

Narrative, Interpretation, and Moral Judgement
in Plutarch's Lives

Chrysanthos S. Chrysanthou
Christ Church



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Chrysanthos S. Chrysanthou, Christ Church

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Abstract

In the *Parallel Lives* Plutarch does not absolve his readers of the need for moral reflection by offering any sort of hard and fast rules for their moral judgement. Rather, he uses strategies for eliciting from readers an active engagement with the act of judging. This study, building upon and verifying further recent research on the challenging and exploratory, rather than affirmative, moral impact that the *Lives* are designed to have on their readers, offers the first systematic analysis of the representation of 'experimental' moralism of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. It seeks to describe and analyse the range of narrative techniques that Plutarch employs to draw his readers into the process of moral evaluation and expose them to the complexities and difficulties involved in making moral judgements. Through illustrating Plutarch's narrative techniques, it also sheds significant light on Plutarch's sensibility to the artistic qualities of historical narrative as well as to the challenges and dangers inherent in recounting, reading, and evaluating history.

Chapter 1 considers the interrogatory nature of the moralism of the *Lives* and their narrative sophistication, which the insights of recent literary theories can help us to unfold and analyse. Chapter 2 is concerned with Plutarch's projection of himself and his readers, and, more specifically, with the devices that Plutarch exploits to build his authority with his readers, establish their complicity, and draw them into engaging all the more actively with the subjects of his *Lives*. Chapter 3 examines how Plutarch's delving into the minds of the in-text characters generates in readers empathy that keeps them alert up to the end of the *Life* to the complex and provisional character of a clear-cut moralising judgement. Chapter 4 reflects especially upon Plutarch's tendency to refrain from offering an overall moral conclusion in the closing chapters of the biographies. It examines several closural devices (such as anecdotes, the aftermath of cities, literary allusions, and generalised moral statements) that are effective in drawing readers to review in retrospect moral themes and questions which matter to the book as a whole, and (in the case of the endings of the second *Lives*) help a neat transition to the final comparative epilogue (*Synkrisis*)—whenever this follows. Chapter 5 explores how the *Synkrisis* expose readers to the particular challenges involved in deciding an overarching concluding judgement. It also closely examines the books that (as they now stand) do not have a *Synkrisis* and makes the case that no 'terminal irregularity' can justify and explain any deliberate omission of their comparative epilogues. Finally, Chapter 6 focuses on Plutarch's essay *On the malice of Herodotus* and explores how far Plutarch's techniques in the *Lives* escape and how far they are vulnerable to the criticisms that Plutarch makes of Herodotus. This analysis brings together the main strands of the earlier chapters so as to illuminate further Plutarch's narrative strategies; it also discusses the possibility that Plutarch exploits the rhetorical agonistic framework of the essay in order to elicit a similar sort of attentive and acute reader response to historical narrative, as in the *Lives*, and to arouse awareness of the precarious act of exercising moral judgement.

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A book is a machine to think with...
- I. A. Richards¹

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¹ *Principles of Literary Criticism*, 1925: 1.

Note on texts, translations, and abbreviations

For the text of Plutarch's works I have consulted the Teubner editions, unless otherwise specified: for the *Lives* those of Konrat Ziegler (Leipzig 1957–71; revised edition by H. Gärtner, 1994–2002); and for the *Moralia* those of M. Pohlenz *et al.* (Leipzig 1925–78). I use Ziegler's abbreviations in citing earlier editions and manuscripts of Plutarch. For the Greek and Latin texts of other authors I use the standard editions. Translations of Plutarch's texts are based on or adopted from those of the Loeb Classical Library editions (for the *Lives* by B. Perrin, 1914–26; for the *Moralia* by various scholars, 1927–69), unless I note otherwise.

I cite passages in the *Parallel Lives* according to the numbering of the Teubner editions, and in the *Moralia* by the page numbers of the Frankfurt edition of Stephanus (1599). For the abbreviations and translations of titles of Plutarch's works, I follow Duff (1999), xiv–xvii (without retaining though his practice of transliteration). For abbreviations of names of ancient authors and titles of works (including those of Plutarch's works that are not mentioned in Duff's book), I adopt those of the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* (third edition). For the translations of titles of works (except for those of Plutarch's works that are translated by Duff), I use the most conventional English names found in the Loeb editions or standard commentaries/studies. When referring to essays in the *Moralia*, I use the full English titles or the Latin abbreviation (except for the *De Herodoti malignitate* which is often cited in the main text as *Malice*). I refer to the comparative epilogue that normally concludes Plutarch's biographical book by the transliterated Greek term *Synkrisis* which I cite by using the two titles of the *Lives* which it follows (e.g. *Lyc.-Num.* 2.1). Abbreviations of titles of journals follow those of *L'Année Philologique*. LSJ refers to H. G. Liddell and R. Scott, *A Greek-English Lexicon*⁹, rev. by H. Stuart Jones (Oxford, 1940).

1.

Introduction:

Plutarch's *Lives*, Moralism, and Narrative Technique

1.1 'A GAME FOR TWO'

Many readers in recent years have stressed that Plutarch's moralism in the *Lives* goes much further than simply allocating praise or blame. Christopher Pelling has argued that Plutarch is less (or at least not only) concerned with 'protreptic' and 'expository' moralism—in the form of 'do that' or 'do not do that', 'this is what is good' or 'this is what is bad'—but rather with 'descriptive' and 'exploratory' moralism, which points towards, and prompts reflection on, ethical 'truths about human behaviour and shared human experience'.¹ Philip Stadter has paid more heed to the practical applicability of the *Lives* for Plutarch's contemporary audience. Plutarch's narrative, according to Stadter, comes to evoke neither wholly positive nor wholly negative figures, but 'moral actors' whom readers should examine with discrimination, using them as mirrors to ask questions for 'self-examination and self-improvement'.² Timothy Duff has focused attention on a number of pairs of *Lives* whose moral texture complicates simple moral assumptions and defies easy answers about right and wrong.³

The work of these scholars has been extremely illuminating in recognising the challenging and interrogatory nature of the moralism of the *Lives* as well as their

¹ Pelling (1988a), 10–18; (1995), 206–8 [= repr. (2002a), 237–9]. The quotation is from (1995), 208 [= repr. (2002a), 239].

² Stadter (1997) [= repr. (2015), 215–30]; (2000) [= repr. (2015), 231–45]; (2003) [repr. (2015), 331–40].

³ Duff (1999).

narrative sophistication, an important aspect of which is how they elicit from readers an active engagement with the process of moral evaluation.⁴ Plutarch, as Duff puts it, ‘assumes a mature, discerning reader able to grapple with the moral challenges’ presented by the characters of the *Lives*.⁵ For, regardless of his strong presence in the *Lives* and his frequent expressions of a personal view,⁶ Plutarch refrains from imposing on his readers overarching moral verdicts or unambiguous resolutions.⁷ Rather, he develops strategies of problematising, and of prompting his readers as well to problematise, questions of moral judgement.

In the course of the biographical book,⁸ we find instances where Plutarch presents his readers with incongruous elements (including insights, comments, explanations, and verdicts, presented either as his own or as those of the in-text characters) that are not compatible with what readers already know or have assumed from the preceding or wider narrative. These ‘moments of tension’ (as we shall see more fully in the next chapters) are capable of drawing readers, through their

⁴ Duff (2004), 285–6.

⁵ Duff (2004), 285, commenting in particular on the challenges presented to the readers by Demetrius and Antony who appear in their *Lives* as tragic figures.

⁶ e.g. *Lyc.* 28.13; *Arist.* 8.1; *Cato Maj.* 5; *Per.* 39.2; *Luc.* 36.6; *Ant.* 19.4. See also Duff (2011b), 63–4.

⁷ See also Pelling (1988a), 15–16; (1995), 205–8, 218–20 [= repr. (2002a), 237–9, 247–9]; Duff (2011b), 59, although I do not agree with Duff’s emphasis on ‘the rarity, in the body of the *Lives*, of explicit statements about what is right or wrong’ (61). Duff (1999), 54 also overstates his position by claiming that in the *Lives* ‘moralism is almost invariably’ implicit. Nikolaidis (2014), 368 n. 38 raises a similar objection.

⁸ I use the term ‘book’ to refer to a pair of *Lives*, most often preceded by a ‘formal’ prologue and concluded with a comparative epilogue/*Synkrisis* (Duff (2011a)), while not excluding a sense in which the whole series of *Parallel Lives* hangs together in the same way as several ‘books’ can form a *roman fleuve*: Pelling (2010b).

subsequent surprise, into reflecting on and reevaluating the various threads in a bid to pass their moral judgement on the men of the *Lives*. This is also the case when readers confront gaps or silences in the text, temporal displacements, and evocations of past and future, or when they may recognise intertextuality. All these devices prove highly effective in increasing readers' engagement, sensitising them to exploratory parallels and wider contexts that inform their act of judging in many challenging ways.

Plutarch's technique of polarising presentation works effectively to this end too. Plutarch frequently lays out before readers a complex array of different explanations and interpretations (even ones with which he explicitly disagrees), or multiple evaluative responses, including conflicting and progressively shifting praise-and-blame judgements. Rather than being a sign of Plutarch's 'immature and insecure work method', as Barbara Scardigli thinks (with reference to the *Life of Lucullus*),⁹ such a praise-and-blame formulation seems to me a sign of Plutarch's narrative sophistication, intended to prompt readers to engage with the discrepancy involved in moral evaluation and actively work to weigh up and put together the opposed strands into their own interpretation.¹⁰ My claim may recall Emily Baragwanath's reader-response approach to Herodotus and particularly her analysis of how Herodotus' technique of offering alternative views of motivation complicates questions of motivation and enhances readers' engagement with them.¹¹

In Plutarch these opposed strands and alternative perspectives often allude to views and experience that were contemporary with the events related. Indeed, an issue throughout our analysis will be the way(s) that Plutarch's delving into the minds of

⁹ Scardigli (1994), 299.

¹⁰ Cf. Duff (2011b), 66–7, 71–2.

¹¹ Baragwanath (2008), esp. 122–59.

the in-text characters constitutes an important and pervasive aspect of the readers' inquiry into questions of cause and explanation, and hence of moral judgement. This delving helps Plutarch to convey the climate of the times, the background of motives and hopes, feelings and perceptions, which empowers the reader to *explain* and *understand* rather than simply *judge* why a man acted or behaved as he did. We might compare here the presentation of the emotional responses and intellectual activity of characters in historians, which is one of their central explanatory strategies, and thus crucial to their historical inquiry;¹² where appropriate, I make some comparison and (occasionally) notice parallels with other historians and other genres, in particular tragedy and the ancient novel, in order to bring out the importance of Plutarch's narrative technique.

Our study examines the representation of 'experimental' moralism of Plutarch's *Parallel Lives*. It seeks to describe and analyse the range of narrative techniques that Plutarch employs to draw his readers into the process of moral evaluation and expose them to the complexities and difficulties involved in making moral judgements.¹³ It is *not* about Plutarch's 'impediments thwarting moral

¹² e.g. Baragwanath (2008), esp. 160–322 on Herodotus; Rood (1998), esp. 61–108 on Thucydides; Pelling (2009) on Velleius, Cassius Dio, Appian, and Plutarch; Davidson (1991); Mitsios (2013), 84–114 on Polybius.

¹³ On the whole, discussions of Plutarch's narrative technique in the *Lives* have tended to be brief or limited in scope. Pelling (2002b) has good remarks on Plutarch's narratorial voice and the interaction with the reader, particularly through the use of explicit 'me' or 'you'. Duff (2011b) is the most illuminating study of the way in which Plutarch's text guides readers' responses to the subjects of the *Lives*, as well as of the ideal critical reader that Plutarch constructs for the *Lives* and some of the texts in the *Moralia*. On Plutarch's techniques of temporal disposition, see Beck (2007a), discussing especially aspects of temporal order, pace, and frequency in the *Lives* (see also the qualifications in

judgements’,¹⁴ but about the specific strategies that Plutarch develops and uses to alert his readers to the dynamic character of the act of judging. Nor does it purport to suggest an exhaustive coverage of Plutarch’s narrative devices; rather, it offers a repertoire of techniques on which Plutarch *can* draw in the *Lives*: ‘a “licence” rather than a “law”’.¹⁵

Most of this inquiry will inevitably be concerned with the constructed narrator (‘Plutarch’), although that does not exclude some ‘bleeding’ into that construction of features of the flesh-and-blood author (e.g. *Cim.* 1–2; *Dem.* 1–3). Naturally, our knowledge of the real-life Plutarch largely comes from the text; but that would not be the case for all or even most of his immediate audience. In a parallel way, the term

Duff (2011a), 228 n. 70); Zadorojnyi (2012), on Plutarch’s use of ‘plupast’ (i.e. when the subjects of the *Lives* try to learn from and imitate examples of their own past) and its metanarrative implications for the readers’ own mimetic engagement with Plutarch’s exemplary history; Grethlein (2013), 92–130 on ‘experience’ and ‘teleology’ in the *Alexander*; and Duff (2015) on Plutarch’s use of grammatical subordination and verbal aspect in the *Lives* to mark ‘foregrounded and backgrounded material’ and change of narrative perspective (from ‘external’, i.e. that of Plutarch, to ‘internal’, i.e. that of a character/participant). Duff also considers how these features of Plutarch’s narrative affect narrative ‘rhythm’. On Plutarch’s focalising technique, see Pelling (2009), 512–15, 522–6. On Plutarch’s use of space, see Beck (2012). Brenk (1992), 4408–26 has some remarks on Plutarch’s handling of time and focalisation in the *Antony*; Verdegem (2010a), 80–7, 410–16 comments briefly on aspects of time, voice, focalisation, and speech representation (particularly in the *Alcibiades*). Seminal works on Plutarch’s literary techniques are Russell (1963) [= repr. (1995), 357–72]; Frazier (1992); Pelling (1980) [= repr. (2002a), 91–115].

¹⁴ I borrow the phrase from Tatum (2010), 15, who comments specifically on the final *Synkriseis* which, in his opinion, ‘concentrate the reader’s attention on what was already present and inherent in the narratives anyway: a contest between two specific exemplars of particular virtues’. See more on the *Synkriseis*, below, ch. 5.

¹⁵ Pelling (1985), 323 [= repr. (2002a), 54], describing another technique of Plutarch.

‘readers’ refers to the readers whom the text constructs (Wolfgang’s Iser’s ‘implied reader’)¹⁶—the term ‘readers’ (in the plural) also allows for a plurality of (doubtless non-uniform) responses which Plutarch’s narrative itself often anticipates—but that does not exclude some ‘bleeding’ into that construction of the real-life experiences of the real-life readers, ones who bring a real-life ‘horizon of expectation’¹⁷ to the reading process, and there are times when their extratextual experience is important. The constructed readers in fact can be used as a pointer to what real readers might bring to the work and how they might respond. This becomes particularly interesting, as we shall see, in those cases where there may be a tension between the two, with the implied readers serving as an implausible analogue but plausible ideal for the real readers.

Though concerned with the *Parallel Lives* only, this study—through the point of entry it provides into Plutarch’s narrative technique—describes and presents interpretative tools which can be helpful for reading and understanding Plutarch’s writings in general, his miscellaneous works known as *Moralia*, or the remaining *Lives of the Caesars*, the self-standing *Life of Aratus*, and the *Life of Artaxerxes*. The techniques may emerge to work in varied ways and to a varied extent in Plutarch’s wider literary oeuvre, just as they do across the corpus of the *Parallel Lives*; but they can illuminate aspects of the distinctive rhetorical and generic register of each work as well as the kind of the response that Plutarch elicits from his readers. For example, in the *Political precepts* and the *Whether an elderly man should engage in politics*, Plutarch (understandably) is less interested than he is in the *Lives* in exploring the minds of individuals and collective groups and the relation between the two. The

¹⁶ Iser (1974); (1978), esp. 27–38.

¹⁷ Jauss (1982).

effect is that these works convey praise or blame in a much more straightforward way than the *Lives* do. So, for instance, while in the *Life of Nicias* the larger background of the fifth-century Athens, which Plutarch's focalising technique recreates, guides readers towards a more comprehensive view of Nicias' inability to deal with the people,¹⁸ in the *Political precepts* Nicias' lack of the power of persuasion is explicitly disclosed to the reader as detrimental (802c–d). Equally, while in the *Lucullus* Plutarch's unfolding of the workings of the minds of Lucullus and the onlookers draws readers into the atmosphere of danger and humiliation that Lucullus suffers, allowing them to explain and understand (though not necessarily pardon) Lucullus' decision to abandon politics,¹⁹ in the *Whether an elderly man should engage in politics* Lucullus' retirement is the subject of strident disapproval (785f–786a; 792b–c). One thing, therefore, that the techniques which we analyse in this study can do is to let us see how Plutarch changes his approach to a story or a character in the light of the different generic demands (here those of a political treatise and a historical narrative), thus opening our eyes to Plutarch's generic sensibility and helping us to develop that sensibility too.

Another thing that they may do is to offer us insight into the aesthetic appeal of Plutarch's narrative. Our discussion, building upon and verifying further recent research on the challenging and exploratory, rather than affirmative, moral impact that the *Lives* are designed to have on their readers in a way similar to that of Greek tragedy,²⁰ reveals the ability of Plutarch's biographical writing to immerse readers in the storyworld and make them feel empathetically the viewpoints of the characters in

¹⁸ See below, §3.2.2.

¹⁹ See below, ch. 3, pp. 121–2.

²⁰ Pelling (1995), 207–8 [= repr. (2002a), 239].

the text.²¹ Plutarch admires that quality in Thucydides. ‘The best historian’, Plutarch says in the *Were the Athenians more glorious in war or in wisdom?*, ‘is the one who, by a vivid representation of emotions and characters, makes his narrative like a painting’. Plutarch continues to stress that ‘Thucydides is always striving in his writing for this vividness, since it is his desire to make the reader a spectator, as it were, and to instil in readers the emotions of amazement and consternation felt by viewers’ (347a).²² Our reading of the *Lives* (especially in chapter three) suggests that Plutarch does not fall short of Thucydides’ artistry. Plutarch constantly sketches in the complex inner lives of historical agents, their emotions, thoughts, plans, and hopes, thus inducing an especially immersive response from his reader, who is drawn into the story and helped to gauge the ebb and flow of the individual and collective minds of historical agents.

Ultimately, the findings of this study deepen our understanding not only of Plutarch the narrative artist, but also of Plutarch the historian. Plutarch is keenly sensitive not simply to the artistic qualities of historical narrative, but to the challenges and dangers faced in recounting and evaluating history. In the last lines of his essay *On the malice of Herodotus* (which I examine in the last chapter), Plutarch

²¹ See also Grethlein (2013), esp. 92–108 with further bibliography cited on p. 93 n. 4, although I am sceptical about his discussion on pp. 120–1, 129–30 stressing that ‘Plutarch has little interest in making his reader view the situation from the perspective of the historical agents’ (121). Contrast my analysis below, esp. chs. 2 and 3. Most recently, see Duff (2015), esp. 138–48, exploring Plutarch’s use of imperfective verb forms to express ‘internal’ perspective, ‘where events are described as though from the perspective of a participant or onlooker’ (130). On the ‘experiential’ quality of Plutarch’s narrative, see further below, pp. 16–17 with n. 46.

²² Tr. Rood (1998), 3. See also *Nic.* 1.1; 1.5 (Plutarch on Thucydides); *Artax.* 8.1 (Plutarch on Xenophon).

clearly states that historical writing—Plutarch comments specifically on Herodotus’ *Histories*—can be charming and graceful, but also dangerous, ‘entailing slanders and ugly lies’ which can deceive and mislead readers into accepting ‘unworthy and false notions about the greatest and best cities and men’ (874b–c). Explicating such complexities surrounding the writing and reading of history demands that readers must be aware of the methodological and moral challenges inherent in producing a historical account. As we shall see in the course of this study, Plutarch not only reminds readers of those challenges (especially in the prologues, discussed in chapter two), but also evolves and employs sophisticated narrative techniques which expose his readers to the difficulties involved in reading and judging history, and require perspicacity on their part in their reading and judging of it.

The following chapters, which are generally organised around the basic parts of the Plutarchan book in order to illuminate more clearly how Plutarch leads readers to question moral judgement and how he problematises such questions progressively throughout his book, turn to consider closely such techniques. Chapter two is concerned with Plutarch’s projection of himself and his readers (most plainly visible in the prologues), and, more specifically, with the strategies that Plutarch develops and exploits to build his authority with his readers, establish their complicity, and draw them into engaging all the more actively with the subjects of his *Lives*. Chapter three examines how Plutarch’s insight into the minds of the in-text characters generates in readers empathy that keeps them alert up to the end of the *Life* to the complex and provisional character of a clear-cut moralising judgement. Chapter four reflects especially upon Plutarch’s tendency to refrain from offering an overall moral conclusion in the closing chapters of the biographies. It considers several closural devices (such as anecdotes, the aftermath of cities, literary allusions, and generalised

moral statements) that are effective in drawing readers to review in retrospect moral themes and questions which matter to the book as a whole, and (in the case of the endings of the second *Lives*) help a neat transition to the final comparative epilogue (*Synkrisis*)—whenever this follows. Chapter five explores how the *Synkriseis* expose readers to the particular challenges involved in deciding an overarching concluding judgement. It also closely examines the books that (as they now stand) do not conclude with a *Synkrisis* and makes the case that no ‘terminal irregularity’ can justify and explain any deliberate omission of their comparative epilogues. Finally, chapter six focuses on Plutarch’s essay *On the malice of Herodotus* and explores how far Plutarch’s techniques in the *Lives* escape and how far they are vulnerable to the criticisms that Plutarch makes of Herodotus. The analysis brings together the main strands of the earlier chapters so as to illuminate further Plutarch’s narrative strategies; it also discusses the possibility that Plutarch exploits the rhetorical agonistic framework of the essay in order to elicit a similar sort of attentive and acute reader response to historical narrative, as in the *Lives*, and to arouse awareness of the precarious act of exercising moral judgement.

In plotting Plutarch’s narrative technique over the course of the present work I use the tools of certain modern theories, which I now explain briefly.

1.2. PLUTARCH’S NARRATIVE TECHNIQUE: THEORY AND METHOD

Narratology provides us with extremely useful tools for describing and understanding how Plutarch’s narrative works to shape the moral response of the readers, especially through its analysis of the narrator’s voice, narrative time, and focalisation. Plutarch is a self-conscious, overt narrator who uses several devices to highlight his presence and role as teller/writer and to interact with his audience: first-person references,

apostrophes, gnomic utterances, references to his own time, comments (evaluative and metanarrative), counterfactuals, cross-references, parallel examples, and numerous others which we will present and discuss in the following chapters.²³ Our primary concern will be to illustrate Plutarch's (narratorial) self-presentation and the dynamics of his dialogue with the readers—the way(s) and the extent to which Plutarch tries to mould his readers' moral response.

One of the most powerful means Plutarch has at his disposal to influence his readers is the manipulation of time: he 'can change the order of events (*order*)', he 'can spend more or less time [i.e. textual space] on recounting events (*rhythm*)', and he 'can recount events only once or more often (*frequency*)'.²⁴ Frequency can take three forms: 'events may be told once (singulative narration), more than once (repeating narration), or repeated events may be told only once (iterative narration)'.²⁵ Rhythm can take four forms: ellipsis (no textual space corresponds to some story time, i.e. an event is not told at all); summary (textual space < story time); scene (textual space comes closer to equalling story time); and pause ('absolute slowness').²⁶ Order mainly refers to chronological displacements which can take the form of a 'prolepsis' (i.e. 'any narrative maneuver that consists of narrating or evoking in advance an event that will take place later') or an 'analepsis' (i.e. 'any evocation after the fact of an event that took place earlier than the point in the story

²³ See de Jong (2004), 1–4; de Jong and Nünlist (2004), 546–7. On Plutarch, see also Verdegem (2010a), 82 with nn. 303–7. In my approach to narratorial voice, I am most influenced by Genette (1980), 212–62; de Jong (1987); (2014), esp. 17–28; de Jong, Bowie, and Nünlist (2004).

²⁴ de Jong (2007), 3, adapted. On narrative theory on time, I follow Genette (1980), 33–160; de Jong and Nünlist (2007); de Jong (2014), 73–101. On Plutarch's handling of time, see Beck (2007a).

²⁵ de Jong and Nünlist (2007), xi–xii.

²⁶ Cf. Genette (1980), 94–5; Rood (1998), 11.

where we are at any given moment’).²⁷ Prolepses and analepses can be internal or external to the main story, i.e. they can fall within or outside its ‘time span’.²⁸

Plutarch is sensitive to the process of temporal arrangement. He is often aware that he distorts linear ordering: ‘this incident, although it occurred at a later time, I decided—since I had taken up the topic of the women—to anticipate it (προλαβεῖν)’ (*Cato Min.* 25.13).²⁹ He may justify why he expands upon a topic—‘since we consider that such incidents can offer a clear demonstration and understanding of character, just as the public and great deeds do, we recounted them in more detail (ἐπὶ πλεον διήλομεν)’ (*Cato Min.* 37.10)—or acknowledge that he recounts something briefly, (often) giving his readers a cross-reference to another *Life* where a fuller version may be found: ‘But Hicetas also met with a punishment worthy of his crimes. For he himself was captured by Timoleon and put to death, and the Syracusans, to avenge Dion, slew his two daughters also; of which things I have written at length (cf. <τὰ> καθ’ ἕκαστα) in my Life of Timoleon’ (*Dion* 58.10).³⁰ He also tends to begin the *Lives* with external analeptic stories about the ancestors of the protagonists and close them with external proleptic accounts of the future of their cities or their successors.³¹ In the *Antony*, for example, we look ahead to Antony’s descendants who extend down to Nero. ‘This Nero’, Plutarch recounts, ‘came to the throne in my time. He killed his

²⁷ Genette (1980), 40.

²⁸ de Jong (2007), 5 with n. 13.

²⁹ Noticed also by Beck (2007a), 406.

³⁰ See also *Gracchi* 21.9. On Plutarch’s cross-references to the *Lives*, see Nikolaidis (2005).

³¹ These are ‘external’ anachronies only if we consider that the time of the main story spans the life of a man from birth to death (cf. Momigliano (1993), 11). Cf. Beck (2007a), 398, 406, 408. On Plutarch’s use of a subject’s ancestors, see Duff (1999), 310–11. On terminal flash-forwards (often comprising powerful flashbacks), see below, ch. 4 with relevant bibliography.

mother . . . and . . . came near to subverting the Roman Empire. He was the fifth in descent from Antony' (87.9). Similarly, in the *Pericles* we are presented with a glimpse of the post-Periclean Athens. Plutarch says that after Pericles' death the Athenians swiftly changed their perception (αἰσθησιν) of Pericles, as they experienced other orators and popular leaders: 'they were agreed that there had never been a character more moderate in self-importance and more awesome in mildness (39.3).³² That odious power [sc. of Pericles], which was earlier called monarchy and tyranny, *at that time* (τότε) seemed (ἐφάνη) [sc. to them] to have been the safeguard for the constitution' (39.4). In both *Lives*, allusions to the future deepen readers' perspective by inviting them to situate Antony and Pericles in the larger framework of Roman and Greek history and make comparisons between past and future. However, whereas in the case of Antony Plutarch limits the readers to his own perspective, in the case of Pericles he also primes them to look through the eyes of the Athenians and reflect with (and on) them through their current enlightenment, which contrasts with their earlier hostility and hence complicates the moral landscape of the *Pericles* (I discuss this later in chapter three).³³

Indeed, a good deal of moral complexity in Plutarch's *Lives* arises from Plutarch's handling of characters' perception or (to use Gérard Genette's term) of 'focalisation'—an important aspect of Plutarch's narrative manner which narratology helps us to unfold and examine. There is a wide range of views on the concept of focalisation and agreement has not emerged.³⁴ Genette introduced the term 'focalisation' to clarify that the questions 'who sees?' and 'who speaks?' in a

³² Tr. Stadter (1989), 348, adapted.

³³ See below, pp. 132–4.

³⁴ See Jahn (2007); Niederhoff (2009); Schmid (2010), 89–99 for helpful (selective) overviews.

narrative text are different,³⁵ although his distinction was refined by later critics who emphasised that focalisation is dependent ‘on the narrator and on the amount of information imparted to the reader by the narrator’.³⁶ Thus, the narrator speaks, but the narrative can be ‘oriented from the perceptions of different characters’³⁷ (beside the narrator’s own).³⁸ Post-Genettean focalisation theory has sought to enrich the perceptual focus of Genette’s model. Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, in particular, added the ‘psychological’ (concerning emotion and cognition) and the ‘ideological’ facets of focalisation.³⁹

This richer conceptualisation of focalisation sheds significant light on Plutarch’s narrative technique of offering his readers access to the emotional and intellectual activity of the in-text characters, which, in turn, becomes fundamental to the readerly moral inquiry. By letting the readers know the assumptions and beliefs, the thoughts and feelings of an individual and the onlookers of the time, Plutarch immerses them in the world of the story and deepens (as I will analyse at length in chapter three) their understanding both of the workings of the individual’s mind and of the social context with which the individual mind engages in dialogue, thus inviting interpretative reflection on ethically perplexing choices and actions.

To describe Plutarch’s treatment of the dialogue between the individual mind and its social context and to explicate its centrality to Plutarch’s and the readers’ research into questions of moral evaluation, I will use some of the concepts and terms

³⁵ Genette (1980), 186.

³⁶ Rimmon (1976), 59. See also Rood (1998), 294.

³⁷ Flower and Marincola (2002), 5.

³⁸ Rood (1998), 294.

³⁹ Rimmon-Kenan (1983), 77–82.

which Alan Palmer develops in his theory of ‘fictional minds’⁴⁰ (though I make no claim to offer a fully worked-out cognitive approach or analysis of Plutarch’s representation of consciousness). Palmer, drawing on various real-life cognitive disciplines (especially philosophy of mind, psychology, psycholinguistics, and neuroscience), supplements the emphasis of traditional narratology on private inner thought by focusing on the social, dialogic, and public dimension of fictional minds in the novel. For Palmer, *mind* is a kind of umbrella term which ‘embraces all aspects of our inner life: not just cognition and perception, but also dispositions, feelings, beliefs, and emotions’.⁴¹ As he contends:

There are two perspectives on the mind: the internalist and the externalist. These two perspectives form more of a continuum than an either/or dichotomy, but the distinction is, in general, a valid one.

- An internalist perspective on the mind stresses those aspects that are inner, introspective, private, solitary, individual, psychological, mysterious, and detached.
- An externalist perspective on the mind stresses those aspects that are outer, active, public, social, behavioral, evident, embodied, and engaged.

I use the term social mind to describe those aspects of the whole mind that are revealed through the externalist perspective (Palmer (2010), 39).

In Palmer’s view, the readers can experience and infer the workings of the characters’ minds even if the narrator does not give direct access to them; the reader ‘sees these minds in action from observation of characters’ behavior and speech’ as

⁴⁰ See Palmer (2004); (2010); (2011a); (2011b); (2015). A special issue of the journal *Style* 45.2 (2011) includes illuminating responses to Palmer’s theory; cf. Grethlein (2015a); (2015b); Fludernik (2015); Ryan (2015).

⁴¹ Palmer (2004), 19.

well as their actions.⁴² A significant aspect of the social mind is the ‘capacity for *intermental thought*. Such thinking is joint, group, shared, or collective, as opposed to *intramental*, or individual or private thought’:⁴³

Intermental thought is a crucially important component of fictional narrative because, just as in real life, where much of our thinking is done in groups, much of the mental functioning that occurs in novels is done by large organizations, small groups, work colleagues, friends, families, couples, and other intermental units . . . It could plausibly be argued that a large amount of the subject matter of novels is the formation, development, maintenance, modification, and breakdown of these intermental systems’ (Palmer (2010), 41).⁴⁴

Although Palmer applies his theory to fictional texts, he suggests that his analysis would be valuable ‘in the study of narratives about real minds: history, biography, and autobiography’ too. To strengthen his claim, Palmer cites an interesting example:

The British politician Leo Amery said of the prime ministers David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill: “LG was purely external and receptive, the result of intercourse with his fellow men, and non-existent in their absence, while Winston is literary and expressive of himself with hardly any contact with other minds” (*Times Literary Supplement*, page 14, 25 September 2009) (Palmer (2010), 200).

Plutarch’s leaders (as we shall see) are similarly examined and understood within the manifold webs of their social nexus; and they raise similar questions of mindset, which easily become questions of moral evaluation involving ethical

⁴² Palmer (2004), 11, 246.

⁴³ Palmer (2010), 41.

⁴⁴ See also Palmer (2011a), 219–20: ‘It is obvious that there is a wide spectrum of phenomena covered by the term *intermental thought* and also by this typology: it ranges from chance encounters between two strangers to the life of a whole town over a long period’.

decision-makings, dilemmas, and problem-solving situations that illuminate a good deal of the motives, intentions, plans, and character of historical agents. On occasions of intense moral situations or dilemmas, the protagonists of the *Lives* may resort (as we will examine later) to solitary self-communing, and yet this still proves, in effect, to be social, or at least to dovetail with their social role and interpersonal dialogue. This dialogue is complex and often results in intense intermental breakdowns which render the narrative ‘experiential’ to the readers: the readers are plunged into the storyworld and drawn into ‘re-experiencing’⁴⁵ the experience of the in-text characters.⁴⁶ Plutarch thus elicits an empathetic sort of reader response, one which entangles understanding with evaluation, a ‘personality-approach’ with a ‘character-approach’ (to use Christopher Gill’s terms).⁴⁷

Our emphasis throughout on the high degree of the reader participation takes its cue from Wolfgang Iser’s reader-response theory, which aids us in analysing the complex, dialogic negotiation between Plutarch’s text and his readers. In Iser’s

⁴⁵ See Grethlein (2013), analysing a wide range of narrative techniques that ancient historians employed to immerse readers in the world of the story and make them re-experience the past.

⁴⁶ The notion of ‘experientiality’ was introduced by Fludernik (1996), 12, who defines it as ‘the quasi-mimetic evocation of “real-life experience”’, but denies it for the genre of historiography (see also Fludernik (2010), 69, challenged by Grethlein (2013), esp. 356–7). Still, Plutarch’s biography may fit into Fludernik’s model and qualify as narrative—‘In history books (with the exception of traditional histories that concentrate solely on political decisions, *and here, more specifically, on the person of the king or emperor responsible for those decisions*), the world of the thoughts and feelings of the actants is scarcely significant’ (Fludernik (2009), 79, my italics)—though Fludernik’s formulation seems wrong-headed even when applied to non-biographical history: a whole population’s (not necessarily uniform) morale and thinking, for example, would be an important part of any social history of the First or Second World Wars.

⁴⁷ See below, pp. 89–91.

theory, the central elements in the interaction between text and reader are the gaps or blanks of the text. These function as stimuli for the reader's imagination, drawing the reader into a gap-filling-in process that is *regulated* by what is explicit in the text, which, 'in its turn is transformed when the implicit has been brought to light'. According to Iser, 'the blanks leave open the connection between [the] textual perspectives',⁴⁸ the four basic forms of which are 'those of the narrator, the characters, the plot, and the fictitious reader'. Often these textual perspectives are subdivided, thus increasing the number of blanks—'the hero's perspective', for example, 'may be set against that of the minor characters'. However, none of the textual perspectives 'on its own is identical with the meaning of the text, which is to be brought about by their constant intertwining through the reader in the reading process'.⁴⁹ In her reader-response approach to Herodotus, Emily Baragwanath rightly notices that in historical accounts, the audience's pre-existing knowledge of what happened 'perhaps supplies the most powerful of further perspectives that inform their act of contributing to the creation of meaning'.⁵⁰

Plutarch, as already noted, does not absolve his readers of the need for moral reflection by offering any sort of hard and fast rules for their judgement. Rather, as we shall see, he often presents them with silences that may activate their imagination to look for plausible inferences; with allusions to the past and future or to other texts,⁵¹ which force them to search for the connections between the implied multiple

⁴⁸ Iser (1989), 34. The preceding quotation is from the same page.

⁴⁹ Iser (1989), 35. The two previous quotations are taken from the same page.

⁵⁰ Baragwanath (2008), 25.

⁵¹ I retain the distinction between 'allusion', implying more an authorial intention, and 'intertext' for what allusion can reveal about the construction of the alluding voice (Hinds (1998), esp. 47–51). On allusion and intertextuality in ancient historiography, see Marincola (2010); Pelling (2013).

perspectives; with generalised moral statements which cause them to work out the application of the general to the specific situation of the story;⁵² and with reversals and surprising elements and discoveries, leading to ‘unexpected directions’ that offer ‘the opportunity . . . to bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections—for filling in the gaps left by the text itself’.⁵³ Striking also is Plutarch’s tendency to confront readers with pairs of contrasts, especially constantly shifting judgements, which may or may not be part of the social reality described. Plutarch may give more or less guidance to the readers on how to make sense of these contrasts; but it is these contrasts, offered to their ‘wandering viewpoint’,⁵⁴ which prompt them (in accordance with Iser’s theory) to enter into the text and strive to combine the plurality of perspectives contained within it into their own interpretation.

All these strategies feed into wider rhetorical practice and literary theory in antiquity. Ancient critics had already acknowledged Iser’s central thesis of leaving some things unsaid in order to activate the imagination of the addressees and cause them to figure out the missing elements for themselves.⁵⁵ Several rhetorical contexts, moreover, demanded an engaged audience who were often cast in the position of judge or juror of contrary positions: ‘this was the case with speeches delivered in the law courts or the assembly (or in Rome the senate), but the rhetorical display pieces that were so popular under the Roman empire invited the audience to assume this role

⁵² See also Duff (2011b), 61–3.

⁵³ Iser (1974), 280.

⁵⁴ See Iser (1978), 108–18 on ‘wandering viewpoint’.

⁵⁵ *On Style* 222 = Theophr. fr. 696 Fortenbaugh. On this point, see Konstan (2006), 13–14; Duff (2011b), 77–8; Kim (2013).

as well’.⁵⁶ Many literary works were also written or included parts that were written in a way that prompted the reader to weigh up the pros and cons of an indeterminate case (for instance, *agōnes* in tragedy, Plato’s dialogues, and opposing speeches in historiography and rhetoric).

Notably, Plutarch himself wrote works that contain conflicting paired speeches, such as the *Which are cleverer: land animals or sea animals?*, which urge the readers to test the two sides in order to gain a ‘notion common to both’.⁵⁷ As Timothy Duff observes, ‘this provides a good indication of the purpose of the unresolved questions in the *Lives* or their *synkriseis*: the reader’s moral sensibilities are deepened by being exposed to conflicting viewpoints and drawn into the work of assessing or resolving them’, although ‘the broader context of moral thought is never in doubt’.⁵⁸

This sort of active, careful, and perspicacious reader response that Plutarch produces is paralleled in his educational treatise on *How a young man should listen to poems*.⁵⁹ There, Plutarch gives ‘not only a manual but a paradigm of how to read’, which partly, as David Konstan has astutely remarked, ‘anticipate[s] certain strategies of postmodern literary theory’, especially through its emphasis on the active involvement of the reader in the construction and interpretation of the meaning of the

⁵⁶ Konstan (2006), 13. I am indebted to Konstan (2006), 13–16 as well as to Duff (2011b), 77–8 for the rest of the paragraph. Cf. below, ch. 6, pp. 228–31.

⁵⁷ Duff (2011b), 78–9. See also Duff (1999), 245–8.

⁵⁸ Duff (2011b), 79.

⁵⁹ Duff (2011b), 80–2.

text.⁶⁰

In Plutarch's view, the young audience should be attuned to the likelihood that poets may not always tell the truth (16d) and that they may depict mean actions without necessarily approving of them (18e–f). They should carefully examine any hints, comments, and verdicts that poets include to express their judgement (19a–d) and pay close attention to the descriptions of the actions that can more or less explicitly reveal the lessons that a poet might want to supply (19d–20b). They should be alert to contradictions and actively try to resolve them (20c–21d). They should be sensitive to linguistic choices and their context (22a–25b), and they should always look for the motivations behind what is being said (28a–d). 'For he', Plutarch stresses, 'who thus meets and resists, and refuses to entrust himself broadside on to every breath of doctrine, as to a wind, . . . will thrust aside a good deal of what is not said truly and helpfully' (28d).

Plutarch (to use the powerful words of David Konstan) envisions in the essay a 'resisting' (7), 'astute' (8), ideal listener/reader, who is 'trained to critical evaluation' (26) and 'know[s] how to listen actively and critically' (27). This is a 'wary listener, who is protected against the dangers inherent in narrative by the continual exercise of critical vigilance' (24).⁶¹ As Konstan says, Plutarch's 'way to make poetry safe is to create a sophisticated and questioning audience for it' (20); and, as I will argue in the subsequent chapters, Plutarch's way to make history safe (especially since Plutarch considers it as charming and dangerous as poetry—in the

⁶⁰ Konstan (2004). The quotations are from pp. 27 and 3 correspondingly. Konstan (2006) makes the case for an active reader in classical antiquity: 'they read, and were taught to read, critically, judging as they went and engaging the text in argument, as it were' (8).

⁶¹ I cite from Konstan (2004). Cf. Konstan (2006), 10.

Malice he explicitly aligns Herodotus with a ‘bard’ (ᾠοιδός) who told his story ‘with musical clear-flowing words’, but not with ‘knowledge and wisdom’ (874b)) is to create a similar kind of reader for the *Lives* too.

In the *Lives*, however, Plutarch expects that his readers are more mature than the young target audience of the educational treatise and thus capable of performing a much more sophisticated version of critical reading.⁶² It is scarcely surprising that the *Lives* offer (as we shall see) more advanced teaching in cautious and critical moral reading than the essay does, training the readers to be critical of all moral judgements, including those adopted explicitly by the narrator. Possibly, the essay may be seen as preparing the young student for the ‘adult moral education’ of the *Lives*, where the readers learn more complex strategies and interpretative methods for reading and judging history appropriately.⁶³ A reader response approach is hence highly suitable for enhancing our understanding of Plutarch’s strategies for regulating his readers’ ongoing interaction with the text.

The remaining section of this chapter shows in a concrete manner how our toolkit can be usefully applied to elucidate Plutarch’s narrative technique in the *Lives*. As test case I take two (intertwined) scenes in Plutarch’s *Life of Solon*: the meeting of Solon with Croesus (27) and Croesus’ speech to Cyrus after Croesus is captured and placed on the pyre (28)—two well known scenes from Herodotus’ *Histories* which

⁶² On the *Lives* as ‘adult moral education’, see Stadter (2000) [= repr. (2015), 231–45].

⁶³ Duff (2011b), 81–2 associates the ideal critical reader of the pedagogical treatise with that envisioned in the *Lives*. He relates the first to Plutarch’s preparation of the young for philosophy and the second to Plutarch’s expectation in the *Lives* that the mature reader will be ‘able to read history philosophically’ (82). Hunter and Russell (2011), 9 suggest that the pedagogical treatise may ‘foreshadow the “adult” discussions of *Sympotic questions*’ and ‘guide those at the beginning of this path’.

Plutarch assumes that his readers would be familiar with.⁶⁴ I chose these scenes because they address themes that have relevance to the *Solon–Publicola* book as a whole, thus allowing us to draw on some of the aspects of Plutarch’s narrative technique with which we shall be principally concerned in the chapters that follow: the importance of mind-reading on the part of in-text characters and external audience and the active sort of reading experience which Plutarch assumes and promotes—mainly how he exploits readers’ varying assumptions and expectations and how he denies offering overarching moral conclusions, keeping readers alert up to the end of a *Life* and (most importantly) the end of the book to the dynamic and complex character of moralising judgements. A closer narratological inspection of the two scenes, moreover, raises questions about the power and limits of Plutarch’s own narrative and its reception, and these will be addressed in the following chapter.

1.3 ‘WAIT TO THE END OF THE *LIFE* TO JUDGE . . .’ (*Sol.* 27–8)

1.3.1 Differing minds

Plutarch’s account of Solon’s meeting with Croesus in the *Life of Solon* begins with the astonishment Solon experiences in Sardis: Solon was unable to recognise Croesus among the throng of lavishly dressed people, just as an inland man cannot distinguish between the sea and the rivers when he goes down to the sea for first time (27.2). Plutarch stresses that Croesus was decked out in much luxury and extravagance, ‘his intention being to present a most august and artful spectacle’ (27.3). Solon, however, was wholly indifferent to Croesus’ splendour. As Plutarch puts it, ‘it appeared to those who think rightly (τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσι) that Solon was despising [sc. Croesus’] vulgarity and meanness’ (27.4). For this reason, Plutarch continues, Croesus ordered

⁶⁴ See below, n. 66.

that his treasures should be thrown open to Solon and that Solon should be led around to see the rest of his estate. But that was unnecessary for Solon, as Plutarch stresses, ‘for Croesus alone sufficed to give an understanding of his character’ (27.5).

These details—none of them found in Herodotus—form the setting of the discussion between Solon and Croesus in the *Life of Solon* and reveal Plutarch’s favourite technique of looking into the minds of historical agents and tracing the way they feel, perceive, and experience the events or states in the storyworld. Readers are given access to the interplay between the mindsets of Solon and Croesus, particularly the opposition between the demotic Greek perspective of Solon and the tyrannical Eastern one of Croesus, which crystallises further over the course of the following dialogue between the two men.⁶⁵

Plutarch expounds upon Croesus’ reaction to Solon’s evaluation of Tellus as the happiest man. He tells us that Croesus thought of Solon as strange and rustic, for Solon did not define happiness on the basis of material gain and wealth, but instead had greater regard for the life and death of an ordinary private man (δημοτικοῦ καὶ ἰδιώτου) than for power and sovereignty (27.6). Readers may recall that Herodotus’ Croesus is simply marvelling at (cf. ἀποθωμάσας) Solon at this point (1.30.4),⁶⁶ although it is true that later on, in Croesus’ response to Solon’s story of Cleobis and Biton, Herodotus too mentions Croesus’ anger (cf. σπερχθείς) at Solon for ranking him inferior to common men (ἰδιωτέων ἀνδρῶν) (1.32.1). Most notably, whereas Herodotus’ Solon frames his discussion about divine jealousy, universal mutability,

⁶⁵ See also Schneeweiss (1975), 174–6; Frazier (1992), 4500–6; Marincola (2015a), 55.

⁶⁶ See Frazier (1992), 4502–3. On the familiarity of Plutarch’s readers with Herodotus, see Pelling (2002b), 267–8, who points out that the stories of Tellus, Cleobis, and Biton are ‘given briefly and enigmatically, presumably because Herodotus’ original is taken as familiar’. See also Pelling (2007); Zadorojnyi (2012), 193–8.

and real happiness in a rather general, proverb-style mode (1.32),⁶⁷ including moral and religious views that Plutarch naturally does not like and chooses to omit,⁶⁸ Plutarch's Solon offers a more explicit opposition between the Greek demotic (which Solon himself appears to share—notice the first person plural at 27.8: ὑπὸ μετριότητος ἡμῖν μέτεστιν) and the Lydian regal perspectives (cf. Ἑλλήσιν ~ ὦ βασιλεῦ Λυδῶν) (27.8),⁶⁹ stressing in particular the Greek values of moderation (μετριότης) and wisdom (σοφία).⁷⁰ In Solon's view, Greek wisdom has a cautious (cf. ἀθαρσοῦς) and demotic character (cf. δημοτικῆς), not a kingly and splendid one (cf. οὐ βασιλικῆς οὐδὲ λαμπρᾶς):⁷¹ it observes that human life is subject to the changeability of fortune and does not allow the Greeks to be puffed up (μέγα φρονεῖν) or admire (θαυμάζειν) temporary welfare and good fortune (27.8).

This is an interesting instance where Plutarch presents his readers with a character viewpoint that may disconcert or surprise them, for it appears to go against the grain of the wider narrative of the *Solon*, which gives full treatment to the Athenians' relapse into internal divisions, yearning for material gain, and proneness to

⁶⁷ Immerwahr (1966), 156; Harrison (2000), 38–40; Pelling (2006a), 143–5, 147–52; Asheri (2007), 103–4; Ellis (2015).

⁶⁸ Pelling (2011b), 42; Marincola (2015a), 45–59.

⁶⁹ Contrast Solon's address to Croesus in Herodotus: ὦ Κροῖσε (1.32.1; 1.32.4) and ὦ βασιλεῦ (1.32.9; cf. 1.30.3), and Croesus' address to Solon: ὦ ξεῖνε Ἀθηναίε (1.32.1; cf. 1.30.2). See also Pelling (2006a), 147 n. 21.

⁷⁰ Cf. Schneeweiss (1975), 172–3; Nikolaidis (1986), 237; Schmidt (1999), 130–1; Fernández-Delgado (2002), 365; Asheri (2007), 100–1, commenting on Hdt. 1.30.4 (ὥς τὰ παρ' ἡμῖν), notices that 'Plutarch adds a touch of Hellenic nationalism (*Sol.* 27.8)' (101). I say 'more explicit opposition', for in Herodotus the contrast is present too, but it is more implicit: Schneeweiss (1975), 173; Long (1987), 64–5; Pelling (2006a), 146–7; (2011b), 42–3; Marincola (2015a), 57 with n. 18.

⁷¹ On the meaning of μετριότης and δημοτικῆς, see Pelling (2011b), esp. 42–50.

tyranny,⁷² and to contradict the readers' pre-existing knowledge of the Greeks' post-Persian Wars trajectory. In the subsequent chapters we shall have occasion to be especially concerned with such moments of tension that force readers to be alert to intra-, extra-, and inter-textual wider contexts and (dis)connections which may confirm, extend, or challenge their moral assumptions.

So is Solon being here over-optimistic or naive? Or is he adopting a stance for didactic purposes? Or maybe Plutarch's main point is to wonder not simply about Solon but about Athens as well? Indeed, Solon's idealistic view may cause readers to test Solon's words for themselves and wonder how different Greeks and Lydians really are. This inquiry may draw them into a deeper engagement not only with Solon and Croesus, but the Athenians too; it primes them to notice points of comparison between the Athenians and Croesus which may reveal a shared human nature—remember the words of Herodotus' Croesus on the pyre that 'Solon spoke with less regard to him than to mankind in general . . .' (1.86.5)—and challenge a complacent or simple Greek/barbarian national polarity—an idea which is known to Herodotus too.⁷³ In the eyes of Plutarch's knowledgeable readers, Croesus and the Athenians may emerge as similar, for they both assume superiority to normal limitations and, as we shall see next, find it hard to learn the right lessons.

⁷² See esp. *Sol.* 12–13; 19.1; 29.1; 30. See de Blois (2006), 435; (2008), 321–3; Pelling (2011b), 48.

⁷³ Pelling (1997a); (2006a), 173, who mentions, in addition, that Herodotus' contemporary audience may have questioned further the Greek/barbarian dichotomy in the light of their experience of Athenian imperialism. Critics of Herodotus tend to find in the *Histories* references to and comments on contemporary Athens: e.g. Strasburger (1955); Fornara (1971); Raaflaub (1987) and (2002); Moles (1996); Pelling (2006a), 142 with n. 4; Grethlein (2013), 205–23.

1.3.2 The limits of learning

When Croesus is captured and bound upon the pyre before all the Persians and Cyrus, he re-interprets and re-evaluates his earlier exchange with Solon, calling into question what and how far he has actually learned from Solon's teaching through his suffering and adverse change of fortune. 'Solon was one of the sages among the Greeks,' Croesus says, 'for whom I sent, not because I wanted to hear or learn anything I needed, but in order that he should become a spectator (θεατής) and, when he left me, witness (μάρτυς) of the happiness I enjoyed at that time' (28.4). Croesus acknowledges his earlier altered insight, but he does not seem to wholly understand Solon's intended teaching. He grasps the main point 'to look to the end of one's life' (28.5: τὸ τέλος τοῦ βίου σκοπεῖν), but, as Christopher Pelling observes, Croesus' conclusion that 'it was a greater evil to lose his wealth than a good to gain it' (*Sol.* 28.4) not only misrepresents Solon's words, but also contradicts Plutarch's earlier statement (within his account of Solon's exchanges with Thales at *Sol.* 6–7) that it is irrational and ignoble to renounce what we want for fear we may lose it;⁷⁴ rather (as Plutarch says) it is important for people to be trained by reason to withstand the assaults of fortune (*Sol.* 7)—a quality that Croesus seems to lack so far.

In his summary of Solon's advice to Cyrus, moreover, Croesus explicitly links his over-confidence (cf. θρασυνόμενον) with his hybristic behaviour (cf. ὑβριζέειν) (28.5). Neither in Plutarch nor in Herodotus does Solon make this claim directly.⁷⁵ In Herodotus, 'all three strands are in the air, universal mutability, divine envy, and the prospect of tyrannically transgressive, self-destructive behavior,'⁷⁶ while in Plutarch

⁷⁴ Pelling (2002b), 268; (2004), 99–100.

⁷⁵ Pelling (2006a), 152 relates this in Herodotus to the conversational dynamics in an autocratic court.

⁷⁶ Pelling (2006a), 152.

the emphasis is transplanted to the Greek versus Lydian dichotomy that underpins the Greek values of moderation and wisdom (27.8–9). Plutarch's Croesus, however, openly weighs himself against the Greek standards and admits that his over-boldness has verged on hybris (28.5); there is nothing of this in Herodotus, although one recalls that Herodotus' Croesus seeks self-applicability too (1.86.5).⁷⁷ Plutarch seems to allow the possibility that at this moment Croesus might have sensitively responded to Solon's wisdom. The ultimate result, Plutarch stresses, is that Solon's *logos* saves Croesus, for it educates Cyrus (cf. τὸν δὲ παιδεύσας τῶν βασιλέων) through Croesus' own example (cf. ἐν τῷ παραδείγματι) (28.6)—Plutarch's emphasis on exemplarity may invite readers to sense a metanarrative dimension (we will return to this point at the end).⁷⁸ Still, few readers can fail to remember that success is to endure for neither Croesus nor Cyrus.

The pattern is familiar on the Greek side too, for the Athenians have their lessons to learn as well, but their susceptibility to Peisistratus' tyranny suggests that they certainly have not learnt them yet (*Sol.* 30). Solon, despite his wisdom, ends up confronting 'a terrible threat to his life-work'.⁷⁹

Notwithstanding Solon's failure, however, Plutarch's technique of looking into the minds of historical agents primes readers to reach some comprehension of his failure rather than passing a quick, harsh, moralising judgement on Solon. It empowers them to look into the mind of Croesus and the Athenians (as we noticed

⁷⁷ Pelling (2006a), 159.

