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PLUTARCH

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THE RISE AND FALL OF ATHENS

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PLUTARCH was one of the last of the classical Greek historians. He was born in about CE 45 at Chaeronea in Boeotia, where he later had a school, and in middle age he took up a priesthood at nearby Delphi.

When Nero visited Greece in CE 66, Plutarch was a student at Athens. He became a philosopher, a man capable of lecturing on and discussing many learned topics, and wrote a large number of essays and dialogues on philosophical, scientific and literary subjects (the *Moralia*). He adopted the philosophical standpoint of a Platonist, and frequently attacked both Stoics and Epicureans. He wrote his historical works somewhat late in life, and his *Parallel Lives* of eminent Greeks and Romans is probably his best-known and most influential work (their translation by North was used by Shakespeare as a source for his Roman plays).

Plutarch travelled in Egypt and also went to Rome, where he had many distinguished friends. The Emperor Hadrian honoured him with a government appointment in Greece, yet he always remained strongly attached to his native Chaeronea. His death probably occurred some years after CE 120.

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IAN SCOTT-KILVERT was Director of English Literature at the British Council and editor of *Writers and Their Works*. He also translated Plutarch's *Makers of Rome: Nine Lives* and *The Age of Alexander* and Cassius Dio's *The Roman History* for Penguin Classics. He died in 1989.

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PLUTARCH

The Rise and Fall of Athens: Nine Greek Lives

Theseus · *Solon* · *Themistocles* · *Aristides* · *Cimon* · *Pericles* · *Nicias* · *Alcibiades* · *Lysander* · With excerpts from *On the Malice of Herodotus*

Revised Edition

Translated by
IAN SCOTT-KILVERT *and* JOHN MARINCOLA

Introduction and Notes by
JOHN MARINCOLA

With Series Preface by
CHRISTOPHER PELLING

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Penguin Plutarch

The first Penguin translation of Plutarch appeared in 1958, with Rex Warner's version of six Roman *Lives* appearing as *Fall of the Roman Republic*. Other volumes followed steadily, three of them by Ian Scott-Kilvert (*The Rise and Fall of Athens* in 1960, *Makers of Rome* in 1965 and *The Age of Alexander* in 1973), and then Richard Talbert's *Plutarch on Sparta* in 1988. Several of the moral essays were also translated by Robin Waterfield in 1992. Only fourteen of the forty-eight *Lives* remained, and these have all now been included in the new edition which the present volume now completes. The earlier volumes in the series are a revised version of Talbert's *Plutarch on Sparta* (2005), then *Fall of the Roman Republic* (revised by Robin Seager, 2005), *Rome in Crisis* (revised by Christopher Pelling, 2010), *The Age of Alexander* (revised by Timothy Duff, 2012) and *The Rise of Rome* (revised by Jeffrey Tatum and Christopher Pelling, 2013).

This has also been an opportunity to divide up the *Lives* in a different way – but it is not straightforward to decide what that different way should be. Nearly all of Plutarch's surviving biographies were written in pairs as *Parallel Lives*: thus a 'book' for Plutarch was not just *Theseus* or *Caesar* but *Theseus and Romulus* or *Alexander and Caesar*. Most, but not all, of those pairs have a brief epilogue at the end of the second *Life* comparing the two heroes, just as many have a prologue before the first *Life* giving some initial grounds for the comparison. Not much attention was paid to this comparative technique at the time when the Penguin series started to appear, and it seemed natural then to separate each *Life* from its pair and organize the volumes by

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period and city. The comparative epilogues were not included in the translations at all.

That now looks very unsatisfactory. The comparative technique has come to be seen as basic to Plutarch's strategy, underlying not only those brief epilogues but also the entire pairings. (It is true, though, that in the last few years scholars have become increasingly alert to the way that *all* the *Lives*, not just the pairs, are crafted to complement one another.) It was very tempting to keep the pairings in this new edition in a way that would respect Plutarch's own authorial intentions.

After some agonizing, we decided nevertheless to keep to something like the original strategy of the series, though with some refinement. The reason is a practical one. Many, perhaps most, readers of Plutarch will be reading him to see what he has to say about a particular period, and will wish to compare his treatment of the major players to see how the different parts of his historical jigsaw fit together. If one kept the pairings, that would inevitably mean buying several different volumes of the series; and if, say, one organized those volumes by the Greek partner (so that, for instance, *Pericles–Fabius Maximus, Nicias–Crassus* and *Coriolanus–Alcibiades* made one volume), anyone primarily interested in the Roman *Lives* of the late Republic would probably need to buy the whole set. That is no way to guarantee these finely crafted works of art the wide reading that they deserve. Keeping the organization by period also allows some other works of Plutarch to be included along with the Lives themselves, for instance excerpts from the fascinating essay *On the Malice of Herodotus* along with the *Lives* of Themistocles and Aristides in the present volume and (as before) several Spartan essays along with the Spartan *Lives*.

Of course, the comparative epilogues must now be included, and they have now been translated and printed along with the second *Life* of each pair, just as the prologues are conventionally printed before the first Life. (This affects only the *Comparison of Coriolanus and Alcibiades* in the present volume, as the second *Life* is usually the Roman one.) Each volume now also includes more extended introductions to each *Life*, which draw attention to the importance of the comparison as well as other features of

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Plutarch's technique. This is a compromise, and an uncomfortable one; but it still seems the better way.

The volumes have, however, sorted the *Lives* into more logical groups. The early Roman figures are now grouped together in a single volume entitled *The Rise of Rome*; the *Life* of Agesilaus migrates from *The Age of Alexander* to join the rest of the Spartan *Lives*, and the *Life* of Artaxerxes joins the *Age of Alexander* collection; the rest of the new translations of Roman Lives join those of the Gracchi, Brutus and Antony in the new *Rome in Crisis* volume. The introductions and notes have been revised throughout.

In a bibliometric study (*Ancient Society* 28 (1997), 265–89), Walter Scheidel observed that the proportion of scholarly articles given to most classical authors had remained more or less constant since the 1920s. The one author to stand out for an exceptional rise was Plutarch. That professional pattern was matched by a similar surge in the interest in Plutarch shown by the general reading public. The original Penguin translations played a large part in fostering that interest, and this new, more comprehensive project will surely play a similar role in the future.

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Preface to the Revised Edition

This collection of *Lives* was first published in 1960. In preparing this new edition, I have revised Ian Scott-Kilvert's translation (for details see the Note on Translation and Transliteration), added the translation of the *Comparison of Coriolanus and Alcibiades* and included excerpts from the essay *On the Malice of Herodotus*. In addition, I have provided a General Introduction and an Introduction to each *Life*; and in place of the few notes in the original, I have tried to give fuller references throughout.

Because of the large number of sources that Plutarch cites throughout these *Lives*, I have thought it best to have a single list where the reader can find some basic information about them. Sources named in the *Lives* appear in SMALL CAPITALS and can be found in Appendix 3. I have also added some information on Attic months, tribes and coinage (Appendix 1) and added a chronology (Appendix 2) with references to Plutarch's treatment of the events. (A few events of importance not mentioned by Plutarch are also included.) I have throughout envisioned the audience for this volume as students beginning their study of Greek history as well as those who may be coming to Plutarch for the first time.

Occasionally I have offered direct quotations from certain of Plutarch's *Lives* not in this collection. In every case these quotations are taken from the other volumes of the Penguin Plutarch. In addition, translations from Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Aristotle and Pausanias are each taken from the relevant Penguin volume.

It is a pleasure to thank those who have helped me in this enterprise. First and foremost is Chris Pelling, who has been not only

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an inspirational scholar but a dear friend. Jeff Tatum offered useful advice and guidance on a number of issues. Fran Titchener most generously allowed me to see a version of her forthcoming commentary on the *Nicias* and also provided copies of several hard-to-find works on Plutarch with impressive speed. I am grateful also to David Sider, who allowed me to see his then-unpublished edition of Simonides' epigrams and elegies. I thank, too, the five graduate students with whom I read the *Themistocles*, *Pericles* and *Nicias* in summer 2016 and from whom I learned a great deal: Carson Bay, Mark Buzbee, Alex Lee, Jonathan Reeder and Alex Skufca. At Penguin I thank Jessica Harrison, who supported the project over many years and showed amazing patience in awaiting the final result. I am also very grateful to Robert Sharman, my copy editor, who improved the translation in many places and, with a keen eye, saved me from a host of errors. I thank as well Karl Whitney and Anna Wilson for their assistance in the final stages of preparing the volume for publication.

I would like to express my immense gratitude to Florida State University, which was my academic home for twenty years until my retirement, and which provided me with the support to work on this and many other projects. I am especially grateful to the staff of FSU's Robert M. Strozier Library, who over the years fulfilled countless requests for inter-library loan materials, and (more recently) provided digitized copies of material in their collection, a particular godsend when I was travelling. And their performance during the pandemic of 2020–21 was nothing short of heroic.

I completed this volume during Trinity Term 2022 as a visitor at St Hugh's College, Oxford, which generously provided me with access to both the college's and the university's incomparable facilities. I am grateful to Tim Rood and George Garnett for nominating me, and to the members of St Hugh's for their hospitality during my stay.

Last, but as far from least as you could imagine, I thank my wife, Laurel Fulkerson, who has been there from the beginning, and has never failed in her encouragement and support.

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J. M.

Note on Translation and Transliteration

I have revised Ian Scott-Kilvert's translation in a number of ways. I have modernized the language where appropriate, and tried to bring a bit more accuracy where I thought it was needed. I have corrected obvious errors and omissions (although there were not many of these). Perhaps the most important change, commented on by some of the other Penguin Plutarch editors, has been the elimination of certain types of transitions made by Scott-Kilvert throughout his translations. These most often took the form of adding at the beginning of a new paragraph some temporal or logical connection, such as 'then', 'thereafter', 'shortly before', 'so then' or the like. It is understandable why Scott-Kilvert introduced these, but they are not in the text of Plutarch, and they have the effect of disguising the structure of the *Life* by giving it a consistent linearity which it almost never possesses (see General Introduction §4). Indeed, part of Plutarch's art is the way he makes connections between topics. In addition, for those who use Plutarch as a historical source, such transitions can be seriously misleading.

The other major change in the translation has to do with formatting. As is well known, Plutarch offers thousands of quotations of earlier writers in both his *Lives* and *Moralia*, and these quotations are often set out in indented format, even when only a single line. This makes sense sometimes, for example, when Plutarch is citing a passage as a piece of evidence in his argument. But many of these short quotations do not serve this purpose, and so in these cases I have simply integrated the line into its larger context.

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Finally, this translation uses the Latinate forms of Greek

names and words: Pericles, Cimon, ostraca, etc. Some scholars try to transliterate Greek words and names in a way that reproduces the original Greek form more closely. Since a number of the references given in the notes follow this system, I list here the most important of the differences.

k for *c*: Perikles, Kimon, Nikias, Alkibiades, ostraka
ei for *i*: Aristeides
os for *us*: Pisistratos
ros for *er*: Lysandros

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Abbreviations

Ancient Authors: abbreviations for ancient authors follow the conventions in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary*. The most frequently cited ancient authors are abbreviated as follows:

AP = *Athenaiōn Politeia*, the *Constitution of Athens*, ascribed to Aristotle.
D. = Diodorus Siculus.
H. = Herodotus.
HO = *Hellenica Oxyrhynchia*, an anonymous history found at Oxyrhynchus in Egypt and surviving in a fragmentary state.
N. = Cornelius Nepos.
P. = Plutarch.
Paus. = Pausanius.
Str. = Strabo.
T. = Thucydides.
X. = Xenophon; references are to the *Hellenica* unless otherwise stated.

For abbreviations of Plutarch's *Lives* see List of Surviving *Lives*, p. lix; *On the Malice of Herodotus* is abbreviated as *Malice*.

Square brackets around an author's name indicate that, although the work is ascribed to that particular author, it is not thought to be genuine.

Modern Works: In the Notes, modern works cited only once have bibliographical details where they are cited; for regularly cited works I give the author and date according to the Bibliog-

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raphy at the end of the volume. For standard works and those most frequently cited the following abbreviations are used:

AE	R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972).
ANRW	W. Haase, ed., *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* (Berlin and New York, 1971–).
AO	R. Develin, *Athenian Officials 684–321 B.C.* (Cambridge, 1989).
APF	J. K. Davies, *Athenian Propertied Families, 600–300 B.C.* (Oxford, 1971).
Blamire	A. Blamire, *Plutarch: Life of Kimon* (London, 1989).
BNJ / BNJ^2	I. Worthington (ed.), *Brill's New Jacoby* and *Brill's New Jacoby*, 2nd edn (Leiden; both available online), a new version of *FGrHist* (below). Historians cited by number with the individual contributor's name in parentheses.
Brenk	F. E. Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled: Religious Themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives* (Leiden, 1977).
Burkert	W. Burkert, *Greek Religion* (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 1985).
Burn	A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks*, 2nd edn with postscript by D. M. Lewis (London, 1984).
CAAP	P. J. Rhodes, *A Commentary on the Aristotelian Athenaion Politeia* (Oxford 1981; repr. with addenda, 1993).
CAH^2	*The Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd edition (Cambridge, 1970–2005). The relevant volumes for this collection are III.3–VI.
CP	M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester, 2014).
CT	S. Hornblower, *A Commentary on Thucydides*, 3 vols (Oxford, 1991–2008).
D–K	H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Fragmente der Vorsokratiker*, 9th edn (Berlin, 1960).
Duff	T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford, 1999).

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F(F)	Fragment(s).
FGE	D. L. Page (ed.), *Further Greek Epigrams* (Cambridge, 1981).
FGrHist	F. Jacoby et al. (eds), *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (Berlin and Leiden, 1923–58; Leiden, 1994–). Historians are cited by their individual number, followed by T(estimonia) or F(ragment) number.
Fontenrose	J. Fontenrose, *The Delphic Oracle: Its Responses and Operations* (Berkeley, 1978).
Fornara	C. W. Fornara (ed.), *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War* (Translated Documents of Greece and Rome 1; 2nd edn, Cambridge, 1983). Cited by document number.
Frost	F. J. Frost, *Plutarch's Themistocles: A Historical Commentary* (Princeton, 1980).
Gantz	T. Gantz, *Early Greek Myth: A Guide to Literary and Artistic Sources* (Baltimore and London, 1993).
Guthrie	W. K. C. Guthrie, *A History of Greek Philosophy*, 6 vols (Cambridge, 1962–81).
HAC	C. Hignett, *A History of the Athenian Constitution* (Oxford, 1952).
HCT	A. W. Gomme, A. Andrewes and K. J. Dover, *A Historical Commentary on Thucydides*, 5 vols (Oxford, 1945–1981).
Hansen	M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles and Ideology* (Oxford, 1991).
Harding	P. Harding (eds), *From the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Battle of Ipsus* (Cambridge, 1985). Cited by document number.
IACP	M. H. Hansen and T. H. Nielsen (eds), *An Inventory of Archaic and Classical Poleis* (Oxford, 2004). Cited according to the number assigned to each settlement.
IEG^2	M. L. West (ed.), *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, 2nd edn, 2 vols (Oxford, 1989–92).

