



# The Passionate Statesman: Eros and Politics in Plutarch's Lives

*Jeffrey Beneker*

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*The Passionate Statesman* explores the intersection of passion and politics in Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*, with special emphasis on how he represents the influence of *eros*, or erotic desire, on the careers of some of the most prominent statesmen from Greco-Roman antiquity.

Using Aristotle's notion of friendship and Plato's conception of the soul to describe the ideal marriage as based on a mutual love of character (*philia*), supported by an enduring erotic attraction, Beneker examines how Plutarch applied his system of ethics both to his reading of history and to his writing of biography.

With close readings focusing on the three pairs of biographies from *Parallel Lives*, namely the Greek kings (Alexander the Great, Demetrius "the besieger," and Agesilaus) and Roman statesmen (Julius Caesar, Pompey, and Marc Antony), the book draws a general conclusion about how Plutarch uses the narration of his subjects' private erotic affairs to interpret their historical deeds.

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