⁷⁸ Cf. Hdt. 1.86.6: καὶ τὸν Κῦρον ἀκούσαντα τῶν ἐρμηνέων τὰ Κροῖσος εἶπε, μεταγνόντα τε καὶ ἐννόσαντα. On the words describing Cyrus' mental activity in 1.86–7, see Segal (1971), 45–6, 48–9. Cf. also Diod. Sic. 9.2.4: ὁ δὲ Κῦρος . . . μαθὼν τὰ ληθὲς μετέπεσε τοῖς λογισμοῖς καὶ νομίσας τὴν ἀπόκρισιν τοῦ Σόλωνος ἀληθινὴν εἶναι . . . '

⁷⁹ Pelling (2004), 100.

above) and understand that these are difficult people to cope with, people who are not (at least not always) in touch with the ideals of wisdom and moderation that Solon propounds. Teaching and learning are neither simple nor straightforward for learners such as Croesus or the Athenians: wisdom is hard to grasp, hard to pass on, and hard to keep hold of; but if Plutarch invites readers to understand Solon by sensitising them to the challenge faced by him, does he necessarily suggest that they should pardon him? Plutarch allows important questions to emerge; questions that may not simply matter to Solon, Croesus, and the Athenians (as we shall see), but to Plutarch's own and his readers' process of teaching and learning in the *Lives* as well.

1.3.3 The limits of teaching

During his discussion with Aesop (which in Plutarch's narrative follows directly after the encounter with Croesus), Solon expresses his total aversion to flattery. Contrary to Aesop, who thinks that one's conversation with kings should be either as rare (ὥς ἥκιστα) or as pleasing (ὥς ἡδίστα) as possible, Solon suggests that it should be either as rare (ὥς ἥκιστα) or as beneficial (ὥς ἄριστα) as possible (28.1).⁸⁰ Solon is thoughtful and well-intentioned—one may recall that earlier in his discussion with Croesus Solon not merely wished not to flatter but also not to irritate Croesus further (27.8)—but his over-rigid application of Greek civil ideals constantly provoked the anger of Croesus. Solon left Sardis, as Plutarch says, after he displeased (λυπήσας) and did not (successfully) advise (οὐ νουθετήσας) Croesus (27.9; cf. Hdt. 1.33). The

⁸⁰ See also *Quomodo Adulat.* 58d–e; Hdt. 1.30.3 on Solon's unwillingness to flatter Croesus. On Herodotus, see Branscome (2013), 28–30, who argues that 'Solon might have been more persuasive with the Lydian king if Solon had included somewhat more "flattery" and somewhat less "truth" ' (29). Cf. *Quomodo Adulat.* 69e and Diod. Sic. 9.2.2, stressing Solon's attachment to the philosophical principle of frankness (παρρησία).

emerging impression is that in such circumstances, where Solon has to face a tyrant at a dynastic court (and a city with similar characteristics) theoretical principles and ideals need to be sacrificed, or at least adjusted to some extent, to practical necessity. The presence of Aesop, the writer of fables (λογοποιός), might itself be enough to insinuate a less direct and more pleasing narrative mode of imparting a truth, which offers a contrast with Solon's more explicit and less charming mode of communication.⁸¹

Indeed, Plutarch's ideal statesman in the *Political precepts* is one who understands the character of his people and knows how they can be pleased, led, and controlled (799b–800a). Solon, on the contrary, in most parts of his career appears to hold an over-idealistic view of the Athenians—one thinks particularly of Solon's discussion with Croesus or with Anacharsis, who mocks Solon for trying to check the injustice and greed of his citizens by mere laws (*Sol.* 5.3–6).⁸² Solon seems not to realise, or at least not to say, that the ideals of popular/populist wisdom, moderation, mildness, and *euboulia* have little effect on such people (at least alone).

Plutarch contrasts Solon with Lycurgus, who managed to make all the Spartans equal and alike in their lifestyle: whereas Lycurgus had great authority, many friends, and much power to support his measures, and employed force (βία) rather than persuasion (πείθοι) to protect and keep Sparta together (*Sol.* 16.2), Solon

⁸¹ Cf. Menenius Agrippa who, contrary to the unbending Coriolanus, speaks to and manages to win over the Roman people by using a fable (*Cor.* 6.2–5). See also Kurke (2011), 131, 389 on the contrast between Solon's and Aesop's styles of teaching. Baragwanath and de Bakker (2012), 49–50 comment on Solon's use of more and less analytical modes in advising Croesus in Herodotus' *Histories*. Plutarch seems to be less positive about Solon's diplomatic skills. Dewald (2012), 79 argues along Plutarch's lines.

⁸² Cf. Diog. Laert. 1.58, attributing Anacharsis' words in *Sol.* 5.4 to Solon.

failed to secure safety and unanimity for Athens because he was a man of the people (δημοτικός) and moderate (μέσος) (*Sol.* 16.2).⁸³ According to Plutarch, Solon combined violence with justice only where he hoped to find the Athenians susceptible to persuasion and compulsion (*Sol.* 15.1). He used calm and gentle advice (cf. *πραΰνειν καὶ νουθετεῖν*) even when he should have opposed Peisistratus (*Sol.* 29.5)—a man who had all the practical qualities that Solon himself lacked (*Sol.* 29.3–4)—and adopted a more severe manner towards the Athenians only when he saw that they were ready to yield to Peisistratus’ tyranny (*Sol.* 30)—but to no avail: either it was too late for him to change their mind; or simply reproaches and/or advice were not enough to elicit the proper response in the Athenians.

Readers may observe that Solon does not completely understand that, in its practical application, traditional Greek wisdom may have to be combined with more practical nuances,⁸⁴ such as the (Aesopic) indirect mode of advice and diplomacy, flexibility, or even violence, in order that advice can find a ready ear:⁸⁵ there are a number of parallel examples in the *Lives* where Plutarch allows a noble and honourable end to justify the means.⁸⁶ Strikingly, Publicola, whose biography Plutarch pairs with that of Solon, offers an elaborate counter-example of a leader who is more oblique, tactful, and accordingly successful in giving his audience the right

⁸³ See de Blois (2008), who compares the statesmanship of Lycurgus with that of Solon.

⁸⁴ I say ‘not completely’ for Solon is not wholly indifferent to practical possibilities. He earlier uses, for example, poetic trickery successfully to persuade the Athenians to renew their war with Salamis (*Sol.* 8.1–3).

⁸⁵ Pelling (2011b), 50: ‘any “popular philosophy” or “wisdom” should not be *that* popular, and certainly not vulgar’. On Solon’s flawed statesmanship, see also de Blois (2006), 434–8; (2008).

⁸⁶ See Nikolaidis (1995); Frazier (1995), 166–71; Duff (1999), 131–3. On the relation between *peithō* and *bia* in particular, see Rodrigues (2014), 192–231 (esp. 197–201 on the *Solon–Publicola*).

lessons.⁸⁷ It is a crucial assumption of this study that the two *Lives* should be considered (even if practical considerations entail that they will not always be analysed with the same degree of detail) as a pair, most often preceded by a ‘formal’ prologue, which introduces both *Lives*, and concluded with a comparative epilogue.⁸⁸

Plutarch shows in the *Publicola* that Publicola is much better equipped than Solon for political survival. He is capable of gauging the public mood (10)—his very name reflects the love of the people for him (10.9)—and is neither *dēmotikos* nor *metrios* when he strives against tyranny (cf. 12.1). Unlike Solon, he does not trust his friends to administer the public treasury (12.3; cf. *Sol.* 15.7–8; *Praec. Ger.* 807d–e), and is much more aware of how to manage and win over to his side his enemies, Porsenna (18–9), for example, or Appius Clausus (21).

The ideal ~ pragmatic question is explicitly readdressed in the comparative epilogue that comes after the *Publicola*. In this last part of the book, as I shall analyse in chapter five, Plutarch exploits a variety of different narrative devices to reengage readers with moral issues which are central throughout the book and thus expose them to the particular challenges involved in drawing an overarching moral conclusion. A telling example of Plutarch’s technique in the *Synkrisis* is present in his assessment of the end of the two men’s political careers:

τῷ τέλει δ’ ἄτερος εὐτυχῆς καὶ ζηλωτός· τὴν μὲν γὰρ Σόλωνος πολιτείαν αὐτὸς ἐπέιδε Σόλων καταλυθεῖσαν, ἡ δὲ Ποπλικόλα μέχρι τῶν ἐμφυλίων πολέμων διεφύλαξεν ἐν κόσμῳ τὴν πόλιν. (*Sol.-Pub.* 3.4)

But in the ending, the other [i.e. Publicola] was more fortunate and enviable. For Solon lived

⁸⁷ The second *Life* of a pair often develops and complicates the themes of the first: Pelling (1988a), 23–6.

⁸⁸ See Duff (2011a) on the structure of Plutarch’s biographical book.

to see with his own eyes the dissolution of his polity, while that of Publicola preserved order in the city down to the civil wars.

Plutarch's judgement in the *Synkrisis* is out of keeping with what he said earlier in the *Life of Solon*. The dissonance between the *Synkrisis* and the preceding *Lives* is an elaborate strategy, *inter alia* (examined in detail in chapter five), which Plutarch employs in the comparative epilogues to spur readers to an active moral inquiry that suggests through comparison and contrast greater depth to an individual's character and morality.⁸⁹ Indeed, in the closing chapters of the *Solon* Plutarch mentions that Solon received honour and kindness from Peisistratus, that he became Peisistratus' adviser and approved of many of his acts, and that Peisistratus retained most of Solon's laws (31.2–3). The ending of the *Solon* not only keeps readers up to the end of the *Life of Solon* pondering on Solon's capacity to read others' characters rightly and manage politics effectively⁹⁰—in chapter four I focus especially on the endings of the first and second *Lives* and suggest that they are generally thought-provoking, rather than offering an overall concluding statement—but also presents a contrast with Plutarch's one-sided argumentation in the *Synkrisis*, which should lead readers to carry on contemplating Solon's policy up to the end of the book.

The last section of the *Synkrisis* and thus of the *Solon–Publicola* book works effectively to the same end. Plutarch draws his readers to mitigate their criticism of Solon's political activity: 'but one will say (φήσει τις) that Solon won back Salamis

⁸⁹ See Duff (1999), 263–86.

⁹⁰ Pelling (2004), 101–2 additionally stresses the closing less admiring emphasis of Plutarch on Plato, who is mentioned to have left unfinished his work on the lost Atlantis (*Sol.* 32.1–2), and Aristotle the philosopher, who is cited for an incredible and fabulous story (*Sol.* 32.4): both plausibly continue the reflection on the limits of theory and philosophy.

for the Athenians when they had given it up, whereas Publicola relinquished territory which the Romans had acquired' (*Sol.-Pub.* 4.4). Plutarch refers here to Publicola's reconciliation with Porsenna (*Pub.* 18); but then Plutarch prompts readers to counter-consider the possibility that Publicola might emerge superior, for 'it is necessary', as Plutarch says, 'that the actions of men should be examined in the light of the times in question (πρὸς τοὺς ὑποκειμένους καιρούς)'. As Plutarch stresses, 'the subtle statesman (ποικίλος πολιτικός) will handle each matter that comes up in the most practicable manner' (*Sol.-Pub.* 4.4–5).

This *study of men's actions in the light of the times in question* which Plutarch suggests in the *Synkrisis* is then a crucial aspect of his inquiry into questions of moral judgement in the *Lives*, made possible by the privileged access which Plutarch and his readers have to the mind of the in-text characters. Mind-reading, as we have seen (and we shall examine at length in chapter three), looms large both as a subject matter and as a technique of immersion-inducing capabilities in the *Lives*: it contributes to reconstructing the atmosphere of the times in which the men of history lived and functioned, and elicits from readers a particularly empathetic engagement with the experience of the in-text characters. Readers are helped to anchor historical agents in their social environment and explore the web of their social interactions. Thus they are enabled to arrive (as Plutarch makes clear in the *Synkrisis*) at a reasonable view of a man's character and morality, one which often challenges (as we noticed above) interpretations or assumptions of a clear-cut moral judgement which historical agents or Plutarch pass on individuals or actions. Indeed, as the *Solon–Publicola* book progresses we might well wonder whether and how far the scene of Solon's encounter with Croesus 'is so worthy of Solon's wisdom' (as least his practical wisdom), as Plutarch says in his introduction of the story (*Sol.* 27.1).

The web of social interactions of the in-text characters, moreover, and particularly the difficulties and challenges involved in their successful or failed guidance and instruction, can help readers reach a deeper appreciation of Plutarch's character and narrative method. Solon's practice of questioning and 'educating' Croesus (and accordingly Cyrus, cf. *Sol.* 28.6: τὸν δὲ παιδεύσας τῶν βασιλέων), I would argue, appears to parallel Plutarch's own vis-à-vis his readers in many respects: both afford their audience educative examples of great men from the past and suggest that they should assume a moderate long-term perspective on questions of moral judgement. Just as Solon advises Croesus to 'consider how the end will turn out' in order to estimate a man's happiness, for too many different things can go wrong in a life in progress, so Plutarch is keenly aware of the manifold challenges and difficulties involved in recounting, reading, and evaluating history (as our last chapter on Plutarch's *On the malice of Herodotus* will argue) and keeps readers alert up to the end of a *Life*, or even the end of the book, to the non-so-straightforward, dynamic character of moralising judgement. Like Herodotus' Solon, Plutarch refuses to pass a final, absolute moral verdict on a historical figure whose exemplary life is still in progress. However, if, as we noticed earlier, it proved difficult for the wise Solon to communicate the right lessons because his pupils were hard to teach and wisdom itself was elusive for him, will it be easier for Plutarch to guarantee his readers safe learning and right judgement? What kind of moralising discourse and style of instruction does Plutarch employ to impart his own paradigmatic *logos* to his readers? And how does he try to ensure that they will be better than Croesus and the Athenians in grasping the right insights from it?

In the following chapter we examine Plutarch's characterisation of himself and his readers as well as the dialogue envisioned between the two, with a view to

illuminating further the nature of Plutarch's biographical project. I will begin with the prologues to the books, where Plutarch is most explicit about his own strengths and weaknesses as well as the sort of response that he fosters and expects on the part of his intended audience.

2.

Life-Writing in Triangles:

Plutarch, Readers, and the Men of History

Plutarch's biographical book begins with a prologue that is clearly distinct from the two *Lives*; it introduces both *Lives*, and along with the comparative epilogue, with which it normally (but not always) corresponds,¹ frames and welds the two *Lives* together into the larger single unit of the book.² The prologues introduce the two subjects of the *Lives*, often suggesting some rationale behind the pairing; they discuss moral issues and several aspects of the purpose and method of Plutarch's work; and they project Plutarch's own persona and that of his readers.³ The presence of Plutarch

¹ On the *Synkriseis*, see below, ch. 5.

² Using the term 'prologue', I follow Duff (2011a), 217–18. Duff, criticising the distinction of proems suggested by Stadter (1988), 276 between 'formal' (i.e. introducing both *Lives* of a pair) and 'informal' or 'integrated' (i.e. introducing explicitly the first *Life* of a pair), proposes that we would be better to consider Stadter's 'informal' proems as 'the opening sections of first *Lives* which do not follow a prologue' and distinguish between those thirteen Plutarchan books which start with a prologue and those eight which do not. According to Duff, the prologues 'introduce both *Lives* and stand outside of either, in the same way as the closing *synkriseis* do' (218). See also Duff (2014), 333. Duff (2011a), 217 n. 19 gives a detailed bibliography of studies on individual prologues.

³ See Stadter (1988), 275–6, 284–6, 292–3 (Stadter insists on the real audience rather than the constructed); Pelling (2002b), 269; Duff (2014), 334.

and his interaction with his readers are much stronger in the prologues than in the narratives.⁴

This chapter sets out to closely examine Plutarch's projection of himself and his readers as well the dialogue between the two. It presents and analyses, first, the different means that Plutarch exploits in the prologues to build his authority with his readers and draw them into engaging all the more actively with the men of history. It then focuses on one sophisticated technique which Plutarch uses, namely that of the conflation of the characterisation of himself and his readers in the prologues and of historical agents in the course of the book, to develop and establish further his readers' complicity as well as loosen the barrier between the world of the readers and that of the in-text characters. Finally, it draws attention to some moments in the narrative where this barrier can be so loose that the world of Plutarch and the external audience and that of the in-text characters can be blended and confused in many interesting ways. Plutarch, as we shall see throughout our discussion, envisions his morally improving narrative and research about the past (*historia*)⁵ as a three-way process in which he himself, his readers, and the men of history come together into a triangle for comparison and reflection.

2.1. 'YOU', 'I', AND 'WE'

2.1.1 'But we shall not compare their speeches . . .' (*Dem.* 3.1)

In the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue, Plutarch acknowledges that it is practically useful for a historian to live in a city that is famous, well populated, and favourable to the arts (*Dem.* 2.1); but he overtly voices his disapproval of any association between

⁴ Stadter (1988), 292; Pelling (2002b), 269; Duff (2011a), 222.

⁵ See Duff (1999), 18 n. 14 for the polysemy of the term *ιστορία* in Plutarch.

the moral status and happiness of the man and the grandeur of his city (*Dem.* 1.1–3). Plutarch stresses that a good and just man can certainly come from a poor and undistinguished country and draws his readers, through the use of first person plurals, to share his awareness that responsibility for any deficiency remains only with the individual and not the city: ‘if *we* fall below the standards which *we* ought to attain in thought and action, *we* must not attribute this to the insignificance of *our* native city, but rather to *our* own shortcomings’ (*Dem.* 1.4).⁶

Against this backdrop, Plutarch justifies his own method in writing about Demosthenes and Cicero:

(2.2) ἡμεῖς δὲ μικρὰν μὲν οἰκοῦντες πόλιν, καὶ ἵνα μὴ μικροτέρα γένηται φιλοχωροῦντες, ἐν δὲ Ῥώμῃ καὶ ταῖς περὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν διατριβαῖς οὐ σχολῆς οὔσης γυμνάζεσθαι περὶ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν διάλεκτον ὑπὸ χρειῶν πολιτικῶν καὶ τῶν διὰ φιλοσοφίαν πλησιαζόντων, ὅψέ ποτε καὶ πόρρω τῆς ἡλικίας ἠρξάμεθα Ῥωμαῖκοῖς συντάγμασιν ἐντυγχάνειν, καὶ πρᾶγμα θαυμαστὸν μὲν, ἀλλ’ ἀληθὲς ἐπάσχομεν. (2.3) οὐ γὰρ οὕτως ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ πράγματα συνιέναι καὶ γνωρίζειν συνέβαινεν ἡμῖν, ὥς ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων, <ὧν> ἀμῶς γέ πως εἴχομεν ἐμπειρίαν, ἐπακολουθεῖν δι’ αὐτὰ καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι. (2.4) κάλλους δὲ Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἀπαγγελίας καὶ τάχους αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ μεταφορᾶς ὀνομάτων καὶ ἀρμονίας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, οἷς ὁ λόγος ἀγάλλεται, χαρίεν μὲν ἡγούμεθα καὶ οὐκ ἀτερεπές· ἡ δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο μελέτη καὶ ἄσκησις οὐκ εὐχερὴς, ἀλλ’ οἷσινσι πλείων τε σχολὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς ὥρας ἔτι [πρὸς] τὰς τοιαύτας ἐπιχωρεῖ φιλοτιμίας. (*Dem.* 2.2–4)

(2.2) But we, for our part, living in a small city, and loving to stay there so that it may not become even smaller, and having no time when we visited Rome and other parts of Italy to practise the Latin language because of the political preoccupations and those who came to study philosophy with us, we started at a later time and an advanced age to study Latin

⁶ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012), adapted (my italics). Cf. Pelling (2002b), 271–2; Zadorojnyi (2006), 107; Duff (2014), 341 for the underpinning assumption of ‘inclusive “we”’.

literature, and had an experience which was remarkable but true. (2.3) For it was not so much through the words that we were enabled to grasp and understand the subject matters, but rather it was the subject matters of which we already had some sort of knowledge, which helped us to understand the words that denoted them. (2.4) To be able to appreciate the beauty and the pithiness of the Roman style, the figures of speech, the oratorical rhythms and the other embellishments of the language we consider it as a most graceful and enjoyable accomplishment. But the study and practice required would be formidable, and we must leave such ambitions to those who have the youth and the leisure to pursue them.⁷

Plutarch comments on his methodological principles in a way that projects a more cross-grained reaction from his reader, who, if assumed to be a cultured individual, like the dedicatee of the book Sosius Senecio (*Dem.* 1.1),⁸ may be sceptical about Plutarch's failure to give a stylistic comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero as orators.⁹ Plutarch's proemial apologetic self-positioning plays on,¹⁰ and engages in dialogue with, the assumed expectations and perplexities of his readers, with whom Plutarch tries to produce an emotionally and intellectually satisfying interaction.¹¹ The impression is of a reader who may resist and need to be persuaded

⁷ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012), adapted.

⁸ Elsewhere in the prologues Sosius is addressed at *Dion* 1.1 and *Thes.* 1.1. See Pelling (2002b), 270, 272; Zadorojnyi (2006), 107 ('The figure of Senecio is important in itself, but it also acts as a deputy for the wider readership') and 106–7 with nn. 24 and 26; Duff (2011a), 219 with n. 29; (2014), 334, 345 n. 13.

⁹ See also Pelling (2002b), 272, 276, although with some reservations, for which see below, n. 82. Cf. Duff (2014), 341.

¹⁰ Russell (1993), 428 notices Plutarch's 'apology and self-recommendation'. Cf. Zadorojnyi (2006), 110.

¹¹ Cf. Burlando (2000), 65–8, stressing that Plutarch, maybe inspired here by Cicero's *De oratore* and *Orator*, practises a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*. On the prologue to the *Demosthenes–Cicero*, see also Mossman (1999); Pelling (2002b), 271–2; Zadorojnyi (2006); Duff (2014), 336–7.

about both the narrative and the man whose narrative s/he reads. S/he will gather from the beginning that this is a man who can be good and produce a virtuous work, although coming from a small city; who is well qualified to explore and compare the natures and dispositions of Demosthenes and Cicero on the basis of their actions and policies (*Dem.* 3.1);¹² and who, unlike others (Plutarch offers a direct criticism of Caecilius' failed literary comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero), is aware of the limits of his own knowledge and abilities (*Dem.* 3.2).¹³

2.1.2 'For it is not *Histories* that I am writing, but *Lives* . . .' (*Alex.* 1.2)

The *Alexander–Caesar* and the *Nicias–Crassus* prologues point to the construction of a similar sort of uneasy reader. In both prologues, Plutarch portrays himself as worried that his readers do not welcome and appreciate his non-exhaustive military account.¹⁴ For, as in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue, Plutarch seeks to situate his work in the literary tradition and asks for the indulgence of his readers.¹⁵ In the prologue to the *Alexander–Caesar*, Plutarch says: 'We shall, because of the number of deeds which are in prospect make no other preface than to beg our readers (τοὺς ἀναγνώσκοντάς) not to 'quibble' (μὴ συκοφαντεῖν),¹⁶ if we do not record all their [i.e. Alexander's and Caesar's] most celebrated achievements or do not describe any of them exhaustively,¹⁷ but merely summarise for the most part what they

¹² Cf. Pelling (2002b), 271–2.

¹³ See also Duff (2014), 341: 'it constructs Plutarch the narrator as modest and knowing his limits'.

¹⁴ See Duff (2014), 346 n. 36 for the most important bibliography on these two prologues, to which Desideri (1995) and (2003) may be added.

¹⁵ Cf. Duff (2014), 340.

¹⁶ Tr. Pelling (2002b), 276 for 'quibble'.

¹⁷ See also *Galba* 2.5; *Fab.* 16.6.

accomplished’ (*Alex.* 1.1).¹⁸ Unlike the historians of Alexander and Caesar, Plutarch claims that his own focus will rest not only on the outstanding deeds of his subjects for the revelation of virtue and vice, but also on their ‘ “off-duty” moments’,¹⁹ which can hint at character as well,²⁰ since he is writing *Lives* (βίους) and not *Histories* (ιστορίαις) (*Alex.* 1.2).

The *Nicias–Crassus* prologue follows a similar pattern. Plutarch tells us: ‘it is time for me to ask from (παραιτεῖσθαι) and entreat (παρακαλεῖν) my readers (τοὺς ἐντυγχάνοντα), as I treat the events that Thucydides . . . has already handled incomparably, not to assume that I am as vain as Timaeus, who thought that he would outdo Thucydides in brilliance and show Philistus to be totally vulgar and amateurish’ (*Nic.* 1.1).²¹ Plutarch marks out for his work and himself a place amidst other historians (Thucydides, Philistus, Timaeus),²² and makes clear that he is not going to pass wholly over those great events that in Thucydides’ and Philistus’ narratives contain ‘indications of the man’s character and disposition’ (*Nic.* 1.5).²³ He appears to care about persuading his audience that he is neither careless nor slothful but a serious and noble inquirer who relied on literary and non-literary sources to present details that can contribute to deepening our understanding of an individual’s character and

¹⁸ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012), adapted.

¹⁹ I owe this expression to Duff (1999), 15.

²⁰ See Pelling (1986a), 159 [= repr. (2002a), 207]. See also Duff (1999), 15–16.

²¹ Tr. Pelling (1992), 10 [= repr. (2002a), 117], adapted.

²² On Plutarch’s criticism of Philistus and Timaeus, see Muccioli (2000). Duff (1999), 25 n. 36 relates Plutarch’s protestations here, especially his polemic against Timaeus, to the traditional feature of the establishment of authorial competence in historiographical prologues.

²³ Tr. Duff (1999), 25, who offers good explanation for preferring ἀποκαλυπτομένην (‘revealed’, the second hand of U) to καλυπτομένην (‘concealed’), which is prevalent in the manuscript tradition, or for emending to ἀνακαλυπτομένην (‘revealed’).

temper (*Nic.* 1.5). Christopher Pelling suggests that ‘all this study of “other authors” and “ancient dedications and decrees” sounds like serious historical enquiry committed to the truth’.²⁴ Indeed, if Plutarch eventually succeeds in communicating this to his readers, they may be more willing to enter into the spirit of his project.

The unique structure of these two prologues may work especially to this effect. As Timothy Duff observes, Plutarch’s prologues to the biographical books normally start with a set of generalised reflections (either on morality and/or the purpose of history or of the *Lives* in particular), which often include anecdotes and quotations, before moving on to the naming of the two men and a summary of their similarities; only the *Alexander–Caesar* and the *Nicias–Crassus* prologues begin directly by mentioning the two subjects, continue by addressing the readers and asking for indulgence, go on to discuss methodological issues, and omit any introductory comparison of the two men.²⁵ As Duff concludes: ‘*Alex.* 1 and *Nik.* 1 combine and streamline the two sections which are kept separate in the other eleven prologues’.²⁶

Readers are likely to recall the prologues to the rest of the *Lives*,²⁷ and feel that the form and style of the *Alexander–Caesar* and the *Nicias–Crassus* prologues are closer to the historical prologues than those of the other prologues.²⁸ Although

²⁴ Pelling (1990a), 25 [= repr. (2002a), 146].

²⁵ Duff (2011a), 219–22; (2014), 334–40.

²⁶ Duff (2011a), 222; (2014), 340.

²⁷ Duff (2011a), 262: ‘It is likely . . . that . . . both *Lives* and books might have been intended to be read against the background of the corpus as a whole, with knowledge of one Life or book informing a reading of others’.

²⁸ Pace Stadter (1988), 275, arguing that ‘the proems to the *Lives* do not follow the model of other biographical proems, or of historical proems, although there are similarities of topic’.

varying in their specifics, most of the ‘standard’ Greek and Roman histories normally begin with a distinct self-projection (either in the third or first person) of the historian, who primarily refers to the subject and importance of his historical narrative, distinguishes his narrative from that of other authors, and actively engages with his readers, particularly by declaring the aim and usefulness of his work as well as several methodological issues.²⁹

If my argument is right and the *Alexander–Caesar* and the *Nicias–Crassus* prologues are closer to the historical prologues, then Plutarch’s prefatory choice may serve to prompt the readers to observe, or at least problematise, how different from history biography will be;³⁰ or equally, to explore how closely biography presses on its boundaries with historiography,³¹ with the emphasis on character constituting a tool of historical interpretation.³² Either way, readers are offered a lens through which

²⁹ On historical prologues, see Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 1.1; Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 52–4. See also Avenarius (1956), 113–18; Janson (1964), 64–83; Earl (1972); Alexander (1993), 23–41; Marincola (1997), esp. 5–6, 34–43, 63–117, 217–57. All these features of historical prologues follow basic rules of rhetorical theory: Martin (1974), 60–75; Lausberg (1998), 124–32; Janson (1964), 65–6.

³⁰ Cf. Hunter (1994), 1067–71 on the ancient novel. He analyses how the beginning and the end of Chariton’s novel and the closing of the proem to the final book echo proemial historiographical commonplaces which serve to set the reader in the proper atmosphere of the tale of Syracusan ‘history’, revealing also Chariton’s concern about the gap between ‘history’ and ‘fiction’. See also Hägg (1987), 194–8, 201–4; Alvares (1997); Trzaskoma (2005). Elsewhere, proemial historiographical conventions can be used for laughs. See e.g. Lucian’s *True History* (1.1–4), with Georgiadou and Larmour (1998), 1–3, 51, and the proem to Seneca’s *Apocolocyntosis*, with Eden (1984), 62.

³¹ Cf. Marincola (1999), 318–20 on Tacitus’ *Agricola*; Pelling (1997b) on Cassius Dio’s technique of ‘biostructuring’.

³² Cf. Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 5.48.1; *Pomp.* 6.7 (on Theopompus’ historiography).

they can look for meaning and think about how they can (and should) understand historical events and reality in Plutarch's biographical narrative.

Plutarch's generic blurring in the *Alexander–Caesar* prologue must be relevant to both *Lives*.³³ It prepares for two narratives that vary a lot in their texture—the *Alexander* focuses more on the 'small things' (as the prologue led us to expect) that affect those big things in Alexander's life,³⁴ while the *Caesar* is closer to the large-scale military historical narratives³⁵—and two men who, as Pelling puts it, came as close as anyone 'to turning the history of their countries into the history of themselves': Alexander and Caesar broke the geographic boundaries and now appear to similarly break the boundaries of the literary genre.³⁶ In the *Nicias–Crassus* book, Plutarch's proemial choice might be primarily related to the *Nicias* rather than the *Crassus*.³⁷ Plutarch devotes over half of the *Nicias* to the Sicilian expedition,³⁸ and he certainly expects that his audience will be familiar with Thucydides' narrative, to which he is highly indebted.³⁹ On the one hand, Plutarch must feel that he has to make

³³ Pace Duff (1999), 20–1; (2014), 340.

³⁴ Pelling (2002c), 260; Beneker (2012), 103–39.

³⁵ Duff (1999), 20–1; Pelling (2002c), 260; Mossman (2006), 287.

³⁶ Pelling (2006b); (2009), 507–10; (2011a), 15 (from where the quotation is taken), 23. Cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.149.619–154.649, with Pelling (2006b), 265–9 for the reverse, namely a historical work including a comparative epilogue about Caesar and Alexander, which is reminiscent of Plutarch's biographical practice.

³⁷ Duff (2014), 340 mentions that Plutarch's statements in the prologue to the *Nicias–Crassus* mainly concern the *Nicias* rather than the *Crassus*; but he rightly notes that the closing words at the *Nic.* 1.5 (οὐ τὴν ἀχρηστον . . . παραδιδούς) are applicable to both *Lives*.

³⁸ Cf. the brief account of the Sicilian Expedition in *Alc.* 17–23.

³⁹ Pelling (1992), 12–13 [= repr. (2002a), 119] observes that Plutarch bases most of chapters 12–29 straightforwardly on Thucydides' narrative.

clear how his own narrative will be different (primarily) from that of Thucydides (as he does in the prologue to the *Alexander–Caesar* in relation to the historians of Alexander and Caesar), but at the same time to ensure that his audience will be ready to follow his lead. Thus the prefatory historiographical *topoi*, which lie behind both prologues, may be used to establish ‘a shared world of discourse’,⁴⁰ whereby Plutarch and his audience will assume a mutual understanding. They are encouraged to expect that Plutarch’s biographical narrative will lay more emphasis on character (*Nic.* 1.5; *Alex.* 1), *but also* that it will not entirely free itself from the modes, concerns, and (accordingly) values of historical writing. An elaborate manifestation of this may be seen in the *Theseus–Romulus* prologue.

2.1.3 ‘May I manage to make the mythical appear like history . . .’ (*Thes.* 1.5)

In the prologue to the *Theseus–Romulus*, Plutarch reflects the familiar tendency of historians to problematise the relation between myth and history,⁴¹ and employs several means to gain the confidence of his readers.⁴² The readers—Sosius Senecio is mentioned as the dedicatee here as well (*Thes.* 1.1)—are taken ‘to be already participating in a textual journey with Plutarch’,⁴³ and to be alert to the wider writing of his *Parallel Lives*,⁴⁴ whose material, as Plutarch stresses, was reachable by ‘reasonable inference’ (cf. εἰκότι λόγῳ) and accessible to ‘factual history’ (cf.

⁴⁰ I am indebted to Alexander (1999), 23 for the expression.

⁴¹ On this practice of historians, see Ampolo (1988), ix–xii; Marincola (1997), 117–27; Cooper (2007), 216–17.

⁴² Cf. Stadter (1988), 284.

⁴³ Zadorojnyi (2006), 108, referring to the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue.

⁴⁴ See Pelling (2002d), 188; Zadorojnyi (2006), 107–8; Duff (2011a), 262 with n. 223.

ἱστορία πραγμάτων ἐχομένη) (*Thes.* 1.2).⁴⁵ They are, therefore, expected to react to the current shift into mythological times.⁴⁶ For this reason, Plutarch allows them to sense not only his diffidence about his new undertaking—‘but after publishing our account of Lycurgus the lawgiver and Numa the king, we thought that we *might* not unreasonably (οὐκ ἂν ἀλόγως) go back still further to Romulus’ (*Thes.* 1.4)—but also his careful inquiry (cf. *Thes.* 1.4: σκοποῦντι δέ μοι), which has something of Thucydides’ intellectual mode of research.⁴⁷

Most notably, Plutarch invites his readers to look at his work-method from another angle informed by Aeschylus’ *Seven against Thebes* (395–6; 435).⁴⁸ Here Plutarch’s knowledgeable audience may observe that the narrator, like Eteocles in Aeschylus’ play, has to sort out an antithesis between two spheres (*Thes.* 1.4). In the tragedy the antithesis lies between the Argives and the Thebans, whereas in Plutarch’s prologue it concerns Romulus and Theseus. In Aeschylus, the questions are raised and discussed by the messenger and Eteocles, while in Plutarch they are part of the narrator’s personal reflection on a methodological issue.⁴⁹ Through the *spatium tragicum* Plutarch attunes his readers not only to the world of the two *Lives*, a world of fables and tragic stories (cf. *Thes.* 1.3: τραγικά), but also to his attempt to tame his

⁴⁵ Tr. Pelling (2002d), 171, adapted.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pelling (2002b), 277.

⁴⁷ Cf. Thuc. 1.1.3; 1.21.2. On the Thucydidean colouring of this prologue, see Ampolo (1988), xi–xii; Pelling (2002d), 172 with 189–90 n. 3, 179.

⁴⁸ The proems are especially rich in such literary allusions: Duff (2014), 334. On Plutarch’s practice of opening the *Moralia* and the *Lives* with citations, see Bowie (2008), 154–7.

⁴⁹ Notice Plutarch’s shift of the second person τίν’ ἀντιτάξεις (*Sept.* 395) into first person τίν’ ἀντιτάξω (*Thes.* 1.4).

mythological material.⁵⁰

Plutarch's final result shows the same tentativeness—he concludes by still doubting whether 'there is any aid to the truth in what seems to have been told with the least poetic exaggeration' (*Thes.* 2.3). The most he can hope for is that his demythologising programme might succeed, and that his readers, or more precisely here his 'listeners' (cf. ἀκροατῶν),⁵¹ even if they still feel uneasy about his *archaiologia*,⁵² may at least be patient and willing enough to engage with it (*Thes.* 1.5).⁵³ This sort of complicity that Plutarch seeks with his readers is also present, as we shall see, in the *Cimon–Lucullus* prologue.

2.1.4 'His favour extends even down to us . . .' (*Cim.* 2.2)

Plutarch feels especially indebted to Lucullus for the aid he offered to his native Chaeronea at a time of crisis:

(2.2) Ἐκεῖνοι μὲν οὖν οἱ τότε σωθέντες εἰκόνα τοῦ Λευκόλλου λιθίνην ἐν ἀγορᾷ παρὰ τὸν Διόνυσον ἀνέστησαν· ἡμεῖς δ' εἰ καὶ πολλαῖς ἡλικίαις λειπόμεθα, τὴν μὲν χάριν οἰόμεθα διατείνειν καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς τοὺς νῦν ὄντας, εἰκόνα δὲ πολὺ καλλίονα νομίζοντες εἶναι τῆς τὸ σῶμα καὶ τὸ πρόσωπον ἀπομιμουμένης τὴν τὸ ἦθος καὶ τὸν

⁵⁰ Pace Bowie (2008), 152: 'his [i.e. Plutarch's] self-comparison to Eteocles is merely decorative αὔξησις'. I agree with Stadter (1988), 284, who argues that 'both [i.e. the quotes from Aeschylus and the *Iliad*] ornament the passage and set the atmosphere for the heroic stories which will follow in the lives'. See also Pelling (2002d), 172.

⁵¹ Given the oral character of the material about Theseus and Romulus (cf. *Thes.* 1.3) but also the wider theatrical atmosphere in this prologue, it is not surprising that Plutarch's audience are called 'listeners' (ἀκροαταί). For a parallel see *Tim.* 15.11. Cf. *Thuc.* 1.20.1; 1.21.1; 1.22.4.

⁵² On Plutarch's conception of *archaiologia*, see Cooper (2007).

⁵³ *Thes.* 1.5: εὐγνωμόνων ἀκροατῶν δεησόμεθα καὶ πρῶτως τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν προσδεχομένων. See also Stadter (1988), 284.

τρόπον ἐμφανίζουσαν, ἀναληψόμεθα τῇ γραφῇ τῶν παραλλήλων βίων τὰς πράξεις
τοῦ ἀνδρός, τάληθῇ διεξιόντες. (2.3) ἀρκεῖ γὰρ ἡ τῆς μνήμης χάρις· (*Cim.* 2.2–3)

(2.2) The people who were at that time rescued by him erected a marble statue of Lucullus in the market-place beside that of Dionysus. And we, although removed many generations, think that his favour extends even down to us who are living now, and considering a portrait which reveals character and disposition as far more beautiful than one which simply copies form and feature, we shall take up in our writing of the *Parallel Lives* the man's deeds, going through them truly. (2.3) For the mere mention of them is sufficient gratitude.

Plutarch shares the gratitude of his ancestors, and thinks that it extends ‘even down to us (καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς) who are living now (τοὺς νῦν ὄντας)’. An ambiguity arises as to whom this we-phrase refers: to Plutarch only or his readers too? Given the particular *local* gratitude, it is hard to think that all of the readers, especially those in future generations, share the same Chaeronea-based debt of obligation. Nevertheless, although that looks more like a point about Plutarch, the grateful treatment of Lucullus is one that Plutarch wants and invites his readers to share with him—a clear instance of what Christopher Pelling describes as ‘invitational “we” ’.⁵⁴ His emphasis on local patriotism might work to win over the readers, who may admire and show respect to Plutarch for his loyalty to his small city.⁵⁵ Plutarch projects that he understands that on the basis of what his readers may already have known about Lucullus (either from the rest of his works or from other authors),⁵⁶ it is most likely

⁵⁴ Pelling (2002b), 282 n. 45.

⁵⁵ I owe this point to John Marincola. Cf. my discussion of the prologue to *Demosthenes–Cicero* book below, §2.2.1.

⁵⁶ In Plutarch see *An Seni* 785f–786a; 792b–c; *Ad Princ. Inerud.* 782f; *Cato Min.* 19.8; *Mar.* 34.4; *Pomp.* 2.12. Other authors: Vell. Pat. 2.33.4; Plin. *HN* 9.170; Nic. Dam. (FGrH 90 F77a). See also Duff (1999), 60 n. 28. On the negative tradition about Lucullus, see Tröster (2008), esp. 59–69.

that they will be reluctant to follow his suggestion. For this reason, he employs many devices to engage them in a joint moral investigation.

He draws several links between the remote past and the present day.⁵⁷ These links between the past and present not only build the authority of the narrative and validate Plutarch's insight, but also convey a world where the past is still present, where Lucullus' story is remembered, and matters: 'they erected a statue as a tribute to Lucullus *then* . . . but we *nowadays* still owe to him' (*Cim.* 2.2).⁵⁸ These first-person plurals, which pile up in the prologue, are important in inviting the readers to cross the boundaries between then and now. Sometimes it is indeed clear that the 'we's are Plutarch himself—'we shall incorporate (ἀναληψόμεθα) this man's deeds into our *Parallel Lives*' (*Cim.* 2.2); 'while we were looking about (cf. σκοποῦσιν ἡμῖν) for someone to compare with Lucullus' (*Cim.* 3.1); 'but we may omit (παρалаίπομεν δ' ἴσως) still other resemblances' (*Cim.* 3.3).⁵⁹ But in other places they are rather blurred, and it is unclear whether the readers should be included too—'for our native city (τῆς πατρίδος ἡμῶν) was at that time in sorry plight' (*Cim.* 1.3); 'as our fathers (οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν) tell' (*Cim.* 1.8). Most importantly, there are 'we's that equate to both Plutarch and the readers—'just as we demand (ἀξιούμεν) of those who would paint fair and graceful features that, in case there is a slight imperfection therein, they shall neither wholly omit nor yet emphasise it' (*Cim.* 2.3).

⁵⁷ Cf. *Cim.* 1.5: ὥσπερ ἔθος ἐστὶ κοινῇ δειπνούντων, 1.8: ὡς οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν λέγουσι . . . καὶ μέχρι νῦν οἱ τῷ τόπῳ γειτνιῶντες οἴονται, 1.9: διασφύζονται γὰρ ἔνιοι . . . καλοῦσι, 2.1: οὐπω γὰρ εἰς τὴν Ἑλλάδα . . . διεπέμποντο, 3.2: ἐκ τῶν τότε χρόνων . . . εἰς τοὺς νῦν ἀφίκεται.

⁵⁸ See Pelling (2002b), 269, 278 n. 5 for further examples of the 'continuance motif'. Cf. Beck (2007a), 410; Duff (2007/8), 5 n. 12; Grethlein (2013), 109.

⁵⁹ Such 'authorial "we"s' are normally found alongside references to the process of writing: e.g. *Pel.* 2.12; *Dem.* 3.1; *Phoc.* 3.6. See also Duff (2011a), 219–20; (2014), 336–7, 341, 346 n. 44.

These inclusive first-person plurals are followed by a fairly impersonal manner of address that enhances readers' involvement:

(2.4) οὕτως ἐπεὶ χαλεπὸν ἐστὶ, μᾶλλον δ' ἴσως ἀμήχανον, ἀμεμφῇ καὶ καθαρὸν ἀνδρὸς ἐπιδείξαι βίον, ἐν τοῖς καλοῖς ἀναπληρωτέον ὥσπερ ὁμοιότητα τὴν ἀλήθειαν.

(2.5) τὰς δ' ἐκ πάθους τινὸς ἢ πολιτικῆς ἀνάγκης ἐπιτρεχούσας ταῖς πράξεσιν ἀμαρτίας καὶ κήρας ἐλλείμματα μᾶλλον ἀρετῆς τινος ἢ κακίας πονηρεύματα νομίζοντας οὐ δεῖ πάνυ προθύμως ἐναποσημαίνειν τῇ ἱστορίᾳ καὶ περιπτῶς, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ αἰδουμένους ὑπὲρ τῆς ἀνθρωπίνης φύσεως, εἰ καλὸν οὐδὲν εἰλικρινὲς οὐδ' ἀναμφισβήτητον εἰς ἀρετὴν ἥθος γεγονὸς ἀποδίδωσιν.

(2.4) In like manner, since it is difficult, but rather perhaps impossible, to represent a man's life as stainless and pure, in its fair chapters one must round out the truth into fullest semblance; (2.5) but considering those transgressions and follies by which, owing to some passion or political compulsion, a man's career is sullied, as shortcomings in some particular excellence rather than as the vile products of baseness, one must not all too zealously emphasise them in the *historia*, and superfluously too, but treat them as though we were tenderly respecting human nature for producing no character which is absolutely good and indisputably set towards virtue.

The impersonal forms 'it is difficult or impossible to represent a pure life' or 'one must round out the truth' seem to refer to the 'one who is writing the narrative', which at least in the first instance will be Plutarch alone. However, the earlier plural at 2.3—'just as we demand (ἀξιοῦμεν)'—and the following participles νομίζοντας and αἰδουμένους make it possible to think of a 'we'-category that can embrace both Plutarch and his readers. In this case, the impersonal language may be used to assert a link between Plutarch and 'people who write like me', namely readers, who are influenced by Plutarch's own production or follow similar principles in their writing; or it may be used to steer concord between Plutarch and the readers who, even if they are not writing history themselves, share his approach and attitude. Likewise, at 2.5

the *historia*, in which ‘one must not all too zealously emphasise the transgressions and follies’, refers both to writing about and research into the past,⁶⁰ and again ties both Plutarch and his readers into an ‘imagined community’ where they feel, think, and act in similar ways. This ‘imagined community’ might extend to include Lucullus too, for he benefitted Chaeronea and ‘now would not accept a false and fabricated account as a reward for his truthful testimony’ (*Cim.* 2.3).⁶¹ The implication is of a value-scheme as well as a research and narrative about the past (*historia*), in which Plutarch, his readers, and the men of history are all engaged. The manner in which this three-sided *historia* actually works becomes more understandable in the *Aemilius–Timoleon* prologue.

2.1.5 ‘As if we entertain each man as a guest through the *historia* . . .’ (*Aem.* 1.2)

At the beginning of the *Aemilius–Timoleon* prologue,⁶² Plutarch uses first-person forms to describe his own personal experience as a moral reader of the past. ‘It befell me (ἐμοί) to begin writing the Lives for the sake of others’, Plutarch says, ‘but now to continue it and enjoy my stay for my own sake (δι’ ἐμαυτόν), endeavouring somehow or other in the mirror of history (ἐν ἐσόπτρῳ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ) to adorn life and

⁶⁰ Cf. above, n. 5.

⁶¹ I owe the concept ‘imagined community’ to Wiater (2011), who applies it to the study of cultural identity in the historical writing of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. He explains that this is ‘a community . . . which is not based on personal acquaintance of its members but on their shared emotional attitude towards a set of moral, cultural, and political ideas and values’ (62). Wiater adopts this concept from Anderson (1991). See further below, §2.2.

⁶² On the *Aemilius–Timoleon* prologue, see Duff (1999), 30–4; (2011a), 220–1; (2014), 341.

make it like the virtues of those men' (*Aem.* 1.1).⁶³ This 'complex process of observation, comparison and self-criticism',⁶⁴ which the mirror-image suggests,⁶⁵ seems to drift into being a matter for the readers too. 'What happens', Plutarch notes, 'is like spending time together and living together, whenever, receiving and inviting each of these men in turn when they visit us through history/research (διὰ τῆς ἱστορίας),⁶⁶ we examine (ἀναθεωρῶμεν) "how great he was and of what kind" ' (*Aem.* 1.2).⁶⁷

This *historia* continues to sound a matter for both Plutarch and his readers. According to Democritus, as Plutarch mentions, 'it is necessary to pray that we may be visited (τυγχάνωμεν) by phantoms which are propitious, and that only those that are agreeable to our natures and good may encounter us (ἡμῖν) . . .' (*Aem.* 1.4). Plutarch goes on to propose, though, that 'we (ἡμεῖς) through the study of history and the familiarity with the writing prepare ourselves (παρασκευάζομεν ἑαυτούς) . . . to repel and put far from us whatever is base and malicious . . . turning back (ἀποστρέφοντες) our thoughts graciously and gently to the best of the examples' (*Aem.* 1.5).⁶⁸ Plutarch thus suggests that the study of the men of history, the *historia*,

⁶³ Tr. Duff (1999), 31. See Duff (2011a), 220–1; (2014), 345 n. 22, confirming through his detailed study of the structure of the prologues to Plutarch's *Lives* that *Aem.* 1 is the prologue to the *Aemilius–Timoleon* book.

⁶⁴ Duff (2011b), 76.

⁶⁵ See Duff (1999), 32–3; Zadorojnyi (2010).

⁶⁶ See Duff (1999), 33.

⁶⁷ Tr. Duff (1999), 31, slightly adapted.

⁶⁸ I am highly indebted to Pelling (2002b), 273 for this paragraph. Pelling additionally observes that the plural 'souls' at *Aem.* 1.5 may reinforce the implication that the readers, who by now are familiar with Plutarch's writing, should be included in the process of moral improvement as well. See also Duff (2014), 341.

and the moral character-forming process that is implicated, are of interest not only to him but his readers as well. For he goes on to directly address his reader—‘of which [i.e. the best and fairest examples] in the present [sc. book] we have made ready for you (προεχειρίσμεθά σοι) the life of Timoleon the Corinthian and Aemilius Paulus’⁶⁹—and implies that the reader should carry on wondering about the two men, for ‘they make it a matter of dispute (διαμφισβήτησιν παρεξόντων) whether they achieved the greatest of their successes due to their good fortune or their good judgement’ (*Aem.* 1.6). This increased sense of Plutarch-reader dialogue and encouragement of the readers’ active involvement in the moral study of the past become most apparent in the *Pericles–Fabius* and the *Demetrius–Antony* prologues.

2.1.6 A shared inquiry

The *Pericles–Fabius* prologue starts with an anecdote about the emperor Augustus and continues with a contrast between sense perception and reason (*Per.* 1.1–3).⁷⁰ Similarly, the *Demetrius–Antony* book begins with a contrast between the senses, which accept all impressions passively, and the arts, which work with reason and have the power of discernment (*Demetr.* 1.1–4).⁷¹ In both prologues the generalising reflection establishes the basis of assumptions and interests that can be applicable to both Plutarch and his readers.

There are some moments when Plutarch explicitly shows that these are *shared*

⁶⁹ Tr. Duff (2011a), 221. For another direct second-person address see *Ag./Cleom.* 2.9: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπακροῖνεις αὐτὸς ἐκ τῆς διηγήσεως, noted also by Zadorojnyi (2006), 106 n. 24; Duff (2011a), 219 n. 29; (2014), 345 n. 13.

⁷⁰ On the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue, see Van der Stockt (1992a), 32–7; Duff (1999), 34–45; (2001); (2011a), 220; (2014), 335; Nikolaidis (2014), 355.

⁷¹ On the *Demetrius–Antony* prologue, see Duff (1999), 45–9; (2004); (2014), 335.

interests and assumptions: ‘the proneness to love and loving affection which is ours (cf. ἐν ἡμῖν) by nature’ (*Per.* 1.1); ‘while we delight (χαίροντες) in the work, we despise (καταφρονούμεν) the workman . . . and we take delight in (ἡδόμεθα) them [i.e. perfumes and dyes], but we regard (ἡγούμεθα) dyers and perfumers as illiberal’ (*Per.* 1.4); ‘we love (ἀγαπῶμεν) to possess and enjoy the good things which come by way of chance, but perform those which result from virtue. And the former we want (βουλόμεθα) to receive (cf. ἡμῖν) from others, while the latter we want rather others to receive from us (παρ’ ἡμῶν)’ (*Per.* 2.3).⁷² Likewise, in the *Demetrius–Antony* prologue, Plutarch draws attention to the power of discrimination with which ‘we are naturally endowed (πεφύκαμεν)’ (*Demetr.* 1.1), and openly expresses his opinion that ‘we (ἡμεῖς) will be more enthusiastic both as spectators and imitators of the better Lives, if we do not leave unexamined (εἰ μηδὲ . . . ἀνιστορήτως ἔχοιμεν) the base and the castigated’ (*Demetr.* 1.6).⁷³

There are other moments too when through impersonal constructions Plutarch prompts readers to consider if and how far the lesson might be relevant in their own lives (this is similar to what we saw above in the *Cimon–Lucullus* prologue). ‘And so . . . is it [sc. not] reasonable (cf. λόγον ἔχει) to blame those who abuse this [i.e. the fondness for learning and seeing that we possess by nature] on objects all unworthy either of their eyes or ears, neglecting those that are good and useful?’ (*Per.* 1.2). And a few lines later Plutarch claims, ‘it is necessary (δεῖ) that one should apply intellect to sights which by their very charm invite it onward to its own proper good’ (*Per.* 1.3). In these examples, it is clear neither who should exercise blame nor who should

⁷² Tr. Duff (1999), 35. On the inclusive plurals, see also Duff (1999), 35–6; (2001), 354; (2004), 279 n. 29. Cf. Pelling (2002b), 280 n. 24.

⁷³ Tr. Duff (1999), 47.

apply intellect. Is it I, Plutarch, or you, the reader, or both of us? The ambiguity—in the first instance notably phrased in a rhetorical question—is itself revealing. It keeps readers engaged, contemplating if and how every point is related to them.

Something similar can be said of Plutarch’s use of ‘generic categories’. We are told that ‘every man (ἕκαστος) has the natural power to use the mind’ (*Per.* 1.2); that virtuous deeds fill with a desire for imitation ‘those who examine them (τοῖς ιστορήσασιν)’ (*Per.* 1.4);⁷⁴ that ‘no youth “of a temperament naturally noble, given to virtue (εὐφυΐης)”⁷⁵ wished to become Pheidias by seeing the Zeus at Pisa’ (*Per.* 2.1); that things which do not inspire imitation do not benefit ‘those who look at them (τοὺς θεωμένους)’ (*Per.* 2.2); but that the good has the power ‘to form the spectator’s character (ἡθοποιούν . . . τὸν θεατήν)’ (*Per.* 2.4). In a similar way, the *Demetrius–Antony* prologue brings out that it is especially appropriate for ‘those who are to live correctly (τοὺς ὀρθῶς βιωσομένους)’ to know and have experience of evil (*Demetr.* 1.4).

The readers, as in the case of impersonal constructions, are not explicitly told what to do or whom to model themselves on, although this is certainly implied. Plutarch’s use of strong indicatives and evaluative terms, such as ‘εὐφυΐης νέος’ or ‘τοὺς ὀρθῶς βιωσομένους’, in conjunction with his overall instructive style,⁷⁶ give readers no grounds to doubt if and how they can benefit from their study of the works of virtue (cf. *Per.* 2.4: τῇ ιστορίᾳ τοῦ ἔργου) and their investigation of the base and blameworthy lives (cf. *Demetr.* 1.6: εἰ μὴδὲ τῶν φαύλων καὶ ψεγομένων [sc. βίων]

⁷⁴ Tr. Stadter (1989), 56. Amyot emended τοῖς ιστορήμασιν to τοῖς ιστορήσασιν.

⁷⁵ Tr. Stadter (1989), 58.

⁷⁶ The opening anecdote (*Per.* 1.1), the simile (*Per.* 1.3), the parallel examples and sayings (*Per.* 1.5–6; *Demetr.* 1.5–6), and the predominance of the present tense add to the didactic drive of the prologues.