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KRS	G. S. Kirk, J. E. Raven and M. Schofield (eds), *The Presocratic Philosophers*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1983).
L–M	A. Laks and G. W. Most (eds), *Early Greek Philosophy*, 9 vols (Cambridge, Mass. and London, 2016).
L–R	D. F. Leão and P. J. Rhodes (eds), *The Laws of Solon* (London, 2015).
Lazenby	J. F. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece 490–479 B.C.* (Warminster, 1993).
LIMC	*Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae*, 8 vols in 16 parts (Zurich, 1981–97).
M–L	R. Meiggs and D. Lewis (eds), *A Selection of Greek Historical Inscriptions to the End of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1969; rev. edn, 1989). Cited by document number.
Marr	J. L. Marr (ed.), *Plutarch: Themistocles* (Warminster, 1998).
Muccioli	F. M. Muccioli and L. Ghilli (eds), *Plutarco: Lisandro Silla* (Milan, 2001). Notes to the *Lysander* are by Muccioli.
O–R	R. Osborne and P. J. Rhodes (eds), *Greek Historical Inscriptions 478–404 BC* (Oxford, 2017). Cited by document number.
OCD	T. Whitmarsh and S. Goldberg (eds), *The Oxford Classical Dictionary* (Oxford; online publication).
OHAB	K. De Temmerman (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Biography* (Oxford, 2020).
P–W	H. W. Parke and D. E. W. Wormell (eds), *The Delphic Oracle*, 2 vols (Oxford, 1956). Oracles are referred to by number.
PCG	R. Kassel and C. Austin (eds), *Poetae Comici Graeci*, 8 vols to date (Berlin, 1983–). Cited by fragment number of the comic poet, with the volume and page number in parentheses.
PD	J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (London, 1971).

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Pelling	C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* (London and Swansea, 2002).
PMG	D. L. Page (ed.), *Poetae Melici Graeci* (Oxford 1962).
Podlecki	A. J. Podlecki, *Plutarch, Life of Pericles: A Companion to the Penguin Translation* (Bristol, 1987).
Pollitt	J. J. Pollitt, *The Art of Ancient Greece: Sources and Documents*, 2nd edn (Cambridge, 1990).
R–O	P. J. Rhodes and R. Osborne (eds), *Greek Historical Inscriptions 404–323 BC* (Oxford, 2003). Cited by number of inscription.
SA	P. Harding (ed.), *The Story of Athens* (London and New York, 2008). Cited by document number.
Sansone	D. Sansone (ed.), *Plutarch: Lives of Aristeides and Cato* (Warminster, 1989).
SdA	F. Wehrli (ed.), *Die Schule des Aristoteles*, 2nd edn, 12 vols (Basel, 1967–1978).
SH	H. Lloyd-Jones and P. J. Parsons (eds), *Supplementum Hellenisticum* (Berlin and New York, 1983).
SIG^3	W. Dittenberger (ed.), *Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*, 3rd edn, 4 vols, 2nd edn, (Leipzig, 1915–1924).
SSR	G. Giannantoni (ed.), *Socratis et Socraticorum Reliquiae*, 4 vols (Naples, 1990).
Sider	D. Sider (ed.), *Simonides: Epigrams and Elegies* (Oxford, 2020).
Stadter	P. A. Stadter, *A Commentary on Plutarch's Pericles* (Chapel Hill and London, 1989).
SVF	H. von Arnim (ed.), *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*, 2nd edn, 4 vols (Leipzig, 1903–24).
T(T)	Testimonium/Testimonia.
TrGF	R. Kannicht et al. (eds), *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, 5 vols (the last in two parts) (Göttingen, 1971–2004). Cited by fragment number, with the volume and page number in parentheses.
Verdegem	S. Verdegem, *Plutarch's Life of Alcibiades: Story, Text and Moralism* (Leuven, 2010).
VLS	M. G. A. Bertinelli et al. (eds), *Plutarco: Le vite di Lisandro e di Silla* (Milan, 1997).

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VNC	M. G. A. Bertinelli et al. (eds), *Plutarco: Le vite di Nicia e di Crasso* (Milan, 1993).
VTR	C. Ampolo and M. Manfredini (eds), *Plutarco: Le vite di Teseo e di Romolo* (Milan, 1988).

In the notes to the individual *Lives*, 'Intr.' refers to the Introduction to that particular *Life*; 'GI' refers to the General Introduction at the beginning of the volume.

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General Introduction

1. *Plutarch's Life and Times*

Plutarch was born sometime in the early 40s CE and lived his entire life in the city of Chaeronea in Boeotia in central Greece.[1] Chaeronea, about 67 miles (108 km) northwest of Athens, had been the site of two important battles in Greek history, one many centuries before Plutarch, one more recent. In 338 BCE, Philip of Macedon had defeated the allied Greek forces at Chaeronea, putting an end to Greek independence. In 86 BCE, the Roman general Sulla had defeated Mithridates of Pontus, who intended to free the Greeks from Roman rule, and whose defeat ensured that Greece would remain under Roman control. Plutarch could still see traces of both these events: the stone lion that marked the site of the battle in 338, and the trophies set up by Sulla after his victory; Plutarch says that even in his own day, more than a hundred years later, remains of Sulla's battle were still being found.[2] Chaeronea, like much of Greece, had suffered during the Roman civil wars of the late Republic – Plutarch tells the story of his great-grandfather being compelled to carry grain while Mark Antony's agents moved them along with whips[3] – but in the early empire it began to see an improvement in its situation. In 27 BCE, Augustus had formally made Greece a province (called Achaea), and by Plutarch's time it had largely recovered from the previous century's conflicts and depredations.[4]

It was not unusual in Plutarch's time for ambitious members of the Greek elite to engage in political life in Rome, hold Roman offices and become members of the Roman senate. Plutarch was eventually famous enough to have done just that, had he wished,

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but he did not, and he remained in his small home town. He said he did so to ensure that it did not become even smaller, though he must have had pragmatic reasons as well to decline such a path.[5] Yet though an inhabitant of a Roman province, Plutarch was hardly provincial. Although we know little about his life, and must piece information together from various hints inside his own work and from other sources, such as inscriptions and the writings of his contemporaries, it is clear that Plutarch was a man of the world, with many powerful friends at Rome, and known even to the Roman emperors.[6]

Plutarch was born into a wealthy family which had sufficient means to ensure that he received an excellent education. He had an early interest in mathematics, before he turned ultimately to philosophy. He studied at Athens with the Egyptian Ammonius, a well-regarded philosopher who also held high office at Athens, and was a man of great influence there.[7] Besides Athens, Plutarch while still a young man travelled to Smyrna and Alexandria, and on one occasion served on a deputation from (presumably, but not certainly) Chaeronea to the Roman proconsul of Achaea.[8] His early years, therefore, combined learning with practical travel and experience.

Athens remained close to his heart, as did Delphi, the seat of the ancient oracle of Apollo, and only about 30 miles (48 km) from Chaeronea. Plutarch visited Delphi with Ammonius on the occasion of the emperor Nero's visit to Greece in 66–67 CE, when Plutarch would have been in his twenties, and either then or at some previous date he became devoted to the shrine. Nero's fall in 68 ushered in the chaos of the 'year of four emperors', and when those civil wars were settled in 69, Vespasian had established the new Flavian dynasty – himself along with his sons Titus and Domitian – which would rule Rome from 69 to 96, when Domitian was assassinated. During these years, Plutarch was presumably busy with travel and other duties, visiting Rome and Italy several times, and assuming responsibilities and offices in his home town.[9] At some point, possibly at the end of Domitian's rule, or more likely a little later, his devotion to Delphi was rewarded when he became one of the two permanent priests responsible for the oracle.[10]

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Trajan's accession to the throne in 98 ushered in the most productive period of Plutarch's life. He retired from most of his responsibilities and began to write, eventually producing an enormous number of biographies and essays. During this time, he received Roman citizenship through his friend Lucius Mestrius Florus, the emperor awarded him the *ornamenta consularia*[11] and he received an honorary appointment as imperial procurator of Achaea. It was during this time as well that he began the *Parallel Lives*, dedicated to Q. Sosius Senecio, a distinguished Roman closely allied with Trajan. As governor of the province of Gallia Belgica in 97 CE, Sosius had given support to Trajan in his political ambitions, and when Trajan came to the throne in 98, he was rewarded. He was ordinary consul in both 99 and 107 CE, was commander in the Dacian Wars and was honoured with the triumphal insignia.[12]

Of Plutarch's home life we can glean certain details from his writings, for he often speaks of his family and they are sometimes characters in his dialogues or dedicatees of his essays. His grandfather Lamprias appears in *Table Talk*, a series of short dialogues on the kinds of matters discussed after dinner in learned company; his father Autobulus (the name is likely, though not certain) had a fondness for horses; and to his wife Timoxena, herself a writer, Plutarch addresses the *Consolation to My Wife* on the loss of their young daughter, also called Timoxena, whose death was particularly painful because she was the first girl after four sons.[13] Of Plutarch's five children, only two boys survived: Plutarch and Autobulus. The latter became, like his father, a philosopher, as did his nephew Sextus, who was the teacher of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus.[14] Plutarch died around 120.

Although we have a great deal of Plutarch's work, it is probably only about half of what he actually wrote.[15] What does survive is nonetheless very impressive. It is divided into biographies and essays, the latter called *Moralia* because a number of the essays deal with moral questions, though their range is wider than that.[16] Some of the essays do treat ethics, for example *Friends and Flatterers*, *Progress in Virtue*, *Control of Anger*, *Curiosity* and *Consolation to My Wife*.[17] Others are more scholarly and show an interest in antiquarianism, for example

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On Isis and Osiris, *The Face in the Moon*, *Greek Questions*, *Roman Questions* and *Table Talk*. There are in addition philosophical works in which Plutarch expounds his own philosophy or attacks others: *Platonic Questions*, *Contradictions of the Stoics*, *Not Even a Pleasant Life is Possible on Epicurean Principles* and *Against Colotes*. Some of the *Moralia* have a more historical interest: *The Glory of Athens*, *The Fortune of the Romans*, *Brave Deeds of Women and On the Malice of Herodotus*. Particularly helpful in understanding the *Lives* are the works that treat political matters: *Old Men in Politics*, *Philosophers and Princes*, and *Advice on Public Life*, the last being especially relevant.[18] However, the artificial classification given here obscures the fluid nature of Plutarch's writing, and there are several works that do not fit easily into a single category, such as the *Dinner of the Seven Sages* or *Socrates' Sign*, which are among Plutarch's most interesting writings.

The other group of writings by Plutarch are the numerous biographies he composed. Some of these are stand-alone biographies such as the *Artaxerxes* and the *Aratus*, the latter of which he dedicated to Polycrates of Sicyon, a descendant of Aratus in the hope that he and his family would find their ancestor worthy of emulation (*Arat.* 1.3–4). He also at some point, perhaps under Domitian, wrote a series of eight *Lives* of the Roman emperors from Augustus to Vitellius, of which only the *Galba* and the *Otho* survive. These two are very brief, and while they share certain features with the *Parallel Lives*, they also differ in significant ways, offering in general more narrative and less moralizing.[19]

2. *The* Parallel Lives

Plutarch's fame today rests on the *Parallel Lives*, 23 pairs of biographies treating 48 men (one pair compares two Spartans with two Romans), all of which except one, the first – in which Plutarch placed Epaminondas of Thebes alongside P. Cornelius Scipio[20] – survive. There has been much discussion of what kind or kinds of biography existed before Plutarch, and how much he owes to previous writers, but the question is difficult to answer because the genre of biography seems to have been

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rather fluid in antiquity and indeed seems to have encompassed very disparate types of works. An interest in lives and character can already be found in Herodotus, writing in the fifth century BCE, and biographical information appears in different types of writing, whether or not those works were formally considered biographies.[21] Biography certainly existed before Plutarch, as can be seen in the writings of the Roman Cornelius Nepos (*ca.* 100–24 BCE), whose biographies have certain affinities with Plutarch's own, and which Plutarch knew and used as a source in the Roman (but not the Greek) *Lives*. Nepos's *Illustrious Men* was originally in 16 books, of which only one, on foreign commanders, has survived. These are rather brief biographies, interesting in their own right, but with nothing of the scale and complexity of Plutarch's.[22] The book on foreign commanders was complemented by a book on Roman commanders, but the loss of that work prevents us from seeing how integrated the parallelism was, if indeed there was any parallelism at all.[23] Suffice it to say that there is little evidence that anyone before Plutarch wrote individual biographies on the scale he employed, and no evidence that anyone before him placed individual lives in parallel in the way that he did.

Plutarch did not write his biographies in chronological order. We noted above that the first pair of *Lives* was the *Epaminondas–Scipio*, and we know the position of a few other pairs within the entire corpus, thanks to remarks that Plutarch himself makes. The *Demosthenes–Cicero* was fifth in the series (*Dem.* 3.1), the *Pericles–Fabius Maximus* tenth (*Per.* 2.5). It is clear that he moved back and forth in Greek and Roman history. Although the *Lives* in this collection appear in chronological order, they were probably written in the following order: *Cimon*, *Themistocles*, *Theseus*, *Lysander*, *Pericles*, *Solon*, *Aristides*, *Alcibiades* and *Nicias*. Indeed, the *Theseus* which leads off the volume was written, as we can tell from Plutarch's own comments, after he had been composing *Lives* for some time.[24]

In choosing which *Lives* to compare with which, Plutarch considered several things, including similarities in his subjects' character, actions, fates, or all three.[25] Although the pairings have been eliminated in the Penguin Plutarch series, which, like this

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one, are grouped according to time periods or themes, recent scholarship has repeatedly emphasized that Plutarch constructed his *Lives* as pairs, and recognition of such is fundamental to the interpretation of his work.[26] It is important, therefore, to understand what a 'Book' of *Parallel Lives* consisted of, even if it is not followed in this edition. A Book is made up of four parts: first, a *Prologue*, brief or lengthy, that covers both *Lives*; then the first *Life*, followed by the second; and lastly the *Comparison* (*Synkrisis*), an essay weighing the specific traits of the two men against each other, and coming to some conclusion about who is preferable in one category, who in another.

