

καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ in Plutarch's *Life of Caesar*

At *Alexander* 1.2, Plutarch states that he is writing biography and not history and that a *πρᾶγμα βραχὺ ... καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ* can reveal far more about one's character than *πράξαι ἐπιφανέσταται*. T. Duff (1999) argues that *Alexander* 1.2, so often taken as a programmatic statement for Plutarch's biographical writing, applies exclusively to *Alexander* and not even to the parallel *Caesar* due to the Life's excessive narration of political and military events at the expense of analysis of Caesar's character from any *πρᾶγμα βραχὺ*. C. Pelling (2002) allows for an application of 1.2 to *Caesar* where Plutarch seeks to show in the parallel lives that Caesar's neglect of small matters, such as love and private life, does not exempt him from the disastrous effect that they have in *Alexander*. He argues that we can trace Caesar's downfall through, for example, the remarks and jests of others such as Cicero (*Caesar* 57.6, 58.3, 59.6).

However, Caesar has many quips and jests of his own, and through them one can just as easily trace his gradual awareness of imminent assassination (62.6, 62.9, 62.10). Pelling dismisses Caesar's remarks as limited to public content, but this argument employs a public/private distinction which I argue is not present in *Alexander* 1.1-3.

In this paper, I shall analyze Caesar's use of *ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιὰ* in *Caesar*, and I will argue using evidence from the *Precepts of Statecraft* that Plutarch is using them to depict Caesar's effectiveness and shortcomings as a statesman, the enterprising and ambitious nature that leads him to tyranny, and the more lenient part of his nature. Caesar employs his remarks and jests effectively as a defensive weapon and achieves results with them. I shall also argue for a more nuanced interpretation of his claim to be second to Cicero. Through this analysis, we are able to gain a clearer and more plausible interpretation of *Alexander* 1.2 that applies to both *Caesar* and *Alexander*.

### Works Cited

- Duff, T. *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice*. Oxford: Clarendon Press (1999)
- Pelling, C. "Plutarch's Method of Work in the Roman Lives", "Plutarch's Caesar: A Caesar for the Caesars?", "Plutarch's Adaptation of his Source Material". *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies*. London: Duckworth (2002)