CHAPTER 2

Antonius and Demetrios

1 Biographical Platonism and the Chance of Living Again

The unkindest cut is to treat Plutarch as a non-parallel biographer. Thus, there are commentaries on Plutarch's Antonios, Cicero, Pericles, Themistocles, but not Demetrios and Antonios, and the like.1 Something of an innovation, however, was Plutarch's composition of parallel Lives of considerable length and on a grand scale.2 More complications arise when we consider his consciousness of writing a series, such as the earlier Lives of the Roman emperors, and later the gigantic figures of Greek and Roman history, in the midst of them returning to the misty Romulus and Theseus.3 As an unparalleled work to be judged on its

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2 Just how much precedent there was for “genuine” biography and parallel biography is a matter of some debate. Discussions can be found in Momigliano, The Development of Greek Biogra-

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3 [EN: On Theseus, see C. Schubert, “Die Method der Atthidographen: die Kleidemos-Frag-
own merits, his Lives reflect the grandiose artistic conceptions of his time and present some complicated problems of interpretation. First, the immediate Life before us can be considered an artistic work in itself, in this case, Antonios. But an individual Life is like a facing statue on a tomb. Moreover, Lives seem issued in bundles, so to speak, with some reciprocal rapport. Most striking is the unexpected change of perspective when the same material appears in different Lives. The cross-references within the Lives, though, suggest that after a certain point Plutarch realized he was constructing a grandiose and complex edifice, not just individual or matching showpieces.\(^4\)

Handling the comparison of individual points in two Lives and giving some indication of their construction is extremely complex in itself, but fitting an individual Life into the complete “architectonic” structure of the ensemble does strain the imagination and ingenuity of a commentator. The task is rendered more difficult by Plutarch’s growing realization of the titanic scale of his enterprise. No attempt will be made here to incorporate the Antonios into the entire series. Only its obvious relationship to the Demetrios will be considered. However, that the Antonios was meant to add the polishing stroke to an epoch is suggested by the genealogy of Nero. If so, it would finish off both the Julio-Claudians and Plutarch’s career as a parallel-biographer.\(^5\) He had already


\(^5\) Pelling, “Plutarch’s Method,” 74–96, would argue that Pompeios, Markos Katon, Krassos, Kaisar, Broutos, and Antonios were prepared together (83) and written after Cicero (89–90); cf. Antonios 26–36. This theory helps explain the length of the Parthian campaign in Anto-