The *Prologues* vary by *Life*.[27] In some *Lives*, such as the *Solon*, *Themistocles*, *Aristides*, *Alcibiades* and *Lysander*, there is no *Prologue*, Plutarch beginning straight away with the first *Life*.[28] The *Nicias* has only the briefest *Prologue*, mentioning the two *Lives* to be examined and their one great similarity (*Nic.* 1.1). Three of the *Lives* in this volume have a lengthy and formal *Prologue*, and they give a good idea of the variety of procedures employed by Plutarch. The *Prologue to Theseus and Romulus*, for example, notes the similarities of the birth and activity of the two men. Both are considered fundamental in shaping their cities, Romulus by founding Rome and Theseus by bringing the inhabitants of Attica together into one citadel at Athens. Both were of uncertain parentage, with the divine playing a role in each; both had misfortunes at home and had to contend with their kinsmen's resentment; and both at the end of their lives clashed with their fellow citizens. But Plutarch also uses this *Prologue* to demonstrate his awareness of the particular hazards associated with writing about this very early period in both cities' history, and he wants his audience to know that he is using a different kind of material which may often shade over into myth.[29]

The *Prologue to Cimon and Lucullus* begins with a long story about a beautiful young man from Chaeronea named Damon. The Roman commander in the city at the time was enamoured of Damon but unable to win him by persuasion, and Damon, worried that the commander would turn to force, pre-emptively killed the Roman and a few of his friends. Because of Damon's

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action, the city itself was in danger of paying a severe penalty, but we then learn that Lucullus, not once but twice, was responsible for the city's salvation and the Chaeroneans in gratitude erected a marble statue of him in the agora. Plutarch then offers his *Lucullus* as an extension of this gratitude, doing his ancestors one better by saying that he will show not the outward likeness of Lucullus but the character within, which 'possesses a far greater beauty' (*Cim.* 2.2). From this he explains how one should portray both the strengths and the faults of one's subject and how he came to choose Cimon as the parallel, outlining what the two men had in common.

The *Prologue* to the *Pericles–Fabius Maximus* pair is the most philosophical of all, beginning with thoughts on the soul's love of learning and contemplation. Although as human beings we cannot control what our senses perceive, we can nevertheless choose what we focus on, and so we must direct our contemplation towards objects worthy of imitation. Not everything that is beautiful is worthy of imitation but only those things that arouse the spirit of emulation, and for Plutarch this means especially virtue as it is seen through noble actions. Only at the very end of these musings does Plutarch state briefly what Pericles and Fabius Maximus had in common.

After the *Prologues* come the *Lives* themselves, usually in the order Greek–Roman, but in three cases the opposite.[30] One might assume that in every case the Greek *Life* was the first to suggest itself to Plutarch, but in fact Plutarch sometimes indicates (as at *Thes.* 1.4–5 and *Cim.* 3.1) that he decided on the Roman figure first and then looked about for a suitable Greek. The order in which the *Lives* appear is important, however, since, as Pelling has shown, the second *Life* will often deepen and complicate characteristics and issues treated in the first, something which is relevant for the *Alcibiades* in this collection.[31]

The *Comparison* follows both *Lives*. Here, as previously noted, individual characteristics are weighed one against another and a final judgement is usually rendered. Because the Greek *Life* usually precedes the Roman, the *Comparisons* generally follow on from the Roman *Life*, and so are mostly to be found in other volumes of the Penguin Plutarch.[32] In this volume, however,

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because Alcibiades' is the second *Life* in its pairing, the reader can find the *Comparison*, and from it can get a good sense of what some of the others are like. Plutarch begins by comparing Alcibiades' and Coriolanus's military skill and bravery, then moves on to their behaviour at home and each man's political conduct. Plutarch considers the extent to which each was deceitful, and the role that ambition played in their careers. Coriolanus's intractability is compared with Alcibiades' flexibility, and consideration is given especially to their relations with their fellow citizens. There is a lengthier treatment (largely negative) of the reasons for Coriolanus's abandonment of his plan to attack Rome, and an interesting study of his contempt for the people compared with that of some others, to Coriolanus's disadvantage. But at the end, despite his harsh temper, Coriolanus is praised for his self-control and mastery over money, whereas Alcibiades is judged as reckless with money and indifferent to morality. A number of readers have found the *Comparisons* problematic: they seem sometimes reductive; they occasionally bring in new information not in the *Lives* just narrated; and they sometimes offer judgements at odds with what Plutarch expresses in the *Life*.[33] They were at one time suspected of being later interpolations into Plutarch's text, but most scholars today accept them as genuine.[34]

3. *The Purposes of the* Parallel Lives

Why did Plutarch write the *Parallel Lives*? We noted above that the first pair of *Lives*, the *Epaminondas–Scipio*, is lost, and presumably Plutarch indicated in the *Prologue* to those *Lives* his original purpose in writing them. While that cannot be recovered, we do have a sufficient number of remarks in what survives to have a good sense of what he wished his audience to take from the *Lives*.[35] Above all, Plutarch's primary purpose in writing was moral and ethical; it was not strictly historical in the sense of trying to discover new data about the past.[36] Although he was a conscientious researcher and canvassed an impressive number and variety of sources (he has over 600 citations in his works, naming over 150 Greek and Roman authors),

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his scholarly activity in the *Lives* was in the service of presenting a coherent and cogent biography. And since character for Plutarch was revealed through action, he wanted to know the facts so that he might know the man.

The *Prologue* to the *Aemilius Paullus* offers some context (1.1–2, 5):

> I first set to work writing these *Lives* for the sake of others, but their composition has proved so congenial that I now persist in it for my own improvement. I am using history as if it were a mirror, in the reflection of which I am trying to adorn my own life, so to speak, by making its virtues resemble the ones displayed in my biographies. For me the experience is very much like actually spending time with these figures from the past and enjoying their companionship: whenever, by way of my historical research, I welcome into my home one of my biographical subjects, I scrutinize him carefully, in order to determine 'his god-like aspect and magnificent size'.[37] . . . I . . . am always welcoming into my thoughts the records of the noblest and most illustrious of men. This is on account of my constant historical research and the deep familiarity with men of the past that comes from writing their biographies, which has prepared me to reject and repulse anything base or wicked or disgraceful cast at me in the course of my unavoidable dealings with contemporaries. Instead, I calmly and composedly shift my attention away from such provocations towards splendid paragons of the past.

Plutarch expects his readers to use as exempla the lives and actions of men from the past, for example Aristides' justness or Pericles' self-control. As one of the ways to effect this in his readers, Plutarch indicates that he will regularly focus on what is positive or worthy of emulation (*Cim.* 2.3–5):

> For just as when an artist has to paint a face which possesses beauty and much grace, and we demand that he should neither leave out any minor defect that there may be, nor render it in detail – since the latter would make the portrait ugly, and the former destroy the likeness – so in the same way, since it is difficult,

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> or perhaps impossible, to represent a man's life as entirely free from blame and spotless, we should build up, from what is good, the most complete likeness in the form of a truthful record. Any errors or crimes, on the other hand, which may tarnish a man's career and may have been committed out of passion or political necessity, we should regard more as lapses from some particular virtue than as the product of some innate vice. We must not point them out too eagerly in our history, but should rather have respect, as it were, for human nature, given its inability to produce a character which is perfect and uncompromisingly dedicated to virtue.

Although his stance may strike some as naïve, Plutarch is here merely asserting a long-standing belief by many who dealt with historical topics in the ancient world, that history was meant to record noble deeds, and the works of historical writers should be used to confer glory on their subjects.[38] In this approach, as Plutarch here suggests, one does not ignore the negative but one also does not give it too large a place, and one errs on the side of charitable interpretation.

And yet as he got further into his task, Plutarch clearly came to believe that sometimes one had to consider lives of great men that may on balance have been *more* negative than positive. Thus in the *Prologue* to the *Demetrius–Antony*, he offers the following observations (*Demetr.* 1.5–6):

> Now the ancient Spartans had the custom of compelling the Helots at their festivals to drink large quantities of neat wine; then they would bring them into the public dining-halls as an object lesson to their young men of what it was like to be drunk. But I think it neither humane nor the act of a statesman to try to improve some by perverting others. Perhaps, however, it is not such a bad idea for me to insert into the paradigms of my *Lives* one or two pairs of men who conducted themselves in a rather unreflecting way and who became in their positions of power, and when they were engaged in great enterprises, conspicuous by their misconduct. My purpose in doing so is not to divert or entertain my readers by giving variety to my writings; I am, rather, following the example of Ismenias the Theban, who when he taught the flute

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> used to point out to his pupils both good and bad performers, and tell them, 'You should play like this one' or 'You should not play like that one'. Similarly, Antigenidas believed that young men would appreciate good flute-players better if they were given experience of bad ones. In the same way, it seems to me that we shall be all the more ready to study and imitate the lives of good men if we know something of the wicked and infamous.

Plutarch goes on to say that the men whom he will treat 'illustrate Plato's saying that great natures produce great vices as well as great virtues' (*Demetr.* 1.7). The remark is worth remembering for at least two of the *Lives* in this volume, the *Alcibiades* and *Lysander*, since both men are problematic characters, and even if Plutarch did not think of them in the same way in the *Demetrius–Antony*, both men nevertheless, while possessing certain virtues, did great damage to themselves and their respective cities.[39]

It is his awareness of human failings that makes Plutarch's *Lives* not simply a straightforward exercise in copying out unproblematic virtues and applying them without thought to one's own life. For one thing, Plutarch recognized that times change and the way virtues were displayed in fifth-century Athens was not necessarily the way they would or should be in Plutarch's own time. This recognition leads to what we might call the cross-cultural study of particular virtues: quite a number of Plutarch's heroes have the same virtues, but the arena in which they get to display these virtues is different, based on the era in which they lived, the nature of their antagonists, the goals they set themselves and the circumstances – and changes of circumstances – that they sometimes endured.[40] This interest in the comparative evaluation of virtues, as Philip Stadter has shown, can be seen in remarks that Plutarch makes in his essay *Brave Deeds of Women*:

> And actually it is not possible to learn better the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women from any other source than by putting lives beside lives and actions beside actions, like great works of art . . . For the fact is that the virtues acquire certain other diversities, their own colouring as it were, due to varying natures, and they take on the likeness of the

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> customs on which they are founded, and of the temperament of persons and their nurture and mode of living. For example, Achilles was brave in one way and Ajax in another; and the wisdom of Odysseus was not like that of Nestor, nor was Cato a just man in exactly the same way as Agesilaus, nor Eirene fond of her husband in the manner of Alcestis, nor Cornelia high-minded in the manner of Olympias, But, with all this, let us not postulate many different kinds of bravery, wisdom and justice – if only the individual dissimilarities exclude no one of these from receiving its appropriate rating.[41]

Secondly, the study of more problematic lives opens up a larger field for the contemplation of ethics and morality. Christopher Pelling has argued persuasively that there are two types of moralism on display in the *Lives*. One of these he calls protreptic, the other descriptive.[42] In the former, there really is the hope or expectation that one could or should adopt the particular virtues of the subject of the *Life*, while in the latter Plutarch shows but does not necessarily recommend. This latter type is perhaps most operative in this collection in the *Nicias*, *Alcibiades* and *Lysander*. Timothy Duff, moreover, has made a convincing demonstration that the 'problematic' *Lives* raise more questions than they answer – and that this is deliberate on Plutarch's part because he expects and wants the reader's close intellectual engagement with his work; and Plutarch even allows that sometimes the reader, in asking the same questions Plutarch does, will come to a different conclusion from Plutarch himself.[43]

While moral improvement is clearly a goal of the *Parallel Lives*, we must not overlook the fact that Plutarch also expected that his *Lives* would offer practical advice to the statesmen of his day (and beyond) about how to be an effective leader and how to deal with one's colleagues in office as well as with the common people. As mentioned above, Plutarch wrote a number of essays that are political in nature, perhaps the most important of which for the *Parallel Lives* is the *Advice on Public Life*. This is a work dedicated to a young man, Menemachus of Sardis, who wishes to embark upon a political career. Here Plutarch offers guidance on a host of topics, and while it is in part

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a 'theoretical' work, many of the examples Plutarch gives in the essay are those narrated also in the *Lives*.[44] And the specificity is important: it is one thing to say that a leader must exercise control over the people, but another to see what specific steps someone like Pericles took in his relations with the people, and how he manoeuvred in a state in which his competitors too were dealing with the people.

4. *Structure and Characteristics of the* Lives

In putting together an individual *Life*, Plutarch was constrained by what was known about the particular figure. It seems clear, for example, that the thin historical texture of the *Cimon* is partly the result of the fact that the majority of Cimon's life and deeds fell between the end of Herodotus's history and the beginning of Thucydides', so there was no narrative framework on which to build. Not surprisingly, then, that *Life* is full of personal detail and gossip. With the *Alcibiades*, by contrast, Plutarch was nearly overwhelmed with sources, many of them contradictory, so the task there was to compose a *Life* that recognized the disparity of the source material while having some organic unity. He had also to consider the nature of his sources: whether certain facts or details came from a historical narrative, a speech given in court, a comedy performed on stage or a philosophical dialogue.[45]

A Plutarchan *Life* follows a broadly chronological framework, usually beginning with the lineage, appearance and family of the hero and concluding with his death. But this is a loose framework which Plutarch will feel free to modify as he likes. Throughout the *Life* he is not averse to manipulating chronology as he sees fit, and sometimes things that go together thematically are grouped in one place, even though they took place at different times, so as to reinforce particular notions about the subject's character; this is often the case with anecdotes that have a timeless quality about them. At other times, Plutarch manipulates chronology for dramatic purposes. Themistocles' proposal to evacuate Athens in the face of the coming Persian invasion is given right before the actual invasion, although the proposal and the strategy must have been determined some time beforehand.[46] In the *Pericles*, the trials of

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Pheidias and Aspasia are likely to have taken place at different times, but they are put together so that Plutarch can portray a Pericles who is besieged on all sides.[47] In addition, as Pelling has shown, the ending of the *Life* is not always the end of the subject's actual life:[48] Plutarch often ends with a scholarly discussion (examples in this volume are the *Aristides*, *Themistocles* and, to a lesser extent, *Solon*); with honours paid to the man after his death (*Theseus*, with the recovery of Theseus' bones and the festivals celebrating him, and *Lysander*); or with general historical or ethical reflections (*Cimon* and *Pericles*).

