, from *Cicero* or its ὑπόμνημα on the Catilinarian conspiracy⁵⁷ which Plutarch may have intended expanding. Thus, *Crassus* as it comes down to us may in fact be a preliminary draft: a ὑπόμνημα. With reference to the *Moralia*, Luc Van der Stockwell defines the ὑπόμνημα as 'a more or less elaborate train of thought, involving material previously

⁵² Brenk (1992), 4391, who sees a connection, albeit in some instances indirect, between *Antony* and all the later *Roman Lives*, which lends additional weight to Pelling's thesis.

⁵³ Pelling (1988), 222, and 236.

⁵⁴ In suggesting Dellius as a source for *Crassus*, I acknowledge that I am going against prevailing scholarly opinion: Pelling (1979), 87 n. 96 and 88, and Hillard (1987), 21 n. 11. Angeli Bertinelli (1993), xlv also considers Dellius a possible source. On Dellius, see also Pelling (1988), 28, 185, and 221; Kelly (2008).

⁵⁵ Nikolaidis (2005), 312: 'I am further inclined to believe that it was his acquaintance with the career and the character of Antony, combined with what he already knew about Demetrios, Alkibiades and Nikias, or had *recently* learned about Coriolanus and Crassus, that prompted him to insert this "negative" parenthesis' (italics are mine), and *idem* 313 n. 107: '[Plutarch] had *encountered* Crassus while preparing the *Lives* of the last heroes of the Republic' (italics are mine).

⁵⁶ Adcock (1966), 59.

⁵⁷ See Pelling (1985), 322.

gathered and certainly written in full syntactical sentences ... on the other hand, the ὑπόμνημα does not yet display literary finish'.⁵⁸ The artistry of the final chapters notwithstanding, this certainly appears to describe *Crassus*; the story from Fenestella and the Parthian narrative reveal the optimistic final polished state to which Plutarch perhaps hoped eventually to raise *Crassus*.⁵⁹ Given that ancient publication was an on-going, sometimes rather drawn out, process, with a preliminary draft circulating within an intimate circle in the first instance, allowing for feedback upon which revisions could be made — then possibly followed by re-release (perhaps in incremental stages) to wider groups — Plutarch may have felt that he had ample opportunity to amend or expand *Crassus* (inserting cross-references, filling in the gaps in the first half of the *Life*)⁶⁰ on the basis of public reaction to his first draft. As *Caesar*, *Pompey*, and *Antony* made their way to Plutarch's readership, possibly a consensus emerged on the need and desirability for *Crassus*. *Antony* probably made it clear that the anchor of *Crassus* should be the Parthian campaign; it would have featured prominently in the ὑπόμνημα and the final version, though in the latter it may not have taken up half of the *Life*.

5

Plutarch's *Crassus* will always sit awkwardly in the later *Roman Lives*, overshadowed by the more substantial *Pompey*, *Caesar*, and *Antony*, and yet it is clear that *Crassus* complements these *Lives*, playing a valuable, albeit supportive role, and allowing Plutarch to create a more complex portrait of the events of the Late Republic through the actions of (almost) all of its main actors.

Perceiving *Crassus* as a late addition to the later *Roman Lives*, or at the very least the final *Life* of the group, provides additional insight into how Plutarch approached the *Parallel Lives* in general, and the *Lives* of the Late Republic in particular: it seems that he started working on a certain group with an idea which *Lives* he would include, yet allowed this plan to evolve slightly by adding a *Life* which complements and expands the scope of the group. No scholarly endeavour, ancient or modern, turns out *exactly* as originally planned; revisions, expansions, deletions, and rearrangements invariably take place; the more elaborate the project, the likelihood of such changes surely increases. Reflecting upon the nature of *Crassus* and its relationships to the other *Roman Lives* would appear to provide a glimpse of the evolving process by which an ancient author undertook the production of a larger-scale, multifaceted project such as the *Parallel Lives*.

⁵⁸ Van der Stockt (1999), 595. Cf. Lucian, *Hist. conscr.* 47-8. Both definitions describe *Crassus*. See also Pelling (1979), 94-95, where he suggests Plutarch indicates his use of notes at *Dem.* 2.1.

⁵⁹ In fact, further evidence of Plutarch's biographic skill may be found in *Crassus*, where the first and final chapters exist in ring composition, with both focusing on family: the opening chapter describes *Crassus*' family, showing them to be a model Roman family (1.1); the final sentences expose the dysfunction of the Parthian royal household (33.5).

⁶⁰ On revising and republishing the *Lives*, including the possibility of adding cross-references at a later point, see Pelling (1979), 81-82.

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