ἀνιστορήτως ἔχοιμεν), which their active dealing with Plutarch's own *ergon*, *bioi*, and *historia* makes possible for them.⁷⁷

We can see that in the *Pericles–Fabius* and the *Demetrius–Antony* prologues there is the intimation of shared community that we noticed in the rest of the prologues too. The readers are taken to be engaged with and reflective about the events of the past as well as Plutarch's own literary work and moral activity. Such active and attentive readers, so the language suggests, may be disturbed by Plutarch's decision to include in his biographical project the *Lives* of less admirable men such as Demetrius and Antony. For Plutarch tentatively expresses his decision—'it might be not so bad (οὐ χεῖρον ἴσως ἐστί) to include . . . one or two pairs' (*Demetr.* 1.5)—and tries to ensure that his readers will welcome this variety by contradicting any sort of alienating expectation that pleasure and entertainment might work against the programme of moral instruction (*Demetr.* 1.5).

A similar positing of an astute and attentive reader, who is highly sensitive to 'generic appropriateness', alternations and novelties of method or material, may be sensed in the course of the narrative as well, particularly when Plutarch directs the nature of his biographical enterprise. Plutarch feels the need to justify the inclusion of material that does not seem relevant to his writing at first sight,⁷⁸ often expressing

⁷⁷ See Duff (1999), 33, 36, 41 for the multiple references of the words ἔργον, βίος, ἱστορία both to the world of the characters and that of the narrator and readers. He stresses that 'Plutarch subtly assimilates his own *Lives* with the actual events of the past which they narrate, and the activity of the writer with that of the reader' (40). See also Duff (2001), 353, 355–60; (2004), 286; (2011b), 77.

⁷⁸ e.g. *Tim.* 15.11: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἀλλότρια τῆς τῶν βίων ἀναγραφῆς οὐδ' ἄχρηστα δόξαι οἰόμεθα μὴ σπεύδουσι μηδ' ἀσχολουμένοις ἀκροαταῖς. See also *Dion* 21.9.

together concerns about the textual space of his account.⁷⁹ He clearly displays awareness of the generic complexity that might arise from his narrative—‘but possibly these will seem like fables’ (*Cam.* 5.6)—and draws attention to material that is better suited to another work or kind of writing.⁸⁰

Overall, Plutarch constructs knowledgeable and perspicacious readers, who are assumed to be mature enough to engage actively with the *Lives* and the suggested process of moral improvement.⁸¹ This ‘assumption’ itself can have a rhetorical force, helping to mould and inspire the real-life readers to be similar to the constructed ideal reader. Real-life readers may reflect on the implications of being as engaged and uneasy as the ideal reader, and that might be more flattering if they can feel that their reading is in line with that of the ideal reader, but it might be more disturbing if not. In particular, they may reflect on whether and how far any negative responses of their own align them with the sort of independent critical evaluation that Plutarch’s ideal reader is assumed, and encouraged, to exercise; or with the approach of the presumed

⁷⁹ e.g. *Alex.* 35.16: τῶν μὲν οὖν τοιούτων παρεκβάσεων, ἂν μέτρον ἔχωσιν, ἥττον ἴσως οἱ δύσκολοι κατηγοροῦσιν, with Hamilton (1969), 95. See also *Cam.* 19.4; *Cato Min.* 37.10; *Gracchi* 15.1.

⁸⁰ e.g. *Lys.* 12.9, on which see Duff (1999), 187 with n. 108 for further examples. See also Pelling (2002b), 275, 281 n. 32. Wardman (1974), 9 relates Plutarch’s apologies about digressional material to the fact that ‘he still feels bound by the historian’s rule’.

⁸¹ See Stadter (2000) [= repr. (2015), 231–45], considering the *Lives* as ‘adult moral education’; Whitmarsh (2001), 54–7; Duff (2004), 276, 285–7; (2011b), including also useful material on the ‘critical reader’ in the *Moralia*. See also Zadorojnyi (2012), 182–3, 190 (‘do-it-yourself moralism’).

and negatively characterised grumpy reader.⁸² Plutarch displays a high level of self-consciousness and self-criticism, teaching not only how a morally profound historical narrative is written, but also how this narrative should be properly and successfully read and appreciated (as we shall see further in the course of our study).

Plutarch, at times, expresses a sort of precariousness and diffidence about his work, which—whether or not it is genuine self-doubt—does something to win over the confidence and indulgence of the readers;⁸³ for a particular sort of authority in Plutarch is built, the authority of a moralist who is not imposing and heavy-handed, but empathises with readers’ perplexities and acknowledges that they are right to be on their guard and not simply uncritical followers—we may remember and contrast here Solon’s inability to be attuned to the psychology of his audience.⁸⁴

Indeed several prologues end with a vigorous encouragement of readers’ participation in the act of judging and moral thought. Sometimes this encouragement is more implicit through the use of impersonal construction—‘so that, if there should be a competition (ἀμύλλα) between nature and fortune, as between artists, it would be

⁸² See Pelling (2002b), 272, 276, distinguishing between ‘target’ or ‘regular’ readers who are sympathetic towards Plutarch’s work and readers whom Plutarch does not welcome ‘with such inclusiveness of warmth’ (‘cross-grained narratees’), for ‘they are not *proper* narratees, not people entering into the spirit of the project, not the readers whom the writing is *for*’ (276). Pelling, however, excludes the possibility that a cross-graining response may arise not only from a non-attentive reading, but also an engaged, sophisticated, and critical one that Plutarch appropriates and welcomes. Cf. Duff (2004), 278–9, who draws a distinction between ‘casual’ (aligned with the physical senses) and ‘ideal’, ‘serious’ readers (aligned with reason) in the *Demetrius–Antony* prologue. Plutarch suggests a similar contrast at *Alex.* 50.1–2: ἀπλῶς πυθομένοις vs. λόγῳ . . . συντιθέντες. See also *Tim.* 15.11: μὴ σπεύδουσι μὴδ’ ἀσχολουμένοις ἀκροαταῖς; and *Alex.* 35.16: οἱ δύσκολοι κατηγορ<ήσ>ουσιν.

⁸³ Cf. Pelling (2002b), 268.

⁸⁴ See above, §1.3.

difficult [sc. for you / me / us] to decide (χαλεπῶς ἂν διακριθῆναι) whether the one made the men more alike in their characters, or the other in the circumstances of their lives' (*Dem.* 3.5); 'so a very subtle reasoning is necessary (δεῖσθαι) [sc. for you / me / us] . . . for the determination and discovery of the differences' (*Phoc.* 3.9); 'we may omit and some other resemblances which it is not hard (οὐ χαλεπόν) [sc. for you / me / us] to gather from the narrative itself' (*Cim.* 3.3). At other times Plutarch's encouragement is more explicit—'and you will judge (ἐπικρινεῖς) for yourself (αὐτός) these things from the narrative' (*Ag./Cleom.* 2.9)—soliciting the readers to challenge whether he himself gets things right: 'whether or not this assessment of mine hits the mark, it is possible (ἔξεσσι) [sc. for you] to judge from what I am writing' (*Per.* 2.5).⁸⁵

Yet, despite the readers being encouraged to approach the narrative critically, to question it independently, and to resist it,⁸⁶ more important is the underlying assumption that Plutarch has built up by now an authority that draws readers to respect him for his circumspection and allows them to gain an insight into his *historia*—his research and narrative about the past—through which the individual 'I' and 'You' together ('We') meet, spend time, and live with the great men from the distant past (cf. *Aem.* 1).⁸⁷ That suggests a brand of complicity between Plutarch, the readers, and the men of history, which is further established and developed (as we shall see next) by the fact that they are all assumed to belong to an 'imagined community', based on a set of common features, moral, ideological, and cultural

⁸⁵ Tr. Waterfield (1998), adapted. These examples are also noticed by Duff (2011a), 223; (2011b), 77 with n. 48; (2014), 342, 347 n. 46.

⁸⁶ I am dependent on Duff (2011b), 81 for the wording here.

⁸⁷ For this sort of complicity between the readers and Plutarch, see also Stadter (1988), 293; Pelling (2002b), 274–5, 277–8; Zadorojnyi (2006), 103; Duff (2014), 340.

values and concerns.⁸⁸

2.2 ‘ME’, ‘YOU’, AND ‘THEY’⁸⁹

2.2.1 Rhetoric vs. praxis: Demosthenes and Cicero

In the first chapter of the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue (*Dem.* 1–3), as we saw above, Plutarch claims that a truly happy and virtuous individual can come from a humble and undistinguished city, while in the second chapter he comments more specifically on his own personal experience of living in his small hometown Chaeronea. Some implicit self-praise may be sensed here,⁹⁰ despite Plutarch’s aversion to it—he has written a whole essay *On inoffensive self-praise*.⁹¹ However, this is the sort of self-praise that Plutarch accepts in the essay as advantageous and helpful, for it can be used to defend himself and his city and give a moral lesson to his readers (cf. *De Ipsum Laud.* 540c; 541e; 547f).

Plutarch reveals the possibility that Chaeronea, like Iulis and Aegina, can produce a virtuous man. This is a man who protects his city from any slander that he and his work may arouse—the emphasis that Plutarch lends to the importance of a big, cultured, and populous city for proper historical research and composition might provoke criticism (*Dem.* 2.1)—and takes full responsibility for his defaults (*Dem.* 1.4). Plutarch thus draws the attention of his audience to his own life and character,

⁸⁸ On the concept of ‘imagined community’, see above, pp. 51–2 with n. 61.

⁸⁹ The title may be reminiscent of that of Duff (2014), 340 (‘ “Me,” “Us,” and “Them” ’). In our case, the complicity does not concern Plutarch and his readers, or at least not only this, but mainly Plutarch/readers and the characters of the *Lives*.

⁹⁰ Pelling (2002b), 271.

⁹¹ On the danger of self-promotion in historical writing, see Gray (1990); Marincola (1997), 175–82.

and some of his moral strengths (cf. *De Ipsum Laud.* 543c).⁹² He constructs a persona for himself that does not cause offence or envy by being intent on self-praise, but can ‘exhort his readers and inspire them with emulation and ambition’ (*De Ipsum Laud.* 544d).

Plutarch continues to explain in the *On inoffensive self-praise* that ‘exhortation that includes action as well as argument and presents the speaker’s own example and challenge is endued with life: it arouses and spurs the hearer, and not only awakens his ardour and fixes his purpose, but also affords him hope that the end can be attained and is not impossible’ (544d–e). Unlike Lycurgus, however, whom Plutarch extols in the next lines of the essay for proposing to the young men paradigms that were ‘close at hand and taken from their own people (τὰ πλησίον καὶ οἰκεία παραδείγματα)’ (544e), Plutarch proposes to his readers heroes who belong to the distant past and cannot serve directly as spokesmen of their own exemplary actions. Still, we shall see that the readers can feel Plutarch’s own example speaking to the concerns of both the present and the past, encapsulating central facets of the life, character, and world of the exemplary heroes. They can thus hope that the past is still alive, the examples are still *oikeia*, and ‘the ends can be attained and are not impossible’—a sort of self-elevation itself on the part of Plutarch, who appears to have attained himself at least some of these ends and can now inspire others through his own life and writings.

Indeed, Plutarch’s unusual tendency towards self-praise in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue bespeaks a notorious feature of Demosthenes and Cicero.⁹³ In the

⁹² See also Zadorojnyi (2006), 110.

⁹³ Demosthenes and Cicero are used as paradigms in the *On inoffensive self-praise*: 540f; 542a (Cicero) and 541e; 542a–b; 543b; 547e–f (Demosthenes). See also Longo (2015), 143 on Demosthenes.

Cicero, Plutarch dwells on the unpopularity and hatred that Cicero causes through his continuous self-praise (24.1; cf. 6.5). In the final *Synkrisis*, he explicitly blames Cicero for praising his deeds and speeches immoderately, ‘as if he was sparring with the sophists . . . not claiming to lead and direct the Roman people’.⁹⁴ The Romans, as Plutarch stresses, were warriors—a line from an unknown play of Aeschylus draws parallels between the Romans and the Greek warrior of Aeschylus’ era⁹⁵—and thus in need of Cicero’s leadership rather than his sophisticated rhetoric. Plutarch does not deny that politicians should use rhetoric to prevail, but rejects the idea that they should lust for the fame that springs from rhetoric. On this account, Demosthenes emerges as more impressive and magnificent. According to Plutarch, he not only handles self-praise cautiously and without causing offence, but ‘declares that his power in speaking is a mere matter of experience (ἐμπειρίαν τινά) which requires great goodwill from his listeners’ (*Dem.-Cic.* 2).⁹⁶

This interplay between self-praise, rhetoric, and leadership/experience in the careers of Demosthenes and Cicero may recall Plutarch’s proemial self-positioning in a number of ways. Plutarch, like Demosthenes and Cicero, faces the challenge of keeping a balance *in* and *between* rhetoric and action. He is an active politician, as he tells us, and for this reason he comes very late to the study of Latin language and literature (*Dem.* 2.2). He acknowledges the importance of the study and practice of the Roman style, speech, and language, but admits that these suit people who have more time for leisure and are young enough for such ambitions (*Dem.* 2.4). He avoids behaving like Caecilius, who unconsciously writes a stylistic comparison between

⁹⁴ Tr. Lintott (2013).

⁹⁵ Lintott (2013), 212.

⁹⁶ Tr. Lintott (2013), adapted.

Demosthenes and Cicero (*Dem.* 3.2)—contrast Cicero who is presented in the *Synkrisis* as vying with the sophists (*Dem.-Cic.* 2). Rather he clearly states that his acquisition of Latin as well as his ability to treat Demosthenes and Cicero as politicians rather than orators arise from his own practical experience as a politician (cf. *Dem.* 2.3: ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων, <ὧν> . . . εἵχομεν ἐμπειρίαν) (*Dem.* 2.3–3.1). Just as for Demosthenes in the *Synkrisis* rhetorical power is a mere matter of experience (ἐμπειρίαν τινά) requiring great goodwill from his listeners, so for Plutarch in the prologue the ability for rhetorical and political analysis is presented as a matter of experience too, which appeals to the goodwill of his readers.⁹⁷ So a triangle for comparison and reflection, comprising not just Demosthenes and Cicero but Plutarch too, is already developed; or indeed a quadrilateral, also entailing the readers, who might be so inspired by the reading.

It is telling that, despite Plutarch's programmatic statements in the prologue, in the course of the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book the distinction between oratory and achievement becomes more complicated and blurred. In the *Demosthenes*, Plutarch includes several references to Demosthenes' way of speaking as well as to the style of his written and oral discourse (4–11). Plutarch has even more to say about Demosthenes' humour, as he admits, but feels that he should stop, for 'the other traits of his [i.e. Demosthenes'] disposition, and his character, should be examined on the basis of his actions and statesmanship' (11.7). In the *Cicero*, there are several comments on the humour in Cicero's style too (5.6; 7.6–8; 26–7) as well as the pleasant and unpleasant elements in his discourse (13; 24; 39.7). In the *Synkrisis*, Plutarch also makes some comparison of the characteristics of the two men's speaking, 'which', as he tells, he 'has left aside so far' (1.2)—this is somehow

⁹⁷ On Plutarch's resistant reader in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue, see above, §2.1.1.

contradictory to what precedes, for most of the details given in the *Synkrisis* can also be found in, or easily extracted from, the *Lives*. In the *Synkrisis*, moreover, Plutarch explicitly uses the oratory of Demosthenes and Cicero to make points about their characters (1–2). He emphasises that ‘it is also possible to distinguish the character of each in their speeches (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις)’ (1.4).⁹⁸

Plutarch, true to his proemial thesis, neither discusses oratory for its own sake nor provides any thorough stylistic comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero. But the temptation to study their oratory as well as their *praxeis* is hard for him to resist.⁹⁹ Dealing with two important figures of letters and politics, Plutarch is ready to mingle his political analysis with literary analysis and stylistic comments.¹⁰⁰ Plutarch’s own rhetoric in the prologue does not perfectly correspond to his practice in the rest of the book.

This sort of mismatch between rhetoric and praxis is another point of convergence between Plutarch’s representation of himself and of Demosthenes and Cicero. Judith Mossman showed through a detailed analysis of the problematic relation between rhetoric and reality in the *Demosthenes*—with some astute comparative remarks on the *Cicero* as well—that the two men’s actions do not always match their spoken and written words (although as Mossman correctly observes Cicero is better at achieving a balance between the two).¹⁰¹ Nevertheless, Plutarch has

⁹⁸ Tr. Lintott (2013).

⁹⁹ Cf. *Fab.* 1.7–8; *Cato Maj.* 7; *Ant.* 2.8; *Gracchi* 2.3–6. See also Pelling (1988a), 119–20; Duff (1999), 15–16 n. 6; Mossman (1999), 81–2 with n. 14; Pelling (2000a) [= repr. (2002a), 339–47]; Billault (2001); Zadorojnyi (2006), 105.

¹⁰⁰ See also Billault (2001), 256: ‘Mais comme ce dernier [i.e. leur art oratoire] ne peut être séparé de leur vie, il n’en est pas moins présent dans son récit’. Cf. Pernot (2004), 406.

¹⁰¹ Mossman (1999). Cf. Longo (2015), 134–7, 141 on Demosthenes.

both men succeed and be duly rehabilitated at the end. Demosthenes bravely dies while pretending to write (*Dem.* 29);¹⁰² the soldier's gold remains untouched in the hands of Demosthenes' statue, which stands in the Athenian agora (*Dem.* 31.1–3); Demosthenes' opponent Demades is fittingly punished and learns a truth 'about which Demosthenes had often warned him' (*Dem.* 31.4–6). Cicero's opponents, as Plutarch states, receive retribution too (*Cic.* 49), after 'they cut off his [i.e. Cicero's] head and the hands with which he had written the *Philippics*' (*Cic.* 48.6).¹⁰³ The *Cicero* closes with an emphasis on the survival of Cicero's books—'and up to the present day they are called *Philippics*' (48.6)—and an anecdote about Augustus, who takes a book of Cicero from his nephew, returns it to him, and says about Cicero: 'a learned man, my child, a learned man and a lover of his country' (49.5).¹⁰⁴ Mossman rightly concludes:

So in both *Lives* the pen finally is mightier than the sword, even though it may not appear so all the time; but only when the pen is worthily employed, and the benchmark of that is not stylistic, but moral. Rhetoric—mere rhetoric—fails, but virtue triumphs (Mossman (1999), 101).

This is one way in which Plutarch resembles the two men of the *Lives*, undermining to some extent what he says in the prologue: rhetoric is closely intertwined with and contributes to his ethico-political programme.¹⁰⁵

Another way in which Plutarch does this may be seen at the end of the *Demosthenes*. There, Plutarch stresses that he relies in his account of Demosthenes' life on both what he has read or heard (ἐξ ὧν ἡμεῖς ἀνέγνωμεν ἢ διηκούσαμεν)

¹⁰² On the theatricality of this scene, see Mossman (1999), 97–8; Várzeas (2009), 336–8.

¹⁰³ Tr. Lintott (2013).

¹⁰⁴ See also Mossman (1999), 99–101. The translation here is from p. 101.

¹⁰⁵ See also Billault (2001); Pernot (2004), 410–11.

(31.7). This methodological claim might recall Plutarch's prefatory thesis that a historian needs to live in a famous, cultured, and populous city in order to be able to collect all of the written and oral evidence necessary to write a complete historical work (*Dem.* 2.1).¹⁰⁶ Whether this prefatory thesis reflects a genuine confession by Plutarch with regard to his difficulty in accessing sources, as Alexei Zadorojnyi finds reasonable,¹⁰⁷ or another false apology, part of the rhetorical technique of *praeteritio*, which Plutarch, as Judith Mossman thinks,¹⁰⁸ employs in the prologue, Plutarch's closing statement in the *Demosthenes* certainly lends strength to his self-characterisation and authority. Plutarch is presented as a man who *works to* surpass the difficulties of living in a small town,¹⁰⁹ and manages to grow wiser and contribute to his city. In the prologue, he openly admits that he loves staying in his small city so that 'it might not become smaller (ἵνα μὴ μικροτέρα γένηται)' (*Dem.* 2.2), a statement that at first glance might be explained by his worry that his small city might lose even one citizen,¹¹⁰ but can equally point to and underline the particular status

¹⁰⁶ Zadorojnyi (2006), 113–20 reads *Dem.* 2.1 against Polybius' criticism of Timaeus in Book 12 and suggests that a plausible dialogue between the two authors encourages reflection on how history was written in Plutarch's times: 'The pervasiveness of order and control under the Empire means a shortage of material that writers of *historia* can explore in the field . . . For the Greek world the death of politics leaves the narrators increasingly beholden to earlier texts' (119).

¹⁰⁷ Zadorojnyi (2006), 105, but he does not preclude that 'Plutarch's disclaimer in *Demosth.* 2.2–4 is tongue-in-cheek' (105 n. 14).

¹⁰⁸ Mossman (1999), 81–2, 100.

¹⁰⁹ See Cooper (2008), 77 with n. 17.

¹¹⁰ Titchener (2002), 137–8 compares Plutarch's claim with Juvenal, 3.1–3 and suggests that Plutarch uses the 'one citizen' joke to express gracefully his antipathy towards Roman and/or urban life.

and prestige of Plutarch in Chaeronea.¹¹¹ Here again Demosthenes and Cicero are not so far apart. They are two men who become great and powerful as orators and politicians after being powerless and undistinguished (*Dem.* 3.4). They are deficient in their physique and rhetoric and have to overcome several obstacles in order to succeed with their people and contribute to their cities.¹¹²

Plutarch, as we saw over the course of our analysis, works similarly hard to overcome his own difficulties as a man and a writer, and to win over and establish his authority and character with his audience.¹¹³ Annalaura Burlando has suggested that Plutarch, maybe inspired by Cicero's *De oratore* and *Orator*, practises in the prologue a sort of *captatio benevolentiae*.¹¹⁴ Whether or not Plutarch is influenced by Cicero here,¹¹⁵ a common rhetorical flourish may be felt. At the end, Plutarch's own pen too is mightier than his sword; but this is a pen, a rhetoric that is worthily employed. It neither lusts for a sort of self-praise that is *kenos* (*De Ipsum Laud.* 540a), namely for its own sake, nor concentrates on stylistics that detract from ethico-political instruction—contrast Cicero in the *Synkrisis* (*Dem.-Cic.* 2)—but is carefully designed to introduce to the readers, and make them acquainted with, significant aspects of the character and purpose of Plutarch as much as of the two subjects of the *Lives*.¹¹⁶ A

¹¹¹ Plutarch pays due attention to his city's role in history and makes sure that Chaeronea is properly recognised: e.g. *Dem.* 19–21; *Alex.* 9; *Sulla* 16–20 with Pelling (2010a), xvi. On Plutarch's references to Chaeronea in his works, see Fuscagni (1994), 158 n. 3.

¹¹² *Dem.* 4; 6.3–5; 7–8; 11; *Cic.* 1; 3.7; 5.4; 8.

¹¹³ Cf. Zadorojnyi (2006), 106.

¹¹⁴ Burlando (2000), 68.

¹¹⁵ On Plutarch's use of Cicero's works, see Scuderi (2004).

¹¹⁶ As Zadorojnyi (2006), 105 emphasises, Plutarch as a philosopher prioritises the subject-matter over the style in the reception of all formats of discourse.

comparable technique, as we shall see next, is elaborated in the *Cimon–Lucullus* prologue. There the emphasis is not so much on the individual but rather on the collective experience of Plutarch and his readers, which is intertwined with that of Cimon and Lucullus in a number of ways.

2.2.2 Truth, philanthropy, and unity: Cimon and Lucullus

As we analysed in the first section of this chapter, Plutarch's personal gratitude towards Lucullus for his kind treatment of Chaeronea (*Cim.* 1–2) is one that Plutarch wishes and encourages his readers to share with him—‘and we, although removed many generations, think that his favour extends even down to us (καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς) who are now alive (τοὺς νῦν ὄντας)’ (*Cim.* 2.2). We also noticed that Plutarch uses several means—most notably first-person plurals and impersonal constructions—to draw his readers into a joint moral investigation about the past (*historia*) (*Cim.* 2.2–5).¹¹⁷ He stirs up an ‘imagined community’ between himself and his readers, which, as we observed, might extend to include Lucullus—and we should add here Cimon too—implicating a set of values and characteristics which Plutarch, his readers, and the two subjects of the *Lives* all have in common (*Cim.* 2.2–5).¹¹⁸

In the prologue, Plutarch stresses that the truth will be his guiding principle in writing the *Life of Lucullus* (*Cim.* 2.2) and suggests to his readers that ‘since it is difficult, but rather perhaps impossible, to represent a man’s life as stainless and pure, in its fair chapters one [i.e. you / I / we] must round out the truth into fullest semblance’ (*Cim.* 2.4).¹¹⁹ Like Plutarch and his readers, Lucullus is presented in the

¹¹⁷ See above, §2.1.4.

¹¹⁸ See above, pp. 51–2.

¹¹⁹ On the complexities of the inclusive impersonal construction here, see above, pp. 51–2.

prologue as a strong proponent of truth. He testified to the truth (ἐμαρτύρησε τᾷ ἀληθείᾳ) in his just treatment of Chaeronea (*Cim.* 2.1) and, as a return to his truthful testimony (ἀληθοῦς δὲ μαρτυρίας . . . μισθόν), would now refuse a false and fabricated account (*Cim.* 2.3). In addition to this, the *persona* of humanity, mildness, and generosity, which Plutarch appropriates for himself and his readers in the prologue (*Cim.* 2.3–5), anticipates major hallmarks of Cimon and Lucullus,¹²⁰ despite some flaws in their character, which are especially central early on in the *Cimon* with Cimon’s shady private life (*Cim.* 4) and at the end of the *Lucullus* with Lucullus’ drift into luxury and excess (*Luc.* 38–43).¹²¹

The sense of complicity and congruence itself, moreover, that Plutarch seeks with his readers in the kind and truthful treatment of Lucullus, although being one that is felt in almost all of the prologues, as we saw in the first section—Plutarch, in general, deprecates dissension and loves unity and concord among people¹²²—may gain an extra punch and purpose here, for both Cimon and Lucullus are presented throughout their *Lives* as advocates of unity and universality. Plutarch’s fellow citizens honoured Lucullus with a marble statue, and now Plutarch encourages his readers to join him in paying Lucullus back for his benefaction. This is a sort of reciprocal euergetism between ‘us’ and ‘him’ that embraces both Greeks and Romans,

¹²⁰ See Fuscagni (1994), 44–58 with references to the importance of these values to Plutarch’s contemporary society and culture; Lavery (1994), 263–4 on Lucullus; Alexiou (2007), esp. 58–9 and 66–7 on both Cimon and Lucullus. See also Beck (2007b), who, in addition, suggests links between the story of Damon in the prologue and Cimon and Lucullus; Tröster (2008), 33–44.

¹²¹ See also Duff (1999), 59: ‘Humanity is a virtue which recurs in the heroes of the *Lives* themselves and which . . . is an important part of Plutarch’s own *persona*’.

¹²² e.g. *Them.* 7.3; *Arist.* 5.2–3; 8.1, cited by Frazier (1996), 144 n. 12; *Ages.* 15; *Flam.* 11.6; *Tim.* 29.6; *De Pyth. Orac.* 401c–d; *Praec. Ger.* 824b–c.

and this ‘*us*’ may be further aided by the fact that ‘*he* has indeed been like *us*’, or at least ‘like the people we would like to be, or accept that we ought to be’. For Lucullus, the themes of unity and philhellenism are introduced into the prologue through Damon’s story,¹²³ and elaborated in the *Life* through his personal qualities, and his political, philosophical, and intellectual practices and pursuits, which all suggest his strong bonds with the Hellenic world.¹²⁴ Cimon is not different. He appears as the Pan-Hellenic anti-Persian champion of the Greeks, the promoter of harmony between the Athenians and the Spartans (*Cim.* 16.1–3; 16.9–10; 18.1; 19.3). Possibly, a further more subtle implication may be sensed here by Plutarch’s contemporary real life readers who either being Greeks or Greeks and Romans may be tempted to ask themselves whether and how far they can identify with the model community that Plutarch constructs with his ideal readers;¹²⁵ a community which promotes cohesion, forms shared intentions, and acts jointly into a synchronic unity, that of the Greco-Roman world, as well as a diachronic continuity in view of the various examples from both the Greek and Roman past.¹²⁶

¹²³ On Damon’s story, see Ma (1994); Pelling (1997c), 241–2 [= repr. (2002a), 375]; Mackay (2000); Franco (2003); Ellinger (2005); Beck (2007b); Tröster (2008), 33–4.

¹²⁴ On Lucullus’ philhellenism, see Swain (1990a), 143–5 [= repr. (1995), 259–64]; (1992a); Tröster (2008), 27–47.

¹²⁵ See Duff (2007/8), 7–11, suggesting that Plutarch’s text assumes and constructs Greek readers; on the contrary, Stadter (2000), 494–8 [= repr. (2015), 231–5] and Pelling (2002b), 270–1 argue that Plutarch’s audience includes both Greeks and Romans.

¹²⁶ For a striking parallel, see *Dion* 1.1 where Plutarch projects a world where both Greeks and Romans learn from philosophy and its application to politics. Cf. Plutarch’s *Table Talk* (Pelling (2011c), 208). Pelling (forthcoming) tries to renounce the Greek-or-Roman polarity by pointing out that lots of Plutarch’s real life readers would think of themselves as both, ‘code-switching’ just as Plutarch does in his work according to company or context.

2.2.3 Practitioners of virtue: Pericles and Fabius

In the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue, as Timothy Duff persuasively argues, Plutarch distances his *Lives* from other works of art and assimilates them with the deeds of virtue of his subjects (*Per.* 2.2: τὰ ἔργα) as well as the good (*Per.* 2.4: τὸ καλόν) that is discernible in them. For Plutarch, as Duff comments, virtue and the narrative of virtuous works, unlike other forms of art, neither give pleasure nor encourage observation or admiration alone but instil in the observers (i.e. the readers) the impulse to imitation as well as to moral thought, which leads to the improvement of their character (*Per.* 2.2–4). Plutarch encourages his readers to engage in the exploration (ἱστορία) of works of virtue (cf. *Per.* 2.2: τὰ ἔργα, 2.4: τοῦ ἔργου), provided by his own *ergon*, the narrative of the *Lives* (another sort of ἱστορία). The *mimēsis* of, and the *historia* about, virtue, concern both Plutarch and his readers,¹²⁷ and in some ways the two men of the *Lives* too, as they are similarly bent on engaging themselves and others in works of virtue.¹²⁸

Fabius has many skills and moral values. He is mild and self-restrained, reverent and incorruptible, and unwavering in his reasoning and military tactics, which prove (at least for the most part of his life) beneficial to the Romans. His own virtuous example, although arousing on several occasions much criticism and

¹²⁷ I am indebted to Duff (1999), 34–45 and (2001) for my analysis in this paragraph. On the complicity between Plutarch and the reader in this prologue, see above, §2.1.6.

¹²⁸ This is a significant characteristic of other Plutarchan heroes as well, e.g. *Cato Min.* 9.5–10, with Duff (1999), 148, bringing out the strong connection with the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue; *Alex.* 41.1; *Luc.* 28.3; *Num.* 20.11–12. Further examples are cited by Frazier (1996), 133; Duff (1999), 50–1. On *mimēsis* as a basic ingredient of the world of the characters and not simply that of the readers, see most recently Zadorojnyi (2012), discussing it under the notion of ‘plupast’.

displeasure, inspires the Romans with lessons on ethics and military leadership.¹²⁹ In his speech of repentance to his soldiers and Fabius, Minucius acknowledges the informative effect of Fabius' pedagogy on his moral self-improvement (*Fab.* 13).¹³⁰ Fabius also appears to be instructing (*Fab.* 14.5: διδάσκων) Aemilius Paulus about the dangers that lie in Terentius' mad decision to confront Hannibal as well as about the benefits of favouring the tactics of *cunctatio* (*Fab.* 14.5–6). In a way that echoes Plutarch's own purpose and method in writing the *Lives*, as outlined in the prologue, Fabius produces in Aemilius a reasoned attitude (cf. τὰ ἐμαυτοῦ σκοποῦντι)¹³¹ and helps him to make a moral choice (προαίρεσιν) (*Fab.* 14.7; cf. *Per.* 2.4: τῇ ἱστορίᾳ τοῦ ἔργου τὴν προαίρεσιν παρεχόμενον).¹³² In addition, Fabius' mild and gentle treatment of his subject cities and allies, especially those who were willing to revolt, glances back again at Plutarch's prefatory fashioning of himself and his readers. Fabius, as Plutarch puts it, considered it a terrible thing that, whereas the trainers of horses and dogs used care and intimacy and feeding to tame the animals, the commander of men should not base most of his discipline (τῆς ἐπανορθώσεως) on kindness and mildness (*Fab.* 20.4). Plutarch has similarly implied through his introductory story about Augustus that our natural affection should primarily be concentrated on humans rather than animals (*Per.* 1.1). Just as Fabius turns his attention towards the virtuous deeds of the Marsian and Lucanian soldiers in order to

¹²⁹ e.g. *Fab.* 1.6; 3.7; 17.5–6. On the pedagogical register of the *Life*, see Xenophontos (2012a).

¹³⁰ See esp. *Fab.* 13.2 (χρησασθαι τοῖς παισίμασι διδάγμασι); 13.3 (πεπαίδευμαι); 13.7 (πεπαίδευκας).

¹³¹ Cf. Aemilius' last words in *Fab.* 16.8: ἀπάγγελλε . . . ὦ Λέντλε Φαβίῳ Μαξίμῳ καὶ γενοῦ μάρτυς αὐτός, ὅτι Παῦλος Αἰμίλιος ἐνέμεινεν αὐτοῦ τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἄχρι τέλους. See also the use of the same verb σκοπέω in Fabius' moral instruction to Minucius (*Fab.* 10.7).

¹³² No such emphasis in Livy 22.40.1–3.

‘correct’ them (*Fab.* 20), so Plutarch suggests that an important step in the process of our moral improvement—ἐπανόρθωσις as it is called by Plutarch in *Aem.* 1.4 and *Demetr.* 1.5 (cf. Fabius’ ἐπανόρθωσις in *Fab.* 20.4)—is that our inborn love of learning and seeing should be used for sights and sounds that are good and useful (*Per.* 1.2) and that our intellect should be directed towards deeds of virtue (*Per.* 1.3).

Here, too, Pericles may be found to reflect elements of Plutarch’s projection of himself and his readers in the prologue. Throughout his *Life* he is presented as a man who fixes his eyes and mind on virtue and inspires others with great deeds. In his political struggle with Thucydides, son of Melesias, Plutarch underlines that Pericles pursues a policy that is gratifying (cf. πρὸς χάριν) as well as instructive (cf. διαπαιδαγωγῶν) (*Per.* 11.4). He acquaints the Athenians with practising (μελετῶντες) and learning (μανθάνοντες) naval expertise (*Per.* 11.4), and tries through settlements to release Athens from a lazy and idle mob, improve poverty, and prevent internal dissension (*Per.* 11.5–6).

His building programme is particularly suggestive. Plutarch tells us that Pericles instructed (ἐδίδασκεν) the people that such works would contribute to the glory of Athens and the common good (*Per.* 12.3–4). Contrary to Plutarch’s suggestion in the prologue, Pericles’ buildings are not presented as works of art aiming only at admiration and pleasure (*Per.* 12.1: ἡδονήν; cf. *Per.* 1.4–2.2), but as a virtuous statesmanlike action that embraces a higher noble goal.¹³³ In Plutarch’s description, each particular art had its own crew, just as a general has his own army, a workman his own tools, and a soul its own body (12.6).¹³⁴ As Philip Stadter notes, Plutarch maps Pericles’ building programme onto one of his favourite philosophical

¹³³ See also Moles (1992), 293.

¹³⁴ Stadter (1989), 162.

images, ‘that of the body as instrument of the soul’. ‘Pericles’, as Stadter nicely puts it, ‘far from pandering to the masses, is organizing the disordered parts of the state under the rule of reason as the soul does the body, or as the god does the heavenly bodies’.¹³⁵

Some uneasiness between Plutarch’s description of Pericles’ building programme and Plutarch’s introductory remarks may be sensed (the reference to Pheidias in the prologue (*Per.* 2.1) makes the comparison between the two sections stronger), for the contrast between works of arts and works of virtue, pleasure and benefit, is not as sharp as in the prologue (*Per.* 2.1–2). It is true that Pericles’ building programme is not presented as producing any eagerness for imitation of the works or the craftsmen, which is Plutarch’s actual emphasis in the prologue;¹³⁶ but it constitutes itself part of Pericles’ virtuous deeds (cf. *Per.* 2.2: τὰ ἔργα),¹³⁷ which, as made clear in the prologue, can elicit admiration as well as imitation of a correct moral choice and action (*Per.* 2.2).¹³⁸ It is notable that the rational procedures by which Pericles creates harmony and order in the city at the time of his aristocratic and kingly government are also expressed by a wide-ranging series of philosophical metaphors and images related to the arts of horse riding, music, seamanship, and medicine (*Per.*

¹³⁵ Stadter (1989), 163 for both citations.

¹³⁶ On Plutarch’s views on arts, artistic *mimēsis*, and aesthetics, see Svoboda (1934); Wardman (1974), 21–6; Van der Stockt (1990); (1992a), 26–55; (1992b); Grethlein (2013), 126–9.

¹³⁷ Cf. *Bellone an Pace* 348c; 349d; 351a, where Pericles’ building programme is included amongst Pericles’ military exploits. I owe this reference to Duff (1999), 265 n. 87.

¹³⁸ See also Beck (2012), 444–5. For a good parallel see *Demetr.* 20. Plutarch praises Demetrius’ φιλότεχνον for not producing a useless pleasure, amusement, and admiration, but for being of lofty spirit and purpose, making the enemies remember Demetrius’ power as well as their own brave deeds (cf. *Demetr.* 20.9: ἀνδραγαθίας).

15.1–2).¹³⁹ As Plutarch says, ‘he [i.e. Pericles] proved that rhetoric is, in Plato’s words,¹⁴⁰ the winning of men’s souls, and that its greatest business is the careful study of the affections and passions, as if they were some pitches and notes of the soul that needed an especially musical touch and stroke’ (*Per.* 15.2).¹⁴¹

In the case of Pericles, then, works of art and works of virtue can hardly be distinguished, especially when the former are worthily employed and their aim is not (simply) aesthetic, but moral—remember the use of rhetoric in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book. This is a point clearly shared by Plutarch too, who detaches in the prologue the *ergon* of his own art, his literary work, from aesthetic pleasure (only), and appropriates for it a more serious morally edifying goal.¹⁴²

Some metanarrative implications may be sensed in this sort of conflation, for which we argued over the course of our analysis, between Plutarch’s characterisation of himself and his readers and that of his subjects of the *Lives*.¹⁴³ It is a sophisticated technique that works towards developing and establishing further complicity between

¹³⁹ See the detailed analysis in Stadter (1989), 187–91, bringing out the Platonic nuances.

¹⁴⁰ Stadter (1989), 191 points out echoes of the *Phaedrus* here, esp. 261a; 271b; 271c; 270c–d.

¹⁴¹ Tr. Loeb combined with Stadter (1989), 191.

¹⁴² See Van der Stockt (1992a), 34–5; Duff (1999), esp. 37–43. Cf. also Plutarch’s use of works of art, e.g. statues, within the *Lives* primarily for a moral rather than an aesthetic purpose: Mossman (1991); Duff (1999), 162–70; Alexiou (2007), 46–8, 174 n. 7.

¹⁴³ Similar conflation has been noticed between Thucydides and Pericles in Thucydides’ *History*: Rood (2004), 121 with n. 14 citing Crane (1998), 38 esp. n. 7 and Murari Pires (1998). Cf. Whitmarsh (2004), 424, 431, pointing out similarities between the narrator and Apollonius in Philostratus’ *In honour of Apollonius of Tyana*.

Plutarch and his readers, for it not only enhances Plutarch's stature as a narrator and moralist—one who appears to have the right moral mental framework, and who managed to attain at least some of the exemplary aspects of the character of the men of history so that he can now inspire others to do the same through his narrative and research about the past (*historia*)—but it can also please and encourage readers by constructing them as the likeness of great men of the past to follow the *historia* too. Equally, it constitutes an elaborate 'zooming device',¹⁴⁴ which has the effect of bringing the world of the past and the world of the present nearer to each other and making it easier and more attractive for the readers to accommodate and spend 'time and live' with the men of history (*Aem.* 1.2), for these men from the past emerge as examples, which at least most of the way are still 'akin' (*oikeia*), relevant, and close to the readers;¹⁴⁵ so akin and close, in fact, that (as we shall see next) at some moments in the narrative of the *Lives* the barriers between *then* and *now* can be hardly distinguishable.

2.3 INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL MINDS INTERTWINED¹⁴⁶

In the *Life of Pericles*, Plutarch comments on the underlying causes of the Peloponnesian War:

(29.7) οὐκ ἂν δοκεῖ συμπεσεῖν ὑπὸ γε τῶν ἄλλων αἰτιῶν ὁ πόλεμος τοῖς Ἀθηναίοις, εἰ τὸ ψήφισμα καθελεῖν τὸ Μεγαρικὸν ἐπέισθησαν καὶ διαλλαγῆναι πρὸς αὐτούς. (29.8)

¹⁴⁴ Sourvinou-Inwood (1989), 136; (2005), 296–303.

¹⁴⁵ On the instructive role of *oikeia* paradigms in Plutarch, see also *De Ipsum Laud.* 544d–e; *Praec. Ger.* 825c; *Arat.* 1. A similar idea is present in the pseudo-Plutarchan *On the education of children*, where it is suggested that fathers should make themselves an example to their children (14a).

¹⁴⁶ 'Internal' refers to the characters' mind, while 'external' to Plutarch's mind (the readers' mind is also 'external').

διὸ καὶ μάλιστα πρὸς τοῦτο Περικλῆς ἐναντιωθεὶς καὶ παροξύνας τὸν δῆμον ἐμμεῖναι
τῇ πρὸς τοὺς Μεγαρεῖς φιλονικίᾳ, μόνος ἔσχε τοῦ πολέμου τὴν αἰτίαν. (*Per.* 29.7–8)
δοκεῖ M: δοκῇ U A, sed η in ras. U ἐδόκει S

(29.7) It does not seem probable that the war would have come upon the Athenians for any remaining reasons, if only they could have been persuaded to rescind their decree against the Megarians and be reconciled with them. (29.8) And therefore, since it was Pericles who was most of all opposed to this, and who incited the people to abide by their contention with the Megarians, he alone was held responsible for the war.

The present δοκεῖ, attested by one manuscript (M) and adopted by Ziegler says something important about Plutarch's conception of the causes of the Peloponnesian War: Plutarch must accept Pericles as being responsible for the outbreak of the war.¹⁴⁷ However, the manuscript tradition equally preserves the imperfect ἐδόκει which suggests a different interpretative perspective, that of the contemporary Athenians,¹⁴⁸ whose unfavourable stand towards Pericles can be easily inferred from the blaming suggested in the last sentence (διὸ καὶ μάλιστα . . . μόνος ἔσχε τοῦ πολέμου τὴν αἰτίαν).¹⁴⁹ The variant readings δοκεῖ and ἐδόκει clearly reflect the ambiguity and complexity that Plutarch's narrative can elicit in readers about the distance between the narrator and in-text characters.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁷ Cf. *Per.-Fab.* 3.1.

¹⁴⁸ Cf. Pelling (2000b), 272 n. 58. He relies especially on Thuc. 1.139.4 and 1.140.4 and considers that the imperfect ἐδόκει is probably right.

¹⁴⁹ See Pelling (2000b), 272 n. 59, pointing out that the word αἰτία 'strongly suggests "blaming", the charges made at the time, and that suits the context's stress on Pericles' unpopularity', on which see *Per.* 31–2; 34.5; 37.5.

¹⁵⁰ For a similar complexity see Thuc. 8.86.4, with Hornblower (2008), 1001. The manuscript tradition preserves ἐδόκει, which Classen emends, to general agreement, to δοκεῖ that expresses Thucydides' personal judgement.

There are actually instances where the narrator tries to avoid confusion and decisively individuates his own perspective from that of the characters. In the *Demetrius*, he expresses his opinion that Demetrius ought to have shown respect towards the goddess Athena, if for no other reason, at least because she was his elder sister (ὥς γε πρεσβυτέραν ἀδελφήν); but Plutarch goes on to declare that this was what Demetrius liked to have her called (τοῦτο γὰρ ἐβούλετο λέγεσθαι) in order to avoid a plausible misunderstanding that this statement might be considered his (24.1).

The readers, however, are often left to determine whether and how far a comment or judgement belongs to the narrator, the historical agents, or both.¹⁵¹ This latent ambivalence, I would suggest, can cause an apparent interweaving of the narrated and narrative time, and produce an effect of immediacy that is suitable for thrusting readers into the story and making them engage with the individual and collective minds of historical agents as well as the dialogue between the two.

2.3.1 All at one . . .

In some cases, although it is not completely clear whether judgements are to be taken as the narrator's or contemporary onlookers', readers can feel confident that there is no conflict between the two, and that they can share both. In the *Life of Caesar*, for example, Plutarch stresses the alienation of the Roman people from Caesar, especially their distress at the triumph Caesar celebrated over Pompey's sons. He comments:

¹⁵¹ Due (1989), 112–14; (2002), 88–9 makes similar observations about Xenophon's *Cyropaedia*. Hornblower (1994), 134–5 and de Jong (1987), 112 give examples of *gar*-clauses from Thucydides and Homer (accordingly) where the narrator's and characters' viewpoints are confused and blended. See also Baragwanath (2008), 198 with n. 83, commenting on the *gar*-clause in Hdt. 5.97.1. Cf. de Jong (1987), 118–22 ('implicit embedded focalisation') and Fowler (1990) [= repr. (2000), 40–63] ('deviant focalisation').

‘for he [i.e. Caesar] had not defeated (οὐ γὰρ . . . κατηγωνισμένον) foreign generals or barbarian kings, but had destroyed the sons and the entire family of the man who had been the greatest of the Romans, and who had fallen on misfortune. It could not be right to celebrate the nation’s disasters like this, nor to preen oneself on a victory whose only possible defence before gods and men was one of necessity, especially as before this Caesar had sent no official messengers or despatches about victory in the civil wars, but had had the decency to shun that sort of glory’ (56.7–9).¹⁵² In the last chapter of the *Pericles*, we are told that the Athenians come to acknowledge Pericles’ worth after his death (39.3). Even his odious power, which was previously called monarchy and tyranny, now seems to them a safeguard for their constitution. Plutarch concludes that ‘so abundant a crop, so large a multitude of evils lay upon the state, which he had kept from sight, making them weak and unimposing, and had prevented from becoming incurable in their strength’ (39.4).¹⁵³

In the example from the *Caesar*, the *gar*-clause can be considered the property of the narrator who affords his own explanation of people’s discomfort and his ethical commentary on Caesar’s action; but it can also present a free indirect rendering of the collective response of the Romans, giving their own thoughts about Caesar. Both possibilities may gain plausibility over the course of the *Caesar*,¹⁵⁴ and readers may

¹⁵² Tr. Pelling (2011a), adapted.

¹⁵³ Tr. Stadter (1989), 349.

¹⁵⁴ In the *Caesar*, we know about the Romans’ high esteem for Pompey—they consider him as the potential doctor of the parlous state of Roman politics (28.6)—as well as their displeasure with the insult Caesar bore to be hurled by Antony at Pompey’s house (51.3). It is not surprising if these people are annoyed with Caesar’s triumph over Pompey’s sons, especially after they suffer so much in the civil wars (33–4; 55.5–6). The outrage at the humiliation or slaughter of compatriots is strongly felt in other *Lives* too, e.g. *Gracchi* 38.8–9; *Pomp.* 10.4–6, with Pelling (2011a), 420.

feel that at these moments the viewpoints of the narrator and onlookers coincide, and that they themselves can share both. Likewise, the praiseworthy note with which the *Pericles* ends can equally belong to the narrator as well as the Athenians who come to appreciate Pericles' qualities in hindsight, as we shall see more fully in chapter three.¹⁵⁵ Pericles himself regarded as the noblest of his works that he had never on the basis of his vast power 'treated any enemy as irreconcilable (ὥς ἀνηκέστω)' (*Per.* 39.1).¹⁵⁶ At the end, both the narrator and the Athenians are presumably speaking Pericles' language (cf. *Per.* 39.4: κατεκώλυεν ἀνήκεστον), and the readers may feel most comfortable joining the two.

Such cases certainly encourage complacency: a circle of narrator, reader, and historical agents is constructed, all of whom are assumed to have the same mind at these moments and reflect together on the protagonist's character. However, the narrator and historical agents do not always seem really concordant, and readers are often perplexed about if and how far the two have a share in, believe, or agree on a specific moral assumption.

2.3.2 Blurred minds

One of the constant interests of the *Life of Demetrius* is Demetrius' relationship with his father Antigonus. Antigonus is presented as a man of high-mindedness and ambition (19.1; 28.2). He has an excessive love for dominion, harshness, and arrogance (28.3–4), and exercises great influence over his son Demetrius. He encourages his son's utilitarian marriage to Phila (14.3) and treats humorously his submission to Lamia and other women:

¹⁵⁵ See below, pp. 132–4.

¹⁵⁶ Tr. Stadter (1989), 346.

(19.4) Ἦν δὲ τότε μικρὸν ἀπολείποντα γεγονῶς ἔτη τῶν ὀγδοήκοντα· μεγέθει δὲ καὶ βαρύτητι σώματος μᾶλλον ἢ διὰ τὸ γῆρας ἐπὶ τὰς στρατείας γεγονῶς δυσπαρακόμιστος, ἐχρήτο τῷ παιδί, καὶ δι' εὐτυχίαν καὶ δι' ἐμπειρίαν ἤδη τὰ μέγιστα καλῶς διοικούντι, τρυφᾶς δὲ καὶ πολυτελείας καὶ πότους αὐτοῦ μὴ βαρυνόμενος. (19.5) εἰρήνης γὰρ οὔσης ἀφύβριζεν εἰς ταῦτα, καὶ σχολάζων ἐχρήτο πρὸς τὰς ἡδονὰς ἀναιμένως αὐτῷ καὶ κατακόρως, ἐν δὲ τοῖς πολέμοις ὡς οἱ φύσει σώφρονες ἔνηφε. (19.6) λέγεται δὲ τῆς Λαμίας ἀναφανδὸν ἤδη κρατούσης τὸν Ἀντίγονον ὑπὸ τοῦ Δημητρίου καταφιλούμενον ἦκοντος ἀπὸ ξένης εἰπεῖν ἅμα γελῶντα· “δοκεῖς Λάμιαν ὧ παῖ καταφιλεῖν.” . . . (19.9) ταῦτα δ' οὕτω πρῶως ἔφερε τοῦ Δημητρίου διὰ τὴν ἄλλην πράξιν. (19.10) οἱ μὲν γὰρ Σκύθαι πίνοντες καὶ μεθυσκόμενοι παραψάλλουσι τὰς νευρὰς τῶν τόξων, οἷον ἐκλυόμενον ὑπὸ τῆς ἡδονῆς ἀνακαλούμενοι τὸν θυμόν, ἐκεῖνος δὲ τὰ μὲν ἡδονῇ διδοὺς ἀπλῶς ἑαυτόν, τὰ δὲ σπουδῇ, καὶ θάτερα τῶν ἐτέρων ἄκρατα μεταχειριζόμενος, οὐχ ἦττον ἦν δεινὸς ἐν ταῖς τοῦ πολέμου παρασκευαῖς. (*Demetr.* 19.4–10)

(19.4) Antigonus was at this time almost eighty years old, and his great size and weight, even more than his old age, made it difficult for him to conduct expeditions. He therefore made use of his son instead, whose good fortune and experience now enabled him to conduct the greatest affairs successfully, and whose luxuries, extravagances, and revelries gave his father no concern. (19.5) For although in time of peace Demetrius plunged deep into these excesses and devoted his leisure to his pleasures without restraint and intemperately, yet in time of war he was as sober as those who were abstemious by nature. (19.6) And it is told that once, after Lamia was known of all men to be in complete control of Demetrius, he came home from abroad and greeted his father with a kiss, whereupon Antigonus said with a laugh, ‘One would think, my son, that you were kissing Lamia.’ . . . (19.9) He treated these failings of Demetrius with such lenity because the young man was so efficient otherwise. (19.10) For the Scythians, in the midst of their drinking and carousing, twang their bow-strings, as though summoning back their courage when it is dissolved in pleasure; but Demetrius, giving himself up completely, now to pleasure, and now to duty, and keeping the one completely separate from the other, was no less formidable in his preparations for war.

There may be several ways of interpreting the underlined sentences. The first explanatory bracket looks initially like an evaluation by Plutarch, who might argue here for a clear distinction between the private life and military efficiency of Demetrius. But it can also be read as representing Antigonos' thoughts given in free indirect mode. The use of the present tense in the second underlined text makes it attributable to the narrator. However, the reader can recognise the possibility that the present, with its durative sense, presents an activity which is ongoing:¹⁵⁷ the Scythian habit might still stand, and people talk about it in Plutarch's era, but this does not preclude that it was also known in the time of Antigonos and Demetrius—Antigonos must have been familiar with the Scythians, especially if one thinks of his support of the Black Sea cities, the Thracians, and the Scythians in their fighting against Lysimachus in 313 BC. So it is plausible that even if Antigonos might not have put it that way himself, he might still have accepted the point that the Scythian analogy makes. Thus Plutarch can adopt or at least express Antigonos' perspective at this particular point in the narrative without necessarily giving his own authority to it. What initially appears to be simply a narratorial statement can also be read as a description of events or states in the storyworld as experienced by a particular character.

This fusion of the narrator's and character's perspectives serves not only to add an extra punch to the explanations of the narrator—Antigonos' trust is better explained if Antigonos has shared this perspective himself to some extent—but also to take the responsibility away from lying solely with the narrator for the validity of this claim—where it initially seems to lie—and give it to a character as well. The

¹⁵⁷ The present participles διδούς and μεταχειριζόμενος have a similar durative sense. Here the present is used in the place of the imperfect (cf. οὐχ ἦπτον ἦν δεινός).

narrator can hence be consistent with the details he gives elsewhere in the *Life* about Demetrius' dissoluteness,¹⁵⁸ and the unpopularity caused, all of which contributed significantly to his downfall;¹⁵⁹ and at the same time, elsewhere, he can be more positive and say that 'one could not claim (οὐκ ἂν εἴποι δέ τις)' that Demetrius did not succeed in keeping his private life separate from his military conduct,¹⁶⁰ especially if Demetrius is contrasted with Antony (*Demetr.-Ant.* 3). Demetrius is less blameworthy than Antony, indeed, but it is impossible for Plutarch that Demetrius can be entirely absolved of any charge against his erotic life. This blurring of perspectives has the effect of distancing the narrator from explicit praise of Demetrius and contributing to the perplexity of forming a single moral judgement on Demetrius' character. This was a character with which Demetrius' contemporaries were befuddled, for it inspired in them both fear (ἐκπληξιν) and favour (χάριν) (*Demetr.* 2.3),¹⁶¹ and one with which Plutarch and his readers continue to be befuddled too.