Plutarch often suspends the chronological narrative, sometimes at the apex of the subject's career, to offer character analysis or to present some remarks by the hero that indicate his character. In the *Themistocles*, for example, immediately after the hero's greatest triumph at Salamis, Plutarch offers a series of anecdotes that illustrate his ambition and his vanity (*Them.* 18), the two traits that will mainly be responsible for his downfall in the narrative that follows. Some examples of Lysander's brutal and aggressive speech are given just at the point (*Lys.* 22) where he is about to argue forcefully on behalf of Agesilaus's right to the kingship – but also right before their clash and Lysander's subsequent attempt to persuade his fellow citizens to change the Spartan constitution (*Lys.* 24.2).

In addition to taking liberties with chronology, Plutarch is also selective in what he chooses to narrate. No introduction to Plutarch can fail to quote the famous *Prologue* to the *Alexander–Caesar*, where Plutarch makes clear that his biographies are not to be seen as straightforward historical narratives (*Alex.* 1.1–2):

> My subject in this book is the life of Alexander, the king, and of Julius Caesar, the conqueror of Pompey. The careers of these men embrace such a multitude of events that my preamble shall consist of nothing more than this one plea: if I do not recall all their most celebrated achievements or describe any of them exhaustively, but merely summarize for the most part what they accomplished, I ask my readers not to regard this as a fault. For I am writing Lives not history, and the truth is that the most brilliant exploits often tell us

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> nothing of the virtues or vices of the men who performed them, while on the other hand a chance remark or a joke may reveal far more of a man's character than battles where thousands die, huge troop deployments or the sieges of cities.

Scholars have pointed out that this *Prologue* is specifically designed for the world-conquerors Alexander and Caesar, and should not be held to be universally true: it would ill fit the preface of the *Cimon*, for example, where, as noted above, there was a dearth of information. Nonetheless, at least three important insights into Plutarch's methods in the *Lives* follow from these remarks.

First, there is a hint as to Plutarch's audience.[49] His remark that his readers must not fault him for not treating all the events of his subjects suggests that they *know* those events, and would be able to see where Plutarch has omitted something. And indeed, Plutarch assumes an audience with an education and a world view much like his own, so that knowledge of Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, or Plato and Aristotle for that matter, could be taken for granted. This allows him on many occasions to make short and simple references to major actions, as when he speaks of 'the legends . . . on everyone's lips' (20.3) in the *Theseus* or 'the famous oracle from Delphi' in the *Themistocles* (10.3) or the 'trick with the midday meal' in the *Nicias* (20.8).

Second, Plutarch indicates that he has made a selection in his treatment of Alexander and Caesar, and although it would not be the same in every *Life*, we must nonetheless remember that Plutarch in every *Life*, despite the sources at his disposal, *actively* selects his material with a view to the kind of portrait he wishes to paint.

Finally, it is important to note the comparative at the end of the passage, 'far more . . . than'. Plutarch believes firmly that actions express character – it is, after all, one of the reasons he portrays his subjects in action – but he makes the point here that actions *alone* will often not tell us something we want to know about a statesman. Words too are indicative of the way a man conducts himself in the world, and for this reason they need to be taken into account. They are a complement to action,

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and this is one of the main reasons why Plutarch will sometimes pause his narrative to record the remarks of his subject.

A further consequence of writing biography rather than history is, of course, the greater focus on an individual. One of Plutarch's most consistent techniques, which is either his own development or was already in some of his sources, is that he ascribes to an individual something that in other sources is ascribed to a collective or group. In this volume the device is perhaps nowhere better seen than in the *Aristides*. The basis for Plutarch's account of the battle of Plataea in that *Life* is clearly Herodotus's history, though Plutarch has, in his usual way, added much that is not in Herodotus's account. But where he is using Herodotus, we can see the transformation. Herodotus tells us that the Athenians at Plataea were commanded by Aristides (9.28.6) but he never mentions him again; decisions, speeches and actions are thereafter ascribed simply to 'the Athenians'. In Plutarch's account, however, each Herodotean incident has Aristides at its centre: it is he who is portrayed as making the decisions or speaking the words that in Herodotus were ascribed to the collective.

Plutarch wrote these *Lives* over a long period of time, and, as one might expect, he is not always consistent in his viewpoint. In addition, he changes focus depending on his subject, and not only tells the story from his protagonist's point of view, but also, in accordance with the remarks made in the *Prologue* to the *Cimon*, tends to give his subject the benefit of the doubt. It is instructive to compare, for example, the scene before the battle of Salamis between Themistocles and Aristides in each of those *Lives* (*Them.* 12.6–8; *Arist.* 8.2–5); or the narrative of Alcibiades' deception of the Spartan ambassadors in the *Nicias* and the *Alcibiades* (*Nic.* 10.4–7; *Alc.* 14.6–12); or the battle of Notium in the *Alcibiades* and the *Lysander* (*Alc.* 35.5–8; *Lys.* 5.1–4). When there are occasional contradictions, Plutarch is not necessarily being careless, but is telling the story in a different way to highlight the subject of that particular *Life*. This perhaps raises the question of Plutarch's notion of historical truth. This is a complicated issue, and perhaps for present purposes it will suffice to say that on the one hand Plutarch did not in general feel

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free to invent historical details for which he had no source; but that on the other hand he allowed himself to embroider details he found in his sources or to reimagine some of the scenes or speeches given by his characters, and that sometimes he did this to an extent that would be unacceptable in a historical account written today.

Finally, it is important to note that ancient writers put a premium on writing an attractive and pleasing narrative, and one element in this was the employment of variety. Sometimes this is achieved by the alternation of narrative with passages of analysis or collections of remarks by the subject. At other times Plutarch employs digressions, of which he is particularly fond. Nearly every *Life* has a place or two where Plutarch gives an opinion or offers a learned disquisition on a topic that may be germane to the subject but then again may just have an intrinsic interest of its own. In the *Lives* here, we find musings on the nature of familial love (*Sol.* 7), how science and religion can coexist (*Per.* 6), the unusual character and influence of Aspasia (*Per.* 24), and the causes of eclipses (*Nic.* 23.2–6) and of meteorites (*Lys.* 12.3–8). This way of engaging with the reader should remind us that Plutarch's *Lives* are above all biographical *essays*.

5. *Plutarch's Sources for Sixth- and Fifth-Century Athens*

Before discussing Plutarch's portrait of Athens, it will be well to look at his sources of information about that time period.[50] Plutarch cites hundreds of sources in his *Lives* and whereas earlier generations of scholars believed that he got much of this information at second hand, from handbooks or anthologies and the like, it is generally agreed today that he read widely and that most of the sources he cites he knew at first hand.[51] This is not to say, however, that he doesn't sometimes misquote or misremember particular details from his sources. Doing research in the ancient world meant using cumbersome scrolls which had to be unwound by hand, and the texts on those scrolls did not have chapter and page divisions like those of a modern book.

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Very often Plutarch cites something from memory, and, as we would expect, he sometimes gets things wrong.

The *Lives* that appear in this volume treat figures about whom Plutarch would have been well informed from his youth onwards, and with these he did not need to do the kind of detailed research he pursued for the Roman *Lives*,[52] though he was conscientious in trying to find out material that was less well known even to his Greek readers.[53] But in general many of his sources were classics of their genres and familiar to his audience. To begin with, there were the historical narratives of the masters, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, whose works covered much of the period Plutarch treats in this volume.[54] In addition he was familiar with a number of other historians whose works, although now lost to us, were highly esteemed by both Greeks and Romans, in particular, Philistus, Ephorus and Theopompus.[55] Philistus was particularly valuable for giving a Sicilian viewpoint on Athens' great expedition against the island in 415–413 BCE, while Ephorus and Theopompus both wrote wide-ranging histories that included some treatment of the fifth century, and often gave accounts of events at odds with the great historians. A particularly valuable source for the *Lives* in this volume was the group of local historians known as the Atthidographers (so called because their works were usually entitled *Atthides*). These writers, who flourished from the late fifth to the mid-third century BCE, treated many events not to be found in the major historians, including details of religion and cult, which were always of great interest to Plutarch.[56]

Two contemporary sources recur in this volume, although the exact nature of their works is difficult to know. Stesimbrotus of Thasos's *On Themistocles, Thucydides and Pericles* is sometimes called a political pamphlet and perhaps focused on the internal politics of the time; it also seems to have provided more gossipy material, which Plutarch records but often distrusts.[57] Ion of Chios, an extremely versatile writer of poetry and prose, is also used by Plutarch. In his work entitled *Visits* (*Epidēmiai*), Ion provided details of his personal encounters with the great men of his day, and Plutarch's citations of this work are sufficient to give us a good feel for it.[58] Plutarch also mined the speeches of the

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Athenian orators of the fifth and fourth centuries for what they could reveal about contemporary events, and in some cases the speeches which he used survive, and so we can compare how he adapted these for his own purposes.[59]

Plutarch was also familiar with the works of political theory and philosophy written in the fourth century BCE and later. These could take different forms, ranging from large-scale discussions and analyses such as those found in Plato's *Republic* or *Laws* to shorter works dedicated to particular cities, such as the series of 158 *Constitutions* written or supervised by Aristotle, only one of which, that for Athens, survives: this one, it is clear, had a great influence on Plutarch and he consistently follows or only slightly modifies its interpretations. Plato's influence on Plutarch was vast and can be felt in every one of the *Lives*, though it reveals itself not so much in the quarrying of facts about the sixth and fifth centuries as in Plato's beliefs about politics.[60]

Various types of poetry were exploited by Plutarch as valuable contemporary witnesses, even though Plutarch had a Platonic suspicion of poetry. This includes the poetry of Solon, which Plutarch uses, as others had before him, to construct a portrait of sixth-century Athenian politics and society. Also valuable were Simonides, Pindar and Aeschylus, who discussed Athenian leaders, treated civic themes or referred to historical events. There was also the more personal poetry of figures like Timocreon, Archelaus and Melanthius, who sometimes attacked famous men but gave important information about them or, at the very least, revealed how they were perceived by contemporaries.[61]

The Attic theatre provided information as well, though here it would be comedy rather than tragedy.[62] The poets of Old Comedy[63] are cited in a number of fifth-century *Lives*, especially the *Cimon*, *Pericles*, *Nicias* and *Alcibiades*. These poets, whose great exponents included Aristophanes, Eupolis and Cratinus, wrote plays that were topical, satirical and obscene, and featured characters on stage who discussed, parodied and often vilified contemporary politicians and generals. Plutarch did not like the lewdness or savage mockery found in these plays,[64] but he recognized that they could be important historical sources either for what actually happened or (more usually)

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for how contemporary figures were seen by their fellow citizens. One would have to allow for comic exaggeration, of course, but even so, such works are regularly employed by Plutarch for the *Lives* of this era.[65]

Plutarch had a real interest in antiquarian research, notably in religious and social customs, and in military and political traditions, as one can see especially in the *Theseus*.[66] It is clear from the *Solon*, for example, that Plutarch familiarized himself with some of the technical treatises written on Solon's laws. In addition, the *Lives* are also full of quotations from decrees, though in this case it is usually assumed that Plutarch knew these from literary sources rather than from personal inspection: he mentions several times Craterus of Macedon's collection, and this was clearly an important source. Plutarch is also fond of describing dedications found in temples and shrines, and often quotes the inscriptions on these monuments as contemporary evidence. It is very possible that he saw many of these for himself (if they still existed in his time), and this reminds us that as someone who travelled to Athens on a regular basis, he must have seen many of the sites and monuments he records here with his own eyes. His description of the monuments on the Acropolis (*Per.* 13.1–13) is a strong reminder of the effect such works of art had not only for contemporaries but also for succeeding generations.

Plutarch also learned of some matters through oral tradition, something which played a large role in the ancients' understanding of their past. Sometimes this comes from Plutarch's own family, as when he recalls his great-grandfather Nicarchus's experience in Mark Antony's time (mentioned above) or the story of his grandfather Lamprias learning from the physician Philotas about the extravagance of Antony's table. It is likely that the story of Damon which opens the *Cimon* is an example of the local traditions of Chaeronea.[67]

It is important to be aware that Plutarch used many sources besides the ones that he explicitly names, and it would be wrong to think that a particular *Life* depends *only* on the sources explicitly named. We can see, for example, that Plutarch sometimes tells the same story in different *Lives* but only in one place does he give the source, although it's clear that the same source lies

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behind the anonymous account. Consider too the *Aristides*, long portions of which are based on Herodotus, although the historian is named only once in the *Life* and for a single detail. Similarly, in the *Nicias*, *Alcibiades* and *Lysander*, Plutarch has before him Thucydides and Xenophon, even though these are rarely named. It must be emphasized that Plutarch is not being deceitful or misleading here. The regular citation of sources such as might be found in a modern work of history or biography was alien to the procedures of ancient writing about the past.

One other procedure might strike the modern reader as odd. Plutarch will often cite and sometimes even quote a source that he then goes on to say he does not trust or believe. The reason he does this has to do with the expectations of his audience. Anyone in antiquity writing on non-contemporary events was not expected to do original research in the sense of going back and investigating matters *de novo*. Instead, one was expected to be familiar with the tradition about those events, that is, what previous writers had said about them. One had to demonstrate, therefore, that one knew what was in the tradition, even if one didn't believe it, for it was in this way that you assured your audience that you had done your research competently and that you were not suppressing evidence contradictory to your own interpretation.[68]

These, then, were the raw materials from which Plutarch fashioned his picture of sixth- and fifth-century Athens, and there can be little doubt that he knew much of what there was to know about the time from Solon to the end of the Peloponnesian War. Yet for various reasons, Plutarch resorts to certain convenient tropes to discuss, analyse and (ultimately) understand the Athens of the sixth and fifth centuries BCE.

6. *Plutarch and Classical Athens*

The era of Greek history covered by the *Lives* in this volume was more than 500 years in the past when Plutarch wrote, and the political world in which he lived was fundamentally different from that which he had to depict for his readers. He knew very well that his world was not that of Solon or Pericles, and that the

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small and largely peaceful province of the Roman empire in which he lived, a province that had come under Rome's sway more than two centuries before, was a far cry from the independent and quarrelsome city-states of the fifth century BCE. At the same time, he was also aware that in order to make his *Lives* of value to contemporary readers, he would need to find something in the past that could still be of value in their world.[69]

The view of political life found in the *Lives* may strike many modern readers as simplistic and overly schematic, but Plutarch comes by it honestly, since it was a feature of much political and philosophical thought before him. In both the Greek and Roman *Lives*, he makes a consistent distinction between the 'few' and the 'many', terms that correspond to the elite and the common people respectively. As a member of the elite himself, Plutarch has a natural bias in favour of his own class, and they are often described in positive terms, while the common people are described either neutrally or pejoratively.[70] This procedure tends to simplify the dynamics and complexities of political life (both Greek and Roman) into an almost fixed and unchanging conflict between rich and poor.[71]

Plutarch tends to explain procedures and policies as conflicts between aristocratic and democratic 'factions' or 'parties', and he tends to see these as fixed and existing already in the time of Solon in the sixth century BCE. Although distinctions between rich and poor were no doubt as old as the Athenian state itself, such notions of class consciousness cannot be much earlier than the mid-fifth century BCE, and, even then, they would be anachronistic, if by 'faction' or 'party' we meant a fixed group of people who maintained similar beliefs and tried to advance a particular political programme. Although Solon is portrayed by Plutarch as democratic and the father of Athenian democracy,[72] it would be still almost a century until the Athenians created for themselves anything resembling an actual democratic polity – and even this, of course, was severely limited since women, resident aliens and slaves had no say in the running of the state. This is not to say that the common people were not important in the social and political struggles of the sixth century, but that at this point in Athenian history their

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role found expression through the struggles of the elite, not through any independent political action of their own.

Plutarch also shares with other thinkers in antiquity the notion that various peoples as a collective have a timeless character, as valid in the sixth and fifth centuries BCE as in Plutarch's own time: (*Advice on Public Life* 799B–C, Fowler trans.):

> Statesmen must apply themselves to the understanding of the character of the citizens, which shows itself as in the highest degree a compound of all their individual characters and is powerful . . . For example, the Athenian populace is easily moved to anger, easily turned to pity, more willing to suspect quickly than to be informed at leisure; as they are readier to help humble persons of no reputation, so they welcome and especially esteem facetious and amusing speeches; while they take most delight in those who praise them, they are least inclined to be angry with those who make fun of them; they are terrible even to their chief magistrates, then kindly even to their enemies.

He then goes on to illustrate these characteristics by recourse to a number of the same stories he tells in the fifth-century *Lives*. This shows that even before he wrote the *Parallel Lives* Plutarch had very particular ideas about how 'Athenians' would behave.

Because of such notions and because of his view that the masses cannot function without a leader,[73] Plutarch is not a reliable guide to Athenian democracy, nor does he attempt to describe, much less understand, how it actually worked. He has little interest in institutions and none at all in analysing the relationship between Athenian democracy and the Athenian empire. Admittedly, in writing biography he was focusing on individuals, but even so he leaves out much of what made the Athenian state of the fifth century distinct.

Where he does explain institutions he tends to do so in personal terms. Take, for example, his treatment of ostracism. Created most likely by Cleisthenes in his reforms of 508/7, ostracism was an institution whereby the Athenians compelled a man to withdraw from Attica for ten years. There was no other penalty, such as loss of civic rights or confiscation of his

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land or goods, and after ten years he was free to return and take up life as a citizen again. It seems fairly clear that in the wake of the expulsion of the tyrants from Athens in 510, the purpose of ostracism was to prevent one individual from becoming too powerful or influential and either setting himself up as a tyrant or inciting civil war. Ostracism thus served an important purpose within the budding democratic state, which was meant to reinforce accepted norms of participation and influence in political life. Plutarch, however, explains the institution of ostracism in personal terms, seeing in it a way for the people to indulge their jealousy, 'which delights in bringing down the mighty and finds an outlet for its own rancour in this penalty of disfranchisement' (*Them.* 22.5). Plutarch seems to recognize occasionally that it could be used to decide policy, as when, for example, Pericles resorts to an ostracism to decide whether his building programme should proceed (*Per.* 14.3). But more characteristic perhaps is the story he tells of the unnamed rustic in the *Aristides*, who wishes Aristides ostracized simply because he is resentful of hearing him constantly called 'the Just' (*Arist.* 7.7).

Plutarch's approach to fifth-century Athenian politics can also be seen in the way he frames conflicts around two opposed individuals, one of whom follows a more 'oligarchic' or 'aristocratic' programme, while the other espouses a more 'democratic' policy: Themistocles vs Aristides, Cimon vs Pericles, Thucydides (son of Melesias) vs Pericles, Nicias vs Cleon and later Nicias vs Alcibiades. This schematic approach not only anachronistically ascribes consistent political programmes to individuals (as noted above) but also overlooks the general agreement of policy that characterized much of Athenian politics throughout the fifth century. So, for example, because Aristides must be portrayed as an ideological opponent of Themistocles, Plutarch overlooks or downplays the fact that both men strongly supported Athenian imperialistic aims and often worked together.[74] Similarly, Cimon, for all his 'oligarchic' leanings, was a mainstay of the early years of the Delian League, and had the same attitude towards Athenian allies and Athenian imperialism as the more aggressive and 'democratic' Cleon.[75]

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Plutarch's portrait of fifth-century Athens must, therefore, be used with caution. He is less interested in giving an organic picture of the Athenian state at a particular moment in its history than in using the figures of sixth- and fifth-century Athens to illuminate the ethical issues that were important in the Greece of his day, and the qualities he saw as necessary for the leaders of his own time to rule effectively.

7. *Plutarch's Statesman*

By contrast with his relative lack of interest in political and institutional matters, Plutarch is very interested in the ways in which great figures from the past behaved within their political context, and what their actions reveal about their ethical choices and character. A comprehensive treatment of Plutarch's ethics is beyond the scope of this brief introduction; instead we will concentrate on several 'virtues' that are especially appropriate to this collection of *Lives*.

We ought first to mention what Plutarch does not focus on, since this is in its own way illuminating. Some aspects of the great glories of the Greek past, though constantly in Plutarch's mind, needed to be understood in a particular way, and one had to be careful in choosing just what to encourage people to emulate, as he notes in the *Advice on Public Life* (814B–C, Fowler trans.):

> Indeed there are many acts of the Greeks of former times by recounting which the statesman can mould and correct the characters of our contemporaries, for example, at Athens by calling to mind, not deeds in war, but such things as the decree of amnesty after the downfall of the Thirty Tyrants, the fining of Phrynichus for presenting in a tragedy the capture of Miletus, their decking their heads with garlands when Cassander refounded Thebes . . . By emulating acts like these it is even now possible to resemble our ancestors, but Marathon, the Eurymedon, Plataea, and all the other examples which make the common folk vainly to swell with pride and kick up their heels, should be left to the schools of the sophists.

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The great battles of the Persian Wars are not the kinds of events that will recur in Plutarch's time. Greece is at peace and for Plutarch that is a good thing. He will, of course, give such deeds the appropriate treatment in his works, and acknowledge their greatness. He can admire virtues such as military prowess without recommending them, since such activity is irrelevant in his own day, and cannot therefore be a main focus of his *Lives*.

What *can* be the focus, and what is still relevant for Plutarch's time, is whatever conduces towards virtue both in the individual and in the state. So the *Lives* will explore virtue within a political context, and although the *Lives* concern men who lived in the past and under a variety of political regimes, Plutarch's focus is always on what is relevant for his own time. And because his medium is biography, not history, Plutarch is concerned above all with the individual.

One of the most important virtues in Plutarch's *Lives* is ambition or the love of honour (*philotimia*), perhaps the most frequent characteristic of Plutarch's subjects, which is not surprising, of course, given that they were public men who strove to do great deeds.[76] Ambition is often sparked by emulation: Theseus wishes to rival Heracles' great deeds, and Themistocles cannot sleep at night because he is obsessed with Miltiades' victory at Marathon. Ambition properly channelled can be of great benefit to the state. But as Plutarch points out in the *Advice on Public Life*, one must not enter public life mainly for love of honour (819F–822A), but rather with a desire to do what is noble. Without that anchor, ambition is likely to become self-serving and destructive.

When directed towards noble ends, ambition serves for the improvement of the state (Themistocles, Pericles) or even, in Theseus's case, mankind. When not so directed, however, it becomes an overmastering passion, an end in itself which can lead to behaviour that is harmful to the state. It can show itself in rivalry or quarrelsomeness (*philoneikon*, literally 'love of strife'), or in the desire to be first (*philoprōton*), or in the love of victory for victory's sake (*philonikon*). In the fifth-century *Lives* the pre-eminent figures of ambition are Themistocles and Alcibiades. Both men reveal the trait early on, and in both men there

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is a fierce competition to prevail: Themistocles and Alcibiades both possess and are motivated by *philoprōton* (*Them.* 3.1; *Alc.* 2.1), and both are particularly keen on winning the acclaim and esteem of the people. This does not mean, however, that they do not benefit their state, since in many cases they obviously do. And both men know when to moderate their ambition for the benefit of their country. Before the battle of Salamis, Themistocles recalls his political enemy, Aristides, from his ostracism, and though rivals, they agree to 'a salutary and noble contest with each other, competing to save Greece' (*Arist.* 8.3). Similarly, Alcibiades, for all his desire to return to Athens, refuses to indulge the sailors' wishes to sail there immediately from Samos; he restrains them from the undertaking, and Plutarch marks the moment by saying that an ordinary man raised to such heights would not have behaved in the same way (*Alc.* 26.4–5).

The great danger of unmeasured ambition is that it can lead to civic strife: the same Alcibiades who restrained the sailors at Samos himself causes such strife by suggesting that the Athenians could win the support of the Persians if they were to adopt an oligarchic constitution (*Alc.* 25.5–6). Rather than civic strife and an unmeasured desire for pre-eminence, the statesman's goal must be harmony (*homonoia*) and concord (*homophrosynē*).[77]

Plutarch everywhere calls attention to incidents in which the leading men curb their rivalry and ambition. When Solon faces severe factional strife in Athens, he must strive against both factions, the wealthy and the poor, and Plutarch praises his efforts at ensuring civic harmony, even if those efforts are ultimately not enough to prevent the rise of the tyrant Pisistratus.[78] Aristides, who in some sense embodies the measured approach to political life that Plutarch desiderated, is frequently lauded for his efforts to maintain harmony. His recognition of the superiority of Miltiades' strategy at Marathon and his subsequent handing over of his command to him show the way for the others to behave (*Arist.* 5.2–3). Themistocles similarly hands over command to Eurybiades before Salamis, because he recognizes the greater good and the dangers to the Greek cause that partisanship will inflict (*Them.* 7.3–4).

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Such statesmanship can be seen as well in the temporary

reconciliation of Themistocles and Aristides before the battle of Salamis, mentioned above, where the two political opponents put aside their differences to ensure that Themistocles' superior strategy prevails. In the battle that follows they continue to work together, Themistocles on the ships, Aristides on the island of Psyttaleia (*Arist.* 9.1–4). And just as these rivals put aside their differences, so too Pericles worked to recall Cimon from exile, and made an (almost certainly unhistorical) agreement with him whereby Cimon would take command overseas, while Pericles was to be in charge at home (*Per.* 10.5). Related to this is Plutarch's attempt to link all of these Persian War heroes together in a kind of succession, like the heads of the philosophic schools. One great leader yields to or follows another. Themistocles and Aristides are linked to Miltiades' victory at Marathon, where both are said to have fought well (*Arist.* 5.4), just as Cimon fights brilliantly at Salamis, led on by the actions of Themistocles (*Cim.* 5.2).

Indeed, Plutarch sees this part of the fifth century as something of a 'golden age', as he indicates in the *Cimon* (17.9):

> at that time differences were based on political matters, and men's spirits were moderate and easily recalled to conformity with the common benefit, and ambition, that most dominating passion, yielded to the needs of one's country.

The promotion of civic harmony also leads Plutarch to recognize and praise any action that he sees as 'panhellenic' in nature. In Plutarch's day the Greeks could recognize themselves as a single nation, but in the fifth century BCE an individual's loyalty was to his city-state, and he was an Athenian or a Spartan or a Theban first and foremost. The internecine conflicts of the Greeks of that earlier time clearly pained Plutarch, and he saw their many conflicts and wars as a great waste.[79] He thus enjoys highlighting individual actions that benefited the Greeks as a whole (as is evident in the excerpt from *Advice on Public Life* above). To give just a couple of examples: in the discussions that follow after Plataea, the Athenians and Spartans are at loggerheads over the award for bravery and Aristides is instrumental in getting them to

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submit their dispute to the Greeks at large; when Cleocritus of Corinth suggests that the prize be given to the Plataeans, Aristides is the first to support it, and the Greeks, thus reconciled, make their dedications (*Arist.* 20.1–3). Plutarch loves the idea (again, possibly unhistorical) that Pericles wanted to convene a congress of all Greeks to advance common aims, and he laments that it was frustrated by Spartan jealousy (*Per.* 17). At the opposite end of the spectrum, the brutal actions that Lysander takes in fomenting civic strife in the states formerly beholden to Athens earns Plutarch's condemnation (*Lys.* 13.7–9). So both the proper attitude towards ambition and the right way of directing it to the benefit of the state are important characteristics for the statesman.

Equally important is the statesman's own self-control and self-restraint (*praotēs*). Plutarch takes from Plato the belief that the human soul has a rational and irrational part, and that virtue consists in using the rational part (reason) to control the irrational (the passions). He takes a page from Aristotle and the Peripatos in believing that the goal for human beings is control of the passions (*metriopatheia*) rather than, as the Stoics argued, absence of passion (*apatheia*); for Plutarch the goal is not that reason will conquer the passions but that both reason and passion will coexist in harmony.

Plutarch's statesman must, therefore, be master of his own soul. He must be strong and consistent when confronted by the inevitable changes of fortune that every human being encounters in life. His self-mastery is also important in giving him the ability to show forbearance to others, especially when he must deal with less enlightened colleagues and the people. The latter, especially, are in need of someone who can withstand their onslaughts yet still deal with them fairly and even mildly. Plutarch adopts the Platonic view of the people, whereby they are spirited and passionate but incapable of controlling themselves. When they have a wise leader, they can be made to behave sensibly and moderately, but when they have a leader who indulges them in their whims or even encourages them, they are at their worst.[80] The model 'good' leader is Pericles, who restrains the people's worse impulses but encourages them when they are unnecessarily cast down or despondent (*Per.* 15.2).