This befuddlement, aroused by the questionable distance between the mind of the narrator and that of the in-text characters, paradoxically allows the readers to

¹⁵⁸ e.g. *Demetr.* 9.5–7; 24.2–12.

¹⁵⁹ See *Demetr.* 14.4: περὶ τὴν ἡδονὴν ταύτην κακῶς ἀκούσαι, 42.6: καὶ τοῦτο δὴ δεινῶς ἠνίασε τοὺς Μακεδόνας, ὑβρίζεσθαι δοκοῦντας, 44.8: ἀπειρηγένοι γὰρ ἤδη Μακεδόνας ὑπὲρ τῆς ἐκείνου τροφῆς πολιοῦντας. The wording is highly reminiscent of *Demetr.* 19 (quoted above), showing how Demetrius' taste for pleasure and luxury contributes to his failures. Cf. *Demetr.-Ant.* 6.2. See also Duff (2004), 283.

¹⁶⁰ This statement in the *Synkrisis* has been taken as contradicting Plutarch's 'less generous' references in the main narrative: Pelling (1988a), 22; Duff (1999), 279; Wheatley (2004), 8–9.

¹⁶¹ The following ἡδιστος γὰρ ὧν συγγενέσθαι . . . χάριν ἐμμελέστατον (*Demetr.* 2.3) might be another example of free indirect construction, which makes it hard to determine with certainty who gives expression to these sentiments: it might be contemporary onlookers; but it can also be Plutarch who explains how they felt.

engage more intimately with the mind of the in-texts character itself. In the *Life of Antony*, Antony is often seen as brilliant but passive, the vulnerable victim of others' flatteries and wiles, especially Cleopatra's. Plutarch stresses that Antony was 'such an appendage' (προσθήκη) to Cleopatra that he decided to fight by sea, although he was far superior on land and clearly saw the deficiencies of his naval forces (62.1). It is in vain that Canidius, the commander of the land forces (63.6–7), and an infantry centurion, who has fought many battles for Antony (64), try to persuade him to the contrary. Cleopatra is the final winner, and her opinion prevails that a sea battle must be fought (63.8).

In describing Antony's attitude in the battle, Plutarch notes that 'Antony made the round of all the ships in a small rowing boat, urging the soldiers to rely on the weight of their vessels and to stand firm and fight exactly as if they were on land (ὥσπερ ἐκ γῆς ἐδραίους μάχεσθαι)' (65.4).¹⁶² The ὥσπερ is effective in bringing into the narrative two different perspectives, that of Antony and that of the narrator, leaving it open as to whom the land analogy belongs. In the first case, it might be revealing of Antony's mind, capturing what he himself thinks and most likely asks the soldiers to think too while engaged in a sea fight. In the second case, it might be a narratorial ironic comment on the situation: the sea battle was finally like the land-battle which should have been *but* was not.¹⁶³ It embraces a judgement on Antony, which has validity beyond the specific incident without necessarily implying anything about Antony's spoken or mental discourse at that particular moment. An alert reader may sense that there is a distance between Plutarch's and Antony's perspectives, a

¹⁶² Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010), adapted.

¹⁶³ Cf. Pelling (1988a), 269, 281, drawing attention to the irony here.

distance which draws them to engage with and juxtapose the as if-reality experienced by Antony and the actual one stressed by the narrator.

A more elaborate example of such a ‘distancing fusion’ of the narrator’s and characters’ minds is found in the *Life of Lucullus*. In the *Lucullus* it is not only the narrator who criticises Lucullus for his offensive use of wealth and luxurious way of living (41.1; 41.7), but also Lucullus’ enemies:

οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Κράσσον καὶ Πομπήιον ἐχλεύαζον τὸν Λεύκολλον εἰς ἡδονὴν ἀφεικότα καὶ πολυτέλειαν αὐτόν, ὥσπερ οὐ τοῦ τρυφᾶν μᾶλλον τοῖς τηλικούτοις παρ’ ἡλικίαν ὄντος ἢ τοῦ πολιτεύεσθαι καὶ στρατηγεῖν. (*Luc.* 38.5)

οὐ del. Rei. Li.

But the followers of Crassus and Pompey scoffed Lucullus because he abandoned himself to his life of pleasure and extravagance, as if luxury were no more inappropriate for the elderly than politics and command.

Part of the complication here is that the ὥσπερ-clause can mean two almost opposite things: (i) ‘as if it were not the case [as it in fact is] that luxury was more inappropriate for the elderly than politics and command’, i.e. Lucullus should not abandon politics and fighting;¹⁶⁴ and (ii) ‘as if luxury were no more inappropriate for the elderly than politics and command’, i.e. it was equally inappropriate for Lucullus to stay and fight or retire in luxury. In the second case, the ὥσπερ-clause gives in a striking fashion the critics’ perception of Lucullus’ perception of his retirement, a complex set of viewpoints that harmonises well with the possible explanations, offered earlier in chapter 38, for Lucullus’ decision to abandon politics: either Lucullus saw that public affairs were out of control and corrupt, or as some people say he was filled with so much glory that he now preferred a life of ease and mildness

¹⁶⁴ Reiske and Lindskog seem to think along similar lines by deleting the οὐ after ὥσπερ.

without those struggles and toils that finally proved to be unfortunate (38.2). Plutarch continues that some praise Lucullus for this change of direction, for other public men ended up badly by persisting in their insatiable lust for glory and power when they were beyond their peak and their strength was failing (38.3–4)¹⁶⁵—in the *Whether an elderly man should engage in politics* Lucullus himself appears (with Plutarch’s disapproval) to blame Pompey for his love of command and love of honour being unsuited to his age (785f)

In the first case, however, the ὥσπερ-clause can represent the sentiments of the onlookers as well as an implicit narratorial judgement on Lucullus’ situation. The absence of ὥς before the ἀφεικότα reinforces the suggestion that the narrator is not wholly excluding himself from acknowledging the force of the criticisms. In the *Life of Pompey* the remark is Pompey’s (48.7) and in the *Whether an elderly man should engage in politics* it is quoted as Pompey’s words, approved by Plutarch (785e–f).¹⁶⁶ We can hear in the sentence the evaluative timbre of both the narrator and the circle of Pompey and Crassus, and this gives an extra force to that disapproving commentary on Lucullus’ perception.

This sense of blurring of internal and external minds that we noticed over the course of our discussion, I would contend, is fundamental to the effect of immediacy that Plutarch’s narrative produces. It breaks down the barrier between the in-text characters and the external audience and encourages the latter to immerse themselves in the storyworld and engage all the more actively with the minds of an individual and of the people around him as well as the dialogue between the two. The different ways

¹⁶⁵ Cf. *Mar.* 2.4; 34.6–7; 45–6 for similar criticisms.

¹⁶⁶ Cf. *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* 204b; *Ad Princ. Inerud.* 782f; *An Seni* 792b–c; *Cim.-Luc.* 1.3–4.

in which this intermental dialogue bears upon the readers' act of judging are examined in the following chapter.

3.

Individual and Public Minds in Action

Readers of Plutarch's *Lives* are primed to get access to the emotions, consciousness, perceptions, plans, hopes, and complex inner lives of historical agents. This induces an especially immersive response, spurring them into the storyworld of the narrative and making them experience the ebb and flow of individual and collective minds. The readers may feel confident to share the assumptions of historical agents or at least adopt a set of them; on occasion, they may view empathetically some of the comments of individual characters or groups of bystanders, while, at times, they may feel puzzled or uncomfortable with the social atmosphere of the time and the way in which Plutarch recreates or even reacts to it.

In all cases, however, Plutarch's interest in the workings of the minds of intratextual characters has some bearing on the readers' moral response, exhibiting and inviting, as we shall see, their active engagement with notions that Christopher Gill associates with 'personality'.¹ A real interest in the individuation, the psychology, the understanding of a person as an integrated member within a society is generated,² without however precluding moral evaluation, a 'character-approach' in Gill's terms.³

¹ Gill (1983), 470–3; (1986); (1996), 1–18.

² Pelling (1989), 231–2; (1990b), 224–35 [= repr. (2002a), 307–15]; (2002a), 321–9. See also Swain (1989), 63–4; Frazier (1996), 101–70; Duff (1999), 69–70, 228 n. 70; Nikolaidis (2014), 353–4, 364–5. Cf. De Temmerman (2014), 12–14, 25–6, 322–4 on the ancient novel.

³ Cf. Pelling (1990b), 229–33 [= repr. (2002a), esp. 311–13]; (2002a), 321–2, 324; Duff (1999), 69–70. Gill (1986), 268–9 argues for a combination of 'character-personality' approach in Greek tragedy. Cf. De Temmerman (2014), 323–4 on the ancient novel.

Rather, the ‘personality approach’ helps the ‘character-approach’ along the way, encouraging the readers to ask evaluative questions and ‘enfranchising them as capable and thoughtful judges’.⁴

This chapter is divided into two parts. The first part (‘The mind inside the skull?’⁵) focuses more on self and individual experience and addresses in particular whether and how far Gill’s concept of ‘self in dialogue’ captures Plutarch’s technique of marking agonising moments of important decisions and actions in the *Lives*. Our discussion goes on to illustrate that the dramatic mode of self in dialogue can function as a privileged channel through which Plutarch, the characters of the *Lives*, and the readers are brought together into a psycho-ethical reasoning that goes beyond the private individual introspection and turns the attention to the wider social environment with which an individual’s mind engages in dialogue.

This dialogue between the self and others, the individual and the society, is further elaborated in the second part (‘The mind beyond the skin’⁶), where the role of the social environment, and more precisely, of the responses of contemporary observers is examined in terms of shaping readerly moral response.⁷ When social context and the interaction of the individual with it come into play, they may highlight in particular the challenged and problematic ‘intermental dialogue’ of a man with his community. This dialogue, as we shall see, invites an empathetic engagement with

⁴ The phrasing here is highly indebted to Baragwanath (2008), 20.

⁵ The phrase is taken from Palmer (2010), 42.

⁶ For the expression see Palmer (2004), 11; (2010), 42.

⁷ On the onlookers’ responses encompassing statements about the character of the main subject of the *Lives* and judgements on his actions, see Pelling (1988a), 335 (index 2. subjects, s.v. characterisation by reaction); Duff (1999), 421 (index of themes, s.v. onlookers as mouthpiece for author) and (2011b), 65–7, 71–2;

moral evaluation. By illuminating the real difficulties and challenges involved in the social environment, it serves to explain (but not necessarily pardon) some of the most morally disconcerting actions of the men of history and prompt further consideration of some of their most important qualities, thus exposing the readers to the complex and provisional character of moralising judgements.

3.1 'THE MIND INSIDE THE SKULL?'

3.1.1 Gill on 'the self in dialogue'

In his 1996 book, *Personality in Greek Epic, Tragedy, and Philosophy*, Gill analyses several examples from Greek epic and tragedy and suggests, *inter alia*, that internalised dialogue constitutes a significant mode, often used in grand characterising scenes of dramatic moments. According to Gill, inner dialogue expresses that sort of sense of responsibility and self-consciousness that is appropriate to an 'objective' psychological framework, centred on reasons and reasoning, and a 'participant' non-Kantian ethical framework, informed by the action-guiding beliefs of the community and the idea of a person's engagement with her/his social role.⁸ Epic and tragic figures, as Gill argues, who have at times been treated as marginal, ethically problematic, and social outsiders, can be better understood as psycho-ethical agents in the light of the norms governing interpersonal relationships in their communities. Sophocles' Ajax, Euripides' Medea, and Achilles in *Iliad* 9 are all making ethical

⁸ See Gill (1996), esp. 1–18, 503 (general index, s.v. internal dialogue). Gill contrasts it with the 'subjective-individualist' conception of personality. From the Cartesian and post-Cartesian models of mind and personhood this line of thought focuses on the 'subject', the idiosyncratic self, derived from a single unifying source of consciousness, while from the Kantian and post-Kantian strand of thinking it rests on the autonomous will, which is the centre of ethical thought, and the individual 'I', which can stand against the roles and practices of society as a self-determining decision-maker.

choices that can be taken as ‘social gestures’ and often ‘exemplary gestures’, implying a special type of second-order reasoning about the proper form of human relationships and goals of human life, which normally shape first-order, practical reasoning. For, however bewildering their situations and horrible their deeds are, there is a difficulty, as Gill stresses, in passing definitive ethical judgements, since we are being invited not to judge these people straightforwardly but to get inside their skin and share their point of view, their intimate thoughts and deliberations.⁹

This kind of moral complexity with which the main heroes of epic and tragedy are presented at key moments of choice and decision is an aspect that is also shared by most of Plutarch’s historical figures. If we follow Gill’s line of thinking, a good deal of what is problematic or (better still) enigmatic in the moral appreciation of Plutarch’s subjects inheres in the fact that their second-order reasoning, like that of the problematic characters of epic and tragedy, guides their emotional responses and leads them to conduct themselves in a way that does not seem acceptable by the normal standards of interpersonal and communal behaviour that they and their societies share.¹⁰ However, does Plutarch’s biographical narrative, like the Homeric poems or the Greek tragedy, exploit the dramatic dialogic model of inner conflicting voices to engage the audience with the reasons and reasoning that motivate the protagonists of the *Lives*, and with the ethical stances they adopt in social exchange? How and how far is the relationship between the intra-psychic interplay and socio-ethical engagement developed by Plutarch? And in what ways does it influence our moral response?

⁹ See esp. Gill (1996), 117–18.

¹⁰ Cf. Gill (1996), 94–5, 119–20.

3.1.2 Dion's and Cicero's dilemmas

There are moments indeed when Plutarch's heroes are isolated by their special situation, do not have the modes of interpersonal dialogue available, and resort to a dialogue with their own self. Dion and Cicero are two blatant examples. Dion, outmanoeuvred by Heracleides, is brought to a great dilemma (εἰς ἅπασαν ἀπορίαν) as to how he should act (*Dion* 33.4):

εἴτε γὰρ ἀφιέναι κελεύοι Διονύσιον ὑπόσπονδον ἐκ τῆς ἄκρας, διαβολὴν εἶχε φείδεσθαι καὶ περισφάζειν ἐκείνον, εἴτε λύνει μὴ βουλόμενος ἐπὶ τῆς πολιορκίας ἡσυχάζει, διατηρεῖν ἐδόκει τὸν πόλεμον, ὥς μᾶλλον ἄρχοι καὶ καταπλήττοιτο τοὺς πολίτας. (*Dion* 33.5)

For if he were to urge the people to let Dionysius leave the acropolis under a truce, he would be accused of sparing and protecting the despot, while if he took care not to give offence in this way and merely continued the siege, he would appear to be deliberately prolonging the war in order to keep himself in command and overawe the citizens.¹¹

Cicero similarly appears to agonise about how to deal with the conspirators. He is afraid, as Plutarch notes, of imposing an extreme penalty because of the humanity of his character. He also wants to avoid appearing surfeited with power and cruelly opposing such powerful men, and he feels anxious about the danger he will face if he treats these men more leniently (*Cic.* 19.5–6). The following explanation is part of Cicero's deliberation:

(19.7) οὐ γὰρ ἀγαπήσειν μετριώτερόν τι θανάτου παθόντας, ἀλλ' εἰς ἅπαν ἀναρραγήσεσθαι τόλμης, τῇ παλαιᾷ κακίᾳ νέαν ὀργὴν προσλαβόντας, αὐτὸς τε δόξειν

¹¹ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012).

ἄνανδρος καὶ μαλακός, οὐδ' ἄλλως δοκῶν εὐτολμότατος εἶναι τοῖς πολλοῖς. (20.1)

Ταῦτα τοῦ Κικέρωνος διαποροῦντος . . . (*Cic.* 19.7–20.1)

(19.7) For they would not be content if they suffered a milder penalty than death but would break out into every kind of outrageous act, since additional passion had been added to their pre-existing wickedness, while he himself would seem to be soft and cowardly, since public opinion did not generally believe him to be the bravest of men. (20.1) While Cicero was in this dilemma . . .¹²

In both cases, the reasoning of the individuals represents the expression of important ethical claims within the framework of their communal relationships. Dion's and Cicero's psychological conflict stems from a plausible crisis in the interpersonal exchange in their societies, with the pressure of events and the possible opposing reactions of other people building up and shaping their uneasy response. This is a response that may be neither itself an 'exemplary gesture' nor result in one, like Medea's infanticide in Euripides' tragedy or Achilles' rejection of Agamemnon's gifts in *Iliad* 9,¹³ but which dramatises and pinpoints an 'exemplary' and life-shaping characteristic of the two men, which defines the ethically complex stance underlying their actions.

Dion's perplexity links with his problematic political and military pragmatism, his questionable ability throughout his life to understand that philosophy is not always efficiently applicable to real-life politics.¹⁴ Cicero's deliberation causes readers to engage with the public reception of Cicero's softness and cowardice,¹⁵ which along

¹² Tr. Lintott (2013).

¹³ Gill (1986), 172–3.

¹⁴ Cf. below, §5.3. This is a theme that makes sense within the *Dion–Brutus* book as a whole.

¹⁵ *Dem.* 3.3; *Cic.* 20.7; 35.3; 35.5; 42.2; 45.2. Cf. Moles (1988), 167–8.

with questions about Cicero's love of his country,¹⁶ his susceptibility to honour and love for glory,¹⁷ and his political inconsistency and instability,¹⁸ serve as a pivot on which our moral appraisal of Cicero consistently revolves. However, what is striking here is that Cicero, contrary to his overall behaviour, deliberates as if he is well aware of and takes seriously into account the negative results of his softness and cowardice (*Cic.* 19.7–20.1), while Dion, despite his usual inability to think as a pragmatic politician, appears to measure up the interplay between his actions and people's reactions (*Dion* 33.5). It may be that Dion and Cicero, becoming for a moment two thoughtful characters in lonely self-communion, manage to reach on these crucial occasions a climax of refined consciousness. Or it could be possible that the narrator shares some responsibility for their reflective words. In the first passage from the *Dion*, the free indirect rendering of Dion's utterance or perception allows the discourse of the narrator and the character to merge;¹⁹ in the second example from the *Cicero*, although there is no such fusion—the whole indirect construction is hinged grammatically on a verb of saying or thinking that is omitted, and the dilemma is explicitly attributed to Cicero (*Cic.* 20.1: ταῦτα τοῦ Κικέρωνος διαποροῦντος)²⁰—Cicero's spoken or mental discourse may be blended or hybridised with the narrator's

¹⁶ *Cic.* 22.5–8; 23.3–6; 49.5–6 but 46.1; *Dem.-Cic.* 4.4.

¹⁷ *Cic.* 5.1; 5.3; 6.5; 24.4; 25.1.

¹⁸ *Cic.* 37–8 (in *Cic.* 37.2–3 conflicting reasoning signals this 'exemplary characteristic' of Cicero which provokes criticism (*Cic.* 38.1–39.5)).

¹⁹ On free indirect discourse in ancient literature, see Sanders and Redeker (1996), 294, 301–3; Laird (1999), 97–8, 107; Beck (2009), 139. Laird (2008), 202 stresses its rare use.

²⁰ Cf. Frazier (1995), 152. A similar construction is present in *Alc.* 34.5–6: ἡ γὰρ ἀτρεμήσαντα κομιδῇ κολούσιν καὶ ταπεινώσιν τὸν Ἄγιν, ἡ μάχην ἱερὰν . . . ἐν ὄψει τῆς πατρίδος μαχεῖσθαι, καὶ πάντας ἔξειν μάρτυρας . . . τῆς ἀνδραγαθίας. ὥς δὲ ταῦτ' ἔγνω καὶ προεῖπεν.

standpoint. In both instances, the blurring produces an immediacy that is suitable for such moments of high tension and crisis;²¹ it opens up communication between the narrator, the readers, and the heroes of the *Lives*, all of whom are assumed to engage with a psycho-ethical reflective debate in which the subject's character and ethical life are explored.

However important such a powerful dramatic form is, Plutarch rarely highlights agonising moments with a self in dialogue.²² Rather he prefers to let his heroes reflect in silence, with no different internal voices being heard. Are these moments of 'dramatic silence' a means to imbue the narrative with theatricality,²³ implant suspense at a crucial moment,²⁴ and mark the collapse and highly poignant state of a character?²⁵ Are they used to communicate deep, considered emotion, and place the silent figure at the centre of dramatic attention, as the 'Aeschylean silences'

²¹ Cf. Laird (1999), 97–8, 181.

²² Cf. Brenk (1992), 4420; Pelling (2002a), 325–9. See also Frazier (1995), 151–2, who notices that Plutarch's interest primarily lies in announcing a decision or delineating the momentous anxiety rather than describing the process of thinking that led to the decision. The infrequent use of self in dialogue is also noticed in the ancient novels, which are more or less contemporary with Plutarch's *Lives*. See De Temmerman (2014), 317, who analyses on pp. 61–5 and 164 some rare examples from the novels of Chariton and Achilles Tatius.

²³ See Montiglio (2000), 185–6 taking *Alex.* 19.3–4, for which read 19.6–7 (esp. 19.7: θεατρικὴν τὴν ὄψιν), as an example of Plutarch's use of wordless scenes to produce theatricality.

²⁴ See Montiglio (2000), 176–7, who mentions *Ant.* 10.8–9.

²⁵ See Schön (1987), 14. Montiglio (2000), 46–81 examines the association between silence and anti-heroic behaviour in the *Iliad*. Examples of silence capturing people in a state of strong emotions or perplexity in the *Lives* include *Cor.* 36.1; *Phil.* 17.5; *Pyrrh.* 3.2. Silence can also be suggestive of a virtuous disposition: e.g. *Per.* 5.2; 34.1; *Aem.* 11.2; *Arist.* 8.6. Cf. Pelling (2011a), 518 (general index, s.v. 'silence, dramatic').

normally do?²⁶ Does the silence in and of the discourse signal the importance of the moment through the inadequacy of the language to express what a person is saying or thinking? Devocalised reflective reasoning in Plutarch's *Lives* can serve all these; and, as we shall see below, this sort of silence can be 'eloquent'²⁷ and meaningful enough to involve something inherent in the substance of the narrative and induce a special kind of immersive response to the subjects of the *Lives*.

3.1.3 Reflecting in silence . . .

Alexander stops before a gigantic statue of Xerxes and talks to it: 'Shall I pass by and leave you lying there because of the expedition you led against Greece, or shall I set you up again because of your magnanimity and your virtues in other respects?' (*Alex.* 37.5).²⁸ Plutarch goes on to mention that Alexander passed on, after he communed with himself for a long time in silence (*Alex.* 37.5: πολὺν χρόνον πρὸς ἑαυτῷ γενόμενος καὶ σιωπήσας). Moreover, we are told that after the murder of Cleitus Alexander grieved, repented, and eventually kept himself silent (cf. *Alex.* 52.1: τὴν ἀποσιώπησιν); and that Antony, after abandoning his army at Actium, stayed isolated in stillness (*Ant.* 67.1: ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ καθήστο σιωπῇ) at the prow of Cleopatra's ship, his head sunk in his hands. He remained quiet (ἡσυχίαν ἦγε) and alone (καθ' ἑαυτόν) for three days, for (as Plutarch says) he either felt too angry or too ashamed to see Cleopatra (*Ant.* 67.5). Antony's emotions are spelled out, but there

²⁶ See Gill (1986), 258. On the Aeschylean silences, see Taplin (1972); Laird (1999), 191 with n. 75 for further bibliography.

²⁷ See Scarpi (1987), 21, 23 for the term 'eloquent silence'.

²⁸ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012).

are no internal conflicting voices concerning his earlier decision or what he decides next. Silence takes over again.

There are other occasions on which silence passes unmarked, and Plutarch simply highlights the subject's deliberation, wavering or loss of judgement. Coriolanus, for example, after he leaves Rome, remains alone (cf. αὐτὸς καθ' ἑαυτόν) for a few days, torn by many conflicting calculations (ὑπὸ πολλῶν διενεχθεὶς διαλογισμῶν) as to how he could take vengeance on the Romans before he goes over to the Volscians (*Cor.* 21.5);²⁹ Cicero reasons with himself (λογισμὸν αὐτῷ διδούς) about his lust for fame (*Cic.* 6.4); Pyrrhus is puzzled for a long time (διηνέχθη τοῖς λογισμοῖς πολὺν χρόνον) when he is offered the chance of conquering Sicily and Macedonia (*Pyrrh.* 22.3). Upon Antony's betrayal of his men, Plutarch emphasises Antony's loss of judgment (cf. οὐθ' ὅλως ἰδίοις λογισμοῖς διοικούμενον) and complete submissiveness to Cleopatra (*Ant.* 66.7); but he does not exhibit any countervailing voices that could, as part of a self in dialogue, articulate and dramatise Antony's decision. It is Shakespeare and not Plutarch who makes the most of the dramatic potential lying in articulating a mental struggle.³⁰

Plutarch, based on the overall behaviour of his subjects, could simply creatively reconstruct—as he does elsewhere—what these men must have inwardly said or thought, if such material did not exist in his sources. However, his reluctance

²⁹ Dion. Hal. *Ant. Rom.* 8.1.2–3, on the contrary, brings out Coriolanus' mental working. Achilles, a regular intertextual parallel to Coriolanus, might be evoked here, especially his wavering of thought when he decides to withdraw from the fight (*Il.* 1.188–94: Πηλεΐωνι δ' ἄχος γένετ', ἐν δέ οἱ ἦτορ ἰστήθεσιν λασίοισι διάνδιχα μερμήριξεν). Cf. Pelling (2002a), 326. On Plutarch's reworking of Dionysius' text (*Ant. Rom.* 6.92–8.62), see Russell (1963) [= repr. (1995), 357–72]; Duff (1999), 214; Pelling (1997d) [= repr. (2002a), 387–411].

³⁰ Cf. Pelling (1988a), 37–45.

to do so might itself be operative, activating the reflection of the readers and implanting in them the desire to fill up the hidden mind by extrapolation from the preceding narrative and, as happens in everyday life, from the subject's external behaviour.³¹

The Panhellenic character of Alexander's campaign against the Persians is consistently suggested in the early part of his *Life*. There is an emphasis on Alexander's constant attempt to benefit the Greek cities in fighting against the Barbarians, and Alexander himself suggests a direct link between his own campaign and the Persian wars, the first truly historical Panhellenic action (*Alex.* 34). Both Alexander's philhellenism and philosophical *paideia* are closely associated with his virtuous conception of kingship, which allows Alexander to prevail over friends and enemies,³² and provide explanatory lenses through which his self-communion before the fallen statue of Xerxes might be seen. Alexander's remorse for Cleitus' murder, moreover, affords Plutarch an excellent opportunity to disclose the internal struggle that Alexander has plausibly experienced.³³ Unlike Justin (12.6.5–14) and Curtius (8.2.1–9), however, Plutarch chooses not to show Alexander's remonstrations with himself. Possibly, he found that it would be to no avail to include such a dramatic presentation of Alexander's self. The earlier scene of Cleitus' murder (*Alex.* 50–1),

³¹ See Palmer (2004), 11, 212–14, 246; (2010), 60; Pelling (2002a), 325–9 on Plutarch's *Lives*; De Temmerman (2014), 317 on the ancient novel.

³² On Alexander's virtuous conception of kingship, see esp. the scene of Alexander's capture of Darius' tent (*Alex.* 20) and Darius' discussion with the eunuch (*Alex.* 30). Cf. also Alexander's later treatment of Porus (*Alex.* 60). Beneker (2012), 103–52 offers an elaborate discussion of the most substantial notions (e.g. self-restraint, ambition, prudence, *erōs*) that underlie Alexander's kingship.

³³ See Fulkerson (2013), 98–113, who argues that the death of Cleitus and the following remorse of Alexander do not result in any real change in Alexander's behaviour.

loaded with tragic overtones,³⁴ works very well in putting us empathetically in Alexander's shoes and making us think about the cause (τὴν αἰτίαν) and the circumstances (τὸν καιρὸν) of the murder as well as the bitter consequences of Alexander's anger and propensity for drinking in the way in which Alexander himself might now have been thinking or talking about them (cf. *Alex.* 50.1–2).

In the *Antony*, Plutarch gives an adequate idea of the factors that might have weighed in Antony's decision. Readers are informed about the attractions of Rome through Octavia, the dutifulness to his men through Antony's earlier Parthian campaign, as well as the charms of Cleopatra. It is natural to think that Plutarch prefers to encourage us to share, temporarily at least, Antony's world-view by making us see things the way Antony might have seen them rather than describing his thought-process. In the *Coriolanus*, moreover, the earlier narrative leaves pointers to Coriolanus' military contributions to Rome, his arrogant and hostile feelings towards the Roman people, the indignation he felt at the ingratitude they showed when he was candidate for the consulship. Readers may recall all of this material and imagine for themselves the sort of inner reflective reasoning that might have shaped Coriolanus' decision to resort to the enemy.

Whether, therefore, one speaks or remains silent, whether we 'hear' one being indeed in dialogue with himself or we are required to decipher his accompanying state of mind by looking outwardly at his usual behaviour and how onlookers responded to

³⁴ See Mossman (1988), 88–9 [= repr. (1995), 218–21]. The scene is especially imbued with Dionysiac colouring. There is also an explicit allusion to Euripides' *Andromache* in *Alex.* 51.8, which may be intended to stir reflection on the bitter consequences that outrageous passion has for both Cleitus and Alexander. On this episode, see Stadter (1996), 302; Whitmarsh (2002), 182–3; Beneker (2012), 132, 135–6.

it, what counts is that such agonised moments adduce a sense of intimacy, designed to thrust readers into the world of the story and spur them into dealing with the reasons and reasoning that motivate the actions of the protagonists as well as the interpersonal dialectic that underlies their ethical experience.

Against this background, I shall now explore Plutarch's presentation of Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon (*Caes.* 32). This provides an illuminating case in point of a meaningful self-communing meditation that turns readers' attention not only inward into the private introspective thinking of the man but also outward into the wider social nexus in which his ethical life is expressed and better understood.

3.1.4 An 'intermental' self in dialogue? Caesar at the Rubicon (*Caes.* 32)

On his way to Ariminum, Caesar reaches the river that marks the boundary between Cisalpine Gaul and the rest of Italy, the Rubicon. Plutarch highlights that decisive turning point in the history of Caesar and Rome by dwelling especially on Caesar's hesitation on the river's edge. Thoughts came upon Caesar (λογισμὸς αὐτὸν εἰσήει), Plutarch stresses, and silently (σιγῇ), within his own mind (αὐτὸς ἐν ἑαυτῷ), his opinion (cf. τὴν γνώμην) wavered first one way and then the other (cf. ἐπ' ἀμφοτέρω μεταλαμβάνων), and his resolve (βούλευμα) suffered change after change (*Caes.* 32.5–6). There is a self in dialogue here, and readers are left to infer for themselves what Caesar might have been pondering from what they already know about him and, most importantly, from what they straightforwardly learn from the dilemma that Caesar shares with his friends (cf. συνδιηπόρησεν) (*Caes.* 32.7). Caesar was contemplating (ἀναλογιζόμενος), as Plutarch says, what great ills the crossing would bring upon the world and how great the story of it would be for

posterity (*Caes.* 32.7).³⁵ Caesar must have previously whipped up silently in himself such conflicting thoughts or something similar to them.³⁶ He eventually abandons his counsels (cf. ἀφείξεται ἑαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ) and, as if with a burst of passion (μετὰ θυμοῦ τινος), embarks on crossing the river (*Caes.* 32.8).

Christopher Pelling has argued that Caesar's considerations are not related to the Caesar we see elsewhere in the *Life*.³⁷ Plutarch's Caesar is neither a hesitant man nor one who, like his pair Alexander, is interested in that 'fame for later generations',³⁸ although the latter might be part of, and result from, Caesar's unrestrained ambition.³⁹ More striking, though, is Caesar's concern for the ills his actions will bring upon the world. Does Caesar become here a model of an ideal philosophical introspection and reflective awareness? The verb συνδιηπόρησεν, a philosophically loaded word with connotations of Socratic dialectic, as Bradley Buszard observes,⁴⁰ seems to pull in that direction. Caesar, moreover, utters the Greek proverb 'let the die be cast' (*Caes.* 32.8), although it is in the *Pompey* (60.4) and not in the *Caesar* that Plutarch makes it clear that Caesar put it in Greek (Ἑλληνιστί),

³⁵ Cf. App. *B Civ.* 2.35.140 for a similar dilemma, expressed in direct speech and not stressing, at least explicitly, the 'fame for later generations' theme: ἡ μὲν ἐπίσχεσις, ὃ φίλοι, τήσδε τῆς διαβάσεως ἔμοι κακῶν ἄρξει, ἡ δὲ διάβασις πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις.

³⁶ Cf. *Pomp.* 60.3: ἔσται σιωπὴ καὶ διεμέλλησεν, αὐτὸς ἄρα πρὸς ἑαυτὸν συλλογιζόμενος τὸ μέγεθος τοῦ τολμήματος. There is (understandably) less interest in Caesar's thinking in the *Pompey*. Cf. Frazier (1995), 153–4; Pelling (2011a), 317.

³⁷ Pelling (2002a), 328; (2011a), 313.

³⁸ See Pelling (2002a), 337 n. 107; Grethlein (2013), 103–5.

³⁹ e.g. *Caes.* 3.2; 5.9; 6.1; 7.2; 11.3–6; 17.1–2. Buszard (2008) comments comparatively on the ambition of Caesar and Alexander.

⁴⁰ Buszard (2008), 195.

presumably the most appropriate means for philosophical contemplation.⁴¹ Nowhere in the *Caesar* are we clearly told about Caesar's philosophical studies or inclination, although there are several hints of Caesar the master wordsmith (2.4; 7.8; 8.1), his philanthropy (48.1–4; 54.4), and how he does not fit the Platonic stereotype of a tyrant.⁴² He practises mildness (57.4), honours enemies (57.5), refuses a bodyguard (57.7), and expresses a preference for dying 'unexpectedly' (57.7; 63.7), plausibly reflecting a philosophical way of thinking and acting, which may recall that of Dion of Syracuse (*Dion* 56.3).⁴³ Even his calendar reforms are presented as worked out with learning and elegance (59.1: φιλοσοφηθεῖσα χαριέντως). It is not impossible, then, that at that very key moment of crossing the Rubicon Caesar might have turned to an insightful self-reflective reasoning about the deleterious consequences of his action, although his immediate decision to cross the Rubicon proves that his reason does not eventually get the better of his passion.⁴⁴

An alternative and richer way of interpreting Caesar's complex state of mind, however, would be to assume that his perception at this point is highly coloured by, or can be read as part of, the narrator's *as well*, who possibly injects his own moral commentary on Caesar's action, contrasting the standard ethical claims in interpersonal relationships (cf. 32.7: ἡλίκων κακῶν ἄρξει πᾶσιν ἀνθρώποις ἡ διάβασις)⁴⁵ with the outcome of Caesar's reflective debate (cf. 32.8: μετὰ θυμοῦ

⁴¹ See Pelling (2011a), 317–18 and 372, citing Dubuisson (1992), 193, who suggests that the Greek was felt as 'la langue du retour sur soi'.

⁴² See Pelling (2011a), 421–2.

⁴³ See Pelling (2011a), 430.

⁴⁴ Duff (1999), 79–80 reads Caesar's probing at Rubicon as a battle between reason and passion.

⁴⁵ Cf. *Caes.* 33–5; 55.6: Plutarch is alert to the shattering consequences of the upcoming war.

τινος ὥσπερ ἀφείς ἐαυτὸν ἐκ τοῦ λογισμοῦ πρὸς τὸ μέλλον . . . ὥρμησε πρὸς τὴν διάβασιν), alluding at the same time to the *logos*, the story which later generations will tell about Caesar (cf. 32.7: ὅσον τε λόγον αὐτῆς τοῖς αὐθις ἀπολείψουσι)—possibly a self-referential allusion to his own *Life of Caesar*. This befuddlement of and in the discourse duly captures and conveys the befuddled state of Caesar’s mind. He might realise that what is to be unleashed will be full of *kaka*, but fails to withstand the challenge; or he might feel that this is the right thing to do anyway. Either way, he goes ahead and undertakes an incalculable and audacious enterprise without paying any heed to ‘the unspeakable dream’ of the previous night (32.9).

The dream continues and raises further questions about Caesar’s attitude: could it be that Caesar is so creditably philosophical (again) that he neglects all the signs of danger and prefers to die unexpectedly?⁴⁶ Or does the dream represent a cause external to Caesar’s agency of which he is presumably unaware,⁴⁷ or even a portended disaster, which Caesar is unable to take seriously because he is so arrogant and ambitious by now that he considers himself invulnerable?⁴⁸ The uncertainty about the dream continues and complicates even further the uncertainty about Caesar’s mindset.⁴⁹ All in all, Caesar keeps a sense of ‘selfhood’ and integrity, which, on the

⁴⁶ Cf. *Caes.* 57.7; 63.7.

⁴⁷ On the providential character of the change from democratic to monarchical government in Rome, see Swain (1996), 155–8. Cf. below, §5.3.

⁴⁸ On the ambiguities inherent in the dream, see Pelling (1997e), 200–1; (2011a), 314; Duff (1999), 80 n. 29; Papadi (2007), 182–3.

⁴⁹ This is possibly another reason why Plutarch prefers to bring the supernatural into play in a more implicit and subtle way, compared to Suetonius (*Iul.* 32) and Lucan (1.185–94). Suetonius refers to the strange phantom urging Caesar on the other bank, and Lucan to the ‘phantom of his terrified country’,

one hand, is in line with, or even has been encouraged by, the growing support of the Roman people so far,⁵⁰ but, on the other hand, goes against the conventional ethical norms, as acknowledged to some extent by the narrator and presumably Caesar himself.

Plutarch's mastery of intra-psychic conflict indeed reveals an interest in *the mind beyond the skin*. Plutarch, his readers, and the men of history all engage and intimately participate in a self in dialogue not simply with the self of the protagonist but with his social context as well (Dion ~ Sicily; Cicero, Caesar ~ Rome). To use Alan Palmer's words, Caesar's, Dion's, and Cicero's 'intramental thought', like that of the other characters we saw in the previous section reflecting in silence, entails an 'externalist perspective' as well.⁵¹ It deflects an appraisal of ethical status either in terms of a purely social or a purely individualistic ethical code. Instead, it probes the dialogic relationship between the two, raising questions as to how far the reasons, reasoning, and actions of the protagonist are informed by his communal engagement and social role.

asking Caesar's army to relent. Plutarch does not choose to introduce the supernatural too grossly, but uses it as a peg to raise questions about Caesar's consciousness and motives. Rondholz (2009) and Beneker (2011) compare Plutarch's version of the Rubicon with other surviving sources.

⁵⁰ *Caes.* 4.4–7; 5.1–3; 5.8–9; 6.7; 8.4–5; 21.2; 21.8–9. It is important that at *Caes.* 20.2 Rubicon is stressed as a base for Caesar's 'demagogy' (cf. ἐδημαγώγει). The theme of Caesar as the popular politician continues, as Pelling (2011a), 236 observes, although Caesar's visitors should be envisaged as politicians and candidates for office rather than members of the people.

⁵¹ See above, ch.1, pp. 14–17.

3.2 'THE MIND BEYOND THE SKIN'

The dialogue of the individual with his social environment can represent a wide range of relations: full integration, conflict or uneasiness, congruence or incongruence. In the rest of this chapter, I focus in particular on some representative instances, where Plutarch's characters appear to challenge, or are challenged by, their social world. Some of these characters have deficient skills in managing this challenge, while others are more capable operators. Despite the weakness or success of historical agents in interpersonal exchange, Plutarch's reconstruction of the larger societal background within which these men live and function allows the readers to explain and understand an individual's failure or success and appreciate better his flaws and strengths,⁵² thus turning moral evaluation into a rather ambivalent and elusive process.

3.2.1 Caesar and Rome

i. '*They drove me to this pitch of necessity . . .*' (Caes. 46.1)

When Caesar enters the Pompeian camp after Pharsalus, he gazes on the piles of enemy corpses and the men who are still lying down, groans, and says: 'It was their choice. They drove me to this pitch of necessity that I, Gaius Caesar, victor in the greatest of wars, would actually have been condemned in the courts if I had given up my armies' (Caes. 46.1).⁵³ If Caesar utters these words in Greek (cf. Caes. 46.2),⁵⁴

⁵² Cf. Pelling (2010b), 227–8.

⁵³ Translations of the *Caesar* throughout this section are taken (in some cases with some minor alterations) from Pelling (2011a).

⁵⁴ Pelling (2011a), 370–2 gives a detailed analysis of the textual complexity here. He is more inclined to accept that the words were uttered by Caesar in Greek and then written by Pollio in Latin.

then the scene can form a ring with the Rubicon, knitting together the beginning and the end of the most critical phase of the history of Caesar and Rome.

On the battlefield of Pharsalus, Caesar analyses and explains his action in terms that are mainly external and social, showing how the pressure of events and the situation in Rome built up the necessity (cf. ἀνάγκης) for his response. His invasion of Italy is presented as an act that makes sense for Caesar when he sees the sort of world he is living in. That is an ailing world (23.6), as we are told in the *Caesar*, a world of crisis and of a parlous state of politics (28.4), confining itself to violence and bribery, initiated especially by the great men or their supporters. Rome is a city defiled with blood and corpses like a ship drifting without a helmsman (28.4–5). It is amidst such great anarchy and crazy turbulence that sensible men recognise monarchy as the only solution and look to Pompey as the gentlest of doctors (28.5–6). But this social background is what affords Caesar rather than Pompey the pretexts (προφάσεις) to establish monarchy (28.4). It is such a chaotic and dysfunctional world that Caesar knows how to exploit for self-promotion rather than for any sort of altruistic social reform or moral crusade.

A comparative reading of the corresponding account in the *Pompey* highlights variations from the *Caesar* which reflect Plutarch's interest in the *Caesar* in relating the man to his wider societal context. In the *Pompey*, Plutarch dwells on how the Caesarians gazed on their enemies' vanity and folly. 'For every tent was garlanded with boughs of myrtle and decked out with flower-laden couches and tables full of beakers, and bowls of wine were laid out: all the preparation and adornment were more those of men who had already sacrificed and were celebrating a festival rather than of armed men who were going to war' (72.5–6). It might be natural for the

Caesar to follow ‘biographical relevance’⁵⁵ and suppress the details about the foolish confidence and infatuated hopes of Pompey and his army; but it might also be unnecessary to delineate this idea, for something similar has already been introduced in Caesar’s paired *Life of Alexander*, within the context of Alexander’s capture of Darius’ tent (20). The alert reader might recall the similar scene in the preceding *Alexander* and think deeply about Caesar’s victory as well as his subsequent failure.⁵⁶

In the *Alexander*, Plutarch stresses that when Alexander captured Darius’ tent, he alienated himself from the vastness of Darius’ luxury and commented on it ironically: ‘So this, it seems, is what it is to be a king’ (20.11–3). Alexander gives an alternative superior idea of kingship to that of Darius, one of contempt for wealth and softness. Plutarch’s readers may think that it is this superior idea of kingship that allowed Alexander to prevail over Darius, and analogously contemplate the political and military qualities that allowed Caesar to prevail over Pompey. However, they may also remember that Alexander did not, in the end, live up to his high moral standards.

Recalling Alexander’s degradation may cast an ominous shadow over Caesar’s later career, thereby raising perplexing questions about Caesar’s future. Will Caesar be able to comport with this initial superiority? Will he be able to avoid an Alexander-like fate, whose decline invited several analogies with his enemy Darius? All of these are questions that presage and prepare readers for Caesar’s downfall, to

⁵⁵ Stuart (1928). Cf. Pelling (2002a), 491 (index of topics, s.v. ‘law’ or ‘licence’ of ‘biographical relevance’).

⁵⁶ Zadorojnyi (2012), 194–8 interestingly suggests that Pausanias’ edgy response to the captured Persian luxury (Hdt. 9.82.2–3) and resort into the Persian lifestyle (Thuc. 1.130.1) may be evoked here, offering a pointed parallel between Pausanias, Caesar, and Alexander.

which Plutarch openly alludes by making a reference to Brutus, ‘the man who went on to kill him [i.e. Caesar]’, at the very moment of Caesar’s triumph over Pompey (*Caes.* 46.4). But these are questions that are left implicit and which are expected to be raised within the single less personal explanatory framework which the narrative of the *Caesar* privileges, that of the relationship between the man and his city.⁵⁷ For the emphasis in the battlefield of Pharsalus shifts in the *Caesar* from the Caesarians and Pompey’s empty luxury towards Caesar himself and the more general ill state of politics in Rome.

ii. *The Lupercalia: Caesar’s public breakdown* (*Caes.* 61)

The Lupercalia festival with its ritual spectacle hints at a world of acting and performance (*Caes.* 61.1–3).⁵⁸ The forum turns into a stage on which a ‘play’ between Caesar, Antony, and the Roman people takes place. There was a prearranged small applause (κρότος)—its importance marked with a historical present γίνεται⁵⁹—as well as a louder cry (cf. ἀνεκρότησεν) approving Caesar’s denial of the royal emblem (*Caes.* 61.5–6).⁶⁰ Plutarch says that ‘the attempt failed’ (*Caes.* 61.7), thus

⁵⁷ Pelling (2011a), 25 acknowledges the importance of the wider social background in explaining Caesar’s fall.

⁵⁸ See Papadi (2007), 178–81 with comparative remarks on the *Ant.* 12.

⁵⁹ On historical present, see Rijksbaron (2011), 187–94; Boter (2012).

⁶⁰ Cf. App. *B Civ* 2.109.457–8 and Nic. Dam. 72–3 for a similar interest in delineating the onlookers’ responses. Appian, like Plutarch, stresses the popular displeasure with the attempts to crown Caesar (cf. 2.109.457: στόνου παρὰ τῶν πλειόνων) and the applause for Caesar’s rejection (2.109.458). Nicolaus of Damascus allows space for more variety and complexity within the reactions of the internal audience.

pointing to an experiment, most likely on Caesar's part, who must play here a manipulative game with the Roman people.⁶¹

Caesar's attempt to test the reaction of the people to the title of king may recall his earlier display of the Marian portraits (*Caes.* 6). There, as Plutarch mentions, some cry out that Caesar aims at tyranny and that all of the honours that he restores are an *experiment* on the people (cf. *Caes.* 6.3: καὶ τοῦτο πείραν ἐπὶ τὸν δῆμον εἶναι; cf. 61.7: τῆς πείρας). Just as in the Lupercalia episode, there is a public spectacle,⁶² staged by Caesar, and a noise (κρότῳ) sounds on the part of the Marians (*Caes.* 6.4; cf. 61.5–6: κρότος . . . ἀνεκρότησεν), who take over the Capitol and praise Caesar to the skies (*Caes.* 6.4–5). Contrary to Lutatius Catulus, who denounces Caesar's machinery against the state, Caesar's admirers urge him not to submit to anybody. For, as they allege, he has the support of the people and with it he can prevail over everyone and hold the first place in the city (*Caes.* 6.6–7). Popular enthusiasm is the central point in the Marian display: people support Caesar and he rises to power.

A similar sort of advice to that of Caesar's admirers is given on a later occasion, when extravagant honours are voted for Caesar in the senate (*Caes.* 60.4–8). It is said, according to Plutarch, that it was one of Caesar's friends or rather his flatterers, Cornelius Balbus, who persuaded Caesar not to stand up to receive the

⁶¹ In Appian (*B Civ* 2.109.456: οὐ μὴν αἱ γε περὶ τῆς βασιλείας πείραι κατεπαύοντο οὐδ' ὧς), it is similarly unclear whether the responsibility lies with Caesar and/or Antony. Moreover, there is no implication that this might be a sort of experiment of the people, a prearranged attempt as in Plutarch (cf. *Caes.* 61.5: ἐκ παρασκευῆς and 61.7: ἐξελεγχομένης). Cf. Plut. *Ant.* 12 and Cic. *Phil.* 2.84–7, both stressing Antony's culpability (see Pelling (1988a), 144–7).

⁶² e.g. *Caes.* 6.1 (εἰκόνας ἐποιήσατο . . . καὶ Νίκας τροπαιοφόρους . . . ἀνέστησεν); 6.2 (τοὺς θεασασμένους . . . πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν); 6.5 (τὴν Μαρτίου θεωμένοις ὄψιν).

consuls and the praetors. ‘Remember you are Caesar’, Balbus said. ‘You are their superior; you should expect them to show you the proper respect’ (*Caes.* 60.8). Readers are likely to recall the Marian display and notice some striking differences between the two instances. In the Marian display the popular acclaim is so central that Caesar’s admirers encourage him to rely on it. Balbus, on the other hand, is a flatterer who leads Caesar astray, alters his consciousness, and makes him cause the distress of the senate and the people (*Caes.* 60.5–8). Caesar carries further that popular alienation which the atrocities of his soldiers and colleagues (*Caes.* 51.2–4) as well as his own triumph over Pompey’s sons (*Caes.* 56.7–9) have already caused.

Indeed, Caesar’s insulting treatment of the senators (*Caes.* 60) can be read together with the Lupercalia episode (*Caes.* 61) as a prominent set-piece that echoes, but at the same time diverges significantly from the Marian display, thus marking a sharp shift in Caesar’s interaction with the Roman people. Caesar conducts in the Lupercalia an experiment on the Roman people—the anonymous bystanders in the Marian display are finally proved right. However, Caesar can no longer treat his public successfully. Whether his attempt to see people’s reaction towards kingship stemmed from his hope that he could be allowed/compelled to keep the diadem,⁶³ or his intention to openly show his rejection, or even to test how far he could go with the people,⁶⁴ the popular adverse response does not match his expectations. The Roman people and Caesar are not at one, and this disjunction cannot help Caesar to achieve his personal political aspirations any more. Caesar is unable to control either himself or the common people, who loudly applaud the tribunes Flavius and Marullus for withstanding any kingly inspiration on Caesar’s part (*Caes.* 61.8–9).

⁶³ See Dio Cass. 44.11.3.

⁶⁴ See Pelling (2011a), 451.

This instance may have been the same occasion as that of Caesar's return to the city from Alba,⁶⁵ and the people's similar bewilderment with the idea of Caesar's kingship (cf. τοῦ δὲ δήμου διαταραχθέντος) (*Caes.* 60.3). There, Caesar was annoyed (ἀχθεσθείς), and he went on his way sullen and dissatisfied (*Caes.* 60.3). Here he is furious (παροξυνθείς) and offends the people by calling Marullus and Flavius 'Brutuses' and 'Cumaeans'. Both 'Brutuses' and 'Cumaeans' must imply a mockery of the tribunes for their simple-mindedness and stupidity (*Caes.* 61.10).⁶⁶ But there is evidently a hint of the Brutus who overthrew the regal dynasty (cf. *Caes.* 61.9) as well as of the other Brutus who will soon overthrow Caesar's rule, and to whom the people now turn for support (*Caes.* 62.1). Caesar, as the theatrical atmosphere of the Lupercalia outrage led us to expect, fails to gauge and handle the popular mind. As if he has been 'extracted' from the world of real-life politics, he now plays the prime role in his own drama of self-deceit and failure. Caesar's misguided judgement and popular disaffection are all there to point to the fact that his downfall seems inevitable.

iii. *Caesar's assassination* (*Caes.* 66)

Plutarch presents Caesar's killing in a theatrical context, just like that of the Lupercalia.⁶⁷ Pompey's statue (Πομπηίου . . . εἰκόνα) and theatre (cf. τῷ θεάτρῳ), the presence of a heavenly power (δαίμονός τινος), and the frenzy (cf. ἐνθουσιασμόν) and passion (πάθος) presiding over the actions, all prepare for a dramatic spectacle (τὸν ἀγῶνα), the murder (φόνον) and the violent struggle

⁶⁵ Pelling (2011a), 447.

⁶⁶ Pelling (2011a), 458–9.

⁶⁷ See Mossman (1991), 117–19; Papadi (2007), 166–8.

between Caesar and his enemies (τὸν ἀγῶνα) (*Caes.* 66.1–3). That *agōn*, as we shall see, recalls a chain of earlier episodes and themes that delineate how Caesar gradually lost his popular touch and ended up in a state of catastrophe.

Pompey's statue brings to mind Cicero's earlier praise of Caesar's attitude after the end of the civil wars. 'By raising up Pompey's statues', Cicero stressed, 'Caesar had firmly fixed his own' (*Caes.* 57.6). There, Pompey's statues marked Caesar's clemency and mildness towards his fellowmen, while here they are ironically linked with his downfall. Several signals in the assassination scene invite us to rethink what provoked this downfall. The reference to the senate, who rose (cf. *Caes.* 66.5: ἡ βουλὴ μὲν ὑπεξανέστη) in order to show respect to Caesar, echoes Caesar's earlier insulting treatment of the senators and the people (cf. *Caes.* 60.4: οὐχ ὑπεξαναστάς), while Caesar's official chair, behind which Brutus' followers gathered (cf. *Caes.* 66.5: ἐξόπισθεν τὸν δίφρον, cf. 66.6: μέχρι τοῦ δίφρου), echoes Caesar in the Lupercalia (cf. *Caes.* 61.4: ἐπὶ δίφρου χρυσοῦ), the popular displeasure with the idea of kingship, and Caesar's offence of the tribunes, which Plutarch interposed there out of its proper chronological order (*Caes.* 61.5–10).⁶⁸ That mounting popular discontent with Caesar is brought into play anew in the context of his assassination through the reference to Tillius grabbing Caesar's toga (τὴν τήβεννον . . . συλλαβών) and ripping it down from his neck (ἀπὸ τοῦ τραχήλου κατήγεν) (*Caes.* 66.6). The gesture is rather similar to Caesar's reaction after understanding his insult to the senate and the Roman *dēmos* (cf. *Caes.* 60.6: ἀπαγαγόντα τοῦ τραχήλου τὸ ἱμάτιον),⁶⁹ and looks back to the goodwill of the people, which Caesar regarded as his 'magic charm', 'putting it on like an amulet

⁶⁸ Pelling (2011a), 480.

⁶⁹ Cf. Papadi (2007), 177–8.

around his neck' (*Caes.* 57.8: ἐαυτῷ περιβαλλόμενος φυλακτήριον).⁷⁰ We sense the popular goodwill now lost, and Caesar himself pulls his toga over his head (cf. ἐφειλκύσατο κατὰ τῆς κεφαλῆς τὸ ἱμάτιον) and gives in himself before Brutus' attack (*Caes.* 66.12). Christopher Pelling comments that Caesar's gesture, apart from recalling Pompey's fall,⁷¹ may also evoke Socrates' death (*Pl. Phd.* 118a), thus contrasting 'the serenity of the philosophical end with the messy violence of the politicians'.⁷²

Closely relevant to this is the fact that now it is Casca and not Caesar who cries out in Greek (Ἑλληνιστί) (*Caes.* 66.8). Caesar's own Greek utterances at Rubicon (*Caes.* 32.8) and in Pompey's camp (*Caes.* 46.2), linked with his reflection at the moments of his greatest success, may be recalled and juxtaposed here.⁷³ The readers may sense that the cycle has turned, and it has turned against Caesar, who now, either by a cosmically or humane ordained plan, falls by the pedestal on which the statue of Pompey stood (*Caes.* 66.12).