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The leader must be able to stand up to the people, rather than give in to them or, as Nicias does, try to buy their favour. Because they are credulous and irrational, he must at times even manipulate them, as Themistocles does before Salamis when, 'at a loss at how to win over the people to his plans by reasoning, brought forward signs and oracles from heaven, as if bringing on a *deus ex machina* in tragedy' (*Them.* 10.1). Though Plutarch is averse to superstition, here the manipulation of the people is done ultimately for a good cause: the adoption of Themistocles' clearly correct strategy. Lysander also tries something like this, constructing an elaborate stage drama to try to win over the Spartans to his revolutionary proposals, though in his case his efforts come to naught when the people he has chosen fail to play their part (*Lys.* 25.1–2). Even Pericles manipulates the people, though not in the crude way of Themistocles: in his case he uses the building programme as a way of employing the energies of the people, either by having them do military service or by engaging them in a variety of crafts – of which Plutarch approves (*Per.* 12.5–6).

Because a statesman must nonetheless respect the people, he at times will give in to them in some small matter to prevent them from doing harm in some greater one. Aristides, despite his 'oligarchic' nature, sees that the Athenians after Plataea desire a more democratic form of government, so he introduces a bill to give every citizen a share in the government (*Arist.* 22.1). Similarly, Pericles, when faced with a threat from the oligarchic Thucydides, chose 'to relax the reins on the people and deliberately shaped his policy to please them, always contriving some pageant or banquet or procession in the city, and controlling the people like children with not inelegant pleasures' (*Per.* 11.4). One can see this even more starkly with Solon, who faced a populace with legitimate needs that had to be met. In that case, the poor wanted a wholesale redistribution of land, but Solon instead remitted debts and abolished the dependent status of 'sixth-parters'. The poor were not pleased, but Plutarch notes that they soon forgot their grievance against Solon and entrusted all their affairs to him (*Sol.* 16.4–5).

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The statesman's self-control must also extend to his mastery

over greed and bribery. Plutarch is not an opponent of wealth – on the contrary, he thinks it is worthwhile for the statesman to have money at his disposal both to benefit the people and to ensure the needs of his own family. One of the few things for which Plutarch faults Aristides is that in his devotion to noble poverty, he left his own children without the means to support themselves, and only the generosity of the Athenian people prevented them from being destitute (*Arist.* 27). Wealth must be attained honourably (which for Plutarch meant in the accepted ways of the traditional elite) and must be managed properly within the state. Here the figure of Lysander presents Plutarch with something of a dilemma. There is no doubt that Lysander himself was modest in his private life and did not enrich himself during all the time he was in command: whatever was given to him by other states made its way back to Sparta and the magistrates in control. And yet this very abundance of wealth caused Sparta, little by little, to lose her traditional way of life, and, eventually, her status as one of Greece's great powers (*Lys.* 17.6–11).

There is much more to say about the virtues of Plutarch's statesman, but it is to be hoped that the few remarks here will suffice for this volume. It is important to remember, too, that each of Plutarch's heroes has his own individual context, and, as noted above, it is precisely the context that makes the *Lives* what they are and gives to each of the figures within them a unique place. If Plutarch's *Lives* are worth reading and rereading, it is because they yield something new with virtually every encounter. Whatever failings Plutarch has as an exponent of classical Athenian history are more than made up for by the richness of his ideas, his imaginative reconstruction of the past, and his profound insights into human life and achievement.

NOTES

1. On Plutarch's life and times see Jones (1971) 3–38; Russell (1972) 1–17; Lamberton (2001) 1–59; M. Beck, in *CP* 2–9.
2. *Sulla* 21.8: 'though almost two hundred years have passed'.
3. *Ant.* 68.4.

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4. Jones (1971) 8; for a sense of the world in which Plutarch lived see the various essays in A. Kouremenos (ed.), *The Province of Achaea in the Second Century* CE (London and New York, 2022).
5. *Dem.* 2.2: 'But I, for my part, live in a small city and choose to stay there to prevent its becoming even smaller.' See E. Bowie, in L. Athanassaki and F. B. Titchener (eds), *Plutarch's Cities* (Oxford, 2022) 19–46.
6. Jones (1971) 38–64; on Plutarch's attitude to Rome, Swain (1996) 137–61; P. A. Stadter, in *CP* 13–31.
7. See C. P. Jones, *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 71 (1967) 205–13; Dillon (1977) 189–92.
8. He refers to it at *Advice on Public Life* 816C–D.
9. Jones (1971) 20–27.
10. *Old Men in Politics* 792F; a dedicatory inscription survives in which Plutarch is indicated as priest: *SIG*^{3} 829A.
11. These ornaments were awarded to those outside of the senate and had various grades, the consular ones being the highest and 'usually given for personal services to the emperor': Jones (1971) 29.
12. On Sosius Senecio see Jones (1971) 54–7.
13. *Consolation to My Wife* 608C.
14. *Historia Augusta*, *Aurelianus* 3.2; *Historia Augusta*, *Verus* 2.5; Eutropius 8.12.1.
15. On the so-called Lamprias Catalogue, probably a product of the third or fourth century CE, which contains some 227 titles of Plutarch's works, see R. H. Barrow, *Plutarch and His Times* (1967) 193–4; J. Irigoin, *Revue des Études Grecques* 99 (1986) 318–31.
16. For lists of the *Moralia* with short summaries of each work see Russell (1973) 164–72; Lamberton (2001) 198–210.
17. The titles of the *Moralia* are variously translated; I have in the main followed Russell (1973).
18. See §7.
19. On these *Lives* see A. Georgiadou and L. de Blois, in *CP* 251–77; L. van der Stockt, in *OHAB* 183–95, both with further references.
20. It is uncertain whether it was Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Hannibal or his adopted grandson, Scipio Aemilianus, the victor in the Third Punic War and at Numantia in Spain. The latter seems somewhat more likely.
21. See C. Pelling, in *OHAB* 86–99.
22. Of the *Lives* in this volume, Nepos has biographies of Themistocles, Aristides, Cimon, Alcibiades and Lysander.

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23. On Nepos see R. Stem, *The Political Biographies of Cornelius Nepos* (Ann Arbor, 2012); id., in *OHAB* 139–51.
24. See *Thes.* 1.4. For the chronology of P.'s *Lives* see C. P. Jones, in Scardigli (1995) 95–124; and A. G. Nikolaidis, in A. P. Jiménez and F. B. Titchener (eds), *Historical and Biographical Values of Plutarch's Works* (Málaga, 2005) 283–323.
25. On P.'s choice of heroes, see J. Geiger, *Hermes* 109 (1981) 85–104; S. C. R. Swain, *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 110 (1990) 126–45.
26. See, e.g., T. E. Duff, *Classical Antiquity* 30 (2011) 213–78.
27. On the *Prologues* see P. A. Stadter, *Illinois Classical Studies* 13 (1988) 275–95; T. E. Duff, in *CP* 333–49.
28. The *Prologue* to the *Themistocles*, if there was one, is lost: see *Them.* n. 1.
29. See Intr. *Thes.* §2.
30. *Sertorius–Eumenes*, *Aemilius Paullus–Timoleon* and *Coriolanus–Alcibiades*.
31. C. B. R. Pelling (ed.), *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge, 1988) 23–6, esp. 23–4: 'All P.'s heroes are naturally individuals, but still the first *Life* often reflects an important *normal* pattern, the second exploits it with an interesting variation' (emphasis original).
32. The *Comparisons* for the *Theseus*, *Solon*, *Aristides* and *Pericles* can be found in *The Rise of Rome*; that for *Cimon* in *Rome in Crisis*; those for *Nicias* and *Lysander* in *Fall of the Roman Republic*.
33. E.g., in this volume, the harsh judgements on Theseus which do not seem borne out by the *Life* itself: see *Thes.* 3.5 and 22.1 with nn. 9 and 99.
34. See W. J. Tatum, in Humble (2010) 1–22; D. H. J. Larmour, in *CP* 405–16, with earlier bibliography.
35. On the purposes of the *Parallel Lives* see Jones (1971) 103–9; Wardman (1974) 1–48; Duff 13–51; J. Geiger, in *CP* 292–303.
36. Even when Plutarch says he will bring forward material not previously or not well known, it is 'not so as to accumulate useless detail, but to hand down that which serves for the close study of character and habits' (*Nic.* 1.6).
37. The quotation is from *Iliad* 24.630.
38. On the encomiastic aspects of classical historiography see Woodman (1988).
39. See the Introductions to each of those *Lives*; cf. Intr. *Nic.*
40. For Plutarch's understanding of sixth- and fifth-century Athens see §6.

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41. 243B–D (F. C. Babbitt, trans.), with the discussion of P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965) 9–12. P. makes similar remarks at *Phoc.* 3.7–8.
42. Pelling 283–300.
43. See T. E. Duff, in G. Roskam and L. Van der Stockt (eds), *Virtues for the People* (Leuven, 2011) 59–82.
44. C. Pelling, in *CP* 154; his whole discussion (ibid. 149–62) of P.'s political philosophy is worthwhile.
45. On Plutarch's sources see §5.
46. See *Them.* 10.3–5 with n. 82.
47. See *Per.* 31–32 with nn. 231, 238.
48. As Pelling 365–86 clearly shows. See also C. Cooper, in *CP* 391–404.
49. P.'s audience was wide, encompassing both Greeks and Romans, as well as men and women: see Stadter (2014) 45–55.
50. Here I treat his sources generally; for the sources used in individual *Lives* see the individual Introductions.
51. For an overview of P.'s sources see M. T. Schettino, in *CP* 417–36.
52. Fundamental for his procedure and working habits in the Roman *Lives* are Pelling 1–44 and 91–116.
53. See *Nic.* 1.6, partially quoted above, n. 36.
54. Although P. was ambivalent and sometimes hostile towards Herodotus, he knew that he was a valuable source, even if he thought he needed to be used carefully. See the excerpts from *On the Malice of Herodotus* in this volume.
55. Capsule summaries of these writers can be found in Appendix 3.
56. We can see their influence in particular in the *Aristides* where they gave the Athenians a much larger role in the battle of Plataea than is to be found in Herodotus.
57. On Stesimbrotus see Pelling, in *OHAB* 89–92.
58. On Ion and P., see C. Pelling, in V. Jennings and A. Katsaros (eds), *The World of Ion of Chios* (Leiden, 2007) 75–109.
59. See, e.g., his use of Andocides' *On the Mysteries* in the *Alcibiades*: Verdegem 242–67.
60. On P.'s use of the Aristotelian constitutions see M. T. Schettino, in *CP* 430–32. On P. and Plato see Dillon (1977) 184–230; id., in *CP* 61–72; Roskam (2021) 18–39; and see further §6.
61. On Plutarch's views on poetry see R. Hunter and D. Russell (eds), *Plutarch: How to Study Poetry* (Cambridge, 2011) 2–17. For P.'s use of Simonides in particular see E. Bowie, in J. Opsomer et al. (eds), *A Versatile Gentleman: Consistency in Plutarch's Writings* (Leuven, 2016) 71–87.

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62. Although Aeschylus's *Persians* (which treated the battle of Salamis) was almost certainly important for the *Themistocles*, Attic tragedy, after a first few attempts at historical subjects, abandoned them and largely confined itself to the mythical heroes of long ago, and it was through these figures, safely removed in time and often in place, that the dramatists addressed contemporary issues. The influence of the tragedians is certainly present in P.'s portrait of Theseus: see Intr. *Thes.*, §2.
63. So called so as to distinguish it from the later New Comedy, which largely revolved around domestic matters, ordinary people (often stock characters) and a love plot, and whose great exponent was Menander.
64. As we can tell from the *Comparison of Aristophanes and Menander*, 853A–854D.
65. On P. and the comic poets see Podlecki (1998) 169–76, 213–14.
66. P.'s antiquarian researches: P. Payen, in *CP* 235–48.
67. For Nicarchus and Lamprias see *Ant.* 68.4 and 28.2–3 respectively; for Damon see *Cim.* 1–2.2. See Beck, in *CP* 2–3, for more references.
68. For the procedure of non-contemporary historians in this matter see Marincola (1997) 95–117.
69. See further §7.
70. On P.'s attitude towards the people see esp. S. Saïd, in L. de Blois et al. (eds), *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works*, vol. 2 (Leiden, 2005) 7–25.
71. See Pelling 207–36 for P.'s views on Roman politics, which are also of relevance for his notions of Greek political life.
72. For what P. means by calling Solon 'democratic', see Intr. *Sol.* §3.
73. See §7.
74. For an example, see Intr. *Arist.*, n. 11.
75. See *Cim.* 11.2–3, where he manages to manipulate the allies into a position of dependency on Athens; that he does so in a kindly way should not mask the strategy itself.
76. Cf. F. Frazier, in *CP* 488: 'Ambition, being a passion of the soul, a catalyst for action, and a factor in political life, cannot fail to interest Plutarch.' On Plutarch and ambition see Duff 83–7; Frazier, in *CP* 488–502; G. Roskam, M. De Pourcq and L. Van der Stockt (eds), *The Lash of Ambition: Plutarch, Imperial Greek Literature and the Dynamics of Philotimia* (Leuven, 2012). Only one man in these *Lives* is marked as unambitious: Aristides (*Comp. Arist.–Cat. Mai.* 5.4), though even he can be said to have ambition, not for political success but for behaving justly.

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77. For more detailed discussion of what follows see J. Marincola, in Humble (2010) 121–44.
78. See Intr. *Sol.* §3.
79. See, e.g., his remarks at *Flam.* 11.
80. See the work of Saïd, cited above, n. 70.

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List of Surviving *Lives* by Plutarch

Lives included in this volume are marked with an asterisk. Abbreviations for the *Lives* used in this edition are in parentheses. (*Comp*. indicates the *Comparison*.)

Parallel Lives

*Theseus (*Thes.*) and Romulus (*Rom.*)
Lycurgus (*Lyc.*) and Numa (*Num.*)
*Solon (*Sol.*) and Publicola (*Pub.*)
*Themistocles (*Them.*) and Camillus (*Cam.*)
*Aristides (*Arist.*) and Elder Cato (*Cat. Mai.*)
*Cimon (*Cim.*) and Lucullus (*Luc.*)
*Pericles (*Per.*) and Fabius Maximus (*Fab.*)
*Nicias (*Nic.*) and Crassus (*Crass.*)
Coriolanus (*Cor.*) and *Alcibiades (*Alc.*)
*Lysander (*Lys.*) and Sulla (*Sulla*)
Agesilaus (*Ages.*) and Pompey (*Pomp.*)
Pelopidas (*Pel.*) and Marcellus (*Marc.*)
Dion (*Dion*) and Brutus (*Brut.*)
Aemilius Paullus (*Aem.*) and Timoleon (*Tim.*)
Demosthenes (*Dem.*) and Cicero (*Cic.*)
Phocion (*Phoc.*) and Younger Cato (*Cat. Min.*)
Alexander (*Alex.*) and Caesar (*Caes.*)
Sertorius (*Sert.*) and Eumenes (*Eum.*)
Demetrius (*Demetr.*) and Antony (*Ant.*)
Pyrrhus (*Pyrrh.*) and Marius (*Mar.*)
Agis & Cleomenes (*Ag./Cleom.*) and Tiberius & Gaius

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Gracchus (*T. Gracch.*, *C. Gracch.*) (a double pair)
Philopoemen (*Phil.*) and Titus Flamininus (*Flam.*)

Stand-Alone *Lives*

Artaxerxes (*Artax.*)
Aratus (*Arat.*)

Lives of the Caesars

Galba (*Galba*)
Otho (*Otho*)

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Further Reading

Recommended reading specific to each *Life* is given at the end of its Introduction.

Plutarch and the *Lives*

There are two excellent introductions to Plutarch, though different in approach and focus: D. A. Russell, *Plutarch* (London and New York, 1973) and R. Lamberton, *Plutarch* (New Haven and London, 2001). C. P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford, 1971) remains fundamental for the understanding of Plutarch in his contemporary context. A. Wardman, *Plutarch's Lives* (London, 1974) has a number of excellent observations throughout. C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* (London and Swansea, 2002) collects the early papers (many of them path-breaking) of the most important and influential contemporary scholar of Plutarch. T. Duff, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford, 1999), though it focuses on only a selection of *Lives*, is the single best monograph on Plutarch published in the last 40 years. M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Chichester, 2014) contains a wealth of important essays by a host of prominent Plutarch scholars; likewise, F. B. Titchener and A. V. Zadorojnyi (eds), *The Cambridge Companion to Plutarch* (Cambridge, 2023). G. Roskam, *Plutarch* (*Greece & Rome*: New Surveys in the Classics, no. 47; Cambridge, 2021) reviews recent scholarship while offering an integrated interpretation of Plutarch's philosophy, ethical thinking and biographical technique. G. J. D. Aalders, *Plutarch's Political Thought* (Amsterdam, 1982) is a slim but important

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study which is particularly valuable for those using Plutarch as a historical source. P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch's Historical Methods: An Analysis of the Mulierum Virtutes* (Cambridge, Mass., 1965), while not focused on the *Lives*, nonetheless has important things to say about Plutarch's methods. Likewise, Stadter's collection *Plutarch and His Roman Readers* (Oxford, 2014), though focusing on the Roman *Lives*, has much of relevance to the Greek ones. The volume of *ANRW* dedicated to Plutarch (II.33.6) contains many valuable articles.

New books and articles on Plutarch appear now with astonishing frequency, and it is nearly impossible to keep up with the burgeoning bibliography, but in addition to the two *Companions* mentioned above, the following collections of essays may be mentioned: B. Scardigli (ed.), *Essays on Plutarch's Lives* (Oxford, 1995); P. A. Stadter (ed.), *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (London and New York, 1992); J. Mossman (ed.), *Plutarch and His Intellectual World* (London and Swansea, 1997); P. A. Stadter and L. Van der Stockt (eds), *Sage and Emperor: Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan (98–117 A.D.)* (Leuven, 2002); L. de Blois, J. Bons, T. Kessels, and D. M. Schenkenveld (eds), *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works*, 2 vols (Leiden, 2004–5); N. Humble (ed.), *Plutarch's Lives: Parallelism and Purpose* (London and Swansea, 2010).

The standard Greek text of the *Lives* is K. Ziegler (ed.), *Plutarchi Vitae Parallelae*, 4 vols in 7 parts (Leipzig, 2nd edn, 1957–71). The Budé edition, edited by R. Flacelière and others in 16 volumes (Paris, 1957–83), offers a Greek text with facing French translation and notes. Though dated, the Loeb Classical Library edition of Plutarch's *Lives* by B. Perrin in 11 volumes (London and Cambridge, Mass., 1914–26) remains the best way to get a sense of the *Parallel Lives* as Plutarch intended, with *Prologue* preceding the two *Lives* in order and the *Comparison* following. The most up-to-date translations of the *Lives* with notes can be found in the Penguin Plutarch volumes: C. Pelling (ed.), *Rome in Crisis* (2010); R. Seager (ed.), *Fall of the Roman Republic* (2005); R. Talbert (ed.), *On Sparta* (2005); T. Duff (ed.), *The Age of Alexander* (2012); J. Tatum (ed.), *The Rise of Rome* (2013). In these

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new versions the *Comparison* follows the second *Life* in the pair (and is thus usually in the Roman volumes).

Other Primary Sources

Translations of many of the primary sources used to reconstruct Greek history (and which Plutarch himself used) can be found in the Penguin Classics series: Aristotle, *The Athenian Constitution*, translated with notes by P. J. Rhodes (1984; repr. with corrections, 2002); Herodotus, *The Histories*, trans. by A. de Sélincourt, revised by J. Marincola (1996; further revised edn, 2003); Thucydides, *The Peloponnesian War*, trans. by R. Warner, with introduction by M. I. Finley (1974); Xenophon, *A History of My Times*, trans. by Rex Warner, with introduction and notes by G. Cawkwell (1979). Though not used by Plutarch, Pausanias, *Guide to Greece*, translated with notes by P. Levi (2 vols, 1979), has much of interest and value and employed some of the same (now lost) sources as Plutarch.

Many of the most important documentary and epigraphical sources are collected and translated in C. W. Fornara (ed.), *Archaic Times to the End of the Peloponnesian War* (Cambridge, 2nd edn, 1983), and P. Harding (ed.), *From the End of the Peloponnesian War to the Battle of Ipsus* (Cambridge, 1985). The latter has also translated the fragments of the Atthidographers with excellent notes and commentary: *The Story of Athens* (London and New York, 2008).

Greek History

There are a number of treatments of Greek history of the time period covered by this volume, i.e., the archaic (traditionally 1200–479 BCE) and classical (478–323 BCE) eras. All the major events are treated in volumes III.3, IV, V and VI of *The Cambridge Ancient History* (2nd edition, Cambridge, 1982, 1988, 1992 and 1994, respectively). J. B. Bury, *A History of Greece* (4th edition revised by R. Meiggs, London and New York, 1978), though dated in many parts, is still of value. P. Cartledge (ed.), *The Cambridge Illustrated History of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 1998) is

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more up-to-date and, as its name suggests, is (wonderfully) illustrated. V. Ehrenberg, *From Solon to Socrates: Greek History and Civilization during the 6th and 5th Centuries* B.C. (2nd edition, 1973; reissued with a new foreword by Paul Millett, London and New York, 2011) covers almost exactly the time period of the *Lives* in this collection; likewise the excellent essays in R. Osborne (ed.), *Classical Greece, 500–323* BC (Oxford, 2000). See also R. Sealey, *A History of the Greek City States, ca. 700–338* B.C. (Berkeley, 1976); T. R. Martin, *Ancient Greece: From Prehistoric to Hellenistic Times* (New Haven, 1996); and S. B. Pomeroy et al., *Ancient Greece: A Political, Social and Cultural History* (4th edition, New York and Oxford, 2018).

A number of recent books offer a treatment of Greek history either based on or combined with the sources on which our narratives are based: G. R. Stanton, *Athenian Politics c. 800–500* BC: *A Sourcebook* (London and New York, 1990); T. Buckley, *Aspects of Greek History 750–323* BC: *A Source-Based Approach* (London and New York, 2010); M. Dillon and L. Garland, *Ancient Greece: Social and Historical Documents from Archaic Times to the Death of Alexander the Great* (3rd edn, London and New York, 2010); J. Roisman, translations by J. C. Yardley, *Ancient Greece from Homer to Alexander: The Evidence* (Chichester, 2011).

For studies of the archaic era see: A. Snodgrass, *Archaic Greece: The Age of Experiment* (London and Berkeley, 1980); O. Murray, *Early Greece* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 2nd edn, 1993); L. G. Mitchell and P. J. Rhodes (eds), *The Development of the Polis in Archaic Greece* (London and New York, 1997); H. A. Shapiro (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece* (Cambridge, 2007); K. A. Raaflaub and H. van Wees (eds), *A Companion to Archaic Greece* (Malden, Mass., 2009); R. Osborne, *Greece in the Making, 1200–479* BC (2nd edn, London and New York, 2009); J. M. Hall, *A History of the Archaic Greek World, ca. 1200–479* BCE (2nd edn, Chichester, 2014).

For the classical era see: J. K. Davies, *Democracy and Classical Greece* (London and Cambridge, Mass., 2nd edn, 1993); K. H. Kinzl, *A Companion to the Classical Greek World*

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(Malden, Mass., 2006); P. J. Rhodes, *A History of the Classical Greek World, 478–323 BC* (2nd edn, Chichester, 2010); S. Hornblower, *The Greek World, 479–323 BC* (4th edn, London and New York, 2011).

For studies treating the Persian Wars as a whole, or individual battles, see: A. R. Burn, *Persia and the Greeks* (2nd edn with postscript by D. M. Lewis, London, 1984); J. F. Lazenby, *The Defence of Greece 490–479 B.C.* (Warminster, 1993); P. Green, *The Greco-Persian Wars* (Berkeley and London, 1996); P. de Souza, *The Greek and Persian Wars 499–386 BC* (London and New York, 2003); B. Strauss, *The Battle of Salamis* (London and New York, 2004); P. Krentz, *The Battle of Marathon* (New Haven, 2010); P. Cartledge, *After Thermopylae: The Oath of Plataea and the End of the Graeco-Persian Wars* (New York and Oxford, 2013); R. Garland, *Athens Burning: The Persian Invasion of Greece and the Evacuation of Attica* (Baltimore and London, 2017); D. C. Yates, *States of Memory: The Polis, Panhellenism, and the Persian War* (New York and Oxford, 2019).

For the Persian empire see: J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia: From 550 BC to 650 AD*, trans. by A. Azodi (London and New York, 1996); P. Briant, *From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire*, trans. by P. T. Daniels (Winona Lake, Ind., 2002); A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London and New York, 2007), a splendid collection of literary and visual material. On the Greeks' various approaches to the Persians see T. Harrison, *Writing Ancient Persia* (London, 2011).

For the Athenian empire see: R. Meiggs, *The Athenian Empire* (Oxford, 1972); M. F. McGregor, *The Athenians and Their Empire* (Vancouver, 1987); P. J. Rhodes, *The Athenian Empire* (*Greece & Rome*: New Surveys in the Classics, no. 17; Oxford, 1985; reprinted with addenda, 1993). P. Low (ed.), *The Athenian Empire* (Edinburgh, 2008) collects a number of important articles and book chapters; J. Ma, N. Papazarkadas and R. Parker (eds), *Interpreting the Athenian Empire* (London, 2009) looks at the Athenian empire in the light of recent developments in archaeology and epigraphy.

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On Athenian democracy see: C. Hignett, *A History of the*

Athenian Constitution (Oxford, 1952); R. Osborne, *Demos: The Discovery of Classical Attika* (Cambridge, 1985); M. Ostwald, *From Popular Sovereignty to the Sovereignty of Law: Law, Society and Politics in Fifth-Century Athens* (Berkeley, 1986); J. Ober, *Mass and Elite in Democratic Athens: Rhetoric, Ideology and the Power of the People* (Princeton, 1989); W. R. Connor et al., *Aspects of Athenian Democracy* (Copenhagen, 1990); I. Morris and K. A. Raaflaub (eds), *Democracy 2500? Questions and Challenges* (Dubuque, Iowa, 1998); M. H. Hansen, *The Athenian Democracy in the Age of Demosthenes: Structure, Principles, and Ideology* (revised edn, Bristol, 1999); K. Raaflaub, *The Discovery of Freedom in Ancient Greece* (Chicago, 2004); K. A. Raaflaub et al., *Origins of Democracy in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley, 2007); P. J. Rhodes (ed.), *Athenian Democracy* (Edinburgh and New York, 2004), a collection of 14 previously published articles; P. Cartledge, *Democracy: A Life* (Oxford, 2016).

For studies of the Peloponnesian War, as a whole or focusing on individual events, the most comprehensive treatment in English is D. Kagan's four-volume study: *The Outbreak of the Peloponnesian War*; *The Archidamian War*; *The Peace of Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition*; *The Fall of the Athenian Empire* (Ithaca and London, 1969–87). See also: P. Green, *Armada from Athens* (London, 1971); G. E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Origins of the Peloponnesian War* (London, 1972); G. Cawkwell, *Thucydides and the Peloponnesian War* (London and New York, 1997); J. F. Lazenby, *The Peloponnesian War: A Military Study* (London and New York, 2004); L. Tritle, *The Peloponnesian War* (Westport, Conn., 2004); J. E. Lendon, *Song of Wrath: The Peloponnesian War Begins* (New York, 2010).

For the physical city and monuments of Athens, J. Travlos, *Pictorial Dictionary of Ancient Athens* (London, 1971), though now more than half a century old, remains fundamental. See also: R. E. Wycherley, *The Stones of Athens* (Princeton, 1978); J. M. Camp, *The Archaeology of Athens* (New Haven, 2001) and *The Athenian Agora: Excavations in the Heart of Classical Athens* (updated edn, New York, 1992); J. M. Hurwit, *The*

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Athenian Acropolis: History, Mythology, and Archaeology from the Neolithic Era to the Present (Cambridge, 1999) and *The Acropolis in the Age of Pericles* (Cambridge, 2004); T. Leslie Shear, Jr, *Trophies of Victory: Public Building in Periklean Athens* (Princeton, 2016).