This supernatural, non-human element with which the assassination scene ends in ring-composition (cf. 66.1: δαίμονός τινος) does not come completely unexpectedly. Caesar's dream at crossing the Rubicon (*Caes.* 32.9) and the omens that foretold his death (*Caes.* 63) presided over the previous chapters, prompting interesting questions (as we noted above) about Caesar's state of mind: should Caesar's neglect of the warnings be taken as sign of his more philosophical preference to die 'unexpectedly' (*Caes.* 57.7; 63.7)? Or do the omens represent an inevitable

⁷⁰ Pelling (1997f), 223–4; (2011a), 431, 449.

⁷¹ *Pomp.* 79.5: ὁ δὲ ταῖς χερσὶν ἀμφοτέραις τὴν τήβεννον ἐφελκυσάμενος κατὰ τοῦ προσώπου.

⁷² Pelling (2011a), 482.

⁷³ Pelling (2011a), 481.

divine power (cf. *Caes.* 63.1), which Caesar ignores or even (un)consciously plays down? This uncertainty about divine involvement continues in Caesar's murder. It serves to remove responsibility from the supernatural (only) and bring into sharper relief the human political forces (especially the popular displeasure, the role of Caesar's friends and enemies) that lie behind his downfall.⁷⁴

The whole of the *Caesar* thus revolves around the interplay between Caesar's mind and that of the Romans, offering suggestive explanatory strands about Caesar's choices and actions. Readers are encouraged not simply to judge and draw conclusions about Caesar's moral character, but to get an insight into the world of the story and engage with the social atmosphere of the time. Caesar's invasion of Italy is explained and understood—without necessarily being justified—as a social response on Caesar's part to the decadent world of the late Roman Republic. It is a unique and extraordinary reaction to an extraordinary situation that Caesar exploits. In a similar way, Caesar's breakdown becomes intelligible in the light of his growing alienation. The Lupercalia episode and his refusal to stand up to receive the senate can neatly be linked with the assassination scene, all bearing testimony to Caesar's declining popularity, strongly felt through differing echoes of the earlier episode of the display of the Marian *imagines* where Caesar enjoys popular enthusiasm. Providing insight into the way(s) in which the Romans felt, thought about, and responded to Caesar aids an exploration of the morally challenging cases of Caesar's individual experience, which is inseparably linked with and shapes the Romans'—and correspondingly our—experience of big historical movements such as the end of the Roman Republic and the rise of the Roman Empire.

⁷⁴ See Pelling (1997f).

3.2.2 ‘For the Athenians sent Nicias out to the war against his will...’

(*Nic.-Crass.* 3.8)

(14.1) Τὸ μὲν οὖν ἐναντιωθῆναι ψηφίζομένη τῇ στρατείᾳ τὸν Νικίαν, καὶ μήθ’ ὑπ’ ἐλπίδων ἐπαρθέντα μήτε πρὸς τὸ τῆς ἀρχῆς μέγεθος ἐκπλαγέντα μεταθέσθαι τὴν γνώμην, ἀνδρὸς ἦν χρηστοῦ καὶ σώφρονος· (14.2) ἐπεὶ δ’ οὔτε τοῦ πολέμου τὸν δῆμον ἀποτρέψαι πειρώμενος, οὔθ’ αὐτὸν ἐξελέσθαι τῆς στρατηγίας δεόμενος ἴσχυσεν, ἀλλ’ ὥσπερ ἀράμενος καὶ φέρων αὐτὸν ὁ δῆμος ἐπέθηκε τῇ δυνάμει στρατηγόν, οὐδεὶς ἔτι καιρὸς ἦν τῆς πολλῆς εὐλαβείας καὶ μελλήσεως, ὥστε παιδὸς δίκην ἀπὸ τῆς νεῶς ὀπίσω βλέποντα καὶ τὸ μὴ κρατηθῆναι τοῖς λογισμοῖς ἀναλαμβάνοντα καὶ στρέφοντα πολλάκις ἐναμβλῦναι καὶ τοὺς συνάρχοντας αὐτῷ καὶ τὴν ἀκμὴν διαφθεῖραι τῶν πράξεων, ἀλλ’ εὐθύς ἔδει τοῖς πολεμίοις ἐμφύντα καὶ προσκείμενον ἐλέγχειν τὴν τύχην ἐπὶ τῶν ἀγώνων. (*Nic.* 14.1–2)

(14.1) Now, that Nicias should oppose the voting of the expedition, and should not be so buoyed up by vain hopes nor so crazed by the magnitude of his command as to change his real opinion, this was characteristic of a man of goodness and prudence. (14.2) But when he availed nothing either in his efforts to divert the people from the war or in his desire to be relieved of his command, but it was as if the people were picking him up bodily and setting him over their forces as general, there was no longer a time for the exceeding caution and hesitation which he displayed, gazing back homewards from his ship like a child, and many times resuming and dwelling on the thought that the people had not yielded to his reasoning, till he instilled discouragement into his colleagues in command and lost the fittest time for action. He would have done better to have engaged the enemy at once at close quarters and put fortune to the test in struggles for the mastery.

Plutarch’s criticism of Nicias’ excessive caution and hesitation looks both back at Nicias’ presence in Athens and forth to his command in Sicily. In Athens, Nicias’ nervous unease is used to explain his avoidance of social gatherings (*Nic.* 5.2), his military decisions during the Archidamian War (*Nic.* 6.1–4), and his inability to stand up to the thoughtless pressures of Cleon (*Nic.* 7.3–8.4), Demostratus (*Nic.* 12.6), Alcibiades and the Athenians (*Nic.* 10.6–9; 12). In Sicily, Nicias is hesitating

and cowardly in the course of action, and his vacillation depresses the spirit of his men (*Nic.* 14.3–4). He is forced by Menander and Euthydemus to conduct a sea battle (*Nic.* 20.6–8), while later he is forced by Demosthenes to launch a direct attack upon Epipolae (*Nic.* 21.6).⁷⁵ Fear of his compatriots clashes with his public duty, as earlier during the capture of Olympieum (*Nic.* 16.7), and leads him to deny Demosthenes' proposal for withdrawal (*Nic.* 22.2). No detailed argumentation of Nicias is found in Plutarch's text as it is in Thucydides' (7.48).⁷⁶ Nicias' fear of the Athenians might have been generalised from Thucydides' account (cf. 7.48.4), but is developed more systematically in the *Life* through the insistent interest in Nicias' uncertain touch with the Athenian people.⁷⁷

These are people who, in Plutarch's presentation, are volatile and violent against their leaders, and do need a lot of handling. They are easily swayed by Cleon (*Nic.* 7–8) and moved to anger against Nicias by Alcibiades' trickeries (*Nic.* 10; 12). They are envious and suspicious of eminent and powerful men (*Nic.* 6.1–2; 11), and are ready to support people who are in a powerless, humble position (*Nic.* 2.6). They are fickle and inconsistent in their mood and actions: they swiftly change their disposition towards Cleon and Nicias,⁷⁸ and they are inconsistent in their feelings towards Hyperbolus' ostracism (*Nic.* 11.6). On the battlefield, they are averse to delays and highly displeased with Nicias' hesitation and cowardice (*Nic.* 16.9; 21.6).⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Cf. Thuc. 7.43.1, where the emphasis is on persuasion (cf. *πείσας*) and not compulsion (cf. *Nic.* 21.6: *ἐκβιασθε(ς)*).

⁷⁶ Cf. Levi (1955), 180; Littman (1970), 218–19; Stadter (1973), 114.

⁷⁷ Cf. Pelling (1992), 20–1 [= repr. (2002a), 125].

⁷⁸ e.g. *Nic.* 2.2–6; 7.3–7; 8.2–4; 9.8–9; 10.6–9.

⁷⁹ In general, on Plutarch's presentation of the people in the *Lives*, see Saïd (2005). As regards the Athenian people, in particular, see Pelling (1992), 21–7 [= repr. (2002a), 125–30], who observes that

Plutarch's unfriendly treatment of the popular mind is emblematic of the decline in the Athenian city, where Nicias' nervousness and apprehension can be somehow understood and explained.⁸⁰ But however understandable these characteristics of Nicias may be, they can still result in catastrophic mistakes. The popular mind becomes for Plutarch a factor that influences the political dynamic during the Peloponnesian War,⁸¹ one that the competent leader has to gauge correctly and handle efficiently.⁸² Pericles, for example, is afraid of, but at the same time sensibly alert to, the envy and suspicions of the Athenian *dēmos*. He adopts a popular policy—as we shall examine in detail in the last section of this chapter—which is contrary to his own nature (*Per.* 7.3) but equips him to prevail over the people and his political opponents (*Per.* 7–14).⁸³ Similarly, Alcibiades, despite the fact that at the end he is ruined by his own *doxa* (*Alc.* 35.3), can speak throughout most of his career the language of the people and read and exploit their psychology skilfully (e.g. *Alc.* 14.4–12; 17.1–4). Nicias, on the contrary, is timid and weak, and unable to stand up for a reasonable caution against the Athenians. It is his failure to impress a view of careful restraint on the Athenians that marks him down. Points about Athens in the *Life of Nicias* are indeed important in reconstructing that larger fifth-century historical

Plutarch varies their portrayal in each Athenian *Life* so as to elucidate better the character of the protagonist.

⁸⁰ Pelling (1992), 35 n. 28 [= repr. (2002a), 137 n. 28].

⁸¹ Pace de Romilly (1988), who argues that Plutarch's psychological and moral emphasis lacks political interest and analysis, especially if compared to Thucydides. On the contrary, Pelling (1992), 27–31 [= repr. (2002a), 130–4], rightly acknowledges Plutarch's subtle political and historical analyses through the exposition of the individuals' inner life and interaction with their cities.

⁸² Pelling (2010b), 227–8.

⁸³ See below, §3.2.4.

background that hits off many aspects of Nicias' character and explains so much of the Athenian failure in Sicily.

Plutarch's description of the Athenian retreat in Sicily works especially to this end. The most pitiful scene in the camp is Nicias. For all of his bodily weakness, Plutarch stresses, Nicias bears that terrible situation bravely, and is plainly seen to be standing fast to his task for the sake of his men (*Nic.* 26.4). Nicias' men, Plutarch recounts, recall his earlier arguments and exhortations with which he tried to prevent the expedition and think that he wrongly suffers such hardships now. They even lose their hope for any divine help, reflecting that Nicias, a man so favourable to the god, who performed many great religious services, should now be meeting no better a fortune than the basest and most obscure men in the army (*Nic.* 26.6). Thucydides' text is likely to lie behind this scene, but Plutarch's elaborate reworking is instructive. The emphasis on Nicias' strength and high spirit (cf. *Nic.* 27.1) might come from Thucydides' account (7.76) and constitute an inference from Nicias' encouraging speech to his soldiers (7.77). Likewise, the Athenians' reflection on Nicias' previous advice and pious character might have been drawn from Thucydides' narrative, but transferred from Nicias (7.77.2) and Thucydides' narrator (7.86.5) to the Athenians.⁸⁴

⁸⁴ See Pelling (1992), 14–16 [= repr. (2002a), 120–1], stressing, in addition, that the shift from 'virtue' in Thucydides to 'piety' in Plutarch suits well the emphasis of the *Nicias* on Nicias' religious observations. I do not agree with Titchener (2000); (2008), 280, who suggests that Thucydides' judgment is transferred to the observers because of Plutarch's negative feelings towards Nicias. I side with Pelling (2002a), 136 n. 16, arguing that 'the narrative is anyway so powerful that it encourage readers to share the troops' admiration'; if not to share the troops' admiration, I would contend, at least to share their retrospective reflection on Nicias' character. Plutarch's emphasis on the Athenians here sits in discord with Said (2005), 17, who points out Plutarch's tendency to downplay the role of the masses in the *Lives* 'by systematically substituting an individual to a collective agent'.

Plutarch's readers see, feel, and think all too much with the Athenians at this crucial moment in Sicily.

However, the Athenians' current state of mind sits strangely with their earlier grimness and hostility towards Nicias, and the readers may well be drawn to question why the Athenians behave now as they do. Might it be that they are simply fickle? Or that they loved Nicias all the time but Nicias' inability to get them right caused their displeasure? Or might it even be that they become ashamed of themselves? Plutarch's narrative invites an empathetic engagement not only with Nicias but also with the Athenians,⁸⁵ both on campaign and back home where, as Plutarch puts it, 'with such difficulty was Nicias believed to have suffered (or believed when he suffered) what he had often predicted to them'⁸⁶—the emphasis on Nicias' foresight is an interesting Plutarchan addition to Thucydides' text (*Nic.* 30.3; cf. *Thuc.* 8.1.1).⁸⁷ The readers may be thereby prompted to reflect on, and work to combine, the Athenians' differing viewpoints and along with them to reconsider any earlier impressions about Nicias—a backward movement which, as will be shown in the rest of this chapter and particularly in the subsequent one, is proffered at the endings of Plutarch's *Lives* in general. The earlier focus on Nicias' inability to impress his judgement on the Athenians and stand up for a reasonable caution in Athens and Sicily is now challenged through the Athenians' enlightenment in Sicily and acknowledgment (even with much difficulty) of Nicias' foresight in Athens; and it is also explicitly undercut by the narrator in the final *Synkrisis* between Nicias and Crassus.

⁸⁵ Cf. Pelling (1992), 31 [= repr. (2002a), 133–4].

⁸⁶ Tr. Duff (2011a), 250.

⁸⁷ Cf. Levi (1955), 185; Duff (2011a), 250 n. 166.

In the *Synkrisis*, Plutarch states that it was the Athenians who sent Nicias out to war against his will and made him suffer misfortune, while, on the Roman side, it was Crassus' ambitious love of command which overwhelmed the Romans and led them out to war against their will (*Nic.-Crass.* 3.8). It is unsurprising that the different emphases affect the narrative presentation of individual and public minds in the two *Lives*. While in the *Nicias* Plutarch recreates so much of the atmosphere of the time, in the *Crassus* he does not make much of the analysis depend on the distinctive character of Rome, even less so than in the other Roman *Lives* of the period—think, for example, of the *Caesar* which we analysed before. We get some idea of the unhappy responses of onlookers to Crassus,⁸⁸ but a psychological interest, with so much emphasis on the emotions and cognition of groups of bystanders, does not grow deeper in the *Crassus* as in the *Nicias*. Plutarch's readers may sense what very different *Lives* Plutarch was ready to write and how very different things interested him from one to another. In the *Crassus*, it is the minimum collective and maximum individual experience that makes the interpretative point. In the *Nicias* it is the disjunction between the maximum experience of the Athenians and Nicias' minimal control over it, which is so central to the Athenian defeat in Sicily. At the end, readers may come to feel some of the disjunction themselves and understand the despair that drives Nicias to fight in Sicily. Through that interest in understanding, they may come to qualify or at least be seriously sceptical of—as the Athenians eventually are—any degree of blame attaching to Nicias' character.

⁸⁸ *Crass.* 16.3–8; 17.8–9; 18; 27.1; 27.4–8; 30.3–5.

3.2.3 ‘These moved Lucullus even further away from political life . . .’ (*Luc.* 43.1)

In the *Life of Lucullus*, Plutarch offers two reasons for Lucullus’ withdrawal from public life: either he realised the malaise and uncontrolled state of Roman politics or—as some claim (ὥς φασιν ἔνιοι)—his satiety with glory led him to resort to an easy and relaxed lifestyle especially after so many struggles and labours ended unhappily (38.2). Later on, as Plutarch says, the plotting of Pompey’s supporters against Lucullus gives him the final urge to abandon politics completely (42.7–43.1). While in the *Pompey* (48.7) and the *Cato Major* (24.11) it is simply old age that presses Lucullus to withdraw, in the *Lucullus* Plutarch seeks to understand Lucullus’ retirement as deriving from the circumstances in which Lucullus lives.

Lucullus has to deal, primarily, with the distemper and discontent of his soldiers. These soldiers are filled with greed and avarice, which make them disobedient, burdensome (*Luc.* 17.6–8; 19.4–5; 30.4–5), and extremely critical of Lucullus’ military strategy of delay and continuous fighting (*Luc.* 14.2–8; 32.1–4; 33.3–4).⁸⁹ Plutarch remarks in particular on the mutiny of the Fimbrians. Lucullus was scoffed at and humiliated by his men and was not even master of his own person (*Luc.* 35.4–9). Both on the battlefield and in Rome unscrupulous demagogues corrupted and turned the Romans against Lucullus, constantly accusing him of lust for money and power (*Luc.* 24.1–2; 33.5–6; 34). Thus, despite his military achievements, Lucullus is barely granted a triumph by the Roman people (*Luc.* 37.1–3). Plutarch’s delving into the social environment within which Lucullus functions and with which he interacts aids readers to fill in the richer background of the Roman politics of the late Republic, which might have inspired Lucullus’ decision to abandon public life. Although this is

⁸⁹ On the relation between Lucullus and the crowd, see Tröster (2008), 93–104. Cf. de Blois (1992), 4590–9 on Plutarch’s presentation of the soldiers in the Roman *Lives*.

given by Plutarch only as an alternative—possibly it was simply that Lucullus was sated with glory and withdrew (*Luc.* 38.2)—Plutarch’s reconstruction of the societal background attunes readers to the kinds of factors that, culminating in the plotting of Pompey’s men against Lucullus, must have sealed Lucullus’ final decision to withdraw completely (*Luc.* 43.1).

However, if Plutarch enables his readers to understand Lucullus’ withdrawal as bound up with the great difficulties Lucullus faced in his engagement with the Romans,⁹⁰ does this necessarily also encourage them to pardon him for his deficient leadership? Plutarch is explicit about the fact that Lucullus fails in reading his men’s distemper aright. He says that Lucullus overlooks and ignores their grievances, for he would not have expected that his troops would be brought to the extraordinary folly that they later showed (*Luc.* 14.2–4). Lucullus’ undiplomatic tactlessness with the ordinary soldiers and his equals brings him close to losing what he achieved before, and Lucullus himself, as Plutarch declares, must assume part of the blame (*Luc.* 33.1–2).

Still, without negating criticism, Plutarch goes on to mitigate a definite and unqualified negative judgement on Lucullus’ generalship.⁹¹ He endorses the claim of the anonymous interlocutors (cf. λέγουσιν) that these were the only flaws of Lucullus, and puts weight upon specific qualities of Lucullus: he was physically impressive, a powerful speaker, and equally prudent in the forum and the field (*Luc.*

⁹⁰ Cf. Pelling (2010a), 112.

⁹¹ Pace Swain (1992a), 315–16, who argues for Plutarch’s bias in favour of Lucullus. Tröster (2008), 150, with n. 5 for further bibliography, offers a more balanced suggestion, arguing that in the *Lucullus* ‘the negative features of the protagonist’s character serve in no small measure to counterbalance the positive ones’.

33.3). As to keeping his men kindly disposed and obedient, Plutarch asserts that perhaps Lucullus was unfortunate (δυστυχής) or simply naturally unsuited (ἀφυής) for a general's most important gift.⁹² He goes on to contemplate that if Lucullus had possessed that along with his other virtues (bravery, diligence, insight, and justice), the Roman Empire would have extended to the ends of the continent and the Caspian Sea (*Luc.* 36.5).

Apart from seeking to explain Lucullus' default in Lucullus' own (lack of) qualities, Plutarch deploys Lucullus' contemporary world in order to elicit from his readers a more generous moral response. Contemporary onlookers are cited, and they may clearly be positive. We are told, for example, that Lucullus seemed to the senate and the soundest of the citizens to suffer unjustly at Pompey's hands (*Luc.* 35.9: ἄδικα πάσχειν ἐδόκει Λεύκολλος); and that Pompey's treatment of Lucullus seemed to those who were present even more worthy of wrath (*Luc.* 36.1: ἔτι δὲ μᾶλλον ἐφάνη . . . νεμεσητόν). Contemporary responses, moreover, can be negative, but overturned in many interesting ways. Readers, for instance, are prompted to devalue or at least cast doubt on the mean-spirited criticism of onlookers, for they are warned in advance of their texture. The Fimbrians are portrayed as corrupted by luxury and greed, prone to anarchy, uncontrollable, self-willed, and lawless (*Luc.* 7.1–2). They are susceptible to demagogues and are easily courted by Clodius' thrusts at Lucullus (*Luc.* 34). Even if Lucullus fails with them at the end, it would take particularly cross-grained readers to take the blunt, outspoken criticism of such men at face value and not moderate their own criticism of Lucullus' conduct. In

⁹² Plutarch defines what the general's most important gift is in *Cim.-Luc.* 2.3: εἰ τοίνυν μέγιστον ἔργον ἡγεμόνος εὐπείθειαν <ἐν>εργάσασθαι δι' εὐνοίας. This is also mentioned by Alexiou (2007), 70.

Plutarch's opinion it was the first time that these men had experienced a genuine leader and had their insolence challenged (*Luc.* 7.3).

Strikingly, the onlookers' criticism may be not simply devalued, but also used by Plutarch to bring an effect of counter-suggestibility. The emphasis on the wits and scoffing of Tigranes and his court at the much lower numbers of Lucullus' army before the battle of Tigranocerta contributes to magnifying Lucullus' victory (*Luc.* 27–8). Plutarch (*Luc.* 28.5) and Lucullus' contemporary Romans (*Luc.* 28.9) extol the importance of Lucullus' military tactics and success. In a similar way, the hostile view of Lucullus' troops toward Cotta (*Luc.* 8.3) as well as their greed and disobedience towards Lucullus during the siege of Amisus (*Luc.* 19.3–9) are juxtaposed with and bring into sharp relief Lucullus' humane and noble character.

Particularly notable is the similar 'turnaround-effect', as I call it, of the bystanders' criticism in the parallel preceding *Life of Cimon* (and as we shall see in the rest of this chapter in the *Pericles–Fabius* book as well), where the readers are already acclimatised to know that an initial negative response may be qualified or submerged by further considerations.

Cimon is accused by the Athenians of debauchery and drunkenness (4.4; 15.4), of having improper intercourse with his sister (4.6; 15.3–4), and of being extremely fond of the Spartans (16.3; 17.3–5). Plutarch admits that Cimon was indeed philo-Laconian and that on every occasion he was prone to exalt Sparta to the Athenians, provoking their hatred and envy and causing his ostracism (16–17). Few readers will fail to find Cimon's dealing with his fellowmen reprehensible. However, Cimon's Spartanism is what defends him against accusations of demagogic flattery and bribery and allows him to emerge as truly generous and uncorrupted (10.8; 14.3–4). Rather than undermining Cimon's leadership, the insults heaped upon him by the

Athenians underline his love for his city—plainly brought out at the battle of Tanagra (17.4–8)—and his concern for dispelling civil strife and preserving the unity of the Greeks (18.1).⁹³

After Tanagra the Athenians themselves regret their unjust charges of laconising against Cimon's *hetairoi*, leave their wrath towards Cimon aside, and recall him from exile (17.7–8). Plutarch explicitly reverses the negative responses of Cimon's contemporaries and invites his readers to think differently: 'but, if, though full of sloth and given to tippling, he [i.e. Cimon] yet took so many cities and won so many victories, it is clear that had he been sober and mindful of his business, no Hellene either before or after him would have surpassed his exploits' (15.5). At the end of the *Cimon* Plutarch draws his readers into engaging all the more profoundly with Cimon's virtuous leadership by looking ahead into future Greek history and the failure of Cimon's successors (19.3–4).

Plutarch, thus, following his programmatic principle in the prologue to the *Cimon–Lucullus*, favours a sort of moral generosity without underplaying the flaws of his characters (*Cim.* 2.3–5). There is no attempt to hide, as we saw, the negative responses of the onlookers. But the effect of such responses can engender a response from the readers that is far from being negative. By illuminating the real difficulties and challenges involved in the social environment in which historical agents live and operate, the criticism of onlookers may serve to explain (not necessarily excuse) some of the most morally worrying decisions of the heroes of the *Lives* (why for example Lucullus withdrew from politics), provide frameworks for understanding better their default leadership (why for example Lucullus as well as Caesar and Nicias—as we analysed in the foregoing sections—failed with their people), and also cast light on

⁹³ Cf. Alexiou (2007), 60.

some of their most important qualities. The readers can, accordingly, moderate their judgements and be reasonably critical of the subjects' conduct, for they may realise that any initial harsh judgement can be balanced or even outweighed by finer qualities and ascriptions of moral verdicts that may be still *sub judice*. At the end, they may come to appreciate better Cimon's virtues (attested strikingly after his death) or be more willing to welcome for themselves the final conversion of the Romans—'but when Lucullus died, the people grieved and gathered together just as if he was still at the height as general and statesman' (*Luc.* 43.3)⁹⁴—if they have already been acquainted not only with the advantages but most importantly the disadvantages and problems that the two men had to handle.

3.2.4 Moral turnaround

Plutarch adopts a more expansive and varied version of the 'turnaround-technique' in the *Pericles–Fabius* book. His description of the attacks on Pericles and Fabius familiarises the readers with the kind of antagonism that the two men had to sustain and elevates some of the most important qualities of their leadership,⁹⁵ 'especially', as Plutarch says in the prologue to the pair, 'their self-restraint and justice, and their ability to endure the foolishness of the people and of their colleagues' (*Per.* 2.5).⁹⁶

In the *Pericles*, Plutarch, on occasion, defends Pericles against contemporary criticism explicitly.⁹⁷ In a rare first-person inclusive plural—'let us leave (ἐὼμεν)'—

⁹⁴ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010), adapted.

⁹⁵ Cf. Pelling (2010c), 227–8.

⁹⁶ For a comparative treatment of the two men, see Stadter (1975); Guerrini (1991), 258–66; Pelling (2005), 325–32.

⁹⁷ Cf. Stadter (1987), 269; (1989), xliii–iv.

he encourages his readers to disregard Ion's claim that Pericles was vulgar, arrogant, and haughty, and cites Zeno in support of Pericles' exemplary sobriety and high-mindedness (5.3). Using an 'indignant rhetorical question'⁹⁸—'and why should anyone be surprised (καὶ τί ἄν τις . . . θαυμάσειεν)'—he attacks the comic poets and Stesimbrotus of Thasus who slander Pericles. He thus awakens readers to Pericles' virtuous character which he tries to keep unstained from the envy and malice of contemporary historical writers (13.16).

Contemporary envy and malice, however, can still be useful for the readers of the *Pericles*, allowing them insights into the anti-Periclean climate of mid-fifth-century Athens and accordingly explanations and admiration for Pericles' political tactics and success.⁹⁹ Pericles' assumption of a policy that was contrary to his own nature but favourable to the people (7.3) is understood as inhering in Pericles' sensible response to the social environment in which he lives.¹⁰⁰ Pericles is afraid of the people and ostracism—especially under the suspicion that he would become a potential tyrant (3.5; 7.1; cf. 16.1)—and has to outmatch powerful political rivals (7). Demagoguery appears at Pericles' hands as a useful means of outstripping his opponents, first Cimon (9–10) and then Thucydides, son of Melesias (11–14), and of winning over the Athenian *dēmos*. Plutarch appraises Pericles' popular settlements as statesmanlike rather than (simply) demagogic (11.4–6).

Winning over the Athenian *dēmos* turns out to be especially challenging for Pericles once he secures authority in Athens and shifts his policy from demagoguery

⁹⁸ Stadter (1989), 179.

⁹⁹ Cf. Stadter (1975), 84–5; (1987), 260, 267 and (1989), xliii; Xenophontos (2012b), 616–21. On the anti-Periclean tradition in the *Pericles*, see Ferrarese (1975).

¹⁰⁰ Cf. Pelling (2005), 327–8.

to an aristocratic and kingly government (15.1). Plutarch focuses in particular on the contest between Pericles' reason and the Athenians' emotions;¹⁰¹ a contest that, as we shall see, allows some understanding of the most virtuous hallmarks of Pericles' character. The Athenians yearned to lay hands upon Egypt, as Plutarch says, stirring to rebellion the realms of the king and gaining possession of Sicily and southern Italy. However Pericles, Plutarch stresses, neither yielded to, nor fell in with, the Athenians' impulses, and he was not carried away by their enthusiasm (20.3–4). Overall, he was trying to restrain their sally, lop off their restlessness, and divert the greatest part of their forces to guarding and securing what they had already acquired. 'He considered it a great achievement', Plutarch tells us, 'to hold the Lacedaemonians in check and set himself in opposition to them in every way, as he showed, above all other things, by what he did in the Sacred War' (21.1). Plutarch comments that the subsequent events amply demonstrate that Pericles was correct in trying to keep the Athenians' forces in check (cf. 22.1: ὁρθῶς . . . τὴν δύναμιν τῶν Ἀθηναίων συνείχεν).

In the Samian War, Pericles has to again restrain the Athenians, who are impatient of delay (δυσχεραίνοντας τῇ τριβῇ) and willing to give battle (μάχεσθαι προθυμουμένους) (27.2). He himself, Plutarch notes, wishes to capture Samos by money and time rather than by the wounds and perils of his fellow-citizens (27.1). Plutarch lends weight to the contrast between Pericles' and the Athenians' mindset—such an emphasis occurs neither in Thucydides (1.117) nor in Diodorus Siculus (12.28)—thus drawing readers into noticing more clearly Pericles' policy of caution and restraint.

¹⁰¹ Cf. *Per.-Fab.* 1.4. See Stadter (1989), xxxi; Frazier (1996), 116–19; Said (2005), 14, arguing platonically that 'in the *Life of Pericles* the people is systematically identified with the ἐπιθυμητικόν . . . Conversely, Pericles plays the part of the λογιστικόν'.

Similarly, in his treatment of the Spartans' invasion of Attica, Plutarch lights upon the fact that Pericles stands up to the Athenians in the interests of reason (cf. 33.6: ἐχρήτο τοῖς αὐτοῦ λογισμοῖς) and shows an acute grasp of the roots of their unreason. The entreaties of Pericles' friends and the threats and denunciations of his enemies, the mocking and disdainful choruses that insult his generalship (33.7), all convey the climate and pressure of the time that Pericles has to withstand. Plutarch underlines that it seemed outrageous (δαινὸν ἐφαίνετο) to Pericles to confront the Peloponnesians and Boeotians (33.5). That phrase δαινὸν ἐφαίνετο might recall Thucydides' corresponding account (2.21.2).¹⁰² Yet, in Thucydides' text it is the Athenians who are annoyed with the destruction of their land and most of them—especially the younger men—want to go on and fight against the enemy. Plutarch uses the same phrase to introduce into the *Life of Pericles* the contrary perspective of Pericles, who, unlike the Athenians, appears to be outraged by the prospect of a possible fight. Pericles' stance of restraint and patience towards the Athenians' frenzy is brought to the forefront: 'Pericles was moved by no such things (ὕπ' οὐδενὸς ἐκινήθη τῶν τοιούτων), but gently (πρῶως) and silently (σιωπῇ) underwent the ignominy (τὴν ἀδοξίαν) and the hatred (τὴν ἀπέχθειαν)' (34.1). Moreover, in the *Life*, unlike Thucydides' narrative, Pericles' personal involvement in both removing the Aeginetans and invading Megara is stressed and linked with Pericles' success in holding in check the infuriated Athenians (34.2–3).¹⁰³

¹⁰² Stadter (1989), 309.

¹⁰³ Cf. Thuc. 2.27.1 and 2.31.1, the first noted also by Stadter (1989), 315. Cf. Stadter (1989), xlix with n. 48. Frazier (1996), 118 comments on Plutarch's less strategic concerns compared to Thucydides: 'c'est que la seule "stratégie" qui compte est celle que met en oeuvre l'homme d'Etat pour s'imposer à

Both Plutarch's more personal focus on Pericles and his description of the hostile popular mind serve to augment the effectiveness of Pericles' policy and render his achievement all the more marvellous. In particular, Pericles' assimilation to a helmsman (cf. 33.6: ὥσπερ νεὸς κυβερνήτης) conjures up Plutarch's earlier emphasis in chapter 15 on Pericles' successful handling of the emotional *dēmos* through his oratorical skill and virtuous character.¹⁰⁴ As Plutarch commented there, 'Pericles mainly used hope and fear as his rudders (ὥσπερ οἶαξι) restraining (συστέλλων) their arrogance (τὸ θρασυνόμενον αὐτῶν) and relieving (ἀνιείς) and comforting (παράμυθούμενος) their despair (τὸ δύσθυμον)' (15.2). 'The sequence of images in 15.1–2, music, medicine, seamanship, and back to music,' all heavily imbued with Platonic nuances, 'reflects a range of rational procedures and skills to create harmony and order', as Philip Stadter appositely comments.¹⁰⁵ Plutarch implicitly assimilates Pericles to the Platonic ideal and skilfully turns Plato from an accuser to a supporter of Pericles by using Plato's own ideas.¹⁰⁶ The readers are drawn to notice that, despite the harsh abuse poured over Pericles, these 'rational procedures and skills' are still present in Pericles' conduct during the Peloponnesian War.

In a much more elaborate manner, the ending of the *Life* invites the readers to challenge the disquieting grain of contemporary responses, planting in their minds a

ses concitoyens'. See also Diod. Sic. 12.44.2–3 for a similar focus on the Athenians rather than Pericles.

¹⁰⁴ On the Platonic connotations of this image, see Stadter (1989), 311; Said (2005), 23–4. Beneker (2012), 47–8, esp. 47 n. 105 cites further examples of the image in Plutarch's work. See also Brock (2013), 53–67, more generally, on the 'ship of state' political imagery from the Archaic Greek Poetry to Aristotle.

¹⁰⁵ See Stadter (1989), 189–91 on a detailed analysis of the images and their Platonic echoes.

¹⁰⁶ Stadter (1989), xlii–iii, lxxviii–ix, 191.

renewed reflection on Pericles' virtues. On his deathbed Pericles was amazed, as Plutarch puts it, that the noblest Athenians and his surviving friends failed to notice that the best and most important of his achievements was that no Athenian had ever put on mourning clothes because of him (38.4). Plutarch moves on to make Pericles' virtues explicit. He considers Pericles admirable for his reasonableness, calm, and pride (39.1). Pericles' 'gracious character' as well as his life, which he kept pure and 'unsullied'¹⁰⁷ in the exercise of power, associate him (in Plutarch's view) with the Olympians (39.2). As Stadter observes, the final comparison with the gods recalls Pericles' own encomiastic words over the Athenians fallen at Samos (*Per.* 8.9: 'Pericles . . . said that they were immortal, just like the gods. For we do not see them, but we infer that they are immortal by the honors which they receive and by the good things which they bestow. This is true as well of those who die for their country').¹⁰⁸ In their enlightened state the Athenians come to confirm Pericles' own words for himself and seal his apotheosis:

(39.3) Τοῦ δὲ Περικλέους ταχέϊαν αἴσθησιν καὶ σαφὴ πόθον Ἀθηναίοις ἐννευγάζετο τὰ πράγματα. καὶ γὰρ οἱ ζῶντος βαρυνόμενοι τὴν δύναμιν ὡς ἀμαυροῦσαν αὐτούς, εὐθύς ἐκποδῶν γενομένου πειρώμενοι ῥητόρων καὶ δημαγωγῶν ἐτέρων, ἀνωμολογοῦντο μετριώτερον ἐν ὄγκῳ καὶ σεμνότερον ἐν προαότητι μὴ φῦναι τρόπον. (39.4) ἡ δ' ἐπίφθορος ἰσχὺς ἐκείνη, μοναρχία λεγομένη καὶ τυραννὶς πρότερον, ἐφάνη τότε σωτήριον ἔρυσμα τῆς πολιτείας γενομένη· τοσαύτη φορὰ καὶ πλῆθος ἐπέκειτο κακίας τοῖς πράγμασιν, ἣν ἐκεῖνος ἀσθενὴ καὶ ταπεινὴν ποιῶν ἀπέκρυπτε καὶ κατεκώλυεν ἀνήγεστον ἐν ἐξουσίᾳ γενέσθαι. (*Per.* 39.3–4)

(39.3) Events produced in the Athenians a swift perception and manifest longing for Pericles.

For those who had resented his power while he was alive and felt that it had condemned them

¹⁰⁷ Tr. Stadter (1989), 347.

¹⁰⁸ Stadter (1987), 263 with n. 25 for the translation.

to obscurity tested out other politicians and popular leaders as soon as he was out of the way, and were agreed that never had there been a character more moderate in self-importance, or more awesome in mildness. (39.4) And that offensive power, which had previously been dubbed autocracy and tyranny, was seen then to have been a source of safety and protection for the constitution. So abundant a crop, so large a multitude of evils lay upon the state, which he had kept from sight, making them weak and unimposing, and had prevented from becoming incurable in their strength.¹⁰⁹

The obituary-notice at Thucydides 2.65 may come to mind here. Thucydides' comments on Pericles' prudent statesmanship—Plutarch adapted and expanded Thucydides' observations earlier in his introduction of the 'aristocratic' Pericles (*Per.* 15)¹¹⁰—look ahead to the corrupt successors of Pericles and future sufferings of the Athenians, and conclude with a praiseworthy note on Pericles' foresight in the war (2.65.7–13). In both Plutarch and Thucydides, the readers are primed to expand their frame of reference to another level, thinking how a risky deviation from the Periclean policy led the city to destruction. However, it is suggestive that Plutarch chooses to plunge his readers into such a reflection through the viewpoint of the city itself, contextualising this powerful posthumous retrospection against the broader background of the struggle between Pericles and the Athenian people. The Athenians are drawn by their own future history into challenging their earlier hostile mood towards Pericles and in forming a counter-interpretation of his leadership, one which

¹⁰⁹ Parts of the translation are taken from Stadter (1989), 348–9 and parts are adapted from Waterfield (1998).

¹¹⁰ Noted also by Duff (1999), 90 n. 71. On Plutarch's reworking of Thucydides' text here, see Stadter (1989), 187–93; Said (2005), 16–17; Pelling (2005), 327 n. 11. Alexiou (2007), 184–7 examines how Plutarch adapts here Platonic material to supplement Thucydides and give a positive appraisal of Pericles.

harmonises so well with the perception of Pericles and the narrator as to guide readers towards a deeper appreciation of Pericles' virtues.¹¹¹

Thus the ending of the *Life* works in tandem with the movement of the narrative as a whole to undercut the sustained and malign criticism in order to prompt reflection on the deeds of virtue. Pericles, as we saw, demonstrates this potential of successfully challenging the criticisms of others and employing 'the healing value of sharp criticism'¹¹² (cf. *Per.* 15.1: δηγμοὺς καὶ φάρμακα προσφέροντα σωτήρια) in order to guide his people towards virtue; even the Athenians are capable in the end of questioning their harsh condemnation and assuming a more probing moral response towards Pericles. Their method aligns with that of Plutarch—who, as we saw in our analysis, *overturns* any sort of simplistic criticism into a more profound reflection on virtuous character—and this furnishes the readers with examples of how, in their active inquiry of the works of virtue (cf. *Per.* 1–2), they should mould their own interpretative methodology, to be used especially on occasions when they are presented with the carping and mockery of historical onlookers: they are enabled to listen to their judgements, but they should also be ready to test them for themselves.

Such occasions feature prominently as a technique and a subject-matter in Pericles' paired *Life of Fabius*. In the *Fabius*, Plutarch constantly refers to the hostile and disparaging stance of the Romans towards Fabius, only to undercut it over the course of the narrative that follows. In this way he provokes his readers to weigh up

¹¹¹ Cf. above, ch. 2, pp. 80–1 on how the last lines of the *Pericles* (τοσαύτη φορά . . . ἀνήκεστον ἐν ἑξουσίᾳ γενέσθαι) might be taken as belonging to the Athenians as well as the narrator.

¹¹² Stadter (1989), 190 for the phrase.

thoughtfully the opposing strands, and thus increases their engagement with Fabius' virtuous character.¹¹³

Both on the field and in Rome the Romans are easily swayed by Fabius' opponents, Metilius (7.5; 8.4; 9) and Minucius (5.5–6; 10.5–11.1), and feel strongly displeased with Fabius' defensive policy.¹¹⁴ Against this backdrop, however, Plutarch delineates Fabius' unwavering resolution (5.7–8) and self-control (7.7; 10.2). Minucius' defeat, in particular, underscores Fabius' virtuous leadership. Fabius' foresight (12.1), philanthropy (12.3), and military vigour (12.5–6) are clearly revealed,¹¹⁵ encouraging the readers to follow Minucius in his conversion (13.7–8),¹¹⁶ and drawing them to destabilise any reservations that they may earlier have felt about Fabius—a sort of moral turnaround which the early chapters of the *Life* have prepared for, and which the following narrative takes further.¹¹⁷

Although opposed by Terentius Varro (14.1–3), Fabius insists on his strategy (14.5–6) and after the Battle of Cannae gains anew the respect and honour of his city. Rome, as Plutarch tells us, reappraises Fabius' earlier cowardice (δειλία) and sluggishness (ψυχρότης) as a matter of 'divine and marvellous intelligence' (θεῖόν τι χρεῖμα διανοίας καὶ δαιμόνιον), and now exalts and relies upon his judgement (τῇ

¹¹³ Cf. Said (2005), 15. See also Xenophontos (2012a), who gives a detailed analysis of how Fabius' contrast with his fellow military officials or with ordinary soldiers helps Plutarch to offer a moral agenda of ideal generalship.

¹¹⁴ e.g. *Fab.* 5.3; 5.5; 7.3; 7.5.

¹¹⁵ Cf. *Per.-Fab.* 2.2; 3.2.

¹¹⁶ Cf. Livy 22.29.7–30.6, focusing similarly on Minucius, while Polybius 3.105.9–10 on the Romans.

¹¹⁷ See *Fab.* 1.5–6, with Xenophontos (2012a), 163. On the enemies' side, everyone except Hannibal disdains Fabius as a coward (*Fab.* 5.3–4). Hannibal's right judgement is confirmed later (*Fab.* 12.6; 23.1).

γνώμη) and prudence (τὴν ἐκείνου φρόνησιν) (17.5–6). Fabius’ gentle posture (cf. 17.7: πράφ βαδίσματι καὶ προσώπῳ καθεστῶτι), philanthropy (cf. 17.7: φιλανθρώπῳ προσαγορεύσει, cf. 18.4–5), and firm resolution (cf. 19.3: τῶν πρώτων ἐχόμενος λογισμῶν ἐκείνων) are all there again at the service of his city.

Especially noteworthy is Plutarch’s treatment of the last rather questionable phase of Fabius’ life. The roles now are reversed, for it is Fabius, not his opponents, who cries out in the city against Scipio and throws his fellow-citizens into a panic (25–6).¹¹⁸ Plutarch includes the popular criticism against Fabius (25.2: ‘the people thought that he attacked Scipio because of jealousy of his success, and that he was afraid lest, if Scipio performed some great and glorious exploit . . . he himself would appear lazy and cowardly . . .’), only to defuse it first (25.3: ‘it seems that Fabius began his opposition out of his great caution (ὕπὸ πολλῆς ἀσφαλείας) and forethought (προνοίας), in fear of the danger, which was great’), and then expand and reinforce it (25.3: ‘but that he grew himself more violent and went to greater lengths in his opposition out of some ambition (φιλοτιμία τινί) and contentiousness (φιλονικία)’).¹¹⁹

To consider that Plutarch ‘seems to think that his [i.e. Fabius’] sense of caution overwhelmed his judgement, and *πρᾶότης* is no longer apparent’, as Philip Stadter argues, may risk underestimating the subtlety of Plutarch’s treatment.¹²⁰ The blurring of moral certainties about Fabius’ character is still present in the closing

¹¹⁸ See Pelling (2005), 327.

¹¹⁹ On Fabius’ ambition, see also *Fab.* 22.5–8.

¹²⁰ Stadter (1975), 84. In the final *Synkrisis* Plutarch is totally silent about either *philotimia* or *philonikia*. Rather he mentions lack of confidence and courage as explanations for Fabius’ opposition to Scipio, thus complicating the reader’s moral inquiry even more (*Per.-Fab.* 2.3–4).

chapters of the *Fabius* through the different contrasting evaluative perspectives to which Plutarch exposes his readers' 'wandering viewpoint' (in Wolfgang Iser's terminology). We are told that the Romans yielded to Fabius' worrying pleas for 'Fabius seemed (ἐδόκει) to arrange these affairs of the state according to his nature (πρὸς τὴν ἑαυτοῦ φύσιν)' (26.2)—a reminder of Fabius' usual caution and self-restraint. His constant carping, though, 'gave offence to many, who thought him a captious and malicious man, or one who because of old age became wholly cowardly and with no confidence, immoderately afraid of Hannibal' (26.3). Contrary to this, after his death Fabius is buried with private financial contributions 'as if he were the father of the people (ὥς πατέρα τοῦ δήμου)'; 'his death', as Plutarch concludes, 'received honour and glory which befitted his life' (27.4). I do not suggest that the terminal praise removes any element of the earlier criticism; but I believe that it is important in reminding us of Fabius' virtuous character and guiding us to problematise a simplistic, harsh moralising judgement.

Indeed, Plutarch's technique of presenting multiple and progressively contradictory evaluative viewpoints accustoms his readers to the need to listen carefully to the conflicting strands and on occasions even to challenge them—as Plutarch himself does—in a bid to judge. This exercise has the effect of deepening their understanding of moral character and moral judgement through provocative comparison and contrast. It also keeps them alert right to the end of a man's *Life* to the complexity of moral evaluation. Throughout our discussion, we have noticed Plutarch's tendency to refrain from offering an overall moral conclusion in the closing chapters of the biographies, but rather prompt his readers to rethink their earlier moral assumptions by drawing their attention to moral questions and issues that have been raised and discussed in the previous parts of the book. The next chapter turns to

considering in detail how the endings to the *Lives* expose the particular challenges involved in making moral judgements.

4.

A Life without End?

It has long been recognised that although death is a most natural place for a biography to conclude, Plutarch varies considerably the way he chooses to put an end to the narrative of an individual's life.¹ He often shows a self-conscious interest in reinforcing the sense of an ending through formal or 'explicit self-closural references'.² Expressions such as 'this, then is what I have to say about Lycurgus' (*Lyc.* 31.10),³ or 'it is therefore time to think of the comparison' (*Flam.* 21.15),⁴ may induce a sense of closure and (more or less) look ahead to the final *Synkrisis*.⁵ Sometimes the link is not (only) between the ending of the second *Life* and the *Synkrisis*, but between the ending of a *Life* and its earlier parts,⁶ a closural cliché in Plutarch's *Lives*, where the last sections of a *Life* normally reiterate and reemphasise

¹ References to the death of the main character signal that a *Life* is coming close to its end (e.g. *Lyc.* 31.7; *Num.* 21.7; *Sol.* 32.3; *Cim.* 19.1–2), but rarely constitute Plutarch's last words (e.g. *Flam.* 21.15; *Cam.* 43.2). Indeed, many *Lives* end with the death of someone else and not that of the protagonist: Pelling (1997c), 228–9 [= repr. (2002a), 365–6]. See also Duff (2011a), 242; Cooper (2014), 391. On 'death' as 'closural allusion', see Smith (1968), 175–8.

² I owe the term to Smith (1968), 172. Cf. Pelling (1997c), 231–2 [= repr. (2002a), 367–8].

³ Cf. *Lys.* 30.8; *Phil.* 21.12.

⁴ Cf. Pelling (1997c), 231 with n. 12 [= repr. (2002a), 367, 383 n. 13].

⁵ Duff (2011a), 250–3 discusses in detail transitional phrases or sentences from the second *Life* to the *Synkrisis*.

⁶ A phenomenon that Torgovnick (1981), 13 calls 'circularity' (when the ending clearly recalls the beginning) and 'parallelism' (when the ending refers not only to the beginning of the work but also to several earlier parts). On circular endings in Plutarch's *Lives*, see Duff (2011a), 244–6, 249–50.

earlier themes and scenes⁷—a technique which finds parallels in other genres too, especially historiography and the ancient novel.⁸ Moreover, in a number of *Lives* Plutarch's closing words work not on the level of the book but on that of a larger series of *Lives*.⁹ Closures 'cross-references' to other *Lives* of the biographical corpus¹⁰ show that Plutarch expects his audience to be familiar with the rest of his biographies,¹¹ and to combine and read some of them together.¹²

The closing chapters of the *Lives* are likely to involve a universal moral note or to be strikingly anecdotal,¹³ displaying a wide range of terminating themes: posthumous honours,¹⁴ retribution against the principal's enemies,¹⁵ the fate of

⁷ See also Pelling (1997c), 232, 242 [= repr. (2002a), 367, 375]; Duff (2011a), 242–53, 264.

⁸ See e.g. Pelling (1997a), 58; Marincola (2005), 294–5, 299–300 on historiography; Fusillo (1997), esp. 214–20 on the novel.

⁹ On this closural device, see Torgovnick (1981), 14 ('linkage'); Fowler (1989), 82–8 ('supertextual closure'). In this chapter I mainly deal with aspects of what Fowler (1989), 82–8 calls 'infratextual closure', working on the level of Plutarch's book and focusing on the endings of first and second *Lives*.

¹⁰ See *Cor.* 39.11 (to the *Numa*), *Thes.* 36.2 (to the *Cimon*), *Gracchi* 21.9 (to the **Scipio*), *Cato Min.* 73.6 (to the *Brutus*), *Dion* 58.10 (to the *Timoleon*). See also Pelling (1997c), 231 with n. 13 [= repr. (2002a), 367, 383 n. 14].

¹¹ See Duff (2011a), 262.

¹² See Pelling (2010b); Stadter (2010) [= repr. (2015), 286–302]; Duff (2011a), 262 n. 223 for further bibliography to which we may add Lucchesi (2014), who examines how Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, *Lysander*, and *Agesilaus* can be read as a unitary series about Spartan history.

¹³ Generalised moral statements: e.g. *Num.* 22.9 (cf. 20.8–12); *Demetr.* 52.4; *Mar.* 46.3–5. Anecdotal endings: *Luc.* 43.2; *Dem.* 31.1–3; *Cic.* 49.5; *Lys.* 30.3–5; *Alc.* 39. See also Pelling (1997c), 232–4 [= repr. (2002a), 368–9].

¹⁴ e.g. *Thes.* 35.8–36.6; *Rom.* 29.1–3; *Num.* 22.1–2; or posthumous dishonour: *Crass.* 32–3; *Gracchi* 20.3–4; 38.4–6; *Cic.* 49.1–2; *Phoc.* 37.3–4. See also Duff (1999), 136–7 (with n. 25), 184.

relatives,¹⁶ and comparison with other individuals.¹⁷ All these themes can be intimately connected—the ending of the *Phocion* offers a good example (38)¹⁸—creating in the readers a sense of finality and completion. However, the final effect, as our discussion will illustrate, is far from a clinching conclusiveness. Plutarch refrains from commanding an unequivocal moral conclusion in an authoritative ‘this is how you should judge this’ sort of way. Rather, he draws readers’ attention to themes and ideas, which work to engage them in further thought.

True, these themes and ideas are not necessarily shocking or unsettling in the light of what precedes them; nor do they essentially address wholly new questions and unexpected perspectives, as scholarship has argued so far;¹⁹ but (as we shall see below) we do find instances where the terminal emphasis can be to some extent

¹⁵ e.g. *Dem.* 31.4–6; *Phoc.* 38.2; *Phil.* 21.1–2; 21.9; *Sert.* 27.2–7; *Pel.* 35.2–12. See also Pelling (1988a), 323; (1997c), 229 [= repr. (2002a), 365]. Divine retribution is sometimes mentioned: *Cic.* 49.6; *Dion* 58.3–7; *Caes.* 69.2–14. See also Duff (1999), 137 nn. 23, 25; Verdegem (2010a), 392 n. 160.

¹⁶ Details about the fate of friends and descendants can also be found: *Lyc.* 31.8–9; *Num.* 21. In *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 3.4–5, Plutarch stresses the importance of descendants for our moral estimation of the principal’s character. See also Pelling (1988a), 323–5; (1997c), 234 [= repr. (2002a), 369]; Duff (1999), 130, 137 n. 25, 182–4.

¹⁷ e.g. *Lyc.* 31.2; *Arist.* 27.6; *Fab.* 27.3–4; *Phoc.* 38.5. Other terminal motifs and themes include homecoming (esp. of the dead body or ashes of a man: e.g. *Thes.* 36.3; *Cim.* 19.5; *Ages.* 40.4), direct links with Plutarch’s time (e.g. *Lyc.* 31.4; *Pub.* 23.6; *Cim.* 19.5; see also Pelling (1997c), 231 [= repr. (2002a), 367]; Duff (2011a), 243), forward glances at the history of a man’s nation (e.g. *Num.* 22.9–12; *Cim.* 19.3–4; *Per.* 39.3–4).

¹⁸ Noticed also by Duff (1999), 137 n. 25. Other endings that combine several of these themes are *Pel.* 33–5; *Marc.* 30.

¹⁹ Pelling (1997c), 236–7 [= repr. (2002a), 370–1].

surprising or discordant (the *Nicias* ends with a note on Nicias' foresight, despite the earlier focus on Nicias' deficient leadership—remember also the disturbing effect of the final enlightenment of contemporary observers, analysed in the previous chapter);²⁰ or where we are presented with a feeling of open questions (Alcibiades' moral status is still uncertain at the end of the *Alcibiades*), or even with new insights (the allusions to Euripides' *Bacchae* at the end of the *Crassus* prompts a new strand of thought about the Sicilian and the Parthian disasters, one which encourages the readers to juxtapose Nicias' wisdom with the limited insight of Crassus and the Athenians). On the whole, however, the closing chapters may be seen as recapturing key moral issues and questions that pervade the earlier account and (even) the book as a whole,²¹ and thus need to remain in the mind of the readers up to the end of the narrative for them to contemplate and examine. If so, glancing back at the preceding narrative primes readers with that insight of hindsight, which empowers them to amplify, problematise, rephrase, or occasionally just simplify their earlier moral assumptions—a most appropriate continuation of the readers' moral research into the lives and the narrative of the lives of historical figures whose significance continues in perpetuity.

4.1 PERPLEXING ANECDOTAL ENDINGS

The *Alcibiades* ends with Alcibiades' death. In chapter 38 the unequivocal emphasis of the Athenians and the Spartans on Alcibiades' experience and energetic conduct brings to the forefront of our mind the 'great nature' of Alcibiades, a man who had

²⁰ See also Duff (1999), 137.

²¹ Cf. Cooper (2014).

vices but great virtues as well, and whose exceptional qualities led to his downfall.²² One version of the story relates that Lysander was persuaded to kill Alcibiades by the authorities in Sparta, for they were afraid of Alcibiades' quickness and ability to do great things (38.6). This rather positive suggestion about Alcibiades' fall is reinforced in the following, and last, chapter by the references to Alcibiades' courageous resistance against his assassins and the glorious and honourable burial he receives at the hands of Timandra (39.5–7).

However, Plutarch also states that the authorities in Sparta might have ordered Alcibiades' killing because of their desire to gratify Agis (38.6). Agis, as Plutarch recounted a few chapters earlier, was hostile to Alcibiades because he was wronged by him as a husband (cf. 23.7–8) and was also displeased at the high repute that Alcibiades enjoyed in Sparta (24.3). A plausible reminder of Alcibiades' liaison with Agis' wife, combined with the details we encounter in the final chapter of the *Life* about Alcibiades' effeminacy (39.2), his living with a courtesan (39.1–2), and his insolent treatment of a local girl (39.9) recall Alcibiades' wanton and unconventional lifestyle, which, as Plutarch shows throughout the *Alcibiades*, wrought a shattering impact upon Alcibiades' *doxa* (35.3), his glory, and popular opinion about him.²³

This sense of moral complexity, which is generated through the mixture of positive and negative elements at the end of the *Alcibiades*,²⁴ is effective in drawing the readers into considering in retrospect themes, such as the relation between the leader and his people or between private and public morality, which are central both

²² On Plutarch's conception of Alcibiades as a great nature, see Duff (1999), 224–8.

²³ Cf. Duff (1999), 240; Verdegem (2010a), 393.

²⁴ Pelling (1996), lvi–vii; Duff (1999), 239–40; Gribble (1999), 281–2; Verdegem (2010a), 392–4.

to the *Alcibiades* and to his pair *Coriolanus*,²⁵ and which are explicitly readdressed in the final *Synkrisis*.²⁶ At the same time, it is congruent with the constantly problematic moral status of Alcibiades,²⁷ who until the end of his life and the narrative of his life is a man of uncertainty and contradictions, about whom his contemporaries (cf. *Alc.* 16), Plutarch, and the readers argue and cannot agree even on the facts.²⁸

The ending of the *Lysander* arouses similar moral ambiguities. Plutarch mentions, first, the displeasure of the Spartans at Lysander's death (30.1) and the poverty of Lysander, which was discovered after his death (30.2). He then goes on to include two stories: the first concerns Agesilaus, who found a document which proved Lysander's revolutionary plans for the Spartan constitution (30.3–5)—Plutarch says that it is Ephorus who gives this story—and the second refers to the posthumous honours which the Spartans paid to Lysander, especially their punishment of his daughters' suitors who, after discovering that Lysander was simply just and good but not rich, wanted to abandon the suit (30.6–7).

The poverty theme may recall Plutarch's earlier discussions of Lysander's morally dubious attitude to money, both his personal incorruptibility and his corruption of Sparta (*Lys.* 2; 17; cf. *Lyc.* 30.1). This ambiguity can still be felt at the end of the *Life*. The attitude of the suitors, which may suggest that the corruption in Sparta has already begun to spread, contrasts with their punishment by the Spartans and the revelation of Lysander's poverty. Moreover, Plutarch's terminal reference to

²⁵ See Pelling (1996), xx–lviii; Duff (1999), 205–40 on these themes.

²⁶ Especially the relation between private morality and public good: *Alc.-Cor.* 1.3–4; 3.2–6; 4–5. On the *Synkrisis* between Coriolanus and Alcibiades, see Duff (1999), esp. 281–3; Verdegem (2010b).

²⁷ Duff (1999), 240; Gribble (1999), 281–2.

²⁸ Pelling (1996), xlii–liv, lvi–vii; Duff (1999), 205–40; Gribble (1999), 267–82; Verdegem (2010a), 419–22.

the suitors and Lysander's daughters might bring to mind the two anecdotes in the opening chapters of the *Lysander* (2.7–8), where Plutarch underlines the uncertainties within Lysander's relationship to money and the contrast between personal virtue and public good.²⁹ The ending of the *Lysander* thus touches upon themes that carry more ethically worrying reminders, allowing readers to sense anew and rethink Lysander's ambivalent relationship to the Spartan norms³⁰—we are even explicitly reminded of his earlier attempt to subvert the constitution—and its complex moral implications.³¹

The end of Lysander's paired *Life of Sulla* works to a similar effect. There, it is the Roman Sulla (38.3) rather than the Spartan Lysander who enjoys the honour of images (εἰδωλα) at his funeral—a privilege reserved for Spartan kings, as Herodotus attests (6.58.3).³² This paradox may remind us of Lysander's failed attempt to gain royal power.³³ Moreover, the image of Sulla, which was moulded (cf. πλασθῆναι) for his funeral (38.3), and his monument, which (as Plutarch says) attests to Sulla's great

²⁹ See Duff (1999), 182–4. As Duff mentions, the text of the second anecdote (*Lys.* 2.8) is most likely corrupt, and must refer to another Spartan whose corruptibility is contrasted with Lysander's virtuous character, although even in that case the anecdote bears witness to the damaging effect that Lysander's policies had on Sparta: 'despite his own personal virtue, Lysander's victories harmed his country by encouraging in his countrymen the love of wealth' (183). See also Duff (2011a), 231 with n. 89 for detailed bibliography on the two anecdotes.

³⁰ See Pelling (1988b), 269–70 [= repr. (2002a), 293–4]; Stadter (1992), 47 [= repr. (2015), 265].

³¹ See also Duff (1999), 184, noticing that Lysander's posthumous rehabilitation is 'undercut by the discovery of his revolutionary plans (30.3–5). Thus it is not clear how sincerely the honours paid him in Sparta after his death are to be taken'. Duff rightly observes another moral ambiguity which stems from the notion of poverty itself: although for Plutarch indifference to wealth is a virtue in the *Lives* (e.g. *Arist.* 24), the neglect of the financial situation of one's family is not (*Arist.-Cato Maj.* 3.2–5).

³² Duff (1999), 168 n. 30.

³³ Duff (1999), 168 n. 30. See also *Lys.-Sulla* 4.4–5 for the unkingly death of Lysander.

kindness and cruelty (38.6), glance back at the beginning of the *Sulla*, where statues of Sulla implied similar inconsistencies within Sulla's character, associated with his appearance (2.1–2).³⁴ Besides, they may look even further back to the beginning of the *Lysander*, where a hardly identifiable statue of Lysander presented him as a traditional Spartan and introduced the contrast, which runs through all his *Life*, between his Spartan and non-Spartan attitudes (1.1).³⁵

These disquieting reminders at the ends of the *Lysander* and the *Sulla* illuminate the contradictory character and ambiguous moral status of the two men, as suggested throughout their *Lives*.³⁶ At the end of the *Sulla* in particular, they may also generate the sort of moral reflection that is appropriate before/for the final *Synkrisis*, where readers need to ponder anew on many of the themes and questions which were raised at the endings of the two *Lives*, for example Sulla's kindness or harshness (*Lys.-Sulla* 2.5–7; 5.3–4) or Lysander's Spartan behaviour (*Lys.-Sulla* 2.1–4; 3.1–2; 3.6–8).

Further, both endings illuminate the morally deflationary effect that posthumous material can generate in the closing chapters of Plutarch's biographies. In the following sections, we shall see that a substantial number of Plutarch's *Lives* end

³⁴ Duff (1999), 165–8. Cf. Stadter (1992), 41–3, 51 esp. nn. 5–7 [= repr. (2015), 258–61].

³⁵ See Stadter (1992), 41–2, 47 [= repr. (2015), 258–9, 265]; Duff (1999), 162–5; Lucchesi (2014), 102–5. In addition, Duff (1999), 168 emphasises the meaning of 'forgery' and 'fiction' in the word *πλασθῆναι* (*Sulla* 38.3), and links it with echoes of the use of deceit and fabrication in the *Lysander* that might be evoked here (*Lys.* 14.7; 25.5; 26.5). On the moral ambiguity surrounding this theme in the *Lysander*, see Duff (1999), 170–6.

³⁶ See Duff (1999), 161, 203–4 arguing that 'the ethical status of the pair seems to remain deliberately ambiguous right through to the end' (161).

with telling, alluding to, or implying an ‘aftermath’.³⁷ I will suggest that the readers’ access to an aftermath and/or their ability to perceive what lies outside the boundaries of the narrative allow them to ‘construct an ending beyond the ending’³⁸ of the *Life*, which provokes further thought about an individual’s character and policies rather than imposing an assertive and unambiguous moral conclusion.³⁹

4.2 THE MAN AND THE ‘AFTERLIFE’ OF HIS CITY

4.2.1 Looking beyond the myth

At the ends of the *Theseus* and the *Romulus* there is a strong indication that the story continues beyond the subjects’ death/disappearance. In the *Theseus*, one reads about Theseus’ offspring and their restitution of kingship in Athens (35.7–8), the heroic honours that Theseus received from the Athenians, his appearance at the battle of Marathon (35.8), and Cimon’s return of Theseus’ bones in Athens (36.1–3). There are also references to Plutarch’s own time, the place where Theseus lies (καίται) buried and the honours that he still enjoys in Athens (36.4–6). Indeed, the last paragraph of the *Theseus* creates a strong link between the mythical time of Theseus and the historical era of Plutarch (36.4–5), demanding in a dense summary that Plutarch’s audience retrospectively appreciate many of Theseus’ best qualities and moments.

The reference to the ξίφος, discovered with Theseus’ coffin and bronze spear (36.2), might take us back to the first chapters of the *Theseus* and the tokens that Aegeus left for his son as symbols of strength and manliness (3.6–7; 12.4–5, esp. 12.5

³⁷ On the technique of the ‘aftermath’ in ancient and modern literature, see Roberts (1997).

³⁸ See Roberts (1997), 261 for the phrase, slightly adapted.

³⁹ Duff (1999), 137 acknowledges that a posthumous ‘restitution’ at the end of the *Lives* can become ‘highly disturbing’.

laying emphasis on Theseus' ἀνδραγαθία). Theseus' tomb, moreover, bears testimony to Theseus' philanthropy and kindness towards the poor and unprotected (36.4)—both crucial aspects of Theseus' character.⁴⁰ The sacrifice which the Athenians still perform in honour of Theseus recalls his divine lineage and two great moments from his life: his return from Crete with the youths and his first arrival in Athens from Troezen (36.4–5).

In several ways, Plutarch makes a sort of rounding off, and the closing chapter of the *Theseus* reiterates earlier parts of the *Life* and, most importantly, the prologue to the *Theseus–Romulus* book. The final forward-moving drive of the ending of the *Theseus* has the effect of bringing Plutarch's proemial demythologising announcements (*Thes.* 1.5) to their completion through the continuous association of the mythical past with the historical present. It also discusses themes (such as the hero's parentage, divine stature, military strength and sagacity, and relations with kindred and citizens) that Plutarch first mentioned with reference to both Theseus and Romulus in the prefatory introduction to the *Lives* of the two men (*Thes.* 2). Thus the 'proleptic summary' at the end of the *Theseus* juggles our glance both back to the earlier parts of the *Theseus* and forward to the next *Life of Romulus* (and even the final *Synkrisis*),⁴¹ encapsulating the book as a whole and providing a later vantage point from which Theseus' mythical past can be reviewed and evaluated in hindsight.

The ending of the *Romulus* is similar in many respects. As in the closing chapter of the *Theseus*, Plutarch uses several means to make his mythical material look like history. He conveys the story about Romulus' apotheosis as a myth and

⁴⁰ e.g. *Thes.* 8.5; 25.1–3; 26.5–6; 30.1–2. The theme returns in *Thes.–Rom.* 2.3.

⁴¹ See Larmour (1988), 362 and 364 n. 11, who brings out the correspondences between the topics in *Thes.* 2 and the final *Synkrisis*.

correlates it with other fables of the Greeks (28.4–7); but he relies upon Pindar, Heracleitus, and Plato (as can be assumed from the context)⁴² in order to suggest a truer and more reasonable explanation of how men ascend to gods (28.8–10). In a rather serious scholarly manner, Plutarch considers all his sources—his discussion of Romulus’ surname Quirinus provides an illuminating example (29.1: οἱ μὲν . . . οἱ δ’ ὅτι . . . οἱ δέ)⁴³—and suggests direct links between the historical present and Romulus’ era (29.2–3). Besides, after giving the mythical explanation of a Roman cult, the Nonae Caprotinae, he adds another more historical one that looks ahead to the time of Camillus (29.4–10).

The blend of myth and history becomes most evident as this proleptic story about Philotis’ successful trickery of the Latins explicitly looks back to Romulus’ time and the Sabine affair (29.6), within the framework of which Plutarch already stressed Romulus’ good political motives (*Rom.* 9.2; 14.1–2; 14.7) and the successful unity between the Romans and the Sabines (*Rom.* 19).⁴⁴ Such an echo of the rape of the Sabine women at the end of the *Romulus*, however, might also serve as a reminder of Theseus’ corresponding acts of violence (*Thes.* 29.1–2; 31)—a comparative question which Plutarch openly considers in the following *Synkrisis* (*Thes.-Rom.* 6.1–

⁴² On Platonic echoes in *Rom.* 28, see Pelling (2002d), 185.

⁴³ Cf. *Rom.* 29.11. On this point, see Pelling (1997c), 231–2 (‘a parade of scholarship’) [= repr. (2002a), 367–8].

⁴⁴ Cf. Pelling (2002d), 194 n. 57, who notes in addition that Camillus’ story recalls the role of the maids at *Rom.* 2.5–6 and Tarpeia’s treachery at *Rom.* 17.3, thus drawing strong links between the worlds of Camillus and Romulus. I would add to these echoes the story about Roma and the foundation and naming of the city of Rome after her, as told at the beginning of the *Romulus* (1) as well as the story about Theseus and the Cretan tribute, especially Theseus’ use of deception in taking with him two men disguised as women (*Thes.* 23.2–3).

5). The ending of the *Romulus*, hence, like that of the *Theseus*, affords a later perspective from which we can come to a moral assessment of Romulus' and to some degree Theseus' careers.

Such forward-looking and thought-provoking conclusions are most appropriate to the *Lives* of the men who laid the foundations of the world's most illustrious cities, Rome and Athens (*Thes.* 1.5; 2.2)⁴⁵—and Sparta, as we shall see in the following section on Lycurgus. Indeed, the future and continuation of their cities provide a template against which to consider moral verdicts on men's characters. Romulus' words to Proculus in the penultimate chapter of the *Romulus* offer a clear case in point. Romulus, after emphasising to Proculus that he was sent by the gods to mankind only for a short time to found a city that would become the greatest on Earth in terms of power and glory, forewarns the Romans that if they combine prudence with courage (σωφροσύνην μετ' ἀνδρείας), they will reach the highest level of human power (28.2–3). Plutarch's knowledgeable readers may remember the future history of Rome, 'especially as the distant future has already so often been felt as a presence in this Life',⁴⁶ and may place Romulus' words in a wider ironic setting, grounding a striking link between the man and his city: just as Rome eventually failed to practise prudence and ended up later (in Caesar's time) with tyranny, Romulus abandoned his combined sagacity and strength (cf. *Rom.* 6.3; *Thes.* 2.2) for the ways of a tyrant (*Rom.* 26).

Theseus and Athens may be recalled in parallel here, for Theseus, just like Romulus, was introduced as a man of strength and prudence (*Thes.* 2.2; 6.2), and experienced a change too, although his own change was from a king to a

⁴⁵ Cf. Duff (2011a), 243.

⁴⁶ Pelling (2002d), 184, 194 n. 55.

demagogue—another theme that is explicitly addressed in the following comparative epilogue (*Thes.-Rom.* 2). Theseus is finally destroyed; and it is the synoecism and the forces of the *dēmos* ‘which he himself unleashed that destroy him’.⁴⁷ As in the case of the Romulus, the analogy between the man and the city—a thoroughly Platonic idea, particularly in the *Republic*—is not far to seek, for Athens will not be very different from Theseus, especially if one thinks of the post-Periclean era and the Athenians’ catastrophic exposure to dangerous demagogues.⁴⁸ Indeed, both Plato and Thucydides, as Christopher Pelling has shown, figure prominently throughout the *Theseus*, encouraging interesting parallels with the fifth- and fourth-century world.⁴⁹ ‘Athens, beautiful and famous in song’, and Rome, ‘unconquered and glorious’ (*Thes.* 1.5), change in the future; and this future might prompt further reflection on the characters and policies of the two men who experienced a similar change, despite being ‘strong and prudent alike’ (*Thes.* 2.2).

4.2.2 How far will all survive?

The last chapter of the *Lycurgus* breaks down into three main points. In the first place, Plutarch recapitulates a fundamental principle of Lycurgus’ policy: Lycurgus considered that the happiness of Sparta, just like that of a single individual—the parallelism between the city and the human being may come from Plato (as we

⁴⁷ Pelling (2002d), 181–2.

⁴⁸ See Pelling (2002d), 172, 181–5, 187–9 on the links between the two men and their cities: ‘both men initiate their nations’ style as well as the nations themselves, and both reversals look forward to later crises and catastrophes’ (185).

⁴⁹ Pelling (2002d), 178–84.

mentioned above), and the *Lycurgus* is actually full of Platonic echoes⁵⁰—was based on its own virtue and unanimity; for he tried to make his people freemen, self-reliant, and prudent (31.1).⁵¹

Secondly, Plutarch offers flash-forwards to the posthumous divine honours that Lycurgus has enjoyed in Sparta down to his own time (31.4). Lastly, he includes a story about the treatment of Lycurgus' corpse, which can be taken as the capstone of the whole *Life*. According to Aristocrates, the son of Hipparchus, the friends of Lycurgus burned Lycurgus' body after his death in Crete and scattered his ashes into the sea. This was done, as Plutarch states, at Lycurgus' request, for Lycurgus wished that his remains should never be carried back to Sparta so that the Spartans would not break the oaths and abandon his polity (31.10).⁵²

Lycurgus' final wish raises questions about both Lycurgus and future Sparta.⁵³ Few readers can have read this without remembering the aftermath of Sparta—Plutarch explicitly refers to this only two chapters earlier—in the light of which they can engage in further thought about Lycurgus' policy. Sparta, as Plutarch said, preserved its good government and high reputation for as long as Lycurgus' successors followed Lycurgus' measures (29.10–1); but in the kingship of Agis and Lysander the laws were subverted and Sparta was filled with greed and luxury (30.1). 'For the time they [i.e. Lycurgus' laws] remained in force', Plutarch says, 'Sparta had not the

⁵⁰ See Schneeweiss (1979); de Blois and Bons (1995); Stadter (1999); de Blois (2005); Lucchesi (2014), 68–9 with nn. 10–11, and 74 with n. 22 for detailed bibliography.

⁵¹ Cf. e.g. *Lyc.* 8.1–4; 8.9; 10.1; 12.6; 13.1–3; 27.8.

⁵² Cf. Duff (2011a), 243 n. 140, who notices that the last words of the *Lycurgus* '[lest] they change his constitution' (πολιτείαν) is 'a fitting end to a life which was above all about Lykourgos' *politeia*'.

⁵³ A wider Spartan perspective is suggested at the end of all Plutarch's Spartan *Lives*. For the *Lysander*, see above, pp. 144–6. See also *Ages.* 40.5; *Ag./Cleom.* 19.6–8; 20.7; 21; 60.1.

constitution of a city, but led the life (βίον) of a man (ἄνδρός) who was under training and full of wisdom' (30.2). Sparta was a city of good order and justice. It fought against illegal oligarchies and tyrannies, and promoted peace and concord among the Greek cities, which put their trust in the Spartan ambassadors 'as the bees gather about their leader' (30.2).⁵⁴ The other Greeks, as Plutarch comments, looked upon Sparta as 'the leader and teacher of well-ordered life and settled civil state' (30.5).

It is clear that for Plutarch as long as Sparta showed respect for Lycurgus' laws, it was the ideal city to which Lycurgus so much aspired, an *alter ego* of Lycurgus himself. Plutarch, in fact, skilfully makes connections between the future Lycurgan Sparta and Lycurgus. He links both Sparta and Lycurgus with Heracles—Lycurgus is a descendant of Heracles (*Lyc.* 1.8), and Sparta is paralleled to Heracles in its fighting against lawless tyrannies (*Lyc.* 30.2)—and uses the metaphor of bees to delineate both Lycurgus' attempt at training his citizens to obey to their community (*Lyc.* 25.5) and Sparta's ability to keep under willing obedience the other Greeks (*Lyc.* 30.2). He also ascribes the role of the instructor of virtue not only to Sparta but also Lycurgus, who acknowledges that laws can teach the city those principles that contribute to its prosperity and virtue (*Lyc.* 13.1–3).

Nevertheless, if Plutarch expresses anxiety about the future of Sparta under Agis and Lysander, suggesting that Sparta failed in its role as a 'teacher of virtue', does he want his readers to cast doubts on Lycurgus and his policy too? Plutarch does not say so, though his reference to the Spartan decline may prompt readers to reflect on Lycurgus' foresight and the efficiency of his measures too—after all that was a most crucial and controversial question in antiquity, and Plutarch's learned readers

⁵⁴ On the pedagogical implication of the bee imagery in Plutarch, see Xenophontos (2013).

must most likely be aware of it.⁵⁵ Plutarch's terminal praise of Lycurgus—Lycurgus appears superior to Plato and other philosophers because he founded an actual *politeia* (i.e. one not simply theoretical) and offered an example of a *polis philosophousa* (*Lyc.* 31.1–3);⁵⁶ even Aristotle (one of the harshest critics of Lycurgus' constitution) comes to acknowledge Lycurgus' worth (*Lyc.* 31.4)—pulls readers' reflections in a certain direction, but it is only later in the *Synkrisis* that Plutarch will state explicitly that the Spartan decadence attested to the uprightness of Lycurgus' measures (*Lyc.-Num.* 4.14). At the end of the *Lycurgus*, the readers are left to consider this themselves.

4.3 CLOSURAL ALLUSIVENESS

We have noticed so far that Plutarch tends to use in the closing chapters of his biographies posthumous material and especially the afterlife of cities in order to expand his readers' frame of reference to a further level against which the character of the men and the perpetuation of their work can be more fully considered and

⁵⁵ e.g. Pl. *Resp.* 545a–550b (Sparta is subject to the cycle of constitutional decline which the *Republic* delineates: timocracy/timarchy); *Leg.* 630d–633c; 636e–637b; 691d–692a (praise of Sparta); 635b–636e; 637c; 688a–c; 806c (criticism of Sparta); Arist. *Pol.* 1269b12–1271b20; 1333b5–1334a10; 1334a40–1334b5 (continuity between Lycurgus' laws and the later crisis of Sparta); Xen. *Lac.* 14 and Diod. Sic. 7.12.8; 15.1.3–5 (the Spartans' abandonment of Lycurgus' laws leads them to decline); Polyb. 6.45–50 (a mixture of praise and criticism of the Spartan constitution, the latter based on the inability of the constitution to restrain the Spartans' ambition to rule over the Greeks and its unsuitability for such ambition).

⁵⁶ de Blois (2005), 101 argues that here 'Plutarch seems to be defending Lycurgus against the traditional criticism that he founded a *politeia* in which the sole virtue was the *polemike arete* and where others were neglected'.

evaluated.⁵⁷ In the following section we shall see that closural allusions to specific texts and models, often interacting with other closural features, particularly posthumous information, work effectively to the same end: they supply the readers with striking *comparanda*, which sensitise them to big moral and philosophical questions.

4.3.1 ‘Philosophical deaths’

The endings of the *Phocion* and the *Cato Minor* feature the strong presence of Socrates, a figure who provides several parallels between the two men throughout their *Lives* and especially at the moment of their deaths.⁵⁸ At the end of the *Phocion*, Plutarch lays particular emphasis on the onlookers’ admiration for Phocion’s calmness (ἀπάθεια) and greatness of spirit (μεγαλοψυχία), especially while Phocion is being led to prison, suffering the abuse of his enemies (36.1–2). We are told that the Athenians eventually appreciated Phocion’s prudence and justice, and that the Greeks considered that the sin and misfortune that Athens experienced in the cases of Phocion and Socrates were similar (38.5).

On the other side, Cato appears at the end of his *Life* with a mixture of philosophical and non-philosophical features. He takes part in a philosophical discussion with his companions after supper (67.2–3), reads Plato’s *Phaedo* (68.2–4;

⁵⁷ See also the endings to the *Pericles* (39.3–4) and the *Cimon* (19.3–4), analysed in ch. 3, pp. 132–4 and 125–7 accordingly.

⁵⁸ Many critics have recognised and fully analysed the Socratic features of the two men. See Duff (1999), 141–5; Trapp (1999). See also Martín (1999) on the *Phocion*; Geiger (1999); Pelling (2010a), 179 on the *Cato Minor*. Cf. Zadorojnyi (2007), exploring in addition how the suicide narrative in the *Cato* can be linked with the broader philosophical interests of Plutarch, especially his opposition to Stoicism and his Platonising concerns about the educative value of written discourse.

70.2), and expresses his willingness to attain self-knowledge and self-control through the power of philosophical reason, teaching, and persuasion (68.6; 69).⁵⁹ Despite some reservations on Plutarch's part about the erotic life of Cato's son (73.2–4), parallel to those about the son of Phocion (*Phoc.* 38.3–4), Plutarch gives weight to the way in which Cato's virtuous example inspired, or was at least continued by, the people of Utica, Cato's relatives and friends (71; 73.5–7). However, one might notice that Cato's firmness and severity were still present up to the end of his life, pointing to Cato's less Socratic, less philosophical temperament.⁶⁰ In contrast to Phocion, who shows calmness and greatness of soul at this last moment of crisis in his life, Cato argues in vehement tones during the philosophical discussion on the Stoic paradoxes (67.3), shouts at his son and servants, and angrily hits one of them (68.4–6). The scene of Cato's death is expressed in the cruellest terms (70.8–10).⁶¹

Plutarch offers an ending of the *Cato* which is thematically consistent with the beginning of this pair of *Lives* and raises issues that have resonance for the book as a whole. Plutarch opens the *Phocion–Cato Minor* book with the suggestion that wise government lies in a perfect blend of austerity and reasonableness, especially under

⁵⁹ Although as Zadorojnyi (2007), 226 observes, even the *Phaedo* will not finally make him a Socrates. Zadorojnyi (2007), 223–7 relates this to the Platonic idea that texts are inadequate guides to philosophy.

⁶⁰ Trapp (1999), 493–5 talks about Cato's reversal of the Platonic Socrates. He notes that 'Cato's death, for all its Socratic-Platonic framing, ends up presenting some striking divergences . . . It is rather that Cato has to work harder to achieve his end, that the path to it is notably more violent and agitated' (494). Cf. Zadorojnyi (2007), 218–20; Pelling (2010a), 179; Beck (2014), 470–1.

⁶¹ Cf. Trapp (1999), 494–5; Zadorojnyi (2007), 218–19.

extreme political circumstances (*Phoc.* 2.8).⁶² At the end of the *Cato* and the book—for no *Synkrisis* follows⁶³—Plutarch returns to this fundamental theme, requiring that his readers explore the extent to which Cato and, as a comparison, Phocion managed to combine their philosophical values with the demands of *Realpolitik*.⁶⁴ Does Plutarch want his readers to tilt the scales in favour of Phocion who appears to conform more closely to the Socratic model?

This at least is what can be inferred from the way in which the two men behaved under the extreme circumstances of their death,⁶⁵ as well as from the preceding narrative, where Plutarch presented in a favourable light Phocion's willingness to compromise with the Macedonians,⁶⁶ while revealing the negative effects of Cato's firmness and severity.⁶⁷ Most likely, if a *Synkrisis* had followed, the question about the two men's adherence to philosophic principles would have been revisited more directly, with Plutarch discussing points which he had already mentioned in the *Lives*, and possibly introducing new details which would have pulled the audience's moral response towards one or the other side. However, the lack of a *Synkrisis* does not discourage the audience from contemplating this crucial topic,

⁶² See Duff (1999), 144–5 for the link between the ending and the prologue. See also Trapp (1999), 487–8.

⁶³ I discuss in detail the four pairs of *Lives* that, as they now stand, lack a final *Synkrisis* in the following chapter, §5.4.

⁶⁴ Cf. Duff (1999), 144–5.

⁶⁵ Cf. Pelling (2010a), 179; Beck (2014), 471.

⁶⁶ See Duff (1999), 145–7, 155.

⁶⁷ See Duff (1999), 133, 140–1, 149–55; Pelling (2010a), 174–8. On plausible Stoic associations with Cato's inflexibility, see Duff (1999), 155–8. Cf. Swain (1990b), 193, 197–201. Zadorojnyi (2007), 222–3 observes that Plutarch's Cato was not even a perfect Stoic, often reacting with unrestrained anger and 'un-Stoic-emotionalism'.

remembering all that has gone before and asking how far the two men were able to attain the ideal mix in their philosophical commitment and in dealing with political reality. Indeed, the lack of the *Synkrisis* (as I suggest in the following chapter) can become more demanding of the audience, for it allows them to assume more autonomy in their moral (re)reading of the two *Lives*. We may remember that in the prologue to this pair Plutarch explicitly demands a heightened degree of participation on the part of the readers. The characters of these two men (as Plutarch stresses) are so similar that ‘a very subtle instrument of reasoning is necessary for the determination and the discovery of their differences’ (*Phoc.* 3.9).⁶⁸

4.3.2 ‘Crassus’ generalship ended just like a tragedy . . .’ (*Crass.* 33.7)

The same powerful effect of a morally disconcerting conclusion, which opens the way for discussion of morals of wide-ranging significance, is achieved by Euripides’ prominence in the concluding chapters of the *Crassus* (32–3). After the Roman defeat at Carrhae the Parthians perform their own version of Euripides’ *Bacchae*. Surena sends the head and hand of Crassus to Hyrodes in Armenia, while declaring that he is bringing Crassus to Seleucia alive (32.1). The derisory triumphal procession that is prepared (32.1), the disguise of Gaius Paccianus as a woman (32.2), the group of trumpeters and lictors who hold fastened on their axes the heads of the Romans (32.2), and the Seleucian courtesans and musicians who follow, all set up a spectacle (cf. 32.3: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν πάντες ἐθεώοντο) which embraces many elements that occur with more or less prominence in Euripides’ Dionysiac play: dressing up and

⁶⁸ Duff (1999), 141 finds here ‘a subtle claim’ on Plutarch’s part ‘for the insight contained in his own narrative’. On the prologue to this book, see Duff (2014), 338–9.

disguise as a female, the *thiasoi* with their musical instruments, the desecration of Pentheus' body.⁶⁹

It is worth remarking that Plutarch uses *Bacchae*, the tragedy *par excellence* of distorted insight and consciousness, to delineate the state of delusion in which Surena finds himself. The people of Seleucia, seeing that Surena mocked the Romans for carrying with them in war the licentious books of Aristides' *Milesiaca*—a deed which Plutarch does not consider without fault either (32.4; 32.6)—found Aesop's myth of the two wallets wise (*fab.* 359): Surena had before his eyes the wallet of the improprieties from the *Milesiaca* and behind him that of his own, and was thus unable to look at and understand the latter (32.5).⁷⁰

The Dionysiac play continues in the banquet of Hyrodes and Artavasdes. Crassus' severed head is brought to the king's door, and an actor named Jason plays Agave's part (33.3). Sillaces, who carries Crassus' head to the centre of the company, is welcomed to the feast (33.3–4). A general response of joy and applause prevails among the Parthians, while Jason, in a bacchic frenzy (cf. ἀναβακχεύσας) and inspiration (cf. μετ' ἐνθουσιασμοῦ), takes Crassus' head and sings the lines from Euripides' *Bacchae* (1169–71) where Agave appears with the head of Pentheus (*Crass.* 33.4–5). At the point when he sings the lines, where Agave claims for herself the privilege of having killed Pentheus (*Bacch.* 1179, adapted by Plutarch), the man who killed Crassus interrupts and appropriates this honour for himself (33.6). The lines from Agave's monologue re-enact the state of illusion in which Agave returns gloriously with Pentheus' head to the royal house. She invites the Chorus to a victory feast and happily prides herself on her glorious hunt (*Bacch.* 1168–1215; 1233–43;

⁶⁹ See Braund (1993), 472–3; Cooper (2014), 401.

⁷⁰ On Aesop's myth of the two wallets, see Angeli Bertinelli (1993), 420.

1251–8), being absolutely ignorant of her abominable crime. The Euripidean drama makes us sense the delusion that ominously grips Hyrodes, Artavasdes, and the rest of the Parthian bystanders.

Pentheus, Agave, and the rest of the royal family of Thebes experience a fundamental reversal from prosperity to catastrophe,⁷¹ when Dionysus establishes his rites at Thebes and joins them all in one ruin. Euripides' Chorus clearly states that Pentheus met the retribution that he deserved (cf. 1327–8: σὸς δ' ἔχει δίκην | παῖς παιδὸς ἀξίαν), and closes the play exalting the power of the divine (1388–92). Plutarch (understandably, for his focus rests on the human forces in play) does not mention any divine involvement (at least explicitly), but, like Euripides' Chorus, stresses the *just* punishment (δίκη . . . ἀξία μετῆλθε) that overtook Hyrodes for his atrocity and Surena for his treachery (*Crass.* 33.7). The revealed truth is that people like Agave, Pentheus, and the Parthians meet disaster because they transcend their limits and go beyond rationality. In a battle where passion overtakes reason, Plutarch's narrative allows it to emerge that there are no real winners and losers. The Parthian leaders end in catastrophe just as Crassus did. Crassus' 'tragedy' concludes with a sort of rehabilitation for Crassus as most tragedies do,⁷² showing how limited insight is present on both sides. This affords readers a perspective that challenges any sort of polarity between the Parthian generals and Crassus, between conqueror and defeated.

David Braund and Alexei Zadorojnyi have identified many points of contact between Crassus and Pentheus, both stressing in particular the lack of self-control and

⁷¹ *Bacch.* 1329 (Agave); 1308–26; 1352–62 (Cadmus).

⁷² See Pelling (1997c), 236 with n. 28 [= repr. (2002a), 371 with 384 n. 32], citing Stinton (1975) [= repr. (1990), 143–85] and Moles (1988), 24, 200.

inadequate consciousness of the two men.⁷³ Less noted, though, is the way in which Pentheus' example and more generally Euripides' *Bacchae* and its Dionysiac context—Dionysus is the god who 'confounds reason . . . dissolves polarities, and inverts hierarchies'⁷⁴—are used by Plutarch at the end of the *Crassus* to problematise the antitheses between Crassus and the Parthians, thus raising moral issues which relate to mankind in general. Crassus, the Parthians, and the Euripidean characters are all brought together in their altered state of consciousness and their inability to sustain their passions, and these qualities lead to their disastrous ends. This constitutes a universal moral truth, which Plutarch raises at the end of the *Crassus* but which can take us even further back, into the *Nicias* and especially its ending, where the same theme is treated, albeit not in completely the same terms.

Euripides pervades the last chapters of the *Nicias* too. In contrast to the Parthians' abuse of Greek literature,⁷⁵ we are told that the Sicilians loved and appreciated Euripides, for the sake of whom some of the Athenian captives were saved (29.3–5)—this is a difference between the two nations, which puts more weight on the cruelty and boldness of the Parthians.⁷⁶ Plutarch then shifts his emphasis from the Sicilians to the Athenians, who, as he stresses, are not easily convinced about the news of the Sicilian disaster: 'with such difficulty was Nicias believed to have

⁷³ Braund (1993); Zadorojnyi (1997).

⁷⁴ Hall (1999), xxi. Cf. Dodds (1960), xlv; Seaford (1996), 31. Pelling (1999) [= repr. (2002a), 197–206] discusses how Plutarch found Dionysus 'good to think with' and especially about people and their multifaceted characters. He argues that Plutarch's more thought-provoking and morally problematic *Lives* are rich in Dionysiac allusions and imagery.

⁷⁵ Apart from the performance of the *Bacchae*, Plutarch stressed Hyrodes' and Artavasdes' acquaintance with Greek letters (*Crass.* 33.2). See Zadorojnyi (1997), 181–2.

⁷⁶ See also Mossman (2014), 446.

suffered (or believed when he suffered) what he had often predicted to them' (30.3).⁷⁷ This last sentence reflects the fundamental theme of the *Nicias*, the contrast between Nicias and the Athenians, which proved catastrophic for both the man and the city (as we saw earlier in chapter three).⁷⁸ But while in the preceding narrative Plutarch stresses especially Nicias' fear and hesitation and the Athenians' grimness and hostility towards him,⁷⁹ at the end he prefers to draw our attention to Nicias' wise advice (an emphasis missing from Thucydides, 8.1.1) and the Athenians' disbelief in it⁸⁰—a sort of rehabilitation for Nicias.

Plutarch rounds off this emphasis on human consciousness (as we saw) at the end of the *Crassus*,⁸¹ although this sort of rounding off is slightly different. While the closing chapters of the *Nicias* cast light on the 'communal drama', namely what happened to the Athenians after the Sicilian disaster, the ending of the *Crassus* concentrates on the 'individual drama' of Crassus and the cruelty he suffered at the hands of his enemies. Even the Euripidean allusions (as we noticed) are used to elucidate the distorted insight of the Parthian generals and bring out moral truths that are closely relevant to Crassus as an individual rather than the Romans as a community. Plutarch could have emphasised how the disaster at Carrhae portended

⁷⁷ Tr. Duff (2011a), 250.

⁷⁸ See above, §3.2.2.

⁷⁹ Reference to his wise advice is not completely absent (*Nic.* 14.1), but it certainly is not where Plutarch's focus rests.

⁸⁰ See above, ch. 3, p. 120 with n. 87.

⁸¹ Duff (2011a), 250 observes that the word παθών at the last line of *Nicias* (*Nic.* 30.3) recalls the introduction to the pair, where Plutarch declared his intention to treat in parallel the Parthian and the Sicilian παθήματα (*Nic.* 1.1). This is another example of circularity that shows how the end of the *Nicias* raises issues that matter to the book as a whole.

doom for the Romans—this is clear enough, for instance, in the *Pompey* (53.8–10) or the *Caesar* (28.1–2), and was a Roman commonplace.⁸² However, Plutarch might have thought such a reference unnecessary, for his contemporary readers would have been able to grasp the suggestion anyway and fill in the ‘blank’ independently. Alternatively, the ‘blank’ itself could be suggestive, pressing readers to notice all the more clearly Crassus’ individual tragedy and his responsibility for it. Thus the endings of the *Nicias* and the *Crassus* mark a contrast between Nicias’ wisdom and Crassus’ limited insight, suggesting an analogy between Crassus and the Athenians rather than Crassus and Nicias.⁸³

Does Plutarch want us to take this subtle variance between the two endings as closely allied to his moral reading of the two subjects and his historical understanding of the Sicilian and Parthian disasters? This question is considered in the final *Synkrisis*. Although he does not hide his criticism of Nicias’ cowardice and nervousness (*Nic.-Crass.* 2.4–6; 3.1–6), Plutarch openly expresses his opinion that it was *Crassus* who overwhelmed the Romans by his love of command and ambition and led them to war against their will, while, on the Greek side, it was *the Athenians* who sent Nicias to war without his consent and made him suffer misfortune (*Nic.-Crass.* 3.8). For this reason, as Plutarch goes on to contend, we should be more inclined to praise Nicias than blame Crassus, for Nicias was not deceived by the hopes of his fellow-citizens, but he adopted the experience and reasoning of a wise leader and insisted on rejecting the Sicilian expedition. On the contrary, as Plutarch

⁸² Cf. *Luc.* 1.98–111; *Flor.* 2.13.13, with Pelling (2011a), 273–4.

⁸³ *Pace* Zadorojnyi (1997), 180 who notes the symmetry between the two endings in their use of Euripides, but underlines that it is ‘a symmetry of polarities . . . wherein the Greeks come out better’. I agree that the Sicilians seem to come better (as Zadorojnyi implies in the next lines), but not the Greeks in general.

observes, Crassus was highly ambitious and thus made the mistake of seeing the Parthian war as a simple task (*Nic.-Crass.* 4.1–2). Too strident a disapproval, however, does not seem to be appropriate for Crassus either, and it is remarkable that Plutarch resorts once again to Euripides (*Phoen.* 524) to problematise moral judgement (*Nic.-Crass.* 4.3).

4.4 INSIGHT DISTORTED

Reflection on the limits of human understanding, as we shall see next, is activated in the closing chapters of the *Lives* not only through Plutarch's engagement with other texts. Several other devices, such as generalised moralising statements, parallel examples, and multiple (often) differing alternatives can operate to cause readers to rethink an individual's mindset and retrospectively examine and understand why he came to a catastrophic end.

4.4.1 *Demetrius–Antony*

In the closing chapter of the *Life of Demetrius*, Plutarch gives two alternative explanations for Demetrius' immersion in alcoholic excess during his exile:

εἴτε τοὺς ἐν τῷ νήφειν ἀναλογισμοὺς τῶν παρόντων ἀποδιδράσκων καὶ παρκαλυπτόμενος τῇ μέθῃ τὴν διάνοιαν, εἴτε συγγνοὺς ἑαυτῷ τοῦτον εἶναι τὸν βίον, ὃν ἔκπαλαι ποθὼν καὶ διώκων ἄλλως ὑπ' ἀνοίας καὶ κενῆς δόξης ἐπλάζετο καὶ πολλὰ μὲν ἑαυτῷ, πολλὰ δ' ἑτέροις πράγματα παρεῖχεν, ἐν ὅλοις καὶ στόλοις καὶ στρατοπέδοις τὸ ἀγαθὸν ζητῶν, ὃ νῦν ἐν ἀπραγμοσύνῃ καὶ σχολῇ καὶ ἀναπαύσει μὴ προσδοκήσας ἀνεύρηκε. (*Demetr.* 52.3)

Either because he sought escape from the thoughts on his present condition which tormented him when he was sober, and tried to smother his reflections in drunkenness; or because he had convinced himself that this was the real life, which he had long desired and striven to attain,

but had foolishly missed it through folly and empty ambition, thereby bringing many troubles upon himself, and many upon others; for he had sought in arms and fleets and armies to find the highest good, which now, to his surprise, had discovered in idleness and leisure and repose.

Either alternative offers a rather disquieting reading of Demetrius, even if the first does not completely exclude the possibility that Demetrius eventually understands the vanity and folly of his earlier life and thus drinks to escape from reality. Plutarch seems not to take sides, preferring to draw a generalised moralising statement:

Τί γὰρ ἄλλο τῶν πολέμων καὶ τῶν κινδύνων πέρας ἐστὶ τοῖς φαύλοις βασιλεῦσι, κακῶς καὶ ἀνοήτως διακειμένοις, οὐχ ὅτι μόνον τρυφὴν καὶ ἡδονὴν ἀντὶ τῆς ἀρετῆς καὶ τοῦ καλοῦ διώκουσιν, ἀλλ' ὅτι μὴδ' ἠδεσθαι μὴδὲ τρυφᾶν ὥς ἀληθῶς ἴσασιν; (*Demetr.* 52.4)⁸⁴

For what other end to wars and dangers is there for worthless kings, whose characters are base and foolish not just because they pursue luxury and pleasure instead of virtue and the good, but also because they do not even know how to enjoy and luxuriate properly?⁸⁵

Plutarch again does not offer his readers a simple injunction or a direct judgement on Demetrius' mindset—although the judgement is quite clear. His preference for a generalised moral truth (just as before for alternatives) casts upon readers more responsibility to seek the applicability and connection of this general

⁸⁴ I follow here the 'Les Belles Lettres' edition by Flacelière and Chambry (1977) and print a question mark (;) at the end.

⁸⁵ Tr. Duff (1999), 118, with some alterations in punctuation.

statement to Demetrius—an exercise which encourages readers to look back at the earlier narrative and reconsider Demetrius’ past life.⁸⁶

Plutarch’s description of Demetrius’ burial enriches and deepens this backward movement (53.1–7). Plutarch stresses that *even* (καί) Demetrius’ funeral had a dramatic (τραγικήν) and theatrical (θεατρικήν) arrangement (διάθεσιν) (53.1). Demetrius’ remains are placed in a golden urn and then in the largest of the admiral’s flagships. They are welcomed in other cities, which offer garlands or men in funeral attire to help bring the urn home and bury it. In Corinth the cinerary vase is placed conspicuously on the poop and is adorned with a royal purple and kingly diadem, while guards stand by and a flute-player accompanies with his melody the rowers, who respond perfectly to the tones of the music as if in mourning (53.1–5). The dramatic and theatrical arrangement of Demetrius’ funeral ceremonies serves as a powerful reminder of Demetrius’ own dramatic and theatrical disposition and lifestyle (41.5–7)⁸⁷—the καί (even) which introduces the account of Demetrius’ funeral (i.e. ‘even his funeral ceremonies were dramatic and theatrical . . .’) pushes this connection⁸⁸—and by a roundabout way allows readers to recall several aspects of Demetrius’ character, his haughtiness, pomposity, and harshness (cf. *Demetr.* 18.5–6),⁸⁹ which explain much of Demetrius’ downfall.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ See also Duff (2011b), 61–3 on how generalised statements activate readers’ response.

⁸⁷ Mossman (2015), 159.

⁸⁸ Noticed also by Mossman (2015), 159 n. 35.

⁸⁹ On theatrical imagery in the *Demetrius*, see Pelling (1988a), 21–2; Duff (1999), 125 n. 91; (2011a), 247 n. 156 with further bibliography cited; Mossman (2015); Pelling (2016), esp. 126–32.

⁹⁰ Brenk (1992), 4395, on the contrary, finds in Demetrius’ funeral an ‘epic or tragic quality’ which ‘has an elevating or heroizing effect’.

Most notably, the theatrical atmosphere of Demetrius' funeral paves the way for the 'Roman drama' (*Demetr.* 53.10). Christopher Pelling has suggested that Demetrius' funeral barge may be echoed in Plutarch's description of Cleopatra's magnificent barge in her first meeting with Antony (*Ant.* 26), thus signalling Cleopatra's crucial role in Antony's impending doom.⁹¹ Indeed, throughout the *Antony* questions about Antony's altered consciousness and subsequent catastrophe are constantly raised with reference to his relationship with Cleopatra, and they are still present in the closing lines of the *Life*.

The *Antony* ends with an emphasis on Gaius 'madness'⁹² and Nero's 'frenzy and wandering of mind' (cf. ὑπ' ἐμπληξίας καὶ παραφροσύνης) (87.8–9), which can be effective in inviting readers to re-engage with Antony's deficient mindset by drawing parallels between Antony and his descendants,⁹³ especially Nero: Antony, just like Nero, exposed the Roman Empire to danger because of his distorted insight. This pattern (as we have seen) is already familiar from Demetrius.⁹⁴ It is not surprising that at the end of the *Antony* Plutarch opens up for his readers avenues of further reflection upon it, especially when the following *Synkrisis* between the two men will raise and discuss (explicitly) related questions.

⁹¹ Pelling (1988a), 22, 188–9.

⁹² See Pelling (1988a), 326: 'ἐπιμανῶς (Solanus, Jones 80 n. 50) is required; P[lutarch] could not have thought Gaius ruled "nobly" or "conspicuously" (ἐπιφανῶς, codd.)'.

⁹³ Pelling (1997c), 235 [= repr. (2002a), 369–70].

⁹⁴ Cf. *Demetr.* 53.9, where Plutarch includes a similar uncomfortable note on Demetrius' successor Perseus, in whose reign the Romans conquered Macedonia: Duff (1999), 281 n. 129; (2011a), 243. Plutarch, however, does not deal with Perseus' consciousness. Possibly he found it unnecessary, since the last chapters of the *Demetrius* have introduced so much of this theme that some questions and links should be left for his readers to make.

4.4.2 *Pyrrhus–Marius*

Many elements in the ends of the *Marius* and the *Pyrrhus* work to engender a similar kind of reader response. In the penultimate chapter of the *Marius*, Plutarch elaborates upon Marius' reaction to the news about Sulla's arrival in Rome after Sulla's victory over Mithridates. According to Plutarch, Marius is shaken, overwhelmed by anxieties, and exhausted by remembering his previous flights and perils. He resorts to drunkenness in order to sleep and rid himself of his anxious thoughts (45.4–7). Plutarch offers two alternatives about the specific state in which Marius found himself before his death. The first, which is based on the historian C. Piso, relates that while Marius was walking with his friends after supper and discussing his frequent reversals of fortune, he said that it was not the part of a mindful man to trust himself to fortune any more (45.8–9). Is that a sort of philosophical self-reflection that suggests to the readers that Marius eventually restrains his insatiable and unreasonable passion for more? A similar line of thinking recurs at the end of Marius' paired *Life of Pyrrhus*. In view of Pyrrhus' severed head, Antigonus the younger harshly disapproves of his son's cruelty and bursts into tears, remembering Antigonus his grandfather and Demetrius his father who were examples in his own family of the instability of fortune (34.8).

However, another rather negative possibility is also included. According to some people (τινές), Marius' ambitious nature became entirely clear during his illness, driving him into a strange delusion in which he thought that he had the command in the Mithridatic war (45.10). From this specific instance, Plutarch openly derives his moral commentary on Marius. He stresses Marius' love of rule (φιλαρχία) and envy (ζηλοτυπία), which inflamed in him a strong and inexorable

passion for directing the war, as well as Marius' insatiability, which led him to blame his fortune despite the fact that he lived to an old age and possessed great political influence and wealth (45.11–12). Although Plutarch's moral conclusion is clear, he does not want to make moral evaluation an automatic or simple process for his readers. Rather, as in the closing chapters of the *Demetrius*, he goes on to provide a more general perspective that causes them to think about Marius' character, and explore and understand why Marius ended up having so distorted a mindset.

To this goal, Plutarch provides two comparative examples of Greek philosophers, Plato and Antipater of Tarsus, who at the point of their death remembered the benevolence of their *daimōn* and/or *tychē* and expressed their gratitude (46.1–2). A general moral excursus follows (just as in the *Demetrius*) which refers to the forgetful (τοὺς δ' ἀμνήμονας) and foolish (ἀνοήτους) people who are always filled with new desires for the future and are never satisfied with the blessings that their fortune grants them. The reasons why these people are insatiable, as Plutarch mentions, are their deficient reasoning (λόγος) and education (παιδεία) (46.3–5).

These statements can prompt readers to ask questions that closely relate to Marius and to some degree to Pyrrhus too.⁹⁵ To what extent were Marius and Pyrrhus able to understand, as Plato and Antipater did, what constitutes true happiness? How far should poor reasoning and education be linked with their moral flaws? These questions require that readers look back at the earlier narratives and retrospectively ponder on the two men.

⁹⁵ Cf. Flacelière and Chambry (1971), 78; Duff (1999), 102, 107–11.

In the *Pyrrhus*, Pyrrhus' inability to live in peace and quiet,⁹⁶ his discontent and greed⁹⁷—which are sometimes expressed as railing against fortune⁹⁸—and his lack of education⁹⁹ are present throughout his *Life* and offer explanations for his failure. The end of the *Pyrrhus*, in particular, works effectively to stimulate further reflection on these themes. Antigonus remembers his father Demetrius and his grandfather Antigonus, both of whom experienced a great change of fortune just as Pyrrhus did (34.8). Plutarch has already made mention of Demetrius in the *Pyrrhus* and stressed the power of greed that caused collisions between Demetrius and Pyrrhus (7.3). He also referred to the Macedonians' estimation of their kings: all their kings—most likely including also Demetrius and his father Antigonus—except Pyrrhus could imitate Alexander in superficial details, such as their cloaks, bodyguards, the inclination of their necks, and the lofty tone of their speech (8.2). Thus at the end of the *Pyrrhus*, Antigonus the younger lets a universal pattern emerge which can link together Pyrrhus, Demetrius, and Antigonus the elder, and introduce an explanatory framework for exploring and understanding Marius too.

In the *Marius*, ambition and discontent,¹⁰⁰ linked with defective education,¹⁰¹ make Marius unaware of how to set bounds on his good fortune,¹⁰² and come to

⁹⁶ *Pyrrh.* 12.8; 13.1–3. See Duff (1999), 112.

⁹⁷ *Pyrrh.* 7.3; 9.6; 12.2–8; 14; 26.1–2; 26.14; 30.1–3, cited also and analysed along with other examples by Duff (1999), 111–15.

⁹⁸ *Pyrrh.* 22.1–3.

⁹⁹ *Pyrrh.* 8.6–7. See also Duff (1999), 109 n. 27.

¹⁰⁰ *Mar.* 2.4; 28.1–2; 31.3; 34.6, cited and analysed by Duff (1999), 118–21.

¹⁰¹ *Mar.* 2. On Marius' education, see Pelling (1989), 206–8; Duff (1999), 304–5. In a series of studies, Swain (1990a) [= repr. (1995), 229–64]; (1990b); (1992a); (1996), 140–4 makes the case that deficient education in the Roman *Lives* is used to explain the flaws of the historical figures.

destroy him. The *Marius* ends on an uncomfortable note with Marius' son. He is harsh and bitter, continues the tyranny of his father, and ends up killing himself in Praeneste in order to avoid being captured by Sulla (46.7–9). Timothy Duff has argued that Plutarch's portrayal of Marius' son gives 'a strong closed ending to the book', for there is a structural correspondence between the details about the nickname of the younger Marius (cf. 46.8: παῖς Ἀρεῶς) and the discussion of Roman names in the opening chapter of the *Marius*.¹⁰³

Plutarch's readers can certainly feel a sense of completeness or closure at the end, especially with the reference to Marius' descendant and Sulla's capture of Rome; but the ultimate effect is far from a cessation of moral inspection. It carries us beyond the life of Marius and stimulates reflection on questions that force us to look back again at the earlier *Lives of Pyrrhus and Marius* and contemplate further the character of the two men. It can take us back to the last chapter of the *Pyrrhus* (34.8–11) and another father-son relation, that between Antigonus the younger and his son Alcioneus. Antigonus teaches his son what virtue is through his use of another father-son example, that of his father Demetrius and his grandfather Antigonus, which in turn may call to mind that of Pyrrhus and his own sons.

Pyrrhus, as Plutarch had recounted, raised his sons only to become fine soldiers, encouraging them to fight even against each other for the inheritance of his kingdom (*Pyrrh.* 9.3–5). Plutarch expressed his own strong disapproval: 'so savage and ferocious a thing is greed' (*Pyrrh.* 9.6).¹⁰⁴ At the end of the *Pyrrhus*, Helenus, one of Pyrrhus' sons, meets a great change of fortune along with his father, just as at the

¹⁰² *Mar.* 34.6, on which see Duff (1999), 120.

¹⁰³ Duff (1999), 130 with n. 105.

¹⁰⁴ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012).

end of the *Marius* Marius' son adds to his father's shortcomings. Whether Pyrrhus' and Marius' sons end up being victims of their fathers' passions is another question, but they certainly bear testimony to the destructive effects of those passions, as Antigonus the younger does to the reversal of fortune of his own predecessors (*Pyrrh.* 34.8).

Thus the discrediting final note on Marius' son in the last chapter of the *Marius* can function as a force for continuing and broadening our moral investigation. Although reasserting most of the moral implications of the earlier narrative, it still allows the readers to meditate on the two men's failure to understand not only how to practise but also how to convey and teach virtue. Should this sort of deep reflection, which is stimulated at the end of the *Marius* and matters both to Pyrrhus and Marius, be related to the lack of a formal *Synkrisis* to this pair of *Lives*? I discuss this question in detail in the following chapter.

For the moment, let it be noted that, where the *Synkrisis* exists, the thought-provoking ending of the second *Life* creates the preconditions for the questioning that continues in the end of the book. But this is a different sort of questioning, as the next chapter is intended to show.