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INTRODUCTION TO THE *THESEUS*

1. *Theseus, the Athenian Hero*

Plutarch's *Life of Theseus* differs from the rest of the *Lives* in this volume in one important way, namely that Theseus was a figure from the Greek heroic past, one of those early figures such as Heracles, Odysseus or Achilles, whose exploits were recorded not by historians contemporary with the events they described, but by oral tradition or by poets of a later age. To be sure, the Greeks believed that such figures really had existed, but they were aware that the information about them was qualitatively different from that concerning men such as Cimon or Pericles. The heroic past, as known from Homer and others, was distinguished from the more 'historical' era by the quality and the magnitude of the deeds of those early figures, who often fought with monsters, spoke with and received help from the gods in person, or accomplished feats – such as a descent to and return from the underworld – that were contrary to nature.

The subject of Theseus as an Athenian hero is an enormous one, and only a very bare outline of the essentials can be presented here. Although there is dispute about a number of details, the outline of his rise to importance as a great heroic figure is clear. He was known, probably from the eighth century BCE, as a somewhat minor hero of a swashbuckling type, given to battling monsters and abducting women; then, at a certain point in the late sixth and early fifth centuries, he was suddenly taken up by the Athenians, who made him into *the* Athenian hero, a founding father and a representative of all the virtues that they thought Athens embodied.

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The older core of the Theseus myth consisted of five incidents

in particular: Theseus's participation in the battle of Lapiths and Centaurs; his killing of the Minotaur; his affair with Ariadne; his seizure of the young Helen; and his descent to the underworld to seize Persephone. Grafted on to this older core is a series of different adventures, designed to show a more beneficent Theseus, one who is a lover of justice, a defender of the weak and a far-sighted statesman. It has been noted that the popularity of Theseus as a subject for Attic vase painters suddenly exploded in the period of 520–510 BCE, and his exploits from then onwards appeared with increasing frequency. Noteworthy is the portrayal on vases of deeds in which Theseus slays villains (not just monsters) who threaten the peace and civilized life. The five events that make up this series of actions – the slayings of Sinis, the sow of Crommyon, Sciron, Cercyon and Procrustes – are found painted as a 'cycle' on a number of Attic vases. At just about this same time (*ca.* 500–490), the Athenians dedicated a Treasury at Delphi and adorned it with a similar cycle of Theseus's deeds over nine metopes on the south side.[1] This surge in the popularity of Theseus cannot be accidental, but must represent a concerted effort by the Athenians to promote a 'native' Ionian hero[2] as a counterweight to the Doric, panhellenic Heracles. The fact that the cycle of Theseus's deeds takes place along the Isthmus and involves Corinthian and Megarian local heroes almost certainly indicates Athenian claims to this region, perhaps as part of an attempt at territorial expansion.[3]

By the early fifth century, then, Theseus's place as an Athenian hero was secure, but his fortunes were given an even greater boost by the exploits of Cimon, who sometime in the 470s sailed to the island of Scyros (where tradition had located the death of Theseus), expelled the pirates there and managed to discover the grave of an enormous figure buried with a bronze sword. Claiming he had found the remains of Theseus, he brought them back to Athens with great fanfare.[4] He had a tomb built for them – the Theseum – in the agora, which Cimon then had adorned with paintings of Theseus's exploits, including his descent under the sea to visit Poseidon, his battle with the Amazons, and his participation in the battle of Lapiths and

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Centaurs.[5] From that point on, Theseus was literally and figuratively at the centre of Athenian life.[6]

2. *Plutarch's Sources for the* Theseus

We can be sure that Plutarch used the early poetic tradition to construct some portion of the *Theseus* but there was much more besides. Classical Athenian literature is full of complimentary references to Theseus. He was a particular favourite of the tragedians, who often used him to represent the ideal virtues of Athenian civic life. In Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*, he staunchly protects the aged Oedipus, who wishes to be buried in Attica, from the brutish Thebans who want to take him back; he plays a similar role as defender in Euripides' *Heracles*, where the despondent Heracles, who has just murdered his wife and children, is taken by Theseus (who remembers Heracles' services to him), who purifies and cares for him. Perhaps the most idealized portrait of Theseus is found in Euripides' *Suppliants*, in which Theseus, urged by his mother, goes to defend the burial rights of the Seven against Thebes. Not only does he risk his own and the Athenians' lives in the quest for justice for the dead men; he also gives a spirited defence of Athenian democracy, portraying himself as a king who rules by popular acclaim and who must, like anyone else, submit his actions to the people for approval.[7]

Theseus's story was eventually taken up by the Atthidographers.[8] These writers fitted Theseus into the lists of Attic kings and incorporated his deeds as known from art and literature. The Theseus they created, however, as was fitting for those claiming to write history, was a largely rationalized and demythologized Theseus. As can be seen throughout this *Life*, Plutarch was much beholden to these writers – he names four of them fairly consistently: Cleidemus, Demon, Hellanicus, Philochorus – and their portrait of Theseus has greatly influenced his own. If in these accounts Theseus no longer battled creatures that were half-man, half-beast, or descended to the underworld and returned, he nevertheless remained a courageous and virtuous hero, an important statesman largely responsible for the creation of the Athenian state.

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But of course, none of these writers had actual historical documents, and, in their absence, they turned to things other than narratives: to collective memory, to monuments, to temple dedications, and to religious customs and rites practised in their own day. Monuments usually had stories or legends that purported to explain their existence (whether true or not is another question). They could thus be invoked as the proof that earlier actions had indeed occurred, and Plutarch avails himself of this technique frequently in this *Life*: for example, despite some reservations about the details of the Athenian war with the Amazons, he refers to the Horcomosium at Athens and the Amazon graves pointed out in Megara, Chaeronea and Thessaly as evidence for the battle and the stories about it (27.7–9).[9]

Dedications in temples similarly had traditions attached to them (and sometimes inscriptions on them that needed explication): Plutarch mentions two statues of Ariadne and one of Aphrodite dedicated by Theseus (20.6, 21.1), and he uses these as 'evidence' for Theseus's actions on Crete. Religious rites, as well, vindicated the historicity of the early heroes, since many rites had an *aition* – an explanatory account – which connected them to those heroes and explained how such rites had originated. These can be found consistently in works by the ancients on their early history, and Plutarch's *Theseus* is no exception: he observes, for example, that the *eiresionē* carried by the Athenians in their worship of Apollo resembles the one that Theseus had carried as a suppliant (22.6); or that Theseus founded the Oschophoria festival, the details of which have their origins in the events surrounding his voyage to Crete and his rescue of the Athenians (23.2–5).[10]

In all these ways, then, the heroic past was fleshed out, and it became possible to construct narratives about very early times. Plutarch, not surprisingly in view of his purposes in writing the *Lives*,[11] adheres to rationalistic explanations throughout the work: Poseidon was not really the father of Theseus, this was just a story devised by Pittheus to keep the real father a secret (6.1); Theseus does not really kill a Minotaur – a half-man, half-bull creature – he merely gets the better of a general named Taurus ('Bull') serving under Minos (16.1); and Theseus and

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Pirithous do not descend to the underworld to steal Persephone, Hades' wife, they merely go to a Molossian king named Aidoneus who happens to have a daughter Phersephone (31.4).[12]

As Plutarch makes clear in the preface to this *Life* (1.2–5), the reader needs to be aware that in some cases the material cannot be accommodated to rationalistic approaches. Indeed, it is difficult to say exactly how much Plutarch himself believed of what he was reporting in this *Life*. He cites numerous authorities in the *Theseus*, far more than he usually does,[13] and this may indicate a desire to bolster the narrative with as much 'scholarly' apparatus as possible, though it might also indicate a desire on the part of Plutarch to demonstrate his mastery of the tradition, and to impress the reader with his skilful arrangement of unpromising material. His careful narrative manner (filled with items indicating reserve, such as 'they say', 'it is recorded', and so on) constantly reminds the reader that author and audience tread on treacherous ground, and it may well be that Plutarch thought that, given such material, he had come as close to the truth as one possibly could. He recognized his efforts for what they were, and in that sense well understood that some readers would not or could not follow him in his explorations of early 'history': his appeal to their indulgence in the *Prologue* (1.5) shows an awareness and appreciation of the sceptic's viewpoint – and it may be a viewpoint that the author himself shared.[14]

3. *Plutarch's Theseus*

In looking at Plutarch's Theseus, two cautions are in order. First, Plutarch's smooth, linear narrative amalgamates stories that had actually developed separately in different places and at different times; second, Plutarch's 'chronology' of Theseus's actions is an artificial construct, since the various tales adhering to him often had no fixed chronological point, and Plutarch structures the events to make the *Life* read in a certain way.

We have seen above how Plutarch inherited a twofold picture of Theseus, on the one hand a swashbuckling adventurer apt to seize and abandon women, and, on the other, a benefactor of human life and a far-sighted and compassionate politician.

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Plutarch keeps both figures before him in this *Life* and faces squarely the contradiction in Theseus's nature. In the early part of the *Life*, not surprisingly, Plutarch portrays a Theseus who as a young man is fired with love of great deeds, and inspired by the example of his cousin Heracles to do something worthy of himself and of his father. He is strong, courageous, pious and intelligent – and headstrong as well, for he defies his mother (as he will later his father) by taking the more dangerous road to Athens. He has an innate sense of justice, eager to requite evil-doers with a punishment of their own kind. When he arrives in Athens and finds the city divided, he quickly takes action and destroys the Pallantidae, putting an end to civil strife.[15]

In Athens he begins to show another side: he wishes to go after the bull of Marathon, partly because he is still eager for action, but now we are told also that he wishes to win the people's favour, and we get a sense early on that he cares about them as well, despite the fact that he is already heir to the kingdom. His spirit again shows itself when the youths and maidens about to be sent to Minos are being selected: against his father's wishes, he volunteers to be sent regardless of how the lot falls out, and the Athenians are now struck by his public spirit. Plutarch emphasizes repeatedly in his presentation of Theseus that he sought out danger and was brave not from necessity but from nature.[16]

With the story of Ariadne we have our first major episode of Theseus involving a woman,[17] an area in which the tradition had ascribed to him some very questionable behaviour. Plutarch's array of variant versions here somewhat clouds our view of Theseus's culpability, but his mention of Theseus's love for Aigle, with the remark that the line was expunged by Pisistratus because it harmed Theseus's character, anticipates Plutarch's later explicit judgement that the abandonment was 'neither an honourable nor even a decent action' (29.2). The danger is already there in Theseus's most glorious deed, as the civic spirit displayed in the salvation of the Athenian youths is juxtaposed with the cavalier abandonment of the woman who helped to ensure his success.

Although some have seen culpability in Theseus's failure to put up the proper sail when returning from Crete, this incident

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adds a further human element to the young man, so eager to bring the good news to family and city that he forgets the important order given by his father, and his success is tinged with tragedy. Now that he is king, however, he begins to reveal his political side, advancing a bold plan by which he would unify the whole of Attica under Athens as capital, and change the nature of the constitution from monarchy to democracy.[18] Historical accuracy aside, these actions show that his early vaulting ambition to do great deeds now extends to the community; in Plutarch's eyes even the tempering of Theseus's 'democratic' reform by the distribution of particular honours to particular classes (25) is praiseworthy, for it means that Theseus was wise enough to not want the rabble to rule.[19]

The ambition and the old habit of womanizing start to reveal a darker side as the narrative moves into its final stages. Theseus's campaign to the Black Sea, where he seizes the Amazon Antiope, leads to the Amazons' invasion of Attica which was 'no trivial or womanish affair' (27.1). The hero's seizure of a woman and the woman's kinfolk coming for revenge would have summoned up memories of the Trojan War, and, despite the great victory of the Athenians, the image of Theseus becomes more shaded, for he can now be seen as a man willing to endanger his country for his private pleasure.[20] For it is only shortly after this that Plutarch mentions the traditions about Theseus's rapes of various women (29), and gives his view of the abandonment of Ariadne.[21] The list helps us also to prepare for the even more scandalous seizure of the young Helen, the complications of which will be closely connected with Theseus's downfall.

It is at this point that Plutarch narrates Theseus's meeting with Pirithous. Under the latter's influence, Theseus engages in both beneficent actions (the slaying of the Centaurs) and highly disruptive ones: first the seizure of Helen and then the attempted seizure of Persephone. Plutarch's juxtaposition of the Helen and Persephone episodes is extremely effective. On the one hand, by demythologizing the usual tale of Theseus's and Pirithous's descent to the underworld (for Hades becomes in Plutarch's version only a normal human king), Plutarch is able to clear Theseus of the charge of impiety; on the other hand,

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the substitution of irresponsible behaviour for impiety picks up the earlier threads of private desire/public consequences that we saw in the story of his seizure of Antiope. It is the combination of the seizure of Helen *and* Theseus's absence from Attica with Pirithous that allows the Spartan brothers of Helen to amass an army and attack the Athenians. Opinion at Athens now inclines against Theseus, exacerbated, to be sure, by the unscrupulous demagogue Menestheus; yet even he, although painted in largely unflattering colours in this *Life*, speaks truth when he remarks that the brothers should be admitted inside the city of Athens, since their quarrel was only with Theseus, who had begun the violence, and not with the people of Athens; the brothers, in fact, do no harm when admitted and wish only to be initiated into the Eleusinian Mysteries (33.1).

When Theseus finally returns to Athens, we have been prepared for what happens: in his absence the demagogues have stirred up the people against him, and, when he tries to reassert his authority, the people are no longer willing to accept him as head of state. The portrait of Theseus 'outmanoeuvred by demagogues and factions' (35.5) suggests political naïveté on the part of Theseus, unless perhaps he is to be seen as the victim of forces that he himself unleashed, unaware of their great power. For, as Christopher Pelling has pointed out, the character of Theseus in this *Life* employs two motifs dear to Plutarch's heart. The first is the way in which a hero can be destroyed by forces that he himself has unleashed: as Theseus had united the people and made them free, so it is as a united free people that they decide they no longer need Theseus or want him at the head of affairs. The second is the way in which a hero's characteristics evoke those of his city.[22]

Plutarch's parallel for Theseus is the legendary founder of Rome, Romulus, and as is clear from the *Prologue* to the pair, Plutarch chose Romulus first and then sought out an appropriate figure with whom to compare him. Plutarch himself states what he thinks the similarities are: (1) both were unacknowledged children of divine descent; (2) both were warriors; (3) both were brave and intelligent; (4) both were essential to the existence of their cities; (5) both abducted women; (6) both had

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