5.

‘It remains to consider the *Lives* in parallel’

(*Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi* 1.1)

Most of Plutarch’s biographical books conclude with a comparative epilogue, where the two subjects of the *Lives* are explicitly set and evaluated against each other. In this concluding part of the book, Plutarch returns to the discursive, non-narrative register of the prologues to which the comparative epilogues correspond in many ways.¹ Just as the prologues normally focus on the similarities between the two men, so the *Synkriseis* frequently list their differences.² Just as the prologues are marked by a strong, explicit interaction between Plutarch and the readers,³ so are the *Synkriseis* rather ‘personal’ compared to the preceding *Lives*, including several first-person judgements and invitations to the readers to join in the process of moral evaluation.⁴ In several cases, there is thematic correspondence between the *Synkriseis* and the prologues as well, for Plutarch encourages, in the *Synkriseis*, a backward glance at themes, images, and ideas that he introduced in the proemial chapter(s).⁵ There is no question that the *Synkriseis*, in several ways, reprise the prologues, due to the way in which they frame and bind together the two *Lives* into the single larger unit of the

¹ Duff (2011a), 213, 256, 258, 263.

² Duff (2011a), 258, 263. Duff refers to Stiefenhofer (1914/16), who argues that in books without prologues, the comparative epilogues tend to exhibit similarities too, and cites Swain (1992b), 106–10 for further discussion of this argument (258 n. 203).

³ See above, ch. 2. Cf. Pelling (2002b), 269, 271–2; Duff (2011a), 219–20, 222, 255.

⁴ Duff (2011a), 255 with n. 193; (2011b), 75–6 n. 43; (2014), 346 n. 37.

⁵ Duff (2011a), 255–9 for this and the rest of the paragraph.

book.

It has been suggested that the *Synkriseis*, although constituting the last part of the book, do not reach a firm final judgement or summative resolution.⁶ Timothy Duff has shown that in the *Synkriseis*, Plutarch is not interested in offering his readers a straightforward authoritative moral judgement but, rather, aims to stir their reflection on the very nature of moral verdict.⁷ Plutarch promotes equality between the two men, and he often employs harsh criticism, simplistic arguments and moral slants that sit far from comfortably with the preceding *Lives* in order to tilt the scales in favour or against one of his subjects in turn.⁸ The lack of fit between the *Synkriseis* and the earlier narrative, although appearing disappointing to several critics,⁹ seems to Duff an important feature of Plutarch's moralising work-method. They serve to expand the moral perspective of the readers and, as Duff maintains, press them to (re)consider the moral issues that the *Lives* raise, and accordingly play their own part in the act of moral judging.¹⁰ The extent and different ways in which the final *Synkriseis* achieve such morally disturbing effect will be the subject of this chapter.

In the first part, I give a general survey of the devices that Plutarch uses in the *Synkriseis* to engage his alert readers with the process of moral evaluation and provoke them to question and reconsider moral judgement. In the second part, the

⁶ See Pelling (1997c), 242–4 [= repr. (2002a), 376–7]; Duff (1999), 283–4; Larmour (2014), 408, 415.

⁷ Duff (1999), 243–86.

⁸ Duff (1999), 257–62.

⁹ Pelling (1986b) [= repr. (2002a), 349–63]; (1988a), 19–20, although Pelling refines most of his arguments in his postscript in (2002a), 359–61; Moles (1988), 20, 25. See Tatum (2010), 8–9; Larmour (2014), 405–6 for brief overviews of the main scholarly strands.

¹⁰ Duff (1999), 263–86; (2011b), 74–5. Tatum (2010), on the contrary, places special emphasis on the competitive, agonistic character of the *Synkriseis*, taking them primarily as a means of grading and ranking.

Synkriseis to the *Cimon–Lucullus* and the *Dion–Brutus* are examined as two representative case-studies of how the *Synkriseis* work towards problematising any straightforward absolute moral conclusion. Finally, in the last part of this chapter, the four pairs of *Lives* (*Pyrrhus–Marius*, *Phocion–Cato Minor*, *Themistocles–Camillus*, and *Alexander–Caesar*), which—as they now stand—are not followed by a final *Synkrisis*, are considered.

5.1 ‘ME, YOU, AND THEY (AGAIN)’

The *Synkriseis*, as we have already noted, return to the ‘personal’ style of the prologues and promote again a straightforward interaction between Plutarch and his audience. Explicit narratorial statements and comments of approval or disapproval abound in the *Synkriseis*. ‘But I do not blame (ἐγὼ δ’ οὐ μέμφομαι) Cato for constantly boasting and ranking himself above everyone else’, Plutarch openly says in the *Synkrisis* to the *Aristides–Cato Major* (5.3); or ‘I do not praise (οὐκ ἐπαινῶ) Crassus for setting the fight into motion with greater haste than safety in his war with Spartacus’ (*Nic.–Crass.* 3.2).¹¹ The *Synkriseis* are especially rich in verbs and pronouns in the first-person plural. The ‘we’s sometimes seem to be restricted to Plutarch. Consider, for example, the first lines from the *Synkrisis* to the *Pelopidas–Marcellus*: ‘This is what we have thought (cf. ἔδοξεν ἡμῖν) worthy of record in what historians say about Marcellus and Pelopidas’ (1.1); or the beginning of the last chapter of the *Synkrisis* to the *Solon–Publicola*: ‘As regards their military careers, moreover, Daimachus of Plataea does not allow Solon even the conduct of the war against the Megarians, as we have described it (ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς διεληλύθαμεν)’ (4.1). There are also cases, however, where it is unclear whether the ‘we’s should embrace

¹¹ See Pelling (2002b), 278 n. 8; Duff (2011b), 255 n. 193 for further examples.

only the narrator or the readers as well: ‘Since, then, both these men experienced great reversals of fortune, let us first observe (σχοπῶμεν) what is related to their power and fame’ (*Demetr.-Ant.* 1.1).¹² Such inclusive or ‘blurred’ ‘we’s suggest a debate about moral evaluation that is not restricted to Plutarch himself but extends to and includes his audience as well.

The same sort of blurring is found in Plutarch’s use of ‘impersonal constructions’, where it is not clear whether moral inquiry embraces Plutarch alone or the readers too. ‘However, in these matters there is more ground (μᾶλλον ἔστιν) for praising Nicias than for blaming Crassus’ (*Nic.-Crass.* 4.1); ‘however, with these exploits [sc. of Marcellus], it is possible (ἔστι) that the battles of Leuctra and Tegyra, the greatest and most illustrious of actions, may be compared’ (*Pel.-Marc.* 1.6). In these instances, the process of praising, blaming or comparing may refer to Plutarch and/or the readers. This blurred effect is important in suggesting that both Plutarch and his readers are taken as actively engaged in moral investigation. It is assumed that both will think and act in similar ways.¹³

The same is true in Plutarch’s use of questions: ‘Or is this a point which has its counterpart in the life of Cimon?’ (*Cim.-Luc.* 2.6); ‘or does this argument reverse itself at once?’ (*Dion-Brut.* 3.6); ‘what, then, would have been their feelings, and for how many days would they have sacrificed to the gods, if Crassus had written to them from Babylon that he was victorious, and had then overrun Media, Persia, Hyrcania, Susa, and Bactria, and declared them Roman provinces?’ (*Nic.-Crass.* 4.3).¹⁴ There

¹² Cf. *Per.-Fab.* 1.1 (φέρε . . . λάβωμεν); *Dem.-Cic.* 3.6 (φαίημεν); *Ages.-Pomp.* 1.1 (ἐπιδράμωμεν); 4.11 (ἀποθεωροῦμεν). Cf. Pelling (2002b), 272–4; Duff (2011a), 75–6 n. 43.

¹³ Cf. Pelling (2002b), 273. Other examples: *Thes.-Rom.* 1.4; *Sol.-Pub.* 4.4; *Cim.-Luc.* 1.5; *Per.-Fab.* 3.7; *Cor.-Alc.* 5.2; *Phil.-Flam.* 1.1.

¹⁴ Cf. *Lyc.-Num.* 3.4; 4.7; *Sol.-Pub.* 1.1; *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 4.1; *Lys.-Sulla* 4.9; *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi* 5.6.

are times, too, when instead of direct questions Plutarch opts for words and expressions that invite further query and allow multiple, even opposing strands of thought: ‘besides, the slaughter of Remus *raises dispute* (ἀμφισβητούμενον ἔχει) as to who was the doer’ (*Thes.-Rom.* 5.1); ‘and for this reason it *causes wonder* (ὥστε θαυμάζειν) if anyone should fail to perceive that vice is a sort of inequality and incongruity of character, when s/he sees men amassing money shamefully or squandering it uselessly’ (*Nic.-Crass.* 1.4).¹⁵ Plutarch wonders and raises questions to himself and most likely to his readers too, who may share this sort of perplexity.¹⁶

In some cases, the readers are explicitly taken to be engaged, and Plutarch often resorts to second-person direct statements: ‘For you should consider (ὅρα γάρ) that the verdict which Solon delivered to Croesus concerning happiness is more applicable to Publicola than to Tellus’ (*Sol.-Pub.* 1.1). An elaborate example occurs in the *Synkrisis* between Nicias and Crassus: ‘But if you love (ἀγαπᾷς) above all else security and quiet, and fear (δέδιαις) Alcibiades on the bema, and the Lacedaemonians in Pylos, and Perdiccas in Thrace, then there is ample room in the city where you can sit at leisure, removed from all activity, and “weaving for yourself”, as some Sophists say, “a crown of tranquility” ’ (*Nic.-Crass.* 2.6). There is no doubt that this second-person statement primarily refers to Nicias, with whom Plutarch seems to open up a sort of discussion here. However, the use of the second-person verbs (ἀγαπᾷς, δέδιαις) can also function as ‘invitation’ to the readers to immerse themselves in the past and try to think in the way in which Nicias might have been thinking. The moral debate becomes much more complicated, with Plutarch, his readers, and the subjects of the *Lives* all being involved.¹⁷ The readers are given an

¹⁵ Cf. *Nic.-Crass.* 5.2: ὥστε θαυμάζειν αὐτοῦ τὴν ἀβελτερίαν . . . περιγενομένην.

¹⁶ Cf. Pelling (2002b), 275.

¹⁷ See also Pelling (2002b), 275.

opportunity to extract a general moral lesson, which they may find potentially applicable in their own life and relevant to their moral assessment of Nicias and that of his pair Crassus.

The same effect is produced by Plutarch's use of general moral statements. There are a number of examples for this: 'Greater therefore is the general, as is the athlete, who hands over his antagonist to his successor in a weaker plight' (*Cim.-Luc.* 3.3); 'and it is just as great a failing in a general to involve himself in a disaster from want of foresight, as it is to throw away an opportunity for success from want of confidence. Inexperience, it would seem, is to blame in each case, which both engenders rashness in a man, and robs a man of courage' (*Per.-Fab.* 2.4).¹⁸ Although the preceding *Lives* and Plutarch's account in the two *Synkriseis* leave no room for doubt that in each case Lucullus and Pericles are the two men who should be commended respectively, such general moral statements are effective in urging the readers to think about how they can be specifically related to the two men whose *Lives* they have just read about.¹⁹

In some cases, Plutarch makes sure that the link between the general and the specific is explicit for his readers. In the *Synkrisis* to the *Aemilius-Timoleon*, for example, Plutarch includes a general thesis about the parallelism between the power of a body, which can endure by nature both heat and cold, and the strength of a spirit, which is neither corrupted by the insolence that prosperity brings, nor humbled by adversity. On these grounds, Plutarch suggests that Aemilius seems (φαίνεται) more perfect than Timoleon, for Aemilius, unlike Timoleon, managed to bear misfortune and success with the same dignity and greatness (2.10–1). Consider also the *Synkrisis*

¹⁸ Cf. *Thes.-Rom.* 2.2–3; *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 3.1; 4.1–3; *Cim.-Luc.* 1.3–4; *Cor.-Alc.* 1.4; *Aem.-Tim.* 1.5.

¹⁹ See Duff (2011b), 61–3 on the function of generalised moral statements in the narrative. Cf. above, §4.4.

to the *Cimon–Lucullus*. Plutarch parallels the displeasing effect that an aristocratic nature brings upon the multitude with that which physicians’ bandages have on a patient whose dislocated body they try to mend. He concludes that from this viewpoint both Cimon and Lucullus should perhaps (ἴσως) be pardoned (2.7). In both instances, Plutarch makes an explicit assumption about how the general moral truth should be related to the specific circumstances of the *Lives*. However, this is simply an assumption, a suggestion on Plutarch’s part—it seems (φαίνεται), perhaps (ἴσως)—which readers may feel free (not that they are necessarily actually free, for ‘maybe’ can only be a polite affectation when the advice is actually pretty firm) to follow, modify, or decline.²⁰ Plutarch adopts a pose of diffidence which can render his readers more acquiescent by not ‘bullying’ them.

This same sort of ‘readerly independence’ may be inferred when Plutarch imagines a moral response to his material that his readers may or may not choose to share. ‘ “What, then” someone will say (φήσει τις), “was not Rome advanced and bettered by the wars?” ’ (*Lyc.-Num.* 4.13); ‘unless someone may prefer (πλὴν εἰ μὴ τις θέλοι) . . . to declare Alcibiades a greater general’ (*Cor.-Alc.* 1.2); ‘but here, perhaps, someone will say (φήσει τις) that Solon won back Salamis for the Athenians when they had given it up, whereas Publicola relinquished territory which the Romans had acquired’ (*Sol.-Pub.* 4.4). Plutarch often shows his readers how they should engage critically with these views. In the *Synkrisis* to the *Solon–Publicola* (as we saw in chapter one of this study) he responds to this plausible ‘*tis*-intrusion’ that ‘it is necessary that the actions of men should be considered in the light of the times in question’ (*Sol.-Pub.* 4.4). Similarly, in the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion–Brutus*, Plutarch expresses his objection to someone’s claim that Dion should be rated higher than

²⁰ Cf. the similar use of ἴσως in *Lys.-Sulla* 3.7; *Per.-Fab.* 3.6; *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi* 2.3; *Pel.-Marc.* 2.1.

Brutus because Dion threw out the tyrant after great struggles, while Brutus killed Caesar unguarded and unarmed. In Plutarch's view, Caesar's murder was a result of the greatest ability and generalship (4.5). Plutarch allows his readers to consider and play with a range of alternative views. However, he often shows them not only how this game should be played but also who the winner might be.²¹

This kind of 'controlled readerly independence' is most evident in those instances where Plutarch uses evaluative language to introduce plausible responses to his narrative. The *Synkrisis* to the *Theseus–Romulus* affords a glaring example. There we read Plutarch's opinion (cf. οἶμαι) that Theseus can hardly escape the charge of parricide for his forgetfulness and neglect of the command about the sail, however long the plea of his advocate (cf. μακρῶ τινι παραιτήσῃ) and however lenient his judges (cf. ῥαθύμοις δικασταῖς) may be. An Attic writer, Plutarch continues, knowing that those who would want to defend (cf. βουλομένοις ἀπολογεῖσθαι) Theseus would have a very difficult task, fabricates (πλάττει) the version that Aegeus ran up to the Acropolis to see the ship and fell down the cliff (5.2). It is clear that Plutarch gives no credit to this tradition. He does not only use the verb πλάττει to introduce it, but concludes the story with an ironic comment: 'as if Aegeus was without companions or hurrying down to the sea without the presence of any company' (5.2). Although it is clear that Plutarch encourages a more negative treatment of Theseus, it is important that he exposes his readers to multiple plausible responses (defendants, lenient judges, Attic writer) which the readers might consider for themselves.

A more elaborate example is found in the *Synkrisis* to the *Lycurgus–Numa*. '“What, then!” someone will say, “was not Rome advanced and bettered by her wars?”'

²¹ See Pelling (2002b), 274–5, esp. 280 n. 30 for further examples of 'anonymous interlocutors' in the *Synkriseis*.

That is a question which will need a long answer, if I am to satisfy men who hold that betterment consists in wealth, luxury, and empire, rather than in safety, gentleness, and that independence which is attended by righteousness' (4.13). Although it is evident that Plutarch favours the second group of people, it is important that readers are aware of the existence of two divergent opinions about how Rome's success, coming out of so many wars after Numa's peaceful era, could be conceived. Awareness of possible alternative interpretations and valuations contributes to broadening their moral view and mobilising their faculty of judgement.²²

A similar thought-provoking effect is often produced by Plutarch's frequent evocation of past and future in the *Synkrisis*. Plutarch looks to the future history of Athens and Rome, for example, to judge the civil polity of Theseus and Romulus: 'and to the modesty, tenderness, and stability which [sc. Romulus] imparted to the marriage relations, time is witness (ὁ χρόνος ἐστὶ μάρτυς)'; and a few lines later he adds that 'the immediate results of his act, as well as the long lapse of time, witness in favour of Romulus' (*Thes.-Rom.* 6.3–5).²³ A backward glance at Lycurgus' era, on the other hand, is suggested in the *Synkrisis* to the *Aristides and Cato Major*. Lycurgus' domestic and civil polity is used as benchmark against which Cato and Aristides are measured (3.1).²⁴ Plutarch, moreover, stirs the readers to consider in the *Synkriseis* not

²² Cf. Duff (2011b), 66–7, 71–2 on the use of alternatives in the main narrative.

²³ Cf. *Per.-Fab.* 3.7; *Lyc.-Num.* 3.13; 4.8–14; *Sol.-Pub.* 3.4 (ἡ δὲ Ποπλικόλα . . . ἐν κόσμῳ τὴν πόλιν); *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 3.5; *Cim.-Luc.* 3.2–3; *Dion-Brut.* 5.2–4; *Ag/Cleom.-Gracchi* 2.5. See also Larmour (2014), 413–14.

²⁴ Cf. *Ag/Cleom.-Gracchi* 5.3–4, concluding that 'no other Greek is worthy to be compared with Lycurgus'. See also Plutarch's use in the *Synkriseis* of comparative examples from different historical periods: e.g. *Nic.-Crass.* 3.4 (Themistocles, Cato); 4.2–4 (Caesar, Pompey, Lucullus, Alexander); *Cor.-Alc.* 2.6 (Aristides); 4.8 (Metellus, Aristides, Epaminondas); *Dem.-Cic.* 4.3 (Themistocles, Alcibiades). The connections that readers are invited to draw through comparison and contrast have the effect of

only the past and future history, but also alternative historical realities that may bring new and unexpected slants into the process of moral investigation: ‘For it is at least possible’, Plutarch says, ‘that Cimon also, if he had retired after his active campaigns to an old age which knew neither war nor politics, might have led an even more ostentatious and pleasure-loving life’ (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.7). Plutarch continues that Cimon, like Lucullus, had a shady private life and died amidst serious military exploits that left him no time for pleasure and licentiousness (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.7–8). For this reason, he concludes, ‘if Lucullus also had ended his days in active military command, not even the most carping and censorious individual . . . could have brought accusation against him’ (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.8). Alternative realities and counterfactuals encourage his readers to consider the possibility that different valuations may be allowed for the same event or person and constantly remind them of the provisional nature of any conclusive and concluding moral verdict.²⁵

In fact, Plutarch himself makes clear that the *Synkriseis* are not meant to be foregone conclusions. In the comparative epilogue to the *Philopoemen–Flamininus*, he acknowledges the difficulty of finding differences between the two men,²⁶ and openly asks his reader to deliberate moral evaluation: ‘consider (σκόπει) whether, if we award to the Greek the crown for military experience and generalship, and to the Roman that for justice and goodness of heart, we shall appear to make a fair decision’ (3.5). One may compare the *Synkrisis* to the *Cimon–Lucullus*. Plutarch notes that ‘one

encouraging interpretative reflection on the principal’s character and morality. This is also the case with Plutarch’s use of texts and characters from different literary traditions: e.g. *Nic.-Crass.* 4.3; *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 3.3.

²⁵ For other counterfactuals in the *Synkriseis* see *Per.-Fab.* 3.1; *Nic.-Crass.* 4.3; *Sert.-Eum.* 2.3; *Ag/Cleom.-Gracchi* 3.3.

²⁶ Cf. *Lyc.-Num.* 1.1; *Arist.-Cato Maj.* 1.1; *Aem.-Tim.* 1.1.

who takes everything into consideration (πάντη μεταλαμβάνοντι) finds it hard to reach a decision (cf. δυσδιάτητον εἶναι τὴν κρίσιν). Heaven seems (ἔοικεν) to have been kindly disposed to both, directing the one as to what he must perform, and the other as to what he must avoid. Both, therefore, may be said to have received the vote of the gods as noble and god-like natures' (3.6). The readers are taken as similarly committed and discriminating in the *Synkrisis* to the *Lysander–Sulla*: 'We may now consider (σκοπεῖν) whether we shall err (διαμαρτάνωμεν) very much from the truth in pronouncing our verdict (ἀποφαινόμενοι) that Sulla won the more successes, while Lysander had the fewer failings; and in giving to the one the pre-eminence in self-control and moderation, to the other, in generalship and valour' (5.6). Similarly, in the concluding comparison to the *Agis/Cleomenes–Gracchi*, Plutarch directly addresses his reader: 'You yourself (καὶ αὐτός) can see (συνορᾷς) from what has been said (ἐκ τῶν εἰρημένων),²⁷ the difference [sc. between them]. But if it is necessary to make a decision about each one, I vote (τίθημι) that Tiberius was first of all of them in virtue, that the youthful Agis committed the fewest errors, and that in achievement and courage Caius fell far short of Cleomenes' (5.7).²⁸ In all these instances, Plutarch eschews imposing on his readers an absolute final verdict.²⁹ Rather, he assumes that they will collaborate with him and consider for themselves how the two men should be judged.

²⁷ Such explicit suggestions for a backward movement occur also at *Lyc.-Num.* 3.3 (ὥσπερ εἴρηται); *Sol.-Pub.* 4.1 (ὥσπερ ἡμεῖς διεληλύθαμεν); *Cim.-Luc.* 1.7 (ὥς προεῖρηται); *Lys.-Sulla* 2.1 (ὥς εἴρηται).

²⁸ I translate here according to Duff (2011a), 256 and the Loeb. Pelling (2002b), 274 links the *Synkrisis* with the prologue to *Ag./Cleom.-Gracchi*: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἐπακρινεῖς αὐτὸς ἐκ τῆς διηγήσεως (2.9).

²⁹ Cf. Pelling (1997c), 244 [= repr. (2002a), 377]; Duff (2004), 286 with n. 62; (2011b), 75 with n. 42.

We have seen throughout our analysis of Plutarch's narrative devices in the *Synkriseis* that in the last part of his biographical book (as in the earlier parts of the book) Plutarch appropriates for both himself and his readers an active and contentious evaluative way of thinking about people and history. He sensitises his readers, and trains them to be sensitive to different, often wholly contrasting moral strands, alternative perspectives and wider frames of reference, which reflect the complexities and subtleties inherent in the process of moral assessment. He also appears to allow the possibility that such engaged and alert readers may not align with him completely; that they may take their own steps in their evaluation of the two men.³⁰ As the analysis of the *Synkriseis* to the *Cimon–Lucullus* and the *Dion–Brutus* in the following section of this chapter illuminates, at the end of his biographical book (just as throughout his book) Plutarch does not offer his readers any straightforward moral resolution. Rather, he presents to them a challenge and hence an exercise of how they should properly judge the great men of history.

5.2 'SO, ALL IN ALL, THE VERDICT IS DIFFICULT'³¹

(*Cim.-Luc.* 3.6)

The *Synkrisis* to the *Cimon–Lucullus* is divided into two main sections, the first concerning the lifestyle of the two men (cf. 1.8: περὶ τῆς διαίτης) and the second their military career (2.1: ἐν δὲ τοῖς πολεμικοῖς). In the opening chapter Plutarch looks ahead to the future history of Greece and Rome and suggests equality between Cimon and Lucullus.³² He says that 'one might consider Lucullus especially happy in his end because he died before that constitutional change had come which Destiny

³⁰ Cf. Duff (1999), 269; Pelling (2002b), 274–5.

³¹ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010).

³² See Duff (1999), 260–1.

was already contriving by means of the civil wars. His country was in a distempered state when he laid down his life but still was free' (1.1). This forward glance at Roman history captures most of what one might expect from reading the *Life of Lucullus*, though some important implications remain untouched.

Lucullus did die before the fall of the Republic, in a period during which Rome was in turbulence but still free. Plutarch refers in the *Lucullus* to the disease of the Roman state, but he also stresses the effect that this ailing state of politics has on Lucullus' decision to abandon politics (38.2; 43.1), implying, thus, a link between Lucullus' degeneration into old age and the political malaise of the *res publica*.³³ Moreover, in the narrative of the *Lucullus*, Plutarch stresses the harm that, in his opinion (cf. νῦν δέ μοι δοκεῖ), Lucullus did his country through his influence upon others and especially Crassus, who was incited by Lucullus' military success to attack Parthia (36.6). Although Plutarch underlines that Crassus' defeat confirmed Lucullus' daring and ability in fighting his enemies (36.6), readers who know either from Plutarch's works or elsewhere that the Parthian defeat helped the clash between Caesar and Pompey to break out, can take a further step in their reading of the *Life* and associate Lucullus' military accomplishments with the outbreak of the civil war and the constitutional change in Rome. Plutarch refers to the importance of Crassus' death in the outbreak of the civil war in both the *Pompey* (53.8–10) and the *Caesar* (28.1–2),³⁴ but avoids openly making this statement in the *Lucullus*. Plutarch's omission must be related to his desire, expressed in the prologue to the *Cimon–Lucullus*, to treat gently and humanely any human error (*Cim.* 2.5); a programmatic principle that seems to underlie not only the *Lucullus* but the *Synkrisis* too.³⁵

³³ Tröster (2008), 159. Cf. above, §3.2.3.

³⁴ Cf. *Luc.* 1.98–111; *Flor.* 2.13.13, with Pelling (2011a), 273–4.

³⁵ Cf. above, §3.2.3 on the narrative of the *Lucullus*.

Although the direct moral register of the *Synkrisis* made much easier for Plutarch an explicit formulation of the association of Lucullus' elderly degeneration with the decay of the Roman state as well as Lucullus' implicit contribution to the outbreak of the civil war and the fall of the Republic, Plutarch offers a faultless judgement that an anonymous interlocutor might have passed (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.1: 'One might consider Lucullus especially happy in his end'). His readers are free to accept, modify or disprove the *tis*-statement as well as Plutarch's own position towards it:

(1.1) καὶ τοῦτό γε πάντων αὐτῷ πρὸς Κίμωνα κοινότατόν ἐστι. (1.2) καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος οὐπω συντεταραγμένων τῶν Ἑλληνικῶν, ἀλλ' ἀκμὴν ἐχόντων ἐτελεύτησεν, ἐπὶ στρατοπέδου μέντοι καὶ στρατηγῶν, οὐκ ἀπειρηκῶς οὐδ' ἀλύων, οὐδὲ τῶν ὅπλων καὶ τῶν στρατηγιῶν καὶ τῶν τροπαίων ἔπαθλον ποιούμενος εὐωχίας καὶ πότους, ὥσπερ Πλάτων (res publ. 363c) ἐπισκώπτει τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ὀρφέα, τοῖς εὖ βεβιωκόσι φάσκοντας ἀποκεῖσθαι γέρας ἐν Ἅιδου μέθην αἰώνιον. (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.1–2)

(1.1) And this point in his [i.e. Lucullus'] life is the most common to the life of Cimon. (1.2) For Cimon too died before Greece was confounded, but while it was at the acme of its power; he died, however, in the field, commanding an army, being neither exhausted nor at a loss, without making feasting and revellings the crowning prize for arms and campaigns and trophies. Plato teases the followers of Orpheus for declaring that for those who have lived rightly, there is laid up in Hades a treasure of everlasting intoxication.

Although Plutarch suggests equality between the two men, his analysis now tips the scales in Cimon's favour. It is true that Plutarch—possibly in keeping with his ethical generosity in treating human mistakes (*Cim.* 2.5)—nowhere mentions Lucullus' name explicitly. However, an antithesis between the two men is implied through the *mentoi* and several hints in the text invite the readers to remember

Lucullus' debauchery.³⁶ Unlike Cimon, Lucullus did not die in the field. Upon his death, the Romans may have grieved and flocked together as if Lucullus was at the acme of his military and political activity, but this is simply an *as if*-situation (cf. *καθάπερ*) (*Luc.* 43.3). The real fact is that Lucullus died after he withdrew from public life (*Luc.* 38.2; 43.1). Moreover, Lucullus, like Cimon, commanded an army, but he was overwhelmed by the demagogues and his soldiers and was forced to abandon his leadership. Unlike Cimon, Lucullus found himself 'exhausted' (*ἀπειρηκώς*), paradoxically not by fighting his enemies but his own soldiers and companions. The participle *ἀλύων* (= being at a loss, at one's wit's end),³⁷ in addition, can evoke the perplexity and despair in which Lucullus found himself in his attempt to deal with his army, being unable to understand their hostile disposition and bring them to their senses (*Luc.* 14.4; 33.2). It can also refer back to the very last chapter of the *Lucullus* and Plutarch's reference to Lucullus' limited understanding in his old age (43.1). Readers may remember Nepos' story about the corruption of Lucullus' intellect by one of his freedmen Callisthenes (*Luc.* 43.2), and possibly along with it many of Lucullus' best qualities. Christopher Pelling noticed that Nepos' anecdote about Lucullus' death is likely to recall the opening chapter of the *Lucullus*, with its emphasis on Lucullus' brotherly affection (1.8–9), as well as the prologue to the pair, the erotic tale and Lucullus' defence of truth and justice in his support of Chaeronea (*Cim.* 1–2); but it is also plausible, as Pelling mentions, that the remembrance of the misguided freedman Callisthenes, a Greek, cast a shadow over Lucullus' philhellenism.³⁸ Within a context, therefore, that is overall positive for

³⁶ Cf. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010), 165 translating *οὐκ ἀπειρηκώς οὐδ' ἀλύων* as 'unlike Lucullus who had given up his career and lost his way'.

³⁷ LSJ, s.v. *ἀλύω*.

³⁸ Pelling (1997c), 241–2 [= repr. (2002a), 375].

Cimon, Plutarch may encourage his readers in the *Synkrisis* to take a backward look at Lucullus' flaws and retrospectively gain a more sinister perspective on his character.

A similar thought-provoking effect is produced by Plutarch's reference to the feasting (εὐωχίαι) and revellings (πότοι), which Cimon avoided crowning his military success with, as well as Plutarch's platonic allusions. Both recall moments from Lucullus' final years, which were spent in luxury and excess. In the *Lucullus*, Plutarch parallels Lucullus' life with Old Comedy, its first part being concerned with political measures and military commands and its latter part with drinking bouts and banquets and all but revels, torch-races, and every sort of childish play (39.1). In addition, in the *Life*, Plutarch stresses Lucullus' zealous love for Plato. Lucullus, as Plutarch says, was fond of all philosophical schools but was especially attached to the Academy, not the New but the Old one (42.3). In the *Synkrisis*, however, it is implied that Lucullus is detached from Platonic thought (1.2).³⁹ Leisure, quietude, and the pursuit of pleasurable speculative learning offer a most suitable comfort to old men in retirement, as Plutarch says. He warns, though, that 'to divert good achievements to pleasure as the final end, and then to sport and wanton at the head of Aphrodite's train, as a sequel to wars and fights, is not worthy of the noble Academy, nor of one who follows Xenocrates, but rather of one who leans towards Epicurus' (1.3).

Plutarch's general statement here is indeed in accord with his view in the *Lucullus* as well as the *An Seni*, where Lucullus appears as a wholly deterrent example (785d–786d; 792b–c). However, in the *Life*, Lucullus' retirement is presented fairly positively compared to the *An Seni*—Plutarch refers to Lucullus' taste both for hedonism and for learning⁴⁰—and we can now see that something similar holds true for the *Synkrisis* too. Had Plutarch wished, he could easily have turned the

³⁹ Cf. Tröster (2008), 57.

⁴⁰ See Pelling (1997c), 239–42 [= repr. (2002a), 373–5].

general moral statement into an explicit harsh criticism of Lucullus' behaviour in the *Synkrisis*. Instead, he offers his readers an opportunity to ask themselves how, and how far, these general moral truths can be applied in Lucullus' case, an enquiry that demands that his readers engage with and try to appreciate retrospectively Lucullus' philosophical and moral decline.

Plutarch seems to have swung consistently in favour of Cimon so far. To even the scales a little, he gives to his analysis a surprising twist, which may urge his audience to wonder (cf. ὁ καὶ θαυμαστόν ἐστιν) further about how the two men should be judged (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.4). He points out that whereas Cimon seems to have been of bad reputation in his youth (cf. *Cim.* 4.4–10; 15.3–4), Lucullus was well-bred and sober. Although Plutarch does not give a straightforward vote in favour of or against one or the other man, a view emerges clearly enough from his concluding statement that better is the man who changes for the better and better is the nature in which the evil disappears and the good flourishes (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.4). This pulls the readers into accepting that Cimon must be preferred over Lucullus.

The discussion continues in Cimon's favour. For, as Plutarch says, it is not worthy that [sc. someone] will regard as equal (cf. οὐ γὰρ ἄξιον ὁμοιωσαι) the constructions of the two men or their meals. Those of Cimon were democratic and humane, at slight outlay and available to many, while those of Lucullus were expensive and luxurious, prepared at large cost and only for a few people (*Cim.-Luc.* 1.5–6). It is worthy of note that in his discussion of the same topic in the *Cimon*, Plutarch also refers to the discrediting claim of Aristotle that Cimon provided a free dinner only for the Laciadae and not for all of the Athenians (10.2). Certainly, in the rest of chapter 10 of the *Cimon*, Plutarch whitewashes Cimon morally (10.2–9), but it is important that in the *Synkrisis* Plutarch completely sidesteps material that could contribute to the blackening of Cimon's character. Instead, Cimon is singled out for

this ‘someone’, the reader of the book, for special commendation.

But is that the only right way of looking at moral judgement? Plutarch seems to put this question to himself and his readers in the following lines of the *Synkrisis*. In a context that is basically negative for Lucullus, some hints of a more positive treatment of him may be acknowledged, as Plutarch notes, if the relation between the difference in the lifetime of the two men and the difference in their deeds is taken into account (1.7). Plutarch, thus, suggests to his readers a counter line of argumentation, emphatically introduced by the εἰ μὴ νῆ Δία.⁴¹ He incites them to think that it is not certain that Cimon would not have chosen a pretentious and pleasure-loving lifestyle, if he had retired after his energetic military activity to an old age that knew neither wars nor politics; ‘for, as has been already mentioned (ὥς προεῖρηται)’, Plutarch says, ‘Cimon was fond of drink, pompous, and discredited in his relation with women’ (1.7). On the other side, in Plutarch’s view (cf. μοι δοκεῖ), had Lucullus died in active military command, not even the most critical and censorious person would have accused him (1.8). In prospect of these counterfactual statements, his readers start to ask their own questions and construct their own alternative scenarios. Could the opposites be overturned in the way Plutarch suggests? Such an enquiry demands that readers look back at the preceding *Lives* and ask themselves whether they agree, disagree, or agree in a modified form with Plutarch’s striking thesis here. The ὥς προεῖρηται, in particular, forces them to turn back to the *Lives*, remember Cimon’s shady private life (*Cim.* 4.4–10; 15.3–4), and weave into their own interpretation the various lines of thinking presented by the narrative and the *Synkrisis*.

In the second chapter of the *Synkrisis*, Plutarch moves the discussion to the

⁴¹ Cf. *Lyc.-Num.* 2.2; *Cor.-Alc.* 2.9; *Aem.-Tim.* 1.3 and interestingly *Pel.-Marc.* 2.2 for similar uses of εἰ μὴ νῆ Δία. Other words or expressions, used in the *Synkriseis*, to introduce a counter strand of thought are καίτοι (*Per.-Fab.* 1.4), πλὴν (*Cor.-Alc.* 1.2), οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ (*Pel.-Marc.* 1.6).

military exploits of the two men. He starts with an equal valuation of them (2.1: ‘both . . . were good fighters’). However, he goes on to marshal several arguments in favour of Cimon, the most potent of them being that Cimon managed to gain the admiration of his allies, while Lucullus met the contempt of his soldiers (2.2–4). It is true, Plutarch admits, that both had tried in vain to subdue Asia. However, Plutarch ascribes Cimon’s failure to the work of fortune, while looking to trace the reasons for Lucullus’ decline in Lucullus’ own personality. ‘But one cannot altogether acquit (οὐ παντελῶς ἄν τις ἐξέλοιτο) him of blame’, Plutarch says, ‘whether he was ignorant of or would not pay attention to the grievances and complaints among his army, in consequence of which he became so bitterly hated’ (2.5).

This *tis*-statement about Lucullus’ deficient dealing with his soldiers imposes on the readers a backward movement again, for it revisits one of the main concerns of the *Life*, though not in much the same terms.⁴² Plutarch emphasises in the *Lucullus* Lucullus’ lack of concern about the desires and complaints of his soldiers as well as his inability to gain their affection.⁴³ However, as regards the latter, Plutarch also stresses that Lucullus was to such a high degree either naturally unsuited (ἄφυσής) or unfortunate (δυστυχής) (36.5). In view of the narrative of the *Lucullus*, his readers may think that fortune worked to some extent not only against Cimon, as Plutarch suggests in the *Synkrisis*, but against Lucullus too,⁴⁴ and accordingly challenge Plutarch’s final assertion that responsibility for Lucullus’ failure must be attributed only to Lucullus himself and that Cimon is to come out better.

Nevertheless, it is not only the readers who may destabilise Plutarch’s

⁴² Cf. above, §3.2.3

⁴³ *Luc.* 14.1; 14.4. Cf. *Luc.* 33.

⁴⁴ Cf. *Luc.* 33.1: Μέχρι τοῦδε φαίη τις ἂν Λευκόλλῳ τὴν τύχην ἐπομένην συστρατηγεῖν, without absolving him, though, of responsibility (33.2).

argument here. Plutarch himself imagines a serious objection that may overturn what has gone before: ‘does this point not have its counterpart in the life of Cimon?’ (*Cim.-Luc.* 2.6). Plutarch gives his own answer, referring to Cimon’s clash with his fellow citizens and his resulting ostracism. To mitigate his criticism of both Cimon and Lucullus, though, Plutarch tries to see the difficulties offered by the social environment in which Cimon and Lucullus lived—something he does in both the preceding *Lives* too as we saw earlier in chapter three.⁴⁵ He accordingly makes a more general claim about the common feelings of the multitude towards aristocrats. He parallels aristocrats with doctors, who, even if they put the dislocated members of a body into their right position, they do not please but annoy the patient. For this reason, Plutarch concludes that both men should *perhaps* (ἴσως) be acquitted of this charge (*Cim.-Luc.* 2.7). His readers may acknowledge some tentativeness in Plutarch’s concluding balanced judgement. They can accordingly feel that they can take their own step in the moral evaluation of the two men, test what Plutarch says here, and endeavour to construct (if they wish) an alternative interpretation for themselves.

The tone of the rest of the *Synkrisis* is, on the whole, positive for Lucullus. A flash-forward to later Greek and Roman history and more precisely to the perpetuation of the two men’s military work is used to prove the case—a prevalent technique in the *Lives* in general, especially in their endings, as we saw earlier in chapter four.⁴⁶ The Persians, Plutarch claims, as if they had not suffered greatly at Cimon’s hands, straightway arrayed themselves against the Greeks and destroyed their force in Egypt, while Tigranes and Mithridates achieved nothing substantial against the Romans. Mithridates, being completely weak, fled to Bosphorus where he

⁴⁵ See above, §3.2.3.

⁴⁶ See above, §4.2; On the *Cimon*, see ch. 3, pp. 125–7.

put an end to himself, while Tigranes took off his diadem and surrendered himself to Pompey, whom he flattered, as Plutarch stresses, not with his own achievements but with those of Lucullus (3.2). No mention of this aftermath is made in the *Lucullus*, where Plutarch focuses especially on how hard Lucullus was humiliated at Pompey's hands and how much of his victory Pompey owed to Lucullus' achievements (35.9–36.4). The new material in the *Synkrisis* recalls Lucullus' earlier shame and achievements—Tigranes' diadem figured in Lucullus' triumph (*Luc.* 28.7; 36.6)—and brings full circle Lucullus' rehabilitation: 'he was as much delighted', Plutarch says, 'to get back the insignia of his royalty as though he had been robbed of them *before* (πρότερον)' (*Cim.-Luc.* 3.3). On these grounds, Plutarch concludes, 'greater . . . is the general, as is the athlete who hands over his antagonist to his successor in a weaker state' (*Cim.-Luc.* 3.3). In the light of the later Greek and Roman history, Lucullus emerges as superior to Cimon for his greatness in war.

On this analysis, the readers are likely to feel surprise when they remember the ending of the *Cimon* (19.3–4) and the use of the Athenian post-Persian history there to heighten rather than diminish Cimon's military achievement.⁴⁷ Such an 'all in vain' suggestion (in Pelling's terms) is heard only in the *Synkrisis*, and the contrast is designed to challenge and undercut Cimon's moral record. From the perspective of this aftermath as well as the following parallelism with the athlete and the contrast of Cimon with other Greek generals, it is Lucullus who comes off better. This certainly flags a shift in moral evaluation, for in the previous chapter of the *Synkrisis* and the preceding *Lives* it was Cimon who emerged superior through the parallelism with an

⁴⁷ See Pelling (1997c), 238 [= repr. (2002a), 372] from where the following cited expression is also taken.

athlete and upon whom Plutarch bestowed the first prize in military activities.⁴⁸ Other Greek generals, moreover, such as Themistocles and Pausanias, were used in the narrative of the *Cimon* to bolster rather than trivialise Cimon's military leadership (cf. *Cim.-Luc.* 3.4).⁴⁹

The process of evaluating Cimon and Lucullus, therefore, turns out to be, to some extent, in flux, subject to constant challenge and radical revision. At the end Plutarch explicitly signals the difficulty in passing a definitive moral judgement: 'One who takes everything into consideration (cf. πάντα μεταλαμβάνοντι) finds it hard to reach a decision (cf. δυσδιαίτητον εἶναι τὴν κρίσιν) . . . Both . . . may be said to have received the vote of the gods as noble and god-like natures' (*Cim.-Luc.* 3.6). Plutarch does not force his readers to come down in favour of or against one or the other figure, but up to the end of the *Synkrisis* (and thus of the book) keeps them alert to the uncertainty about moral implication and interpretation.⁵⁰ That process of balancing the to-and-fro argument in the final *Synkrisis* is, in itself, mimetic of the sort of generous but critical reflection that Plutarch suggests in the prologue to this pair (*Cim.* 2.3–5) and encourages throughout the book (as we saw in the previous chapters). That might be programmatic too for what the readers might extend to other cases of comparative epilogues, as we shall see in the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion–Brutus*.

⁴⁸ Cf. *Cim.* 13.3; *Luc.* 30.2; *Cim.-Luc.* 2.1. On the imagery of competition in the *Cimon–Lucullus*, see Pelling (2010a), 110: 'That is appropriate, with both men competing not merely with their enemies but with their colleagues or predecessors; but in *Cimon* such competitiveness is salutary (*Cim.* 5, 8, 18), in *Lucullus* it goes astray (ch. 30 and n. 158)'. Cf. Tröster (2008), 127 n. 1 with further bibliography on the image of the athlete in the *Cimon–Lucullus*.

⁴⁹ Cf. *Cim.* 5.5–6; 6.2–3; 6.6; 8.1–2; 12.2; 16.2; 18.7.

⁵⁰ Cf. Pelling (1997c), 244 with n. 55 [= repr. (2002a), 377 with 386 n. 64] on the openness of moral verdict in the *Synkrisis*.

5.3 'OR IS THIS THE FIRST POINT THAT TELLS THE OTHER WAY?'⁵¹

(*Dion-Brut.* 3.6)

In the first half of the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion-Brutus*, Plutarch consistently favours Dion, while in the second half he turns to argue in favour of Brutus. Throughout the concluding epilogue, Plutarch is ready to go well beyond what the two *Lives* suggest. He starts by claiming that Dion managed everything alone, while Brutus was deeply indebted to Cassius (1.1-4). His readers may sense that there is some distance here between the *Lives* and the *Synkrisis*. In the *Dion*, Plutarch refers to the important role that Speusippus and other companions as well as several statesmen and philosophers played in the successful organisation of Dion's fight against Dionysius (22).⁵² In the *Brutus*, moreover, Plutarch allows the possibility that Cassius had contributed not only to the strengthening but also to the worsening of Brutus' power: 'And indeed it seems that Brutus could easily have become the first man in Rome beyond any dispute, if he had had the patience to take second place to Caesar for a time and wait for his power to pass its zenith and the glory of his achievements to fade. But it was Cassius with his violent temper and his hatred of Caesar . . . who inflamed Brutus's feelings and urged him on' (8.4-5).⁵³ The distance between the *Lives* and the *Synkrisis* causes the readers to challenge Plutarch's judgement in the *Synkrisis*.

The same taste for continuation rather than settling of the moral evaluation in the *Synkrisis* may be sensed in Plutarch's treatment of the reasons behind the decision of Dion and Brutus to turn to war. Dion, Plutarch claims, although he was passing his exile in safety and quiet, willingly (cf. ἐκὼν) ran risks in order to save Sicily. Brutus and Cassius, on the contrary, took up the war only after they were condemned to

⁵¹ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010) throughout this section for the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion-Brutus*.

⁵² Cf. *Dion* 23.2; 24.2; 35.4. See also Erbse (1956), 414 n. 4 [= repr. (1979), 495 n. 54].

⁵³ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010). Cf. *Brut.* 7.6-7.

death and were chased down, out of necessity (ἀναγκάως) and for the sake of themselves rather than for their citizens (1.6–7). Plutarch’s judgement may be found unsettling, especially if it is mapped against the earlier narrative. It is not only that in the *Brutus* it is made clear that Brutus and Cassius turned to war some time before their death-sentence (27), but also that their war against Caesar was inspired more by care for the common good than by personal considerations.⁵⁴

A similar concern to challenge a univocal moral conclusion in the *Synkrisis* seems to underlie Plutarch’s evaluation of Brutus’ murder of Caesar. Although admitting that Dionysius should have been killed, for he was generally accepted as a cruel tyrant, Plutarch casts doubts on whether Caesar’s murder was a good thing or not, since Caesar’s rule had no cruel or tyrannical consequence. Plutarch continues to stress that Rome needed a monarch and that Caesar was sent by Heaven as the gentlest possible doctor to cure the ills of the Roman state. The Romans, accordingly, missed Caesar and became cruel and implacable to his murderers, while Dion’s fellow-citizens despaired at his decision to let Dionysius leave Syracuse and not to destroy the tomb of the earlier tyrant (2). Plutarch’s emphasis in the *Synkrisis* shows considerable discord with the preceding *Lives*. In the *Dion* there is nothing about Dion’s decision to let Dionysius leave Syracuse. Dionysius rather escapes from the city (cf. *Dion* 37.4: λαθὼν . . . ἐξέπλευσε).⁵⁵ Moreover, in the *Dion*, it is Dion’s unscrupulous enemy, Heraclides, who blames Dion for holding the people in check when they tried to open the tomb of Dionysius (53.1–2), and not Dion’s fellow-citizens as Plutarch stresses in the *Synkrisis*. Most importantly, no suggestion of

⁵⁴ Cf. Pelling (2010a), 616 n. 2. On Cassius’ private interest, see *Brut.* 8.5–7; 29.5, but see also *Brut.* 9.1–4; 10.5–6 for a more public interest. On Brutus’ commitment to the common cause, see *Brut.* 4.2; 10.4; 28.4–5; 29; 40.8.

⁵⁵ Pelling (2010a), 616 n. 5.

Caesar's monarchy as being divinely ordained to cure the sad state of Roman politics is made in the *Brutus*. Paradoxically, in the *Life of Brutus* we are told that the place for the meeting on the Ides of March 'seemed (ἐδόκει) to be providentially in their [i.e. the conspirators'] favour' (14.2). And a few lines later we hear that 'some heavenly power seemed (ἐδόκει) to be conducting Caesar to Pompey's vengeance' (14.3), although it is true that unfavourable omens discouraged Caesar from proceeding as well (16.1; cf. 15.1).

Thus, while the narrative raises no doubts about Brutus' high morals and leaves the impression of divine support for Caesar's murder, the *Synkrisis* allows the alternative that the tyrannicide was not a good thing to do.⁵⁶ This is not Plutarch's overarching concluding statement but simply another view (cf. ἐδοξε)⁵⁷—most likely of Brutus' contemporaries—according to which the circumstances in Rome were calling for monarchy and Caesar was sent by god as the gentlest doctor (*Dion-Brut.* 2.2). However, the unexpected character of the argument in the *Synkrisis* may unsettle the readers and prompt them to reflect on historical and ethical questions of responsibility and causation by drawing together into their own interpretation the various perspectives presented by both the narrative and the *Synkrisis*.

But does this alternative perspective in the *Synkrisis* come completely out of the blue? The following chapter of the *Synkrisis* betrays that readers may have not been left with absolutely no indication about Heaven's appointment of one-man rule in Rome, although this rule is Octavian's and not Julius Caesar's. Plutarch suggests that Dion must come out better because of his excellent military leadership, while Brutus should be blamed not only for taking up the last expedition unwisely (οὐθ' . . . φρονίμως) but also for bearing his misfortune with no resolution (3.1–3). This is

⁵⁶ Cf. Pelling (1997c), 243 [= repr. (2002a), 376]; (2010a), 253–4. Cf. Duff (1999), 284.

⁵⁷ Cf. *Ant.* 6.7, with Pelling (1988a), 132; (2011a), 279.

another case where Plutarch works against the picture he establishes in the wider narrative of the *Brutus* in order to problematise further Brutus' moral status in the *Synkrisis*.⁵⁸ In the *Brutus*, it is made clear that it was because of some mischance (τύχη δέ τινη) rather than by the fault (κακία) of the naval commanders that Brutus did not learn about his crucial naval success and went on to fight another battle (47.5–6). Plutarch openly stresses there that 'the day of the Republic was past . . . and it was necessary that the rule of a single man should take its place, and so the god (ὁ θεός), wishing to remove from the scene the only man who could hinder the potential master of the world, cut off any chance (τὴν τύχην) that the news might reach Brutus in time, although it came very close to doing so' (47.7).⁵⁹

Plutarch's emphasis in the *Life*, thus, sits far from comfortably with what he says in the *Synkrisis*, namely that Brutus embarked upon the last struggle because of his lack of wisdom. Readers who sense this lack of fit between the *Synkrisis* and the *Life* may recall in the *Synkrisis* Plutarch's fatalistic interpretation of Brutus' defeat in the *Life* and wonder about how far responsibility may lie with Brutus. Most crucially, they may also relate it to the previous chapter of the *Synkrisis* and Plutarch's emphasis on the god-sent monarchy of Caesar, which seemed to be a bad thing for Brutus to oppose (2). If Brutus took up the last struggle because some divine power favoured Octavian, as the narrative of the *Brutus* seems to suggest, does Plutarch invite us to think that in the case of both Caesar and Octavian, Brutus was facing not simply a human adversary but also something more divine?⁶⁰ Does he wish us to absolve Brutus of absolute responsibility and think that his involvement in the tyrannicide and the last struggle was much less morally problematic than first seemed

⁵⁸ See also Pelling (2010a), 616 n. 7.

⁵⁹ Tr. Scott-Kilvert and Pelling (2010), adapted.

⁶⁰ See also Pelling (2010a), 254–5; Dillon (2010), 99.

in the final *Synkrisis*? Plutarch's judgements in the *Synkrisis* remain to some extent open to his readers' collaboration in challenging and reworking them.

Plutarch makes his readers more aware of the ambivalences and tensions that accompany the process of judging in the next lines of the *Synkrisis*. The biggest charge that they make against (ἐγκαλοῦσι) Brutus, as Plutarch says, is that he became the murderer of Caesar, who was his friend and saviour. Plutarch continues, 'no one could make this criticism against Dion (τοῦτ' οὐκ ἄν τις εἴποι κατὰ Δίωνος), for, on the contrary (τοῦναντίον), he helped and strengthened Dionysius' power as long as they were relatives and friends; and it was only after he had been expelled from his country, had been wronged as a husband and had lost his possessions that he openly undertook a legitimate (νόμιμον) and just (δίκαιον) war' (3.4–5). This gravest charge, brought against Brutus, is a big moral issue that remains untouched in the *Life*.⁶¹ Plutarch is keenly aware that some of his readers may find it awkward and choose not to agree with the anonymous interlocutor's suggestion that there is no similar blemish on Dion's moral status. He thus allows the possibility that different, even completely opposite, interpretations might be offered of the same event, and goes on to pose a question emphatically: 'or is this the first point that tells the other way? (ἢ τοῦτ' ἀντιστρέφει πρῶτον;)' (3.6). This question, being either part of Plutarch's self-reflection or a direct appeal to the readers, clearly marks a shift in Plutarch's argument and moral tone.⁶² It presents his readers with a challenge and obliges them to embark on a new train of thought about moral judgement.

From this point on Plutarch is prepared to find material to moderate his earlier disapproval of Brutus and to be similarly critical of Dion. Although he starts, as at the very beginning of the *Synkrisis*, by giving the impression that he will approach the

⁶¹ Pelling (1997c), 242–3 [= repr. (2002a), 376].

⁶² Duff (1999), 253 (esp. n. 36), 258 n. 55.

two men equally because of their hostility to tyranny and shared hatred of evil (3.6; cf. 1.1), he continues to argue in favour of Brutus, while making Dion seem morally ambivalent. In his analysis, Plutarch shows a considerable discord with what has been said before in the *Synkrisis* and the two *Lives*.

Few readers will have failed to remember, for example, that, although here Plutarch commends Brutus for his devotion to the common good, liberty and justice (3.6)—an appraisal which is insistent in the wider narrative of the *Brutus*,⁶³ a few chapters before he had blamed both Brutus and Cassius for taking up the war out of necessity (ἀναγκαίως), on their own behalf rather than for their fellow-citizens (ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν τὸ πλεον ἢ τῶν πολιτῶν) (1.6). The biggest charge that they laid against Brutus, Plutarch added, was that he fought against his friend and preserver Caesar (3.4). This earlier criticism of Brutus sits uneasily with Plutarch's current emphasis on the common good (τὸ κοινῇ συμφέρον) and justice (τῷ δικαίῳ) upon which Brutus relied in justifying his friendship with his enemy Pompey and his enmity towards his friend Caesar (3.8). The conflicting strands may strike his readers as odd and oblige them to engage thoughtfully with them.

Dion, in turn, is accused of having personal motives for fighting against Dionysius. In order to prove his case, Plutarch adduces Plato's letters, an extra piece of evidence, not included in the *Dion*, which shows that Dion tried to destroy Dionysius because he was expelled from tyranny and not because he rejected it (3.7). Although Dion, Plutarch stresses, offered Dionysius his support as a favour (πρὸς χάριν) while they were friends, he turned against him in anger (πρὸς ὀργήν) when he lost Dionysius' trust (3.9). It is for this very reason, Plutarch continues, that Dion's friends were afraid that Dion would have established his own rule after Dionysius'

⁶³ Cf. above, n. 54.

removal (3.10).

There are several incongruities between Plutarch's statements here and the earlier chapters of the *Synkrisis* and the *Dion*. In the first half of the *Synkrisis*, we are clearly told about Dion's lesser concern for private interest. We hear that Dion contributed his own private wealth (τὸν ἑαυτοῦ πλοῦτον) for the freedom of his fellow-citizens (ὑπὲρ τῆς τῶν πολιτῶν ἐλευθερίας), and willingly (cf. ἐκὼν) took a great risk to save Sicily, although he was quiet and safe in exile (1.5–7). Moreover, in the *Dion*, Plutarch makes clear how unjust and unreasonable the suspicions and fears of the Syracusans were that Dion could have assumed a kind of tyranny (32.1–2),⁶⁴ and leaves the impression of less self-interest and passion in Dion's attempt to strike Dionysius down.⁶⁵ One way, moreover, in which Plutarch traces Dion's decline in the *Life* is in Dion's treatment of χάρις and ὀργή. The *Life* underlines Dion's aversion to flattery, used especially by the friends of the younger Dionysius (cf. 6.4: πρὸς χάριν τῷ μειρακίῳ συμβουλεύοντα),⁶⁶ his outspokenness with Dionysius (5.8–10) as well as his natural gravity and harshness in his interaction with other people. Dion, as Plutarch says, was an unpleasant (ἄχαρις) companion to a young man who was corrupted by flattery (8.3), and Plato warned him about the dangers lying in his self-willed stubbornness (αὐθάδεια) (8.4).⁶⁷ Most crucially, Dion himself knew that it

⁶⁴ Pelling (2010a), 617 n. 16.

⁶⁵ *Dion* 22; 23.2; 29.1; 32.1; 43.

⁶⁶ On the negative effects of flatterers on the younger Dionysius, see Nerdahl (2011), esp. 301–6. More generally, on *charis* in the *Lives*, see Frazier (1996), 248–50.

⁶⁷ On the Platonic intertext, see Zadorojnyi (2011), 149–50. See also *Dion* 17.3 (esp. βουλομένου τοῦ Πλάτωνος ὁμιλίᾳ χάριν ἐχούση . . .); 52.5–6 (esp. 52.5: καίτοι τῶν πραγμάτων αὐτῷ χάριτος ἐνδεῶν ὄντων). Cf. *Dion* 32.5: The Syracusan people were averse to the uncompromising character of Dion and prone to the flattery of Heraclides, who sought to win their favour (cf. ὑπεδύετο τὴν τῶν πολλῶν χάριν).

was not out of goodwill (οὐ πρὸς χάριν) but against the wishes of the tyrant and because of his needs that he enjoyed preeminence in Dionysius' regime (8.5). In the light of all these references in the *Life of Dion*, Plutarch's claim in the *Synkrisis* that Dion offered his support to Dionysius as a favour (πρὸς χάριν) defies readers' expectations.

The same is true of Plutarch's opinion in the *Synkrisis* that anger (ὀργή) was the stimulus for Dion's struggle against Dionysius. It is true that in the *Life* Plutarch refers to Dion's annoyance and hostility (ἐχαλέπαινε, ἐξεπολεμώθη) towards Dionysius (21.1) as well as the initial reluctance of Dion's men to fight because they thought that Dion was in a mad frenzy of anger (cf. ὡς ὀργῆς τιнос παραφροσύνη καὶ μανία) or hopelessness (cf. χρηστῶν ἐλπίδων ἀπορία) which led him to thrust himself into desperate undertakings (23.1). However, Dion's strong dislike of anger, stemming from his excessive adherence to philosophical principles, became a vital theme of the *Life* in plotting his fall. Dion's opponents, Heraclides and Theodotes, try to get Dion's sympathy by appealing to his virtuous character and most notably to his ability to be a better master of his anger (47.1–2). Dion himself tries to soften the hatred of his friends, who insist on the punishment of Heraclides and Theodotes, by stressing his training in the Academy, where he learned how to conquer anger (θυμοῦ περιεῖναι), how to be mild (πρᾶος) towards those who have made a mistake, and how not to allow anger to spoil his virtue (cf. θυμῷ διαφθεῖραι τὴν ἀρετήν) (47.4–9).

The *Life of Dion*, therefore, shows that Dion's attitude towards χάρις and θυμός, although being morally and philosophically true, was practically ineffective. Being too unbending and stubborn in real-life politics brought Dion the resentment and annoyance of the Syracusan people, who were easily swayed by the charms and

flatteries of dangerous demagogues such as Heraclides (32.5).⁶⁸ Further, the hard realities of politics left no room for Dion to be too idealistic. Had he disposed of Heraclides earlier, he would have certainly avoided many troubles that he would face later on.⁶⁹ The narrative of the *Dion* allows us to discern that favouring someone or attacking a dangerous opponent in anger may be not too bad in the real world of politics. It is all the more striking, then, that Plutarch comes to the *Synkrisis* to challenge what his readers must have assumed from the narrative of the *Dion*, arguing against Dion for supporting Dionysius out of goodwill (πρὸς χάριν) and turning against him in anger (πρὸς ὀργήν). No suggestion of the *charis*-point is made in the narrative, as we saw, while the dangers of being too magnanimous and mild are well illustrated. The provocative contrast between the *Life* and the *Synkrisis* draws the readers to question, first, if and how far Dion resorted to χάρις and ὀργή in his dealing with Dionysius, and, second, to challenge whether or not Plutarch was right in taking Dion's yielding to χάρις and θυμός as necessarily a stain on Dion's moral record.

The *Synkrisis*, thus, opens up an avenue for reconsidering one of the main concerns of the two *Lives*: the extent to which Dion and Brutus were able to grasp the clash between idealism and practicality. This question is further explored in the following chapter of the *Synkrisis*, where several contradictions with its earlier sections and with the two *Lives* serve to draw our attention to the way in which the two men conceived and carried out their tyrannicide. Although in the second chapter of the *Synkrisis* Plutarch casts doubt on whether Brutus did the right thing to kill Caesar, the best doctor Rome could have had in such a crisis, he now praises Brutus for setting out to overthrow Caesar without having any fear of his great ability, power,

⁶⁸ See Pelling (2004), 96–7; (2010b), 229. Cf. Dillon (2010), 91–2.

⁶⁹ Pelling (2004), 95.

and fortune. Even if someone claims (εἰ δὲ φήσῃ τις) that Dion expelled Dionysius after great struggles, for Plutarch it is clear that Brutus must be rated more highly than Dion for his high intelligence and strategic planning (4.1–6). Within the present context, Plutarch presses us to challenge any doubts about Brutus’ political insight, which his earlier presentation of Caesar’s killing as more problematic might have raised.

Brutus gets a good press from Plutarch for conceiving of the plan to kill Caesar a long time in advance and carrying it out with the aid of many associates, none of whom let him down. Plutarch stresses that Brutus either chose the best people from the beginning or he chose the ones he did and turned those he trusted into good men. Dion, on the contrary, either made a bad choice and entrusted himself to worthless men or treated them in such a way as to turn the good people into bad. Plutarch concludes that neither of these is appropriate to a prudent man, and brings into his discussion Plato’s similar criticism of Dion in order to reinforce his point (4.6–8). Comparison with the previous narratives of the *Dion* and the *Brutus* have the effect not only of making Brutus seem superior to Dion but also of provoking further reflection on the two men’s ability to transfer philosophical ideals into real-life politics.

In the *Dion*, although Dion’s friends were right in their advice on killing Heraclides (47.3), they were most often deceitful and harmful to Dion and his family.⁷⁰ Hicetas, ‘one of Dion’s friends’, murdered Dion’s sister and wife (58.8–9), while Callipus organised the plot against him (54–6). Most crucially, although Dion was warned about Callipus’ plan, he preferred to die, as he says, ‘if he should live on his guard, not only against his enemies, but also against his friends’ (56.3). Similar

⁷⁰ Pelling (2010a), 617 n. 21.

instances, where Dion's reluctance to yield his principles to the demands of real politics worsens his position, may be called to mind, such as his choice to let Dionysius' letter be read aloud to the Syracusans (*Dion* 31.4–32.2) or his strengthening of Heraclides (*Dion* 33.3–5; 48.7–9). Dion was indeed unwilling to behave in ways that did not fit his philosophical upbringing and to act from a sense of political and military pragmatism. This is a point where the narrative and the *Synkrisis* are at one.

Brutus might be thought to have fared better than Dion. In the *Brutus*, we are told that those chosen to participate in the plot against Caesar are proved to be most trustworthy and faithful (12.1–13.1) and that Lucilius, 'one of Brutus' friends', risks his life for Brutus (50). Messala and Strato, two other friends of Brutus, are strongly committed to him (53.1–3), and Brutus himself acknowledges and expresses his pleasure with the loyalty of his friends (52).⁷¹ All in all, Plutarch's applause of Brutus in the *Synkrisis* seems to be consistent with the thrust of the wider narrative of the *Brutus*. However, Plutarch's claim in the *Synkrisis* that Brutus was able to turn the men he trusted into good men might sound too strong if one calls to mind Brutus' sparing of Antony and the subsequent frustration of his hope that Antony could undergo a change of heart (*Brut.* 18.4–5). Although being more able than Dion to respond to the needs of the real world, such as when he faces Gaius Antonius (*Brut.* 26) or Cassius' soldiers (*Brut.* 46),⁷² Brutus gives way to Antony's proposal to read Caesar's will before the people and agrees to bury his body publicly with honours, thus causing the people's indignation at the conspirators. This was thought to be

⁷¹ On Brutus and his friends, see Affortunati (2004), 16–20.

⁷² Cf. Pelling (2010a), 251–2, referring also to the rigidity of Brutus, which is seen positively as a political strength, inspiring others with confidence, rather than as a flaw—which is the case for Dion—associated with the lack of compromise.

Brutus' second serious error of judgement, as Plutarch stresses, after his decision to spare Antony on the Ides of March (*Brut.* 20.1–7).⁷³

In the *Synkrisis*, then, Plutarch returns to a theme that is consistent throughout the two *Lives* and to questions for which both the *Dion* and the *Brutus* prepare the readers. To what extent were Dion and Brutus able to understand the clash between philosophy and pragmatism? How far did they get things right so as to act successfully not only as philosophers but as politicians too? These questions are neither new nor unexpected in the *Synkrisis*, but they bring along some new and unexpected twists that, as we saw, can jolt the readers into contemplating anew the philosophical and political insight of the two men in their attempt to construct their own moral position.

This process of passing a judgement becomes still more acute and demanding for the readers in the last chapter of the *Synkrisis*. Plutarch adds some complicating posthumous material, which ends the book with a controlled ambiguity of moral judgement. He mentions, first, that no one avenged Dion's death, while Brutus enjoyed posthumous dignity and respect from his enemies Antony and Octavian (5.1). However, in the last chapter of the *Dion*, Plutarch refers to the gods' caring about a fitting punishment for Callipus. Plutarch tells us that Callipus attacked Messana and lost most of his soldiers, among whom were Dion's murderers, and that he was put to death by Leptines and Polyperchon, who used the dagger with which Dion was smitten (58.3–7). Moreover, the *Dion* ends on a note that in order to avenge Dion the Syracusans killed the daughters of Hicetas, the murderer of Dion's sister and wife (58.10). In view of the closing chapter of the *Dion*, Plutarch's terminal preference over Brutus is left open to the readers to challenge and reverse it.

⁷³ Pace Swain (1990b), 197, 201–2, who argues that 'Plutarch seems to avoid tracing the unfortunate consequences of Brutus' insistence on principle in politics' (197).

The disturbing polyvalence of the anecdote, moreover, with which the *Dion-Brutus* book ends, adds to the disquiet sense of the lack of a definite moral conclusion. Octavian comes across a statue of Brutus in Mediolanum in Cisalpine Gaul and teases the citizens of Milan that they harbour his enemy. He laughs at their fright, praises them for remaining true to their friend even in misfortune, and orders that the statue should remain where it is (*Dion-Brut.* 5.2–4). The theme of friendship returns at the very end of the book, and Brutus might be commended again for the loyalty of his friends as well as the respect that he inspires even in his enemy. Moreover, the reference to the statue of Brutus might take us back to the first chapter of the *Life of Brutus* and call to mind the statue of Brutus' ancestor, Junius, whose harsh, uncultivated character functions as a foil for Brutus' mild philosophical nature (1.1–4). The terminal anecdote, though, echoes not only the philosophical tranquillity of Brutus but also the tranquillity that is now pervasive under Octavian's rule.⁷⁴ Yet, if Octavian is shown to be a gentle enemy and generous ruler, does Plutarch want us to think that Brutus might have been not completely right in setting himself to overthrow Octavian, as he might have been not completely right in removing Caesar (cf. *Dion-Brut.* 2)? Did Brutus lack the political insight, necessary to show him what was good to oppose and what not? The anecdote is puzzling enough to leave the readers in an ambiguous state between praise and blame. At the end of the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion-Brutus*, as at the end of the *Synkrisis* to the *Cimon-Lucullus*, Plutarch defies complacent reassurance and assertive moral conclusions. His preference is for anti-closure and continuation of the moral investigation.

⁷⁴ Pelling (2010a), 255.

5.4 ‘TERMINAL IRREGULARITY?’⁷⁵

Four pairs of Plutarch’s *Lives* lack a final *Synkrisis*: *Pyrrhus–Marius*, *Phocion–Cato Minor*, *Themistocles–Camillus*, and *Alexander–Caesar*. Although it used to be thought that the *Synkriseis* of these pairs had been lost,⁷⁶ recent discussion has mainly assumed Plutarch’s deliberate omission of them. Hartmut Erbse’s suggestion that Plutarch chose not to write a comparative epilogue for these pairs because he found that the similarities between the subjects of these *Lives* were either so great or so slight has been rejected by scholarship.⁷⁷ ‘Similar problems did not stop Plutarch writing *synkriseis* elsewhere’, Christopher Pelling argues,⁷⁸ relating Plutarch’s omission of the comparative epilogues to the unusual way in which their respective *Lives* close.⁷⁹ Most recently, though, Timothy Duff has rightly noticed that the features which characterise the closure of each of these four pairs can equally be found in the closure of many other second *Lives*,⁸⁰ a point which is of great importance for our analysis here. Duff concludes that it is likely that the *Synkrisis* has been lost in all or some of these four pairs. Given, though, Plutarch’s variety in the usual structure of his biographical book, Duff does not exclude the possibility that Plutarch may never have written comparative epilogues for these four books.⁸¹

The absence of the *Synkrisis* poses some important questions to explore:

⁷⁵ The phrase is borrowed and adapted from Pelling (1997c), 244 [= repr. (2002a), 377].

⁷⁶ e.g. Moles (1988), 19.

⁷⁷ Erbse (1956), 403–6 [= repr. (1979), 484–7].

⁷⁸ See Pelling (1997c), 244 [= repr. (2002a), 377]. Cf. Wardman (1974), 236–7; Larmour (1992), 4174–7.

⁷⁹ Pelling (1997c), 244–50 [= repr. (2002a), 377–82].

⁸⁰ Duff (2011a), 258, but he does not discuss the moralising effect which these closural features produce.

⁸¹ Duff (2011a), 259. Cf. Duff (1999), 253–5.

should the lack of the *Synkrisis* be related to any irregular ending of the second *Life*? What sort of response does Plutarch require from his readers who finish the book with the last chapters of the second *Life*? How and how far does this differ from the moral reaction he encourages at the end of the books that conclude with a formal *Synkrisis*?

It might be helpful to start with the two pairs whose endings we have already analysed in detail in the previous chapter, the *Phocion–Cato Minor* and the *Pyrrhus–Marius*. As we said there, the strong presence of Socrates and the philosophical nuances at the end of the *Cato Minor* raise issues that have resonance for the book as a whole. They press us to explore in retrospect how far Cato and his pair Phocion managed to attain the ideal philosophical mixture of firmness and softness in their character and political conduct. Pelling found the final scene of the *Cato* especially dramatic. ‘One can understand if he was reluctant to compromise so fine an ending with a formal *synkrisis*, and preferred to leave it as it is, especially as the implicit comparison with the dying Phocion is so loud’.⁸² The same line of thinking is followed to explain the lack of *Synkrisis* to the *Pyrrhus–Marius*. The moral excursus at the end of the *Marius* matters both for Pyrrhus and Marius.⁸³ Besides this, the disquieting end of the *Marius* with Plutarch’s rather explicit criticism of Marius and his son has been suggested as another reason for the omission of the *Synkrisis*.⁸⁴ As Duff notes, the reflective passage at the end of the *Marius* (46.1–5) ‘is, unusually, explicitly critical of Marius and by implication Pyrrhos, a feature usually reserved for

⁸² Pelling (1997c), 245 [= repr. (2002a), 377]. Cf. Duff (1999), 255. Trapp (1999), 495 calls Socrates a ‘third man’, a ‘*tertium comparationis*’ which encourages comparison between the two men in the absence of a formal *Synkrisis*.

⁸³ Duff (1999), 107–8, 254–5.

⁸⁴ Pelling (1997c), 245 [= repr. (2002a), 377–8], who contrasts it with the more generous mode that he finds at the ends of the *Lives*.

the *synkrisis*'.⁸⁵ However, we may notice that Plutarch did write a comparative epilogue after the *Antony*, whose closing lines include a similar uncomfortable note on Nero (87.8–9), which, as we have seen in the preceding chapter, is thought-provoking rather than simply denouncing, highlighting issues about consciousness that matter to both Demetrius and Antony. Pelling and Duff considered the blunt moralism of the last lines of the *Antony* as 'prefiguring' and smoothing over the transition to the explicit moralising of the following *Synkrisis*.⁸⁶ One might accordingly wonder why Plutarch did not similarly use the crude moralism of the last lines of the *Marius* as a device of transition to, rather than a replacement for, a final *Synkrisis*.

Themistocles–Camillus is the most difficult case to explain. It has been argued that the start of the pair is corrupt and that a formal prologue might have been lost as well as the final *Synkrisis*.⁸⁷ Pelling found both the beginning and the epilogue of the *Camillus* 'most perfunctory',⁸⁸ although he acknowledges that the closing note on the death of Camillus and the great grief that the Romans felt for his loss (43.2) fit a regular closural feature of Plutarch's *Lives*.⁸⁹ Crucially, Plutarch's mention at the end of the *Camillus* of the response of the city to the man finds its parallel at the end of the *Themistocles* (32.4–6), calling to mind a weighty theme in both *Lives* and giving the audience a last chance to remember and give some thought to what they have

⁸⁵ Duff (1999), 255, although on pp. 103, 253 and (2011a), 258–9 he does not deny the possibility that the *Synkriseis* may have simply been lost.

⁸⁶ Pelling (1997c), 235–6 [= repr. (2002a), 370]; Duff (1999), 281.

⁸⁷ See Duff (1999), 255 n. 46; (2011a), 224 n. 53, 259 n. 205 and a detailed discussion in (2008), 176–9.

⁸⁸ Pelling (1997c), 245 [= repr. (2002a), 378].

⁸⁹ Pelling (1997c), 245 n. 59 [= repr. (2002a), 386 n. 70].

already heard about the relationship of the man and their cities.⁹⁰ This reflection might extend to, and include at the end of each of the two *Lives*, the future of the man and his city either explicitly through posthumous material (*Them.* 32.4–6) or implicitly through the peculiar way in which Plutarch constructs the ending itself (*Cam.* 43.2). Pelling suggested that the abrupt ending of the *Camillus* reflexively mirrors the historical reality of Rome. By leaving the story in *mediis rebus* Plutarch might intend to underline the ‘gap left for the future’ of Rome,⁹¹ when the party-strife that Camillus managed for the present would come back and go on.⁹² Questions, therefore, about Themistocles, Camillus, Athens, and Rome return at the end of the *Camillus*, and could possibly be expanded further in a final comparative epilogue.

A similar thought-provoking ending can be found at the end of the *Caesar*, which again is not followed by a final comparison between Alexander and Caesar. With regard to the loss of the *Synkrisis* to the *Alexander–Caesar*, it has been argued that the end of the *Alexander* and the start of the *Caesar* have most likely been lost, and it is possible that the final *Synkrisis* shared the same fate.⁹³ However, Pelling suggested that Zonaras (4.14) might preserve a form of the lost ending of the *Alexander*.⁹⁴ There, Alexander, as soon as he realised that he would die, tried to drown himself in the Euphrates secretly, his intention being to disappear and leave

⁹⁰ On this theme, see Stadter (1983/84), 358–63; Piccirilli (1983), xxxix; Larmour (1992), 4182–98; Pelling (1992), 30 [= repr. (2002a), 132–3]. For a more recent and complete comparative reading of the two *Lives*, focusing especially on the relation between the two men and their cities, see Duff (2010). Duff argues that ‘the reader who approaches the *Camillus* after reading the *Themistocles* is encouraged to compare and contrast not only the two subjects as *men*, but also Athens and Rome as *cities*’ (59).

⁹¹ Pelling (2005), 338–9 n. 49, cited by Duff (2010), 78 n. 116.

⁹² Duff (2010), 65, 68, 70.

⁹³ Duff (1999), 254; (2011a), 268–70.

⁹⁴ Pelling (1973).

behind him the story that he ascended to the gods. Roxane, though, deflates his divine aspirations and the whole divine register. If Zonaras' fragment preserves a part of the ending of the *Alexander*, then, as Pelling observes, there is some implicit comparison with the end of the *Caesar* (69.2–14), where death and the relation between the supernatural and the human—a recurrent theme in both *Lives*—are in the air again.⁹⁵

It is worth citing in full Pelling's conclusion:

It may even be that the final intrusion of the supernatural is a sort of commentary on the whole pair . . . We can surely be content to leave the end as it is, open and thought-provoking. This is certainly a case where we find a new perspective and a new set of reflections, an exception to Plutarch's usual preference for avoiding such terminal redirection. There is a sense of rest as well, with the posthumous vengeance and the concluding death, but it is still rare to have so arresting a new perspective so close to the end. Again, this is not the usual closing rhythm; again, a closing formal *synkrisis* could not have fulfilled its usual role; again, the implicit comparison with *Alexander* could have struck Plutarch as enough, and not to be compromised by a lamer, formal equivalent (Pelling (1997c), 250 [= repr. (2002a), 381–2]).⁹⁶

⁹⁵ Pelling (1997c), 245–50 [= repr. (2002a), 378–82]; Duff (1999), 255.

⁹⁶ Pelling (2006b), 265–9; (2011a), 32–3 makes another suggestion, based on the generic proximity of biography and historiography. He associates Appian's *Synkrisis* of Alexander and Caesar at the end of the second book of the *Civil Wars* (2.149.619–154.649) with the Plutarchan comparative epilogues, although, as he acknowledges, Appian stresses the similarities (cf. Plutarch's proemial comparisons) rather than the differences between the two men. Pelling argues that in the case of Caesar and Alexander history and biography may have come so close to each other that Plutarch's biographical work follows the practice of standard histories and does not include a *Synkrisis*, while Appian accommodates what is normally found in Plutarch's biographical book—compare also our earlier discussion of the proximity of the *Alexander–Caesar* prologue to the historical prologues (§2.1.2). Cf. Duff (1999), 254 n. 43, who notes that the parallelism between Alexander and Caesar was widespread and not exclusive to Plutarch. He also suggests that it is equally possible that Appian was influenced by a lost Plutarchan *Synkrisis* or that he tried to fill in the Plutarchan 'gap'.

True, the endings of the *Caesar*, the *Camillus*, the *Marius*, and the *Cato Minor* are open and intriguing, but, as we saw in the previous chapter, the endings of the second *Lives*, which are followed by a comparative epilogue, are not very different. Most often, they encourage the readers to address questions that matter to both subjects of the *Lives* and challenge a straightforward moral verdict on them. In most cases, these questions are neither new nor unexpected, although there are instances, such as at the end of the *Crassus*, where a new set of reflections may be raised. The Euripidean allusions there, as we saw, presses us to juxtapose Crassus' 'individual drama' with the Athenians' 'communal' one, and take a new strand of thought about the Sicilian and the Parthian disasters that bears more emphasis on the contrast between Nicias' wisdom and the limited insight of Crassus and the Athenians. The *Synkrisis* to the *Nicias–Crassus* picks up and continues this sort of reflection,⁹⁷ but the closing chapters of the *Crassus* certainly contribute to paving the way. The striking ending of the second *Lives*, therefore, did not prevent Plutarch from concluding his books with thought-provoking comparative epilogues. Rather, thought-provoking endings help a neat transition to thought-provoking *Synkrisis*.

The *Synkrisis* thus may indeed have been lost in some or all of these cases; but it is not implausible, as Duff argues, that Plutarch may have chosen to vary the usual structure of a book (as he often does) by not writing a comparative epilogue.⁹⁸ Possibly, Plutarch expects (or at least aspires) that his readers, who (as we saw throughout this study) are assumed to be familiar with the rest of his biographical oeuvre, will work harder to meet the 'need' for a comparative completion and independently supply their own final *Synkrisis*. The 'gap', in other words, may be not detrimental to the readers' moral enquiry but function as an invitation to them to fill it

⁹⁷ Cf. above, §4.3.2

⁹⁸ Duff (2011a), 259.

alone through a subtle discerning reasoning (cf. *Phoc.* 3.9)⁹⁹—a rather challenging sort of moralising which cast high demands on the readers.

This chapter corroborates the earlier findings of our study. At the end of the book—whether this end is the *Synkrisis* or the closing chapters of the second *Life*—Plutarch requires an especially vigorous, committed sort of reader response that is fundamental to all of the parts of the book, with any differences lying in the degree of explicit or implicit moral involvement that some of the parts, especially the prologues and the *Synkriseis*, favour. He also reinforces the need for provisionality of an overall concluding statement and the alertness to the likelihood of discordant moral judgements, which the book as a whole has suggested.

This bears some significant assumptions, which will become apparent in the next concluding chapter, about Plutarch's conception of how to write a morally edifying historical narrative as well as how to be attentive and perceptive in reading about and judging the past. Plutarch's criticisms in the essay *On the malice of Herodotus* offer us a perspective in which to (re)view Plutarch's narrative technique in the *Lives* at the same time as they allow us to deepen our characterisation of Plutarch and his ideal sophisticated reader.

⁹⁹ *Phoc.* 3.9: ὥστε λεπτοῦ πάνυ λόγου δεῖσθαι καθάπερ ὀργάνου πρὸς διάκρισιν καὶ ἀνεύρεσιν τῶν διαφερόντων.

6.

Conclusion:

On the Malice of Plutarch?

In the opening chapters of the essay *On the malice of Herodotus*, Plutarch states his purpose in writing this work. He says that he wants to defend his ancestors and the truth from the many lies and fabrications in Herodotus' *Histories* by uncovering the real viciousness of Herodotus' character (κακοήθεια), which is skilfully veiled in the grace and charm of his narrative style (854e–855a). For this reason, Plutarch lists eight signs by which a malicious historian and a morally unsatisfactory narrative can be recognised (855b–856d): (1) a preference for the severest words when milder ones are available; (2) the inclusion of material that is discreditable and irrelevant to the story; (3) the omission of what is good and noble; (4) a preference for the worst version of an action when more alternatives are current; (5) a preference for, or even invention of, the less creditable explanation; (6) the ascription of success to luck or money and not to intelligence or valour; (7) indirect attack by reporting a slander and then denying it; (8) a mixture of blame with some praise in order to make blame believable.

Plutarch's proneness to moral generosity in the *Malice* is consistent with critics' conception in antiquity of the task of the virtuous historiographer, who must avoid extreme criticism and the criticism of virtuous men,¹ as well as the *persona* of sympathy and moderation that Plutarch displays in the *Lives* (a point I emphasised in

¹ e.g. Polyb. 2.61; 12.15.9; Cic. *Fam.* 5.12; Dion. Hal. *Pomp.* 3–6; *P Oxy.* LXXI 4808. See Luce (1989); Gray (1990); Fox (1993); Duff (1999), 56–9; Chrysanthou (2015); Marincola (2015b).

particular in chapter two of this study). In the *Life of Dion*, Plutarch recommends that historians should neither praise the conduct of Philistus nor dwell insultingly upon his misfortunes (36.4), while in the *Life of Pericles*, he warns his readers against the dangers that lie in the writings of historians who were contemporary to the events narrated. ‘The research of their contemporaries’, Plutarch says, ‘into men’s deeds and lives, partly because of envy and hatred, partly because of favour and flattery, defiles and distorts the truth’ (13.16).²

Despite this problem, however, Plutarch’s *Pericles* abounds with references to contemporary witnesses (examined in detail in chapter three), many of whom are extremely critical of Pericles’ conduct. It is true that Plutarch does not accept them—he disregards, for instance the slanders of Ion (5.3) and Stesimbrotus of Thasus (13.16). But, according to his theory in the *Malice*, this practice constitutes a contemptible sign of covert attack that exposes the historian to accusations of malice (κακοήθεια) and baseness (ἀνελευθερία) (856c).

Our final chapter will examine how far the techniques analysed in the earlier chapters escape and how far they are vulnerable to the criticisms that Plutarch makes of Herodotus in the essay. The analysis will bring together the main strands of the foregoing discussion so as to further illuminate Plutarch’s narrative technique in the *Lives* of engaging his readers with the most elusive varieties of moral judgement.³

² On the historian’s impartiality, cf. Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 8; 41; Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 7; 13; 39–41; 61; 63; on flattery or envy in particular, cf. Dion. Hal. *Thuc.* 8; Lucian *Hist. conscr.* 7; 10; 12–13; 63. I owe these references to Fox (2001), 79 with nn. 20–3 and 81 with nn. 32–3. See also Avenarius (1956), 49–54; Homeyer (1967), 183–4; Luce (1989); Marincola (1997), 158–74 for further examples.

³ The (in)consistency of Plutarch’s attitude between the *Malice* and the *Lives* has been the subject of numerous studies, e.g. Theander (1951), 32–7; Wardman (1974), 189–96; Pelling (1990a), 32–5 [= repr. (2002a), 150–2]; (2007); Dognini (2007), 481–2, 495–7; Marincola (2015a); (2016). None have

6.1 'MALICE' IN THE *LIVES*

Plutarch, in keeping with his theory in the *Malice*, often prefers to include in a biography the most creditable version of the actions, motives, and intentions of his protagonist. Although in the *Pericles*, for example, it is implied that Cimon played the demagogue (9.2), in the *Cimon*, Cimon's Laconism defends him against any accusation of demagogic flattery (10.8).⁴ Although in the *Pericles*, Cimon is ostracised on the charge that he was 'a lover of Sparta and hater of the people' (9.5: ὡς φιλολάκωνα καὶ μισόδημον), in the *Cimon* there is nothing of the *misodēmos* charge (17.3),⁵ despite some hints at the popular aversion to Cimon (15.3). A story, moreover, which some people tell (ἔνιοι δέ φασιν), about some secret plotting between Cimon and Pericles is cited in the *Pericles* (10.5),⁶ but not in the *Cimon*, where Plutarch places weight on the moderate political atmosphere and the predominance of public concern in Athens (17.9).

There is a fundamental discrepancy between Plutarch's portrayal of Cimon in the *Pericles* and the *Cimon*. As Philip Stadter rightly puts it, in the *Pericles* Cimon functions as a foil for Pericles.⁷ His less creditable portrayal is part of Plutarch's presentation of Pericles' political activity, as we saw in chapter three. It makes Pericles' decision to embark on a policy of pleasing the people more understandable—Pericles has to outmatch a demagogue in order to survive

considered, however, the principles of historical criticism systematically in relation to Plutarch's narrative technique in the *Lives*.

⁴ Stadter (1989), xlix–l, 114.

⁵ Stadter (1989), l, 121; Alexiou (2007), 60–1.

⁶ Stadter (1989), l.

⁷ Stadter (1989), xlix.

politically—and implants in our mind a sharper realisation of Pericles’ success with the *dēmos*. Pericles appears in his *Life* to have gained so much power over the people that he outstrips Cimon as *misodēmos* (9.5); and he is so much attuned to the psychology of the Athenians (cf. 10.4: αἰσθόμενος) that he recalls his political rival from exile, possibly after making a secret agreement with him, as a response to the Athenians’ change of mind (cf. 10.4: χαρίσασθαι τοῖς πολλοῖς). In the *Cimon*, on the contrary, Plutarch keeps closely to what his theory in the *Malice* should demand and does not include such unsavoury material about Cimon. Rather, he shapes his narrative in a way that (as in the *Pericles*) helps his readers to reach a coherent view of the virtuous character of his protagonist.

The same ethical principle applies in Cimon’s paired *Life of Lucullus*. In the *Lucullus*, Plutarch does not mention that Lucullus causes the hatred of his soldiers by leaving unburied the bodies of those who, led by Triarius, died in the combat with Mithridates (35.1–2)—a detail found in the *Life of Pompey* (39.2). In the *Lucullus*, instead, Lucullus appears to protect Triarius from the soldiers, who are infuriated with Triarius (35.3). This emphasis links nicely with the following reference to the mutiny of the Fimbrians and the humiliation that Lucullus suffers at the hands of his soldiers (35.4–9). Moreover, Lucullus’ wrangling with Pompey is stronger in the *Pompey* than in the *Lucullus*. There is no reference in the *Lucullus* to the accusations that Pompey and Lucullus thrust against each other (cf. *Pomp.* 31.8; 31.10–3).⁸ Plutarch, rather, dwells on the onlookers’ sympathy for Lucullus (36.1; cf. 35.9) and explicitly expresses his own opinion that ‘Lucullus’ achievements adorned Pompey’s command’ (36.4)—a point that in the *Pompey* is aired in the responses of the onlookers (cf. 31.6: ἔδοξεν) and Lucullus (31.11–3). Closely relevant is Plutarch’s

⁸ See Swain (1992a), 315.

account of the reasons for Lucullus' withdrawal from politics. While in the *Pompey* (48.7) and the *Cato Major* (24.11) it is old age that presses Lucullus to retire, Plutarch prefers to mention in the *Lucullus* that Lucullus withdrew from public life after he realised the malaise and uncontrolled state of Roman politics (38.2); an explanation that is at least blander, though in this case not necessarily so morally superior, for Plutarch's ideal statesman is one who would feel the need to get involved and do something about the situation (cf. *Praec. Ger.* 823e–825f).

All these alternations are revealing of the subtlety of Plutarch's ethical and political analysis in each *Life*. In the *Pompey*, Lucullus is among the political rivals whom Pompey has to outdo. In the *Lucullus*, on the other hand, it matters that the soldiers are infuriated with their generals, that Lucullus suffers at their hands, that the onlookers sympathise with Lucullus, and that Lucullus grasps the intractable malady of Roman politics. It all matters, as we saw in chapter three, in sensitising the readers to the despair with which Lucullus takes the decision to retire and encourage them to challenge a moral judgement on Lucullus that *prima facie* seems wholly negative.

Alongside the despair-explanation, however, Plutarch cites another alternative that might be felt to be equally or even less unfavourable: as some claim (ὥς φασιν ἔνιοι) it is Lucullus' satiety with glory that led him to resort to an easy and relaxed lifestyle especially after so many struggles and labours ended unhappily (*Luc.* 38.2). It might be possible that Plutarch keeps some distance from this claim by attributing it to those unidentified 'others'.⁹ But, contrary to his warning in the *Malice*, he still includes it.

⁹ See Pauw (1980), 90–1; Stadter (1989), 320–1; Pelling (1992), 11 with 32 n. 4 [= repr. (2002a), 118 with 134 n. 4]; Duff (1999), 186 n. 106, although such citations do not (always) suggest 'distancing': Cook (2001); Pelling (2007), 159.

Indeed, there are several instances where Plutarch refers to the worst version of some action as well as the more discreditable explanation or intention. In the *Nicias*, after the news from Pylos reaches Athens, Cleon accuses Nicias of cowardice (δειλία) and weakness (μαλακία) (7.3)—Cleon’s attack in Thucydides is less blunt and personal (cf. 4.27.5: ‘if the generals were men’). Later on in Plutarch’s narrative, Nicias’ delay in Olympieum is deliberate and self-interested (16.7), reflecting a view of an excessive concern for self-preservation that is not present in Thucydides’ corresponding account (6.71), although Plutarch might have generalised it from Nicias’ speech in Thucydides, where Nicias declares his preference to die in Sicily rather than in Athens (7.48.4). In both Thucydides and Plutarch, Nicias refuses to accept Demosthenes’ proposal for withdrawal. Plutarch, however, leaves out the more strategically concerned argumentation of Nicias in Thucydides (7.48) and concentrates only on Nicias’ fear of the Athenians (22.2–3).¹⁰

There are similar retouches in the *Coriolanus*. Plutarch agrees with Dionysius of Halicarnassus—his principal source in this *Life*¹¹—that Coriolanus remains undaunted and proud after his trial. But, while Dionysius stresses the nobility and resolution of Coriolanus’ character (*Ant. Rom.* 7.67.2), Plutarch expands upon Coriolanus’ rage and deep resentment (21.1).¹² As to Coriolanus’ reception by the Romans, Plutarch mentions that they were unwilling to elect Coriolanus as their consul because of fear, resentment, and envy (15.2–3). Dionysius, on the contrary, focuses merely on their caution and fear (*Ant. Rom.* 7.21.2). Moreover, Dionysius offers two reasons for why the Senate opposed a popular proposal for Coriolanus’

¹⁰ Cf. above, ch. 3, p. 117 with n. 76.

¹¹ Russell (1963), 21 [= repr. (1995), 357–8].

¹² Russell (1963), 27–8 [= repr. (1995), 370–1]; Pelling (1997d), 21 [= repr. (2002a), 399].

recall (*Ant. Rom.* 8.21.5): they tried to test the sentiment of the people and by their own reluctance to obey them to arouse them to a greater zeal for Coriolanus; or they wanted to absolve themselves of any responsibility for Coriolanus' acts. Plutarch suggests three different reasons, all less favourable, focused on passions and emotions rather than policy (29.4): they were contentious and tended to oppose everything the commons proposed; or they did not want Coriolanus to owe his return to the kindness of the commons; or they were angry at Coriolanus because he had injured all of the city alike and not only those who had wronged him.¹³

We can see that in both the *Nicias* and the *Coriolanus* Plutarch prefers to build up a psychological and emotional profile of the subjects of the *Lives*, which favours negative readings of explanations and motives. The effect of Plutarch's choice, however, is so far from deriving pleasure from speaking ill of Nicias or Coriolanus in the way that the *Malice* would stigmatise as *kakoethes*. Rather, it displays and invites the readers to engage with the mind of historical agents, that background of motives, thoughts, and feelings, against and within which they act. Nicias' hesitation and fear is emblematic of the decline in the Athenian leader as well as the Athenian city.¹⁴ Coriolanus' anger continually provokes, and is provoked by, the anger of the Romans. This 'intermental dialogue' between the individual and the collective is a favourable technique in the *Lives*, as we considered at length in chapter three, which invites empathy from the readers and dissuades them from quickly moralising judgements, for it induces a special kind of immersive response, drawing the readers to get inside

¹³ Cf. Russell (1963), 26–7 [= (1995), 369], but NB qualifications in Pelling (1997d), 26–7 with n. 32 [= repr. (2002a), 403, 411 n. 41].

¹⁴ See above, §3.2.2.

the skin of historical agents and work actively to figure out how and why they acted (and finally failed) as they did.

Most commonly, Plutarch fills up the *Synkriseis* with the less creditable versions of events and explanations of actions. Timothy Duff, in particular, has remarked extensively upon Plutarch's tendency in the *Synkriseis* to favour a more negative interpretation of deeds and motives, which presents a contrast with more positive threads that the readers have already heard in or assumed from the preceding *Lives* or the prologue.¹⁵ Although the narrative of the *Brutus*, for example, raises no doubts about Brutus' high morals, and also leaves the impression of divine support for Caesar's murder, the *Synkrisis* to the *Dion–Brutus* allows the alternative that the tyrannicide was not a good thing to do (2).¹⁶ Although the narrative of the *Demetrius* suggests that Demetrius was acting in self-defence in killing Alexander (36), the *Synkrisis* to the *Demetrius–Antony* mentions that many say (πολλοὶ λέγουσι) that Demetrius made up false charges against Alexander and murdered him (5.4).¹⁷ In the *Synkriseis*, as we examined in detail in chapter five, readers are prompted (often explicitly) to grapple with incongruities, weigh up conflicting strands, and keep their eyes open (up to the end of the book) to the complex and elusive character of moralising judgement. Harsh criticism and less favourable slants, as Duff observes and as we saw further in chapter five, work in particular to destabilise straightforward moral assumptions and re-question a concluding and conclusive moral verdict.¹⁸

¹⁵ Duff (1999), 257–62.

¹⁶ See above, §5.3.

¹⁷ Pelling (1988a), 20; Duff (1999), 280. See Duff (1999), 263–83 for further examples.

¹⁸ Duff (1999), 249–86.

Plutarch's method of giving his readers the role of judge between alternative (or multiple) accounts is not exclusive to the *Synkriseis*. In the *Pericles*, Plutarch points his readers to a variety of alternative explanations for Pericles' decision not to revoke the Megarian decree: (i) some say (οἱ μὲν . . . φασίν) that Pericles was a lofty spirit and acted with a clear perception of the best interests of the city, considering the order as a test of the Athenians' submissiveness and the decision to obey as a confession of their weakness (31.1);¹⁹ (ii) others (οἱ δέ) say that he condemned the Spartans out of arrogance and a love of victory in order to display his power (31.1); (iii) the worst charge of all (ἡ δὲ χειρόστη μὲν αἰτία πασῶν), but the one which has the most witnesses (ἔχουσα δὲ πλείστους μάρτυρας), as Plutarch puts it, was that Pericles and his friends were under attack, Pericles feared a trial and so inflamed the war in order to re-establish his power (31.2–32.6).

In the *Malice*, Plutarch ascribes this last 'worst charge' to the comic poets whom he considers malicious and uncharitable because of their preference for the worst explanation (855f–856a). Plutarch suggests in the *Malice* that when the events or the cause or the intention of a deed are not clear, then the more creditable account and explanation should be preferred (855f). In the *Pericles*, Plutarch discredits the last charge as 'the worst' (although he gives it the most space and admits that it has the most witnesses), but leaves the question of Pericles' motivation open, saying that 'the truth (τὸ δ' ἀληθές) is unclear (ἄδηλον)' (32.6).²⁰ Rather than being a mark of malice, however, as Plutarch supposed in the *Malice*, these unresolved alternatives may help readers to reach a more profound understanding of moral evaluation.

¹⁹ I paraphrase Loeb here.

²⁰ Cf. *Cato Maj.* 5.7: ταῦτα μὲν οὖν εἴτε μεγαλοψυχίας εἴτε μικρολογίας θετέον, ἔξεστι τῷ πείθοντι χρῆσθαι λογισμῷ.

Plutarch sets before them a multiple skein of possible intentions and invites them to notice and examine a range of possibilities as to what was motivating Pericles at the time. It is true that the wider narrative of the *Pericles* has given a clear guide as to which explanation is the least likely to be true, and hence the readers are in this case guided fairly firmly; but, there can still be great value in making that verdict the readers' own work, for the process of judging turns out to be more engaging and 'philosophical' for them—one may compare Plutarch's thesis in his essay *On the first cold*: 'it is more philosophical (φιλοσοφώτερον) to suspend judgement when the truth is obscure than to take sides' (955c).²¹

Frequently, however, Plutarch does not suspend judgement, but openly takes sides, particularly against his sources. In the *Aristides*, he discredits Craterus' mention of Aristides' condemnation for bribery (26). In the *Alcibiades*, he rejects Antiphon's accusations of Alcibiades (3). In the *Pericles* he disqualifies the calumnies that Ion (5.3), Idomeneus (10.7), the comic poets, Stesimbrotus of Thasus (13.15–6), and Duris of Samos (28.2–3) heap upon Pericles. In the *Malice*, Plutarch blames those who cast a slanderous report and then withdraw it by saying that they do not believe the charges that they certainly (as Plutarch emphasises) want their readers to believe (856c). Why, then, does Plutarch include in the *Lives* such blunt criticisms that he neither believes nor accepts?

His practice maps directly onto the reality of various judgements that may appear when an action is viewed from different perspectives. Readers are primed to observe and consider a multiplicity of possible judgements. Plutarch's language invites readers' active engagement: 'let *us* leave (ἐώμεν) Ion's claim' (*Per.* 5.3); 'how could *one* trust Idomeneus . . . (πῶς ἂν οὖν τις Ἰδομενεῖ . . . πιστεύσειε)?'

²¹ Cf. Stadter (1989), 305.

(*Per.* 10.7); ‘and why should *anyone* be surprised (καὶ τί ἄν τις . . . θαυμάσειεν) about the accusations of the comic poets . . . ?’ (*Per.* 13.16); ‘but *perhaps* (ἴσως) it is not worthy to give credit to these [i.e. Antiphon’s accusations]’ (*Alc.* 3.2). One may again notice here the rhetoric of diffidence that Plutarch employs (as we saw earlier in chapters two and five) in the prologues and the *Synkriseis*. Although Plutarch clearly guides readers towards favouring a positive reading of his characters, he tries not to intimidate them—he is the author of the *On inoffensive self-praise* and he knows well how not to appear imposing and oppressive. He still poses questions to his readers and suggests alternative trains of thought that might be *possible* (‘perhaps it is not worthy to give credit . . .’) for them to follow or not. In any case, the alertness to and acknowledgement of contrary verdicts work to broaden the readers’ moral perspective and train their faculty of judgement.²² This is one way in which ‘rejected criticism’ seems intended to work (as we examined especially in chapters three and five).

Another way may be that Plutarch’s stance provides readers with an example of how to be alert to conflicting strands as well as how to be sceptical about counter-perspectives of different people, and across different periods. Craterus should be rejected, according to Plutarch, for he ‘furnished no documentary proof, no judgment of the court, no decree of indictment, although he is wont to record such things with all due fullness, and to adduce his authorities’ (*Arist.* 26.4). Antiphon’s accusations should possibly be disbelieved, as Plutarch warns, for they come from a man who ‘admits that he hated Alcibiades, and abused him accordingly’ (*Alc.* 3.2). Plutarch’s circumspection is important for establishing his own authority as the person who has already exercised such fair-minded criticism and therefore invites trust—more trust than those malicious predecessors—and who can now furnish the readers with a

²² See also Duff (2011b), 66–7, 71–2, 79.

model of how to work critically themselves with the sources and be on their guard against unreliable or mean-spirited criticism.

This is particularly significant when criticism reflects and encapsulates contemporary (to the story narrated) opinion about the protagonists of the *Lives*, such as in the case of Antiphon in the *Alcibiades* or Ion, the comic poets, and Stesimbrotus of Thasus in the *Pericles*. A rejected possibility may serve to convey the disagreement that a figure such as Alcibiades stimulates—a consequence in itself of his multifarious character.²³ Alternatively, it may illuminate the antagonism and attacks that a man like Pericles has to sustain and have an effect of counter-suggestibility, enhancing his qualities—especially the fact that Pericles constantly dealt with such captious criticism so magisterially—through demonstrating the difficulties involved. Thus Plutarch attunes readers to the likelihood that criticism may be deflected, overturned, or qualified by more positive things, and that moral judgement may not be easily reducible to a black-and-white polarising—a version of Plutarch’s practice of mixing blame with praise, which, although rejected in the *Malice* (856c–d), is extensively employed in the *Lives*.²⁴

As well as Plutarch, several individuals within the *Lives* demonstrate this potential of qualifying blame and turning it into a more profound reflection on morality and virtuous character. Pericles, for instance, and (to some extent) Fabius, as we saw earlier in our analysis of the two *Lives*, are capable of challenging successfully the malicious criticism of their audiences—Pericles is most expert in employing ‘the healing value of sharp criticism’ (*Per.* 15.1)²⁵—and guiding them

²³ See also Gribble (1999), 269; Duff (1999), 231–2.

²⁴ e.g. *Pel.* 2.10–12; *Cor.* 1.4; *Alc.* 16; *Demetr.-Ant.* 6.3–4.

²⁵ Stadter (1989), 190 for the phrase.

towards a deeper understanding of virtue.²⁶ Similarly, the Athenians at the end of the *Pericles*, the *Nicias*, and the *Cimon* or the Romans at the end of the *Fabius* and the *Lucullus* come to qualify their earlier harsh criticisms by turning their attention to the virtuous character of their leaders (as examined at length in chapter three). All of these figures work in parallel with Plutarch and encourage readers to do it vis-à-vis Plutarch too. Readers may exercise the same sort of critique, but an increasingly positive critique, on Plutarch himself as a writer—in chapter two we saw that the readers are assumed to be uneasy about and (and in some cases) critical of Plutarch and his narrative—and on the types of criticisms of others that Plutarch has included in his text (for example, they should not have been so quick to believe Antiphon and criticise Alcibiades).

Plutarch's principles of historical criticism in the *Malice*, as we can see, allow us a point of entry into Plutarch's praise-and-blame rhetoric in the *Lives*, a significant aspect of which is how Plutarch's blame-filled account may invite readers to observe and think about the complexities surrounding moralising judgements. If the *Malice* helps us to explicate Plutarch's narrative and moralising method in the *Lives*, is it too much to look at this the other way round and wonder whether Plutarch's stricture in the *Malice* may arouse a similar sort of engaged and cross-grained reader, who listens to Plutarch's judgements but is not necessarily ready to accept them *tout court*?

²⁶ See above, §3.2.4.

6.2 THE BEETLE IN THE ROSE

The *Malice* points to a judicial setting. As William Seavey observes, the structure of the work and the presence of legal technical language (863a), the appeals to witnesses (860c; 861c) and the use of *eikos*-reasoning (870d; 871a), the apostrophes to Herodotus (861f; 862f–863a; 873b) as well as the verbal abuse and tendentious arguments that prevail throughout, all suit forensic rhetoric.²⁷ Readers are accordingly meant to be in a position resembling that of jurors in a courtroom, who actively engage with the issues raised in a bid to judge. Plutarch directly addresses readers to turn their attention to Herodotus' malice—'notice (ὄρα) how [sc. Herodotus] maltreated Othryadas' (858c); 'examine (σκόπει) what reputation he [i.e. Adeimantus] had' (870f); 'listen (ἄκουσον) to his [i.e. Herodotus'] persuasive explanation' (871e)—but it is hard to think that readers will not have considered in their minds the opposite argument too. Most of them will have already been familiar with training in rhetorical schools—'the "mental acrobatics" required by the [school] exercise developed . . . an almost unfailing precision in analyzing the pros and cons of cases'²⁸—and with texts that introduce an agonistic framework, prompting them to weigh critically contrasting arguments and make a balanced judgement for

²⁷ Seavey (1991), with further examples *passim*. Cf. Russell (1973), 60, arguing that the *Malice* is 'a kind of scholarly *controversia*'. Bowen (1992), 4 acknowledges that 'a semiforensic air' exists in the whole work. Palerm (2000) discusses the rhetorical aspect of the *Malice* and relates it to *psogos* ('un ejercicio epidíctico de vituperio' (398)). Marincola (1994), esp. 194–200 stresses that rhetorical criticism is appropriate in historiographical polemic—cf. Homeyer (1967), 187; Hershbell (1993), 158–9—and argues that the *Malice* is a historiographical and ethical essay (192–3). See also Marincola (2015b), 89–90.

²⁸ Cribiore (2001), 223, as cited by Konstan (2006), 13.

themselves—*agōnes* in tragedy, philosophical dialogues, paired speeches in historiography, Greek and Roman declamations.²⁹

Readers, moreover, come to Plutarch's essay with their own experience and knowledge of Herodotus' *Histories*. It is not completely implausible that they are already familiar with (some of) the rest of Plutarch's literary oeuvre as well; they may be aware, for example, of Plutarch's humanity in general and towards Herodotus in particular (in the *Lives* or the Epicurus essay).³⁰ Thus Plutarch's unusual invective and subsequent distortions and provocative interpretations of Herodotus' narrative may shock them into reconsidering and re-evaluating all the more profoundly Herodotus' character and narrative method. Readers might well wonder about whether and to what extent they may identify themselves with those unwitting readers of Herodotus, who, as Plutarch says, have been deceived (854e) and beguiled (874b) by the charm and grace of the *Histories*.

Elsewhere in the *Moralia*, Plutarch uses arguments that may seem to his readers to be one-sided, but there one can argue that this was done deliberately in

²⁹ Duff (2011b), 78. See also Rutherford (1989), 127; Konstan (2006), 13–16. See also above, ch.1, pp. 19–20.

³⁰ *Non Posse* 1093b–c. See Pelling (2007), 155–62. On Plutarch's varied approach to Herodotus in the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, see also Theander (1951), 45–8; Lachenaud in Cuvigny and Lachenaud (1981), 118–20; Hershbell (1993); Dognini (2007), 481–2, 495–502. On the chronology of the Epicurus essay and the *Malice*, see Pelling (2007), 157 n. 41 with a detailed bibliography cited there: '*Malice* probably belongs to the period when the *Lives* were being composed . . . i.e. over a substantial period after 96 . . . not long before his death. The Epicurus essay seems to belong closely with *Against Colotes* (cf. 1086 C–D), and that work can very tentatively be dated to around 98–9 . . . But none of this is altogether secure'.

order to raise questions and prompt reflection.³¹ In the *On the fortune or virtue of Alexander*, for example, Plutarch makes the extreme argument that Alexander's success was the result of his virtue only and that Alexander was 'a philosopher in arms'. As Timothy Duff puts it, 'The *De Al. Magn. fort.* is surely not intended to be taken as a reasoned statement of Plutarch's own views, but as a rhetorical *tour de force*, demonstrating how one might make the case, and do it well, for this extreme position'. Duff emphasises that readers are meant to consider in their own minds the opposite case too: 'The position of the reader is once again as a judge of the arguments presented: not passive, but actively engaging with and weighing the arguments'.³²

In the *Malice*, Plutarch may be similarly working within the rhetorical agonistic framework of the essay, making an extreme case against Herodotus and casting his readers as thoughtful judges. The *Malice*, I would suggest, works to elicit a similar sort of attentive and acute reader response as the *Lives* to historical narrative, and to similar effects. Just as in the *Lives* readers are accustomed, and trained throughout the biographical book, to listen critically to opposed moral verdicts through their own moral inquiry into Plutarch's account (as we saw above), so in the *Malice* they are primed not only to listen to Plutarch's criticisms, but also to reflect perspicaciously on them through their individual (re)engagement with and interrogation of Herodotus' *Histories*. The ultimate effect is that readers may arrive at a more profound understanding of the character and narrative method of Plutarch and Herodotus; and they may reach a reasonably comprehensive view of the true nature and purpose of their narratives, one which equips them to appreciate properly, and

³¹ Duff (1999), 245–8; (2011b), 79–80 with nn. 53–4.

³² Duff (2011b), 79.

form the right judgement on, the great men of history and the great historians too. In this work, as in the *Lives* as a whole, Plutarch' rose might win over the beetle in the end.

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