According to the proverb, "Well begun is half done." Plutarch certainly accepted this principle, for he lavished special care on the openings of his Parallel Lives. In this he was not unusual. Ever since Homer, artists had taken pains with the beginnings of their works. When rhetorical theory became the principal means of discussing literary organization, detailed rules were established governing the proper treatment of formal beginnings, or proems (προοιμία, Latin exordia). Other prose writers—philosophers, historians, technical writers—borrowed and adapted these theories for their own works. No writer, however, excels Plutarch in the variety, charm, and technical skill of his proems.

The very number of the proems in the Parallel Lives\(^1\)—more than twenty—makes them a proper subject for study for anyone interested in the form of ancient prose or its use of rhetorical principles. But they are of more than formal interest, since they also reveal the expectations and assumptions of Plutarch and his readers. In them Plutarch expresses his motivations and purposes, and several contain major statements on method. In addition, since proems are especially directed at gaining the interest of the reader, they implicitly reveal the nature of his audience: their social status, leisure activities, and intellectual interests. The proems to the Lives do not follow the model of other biographical proems, or of historical proems, although there are similarities of topic. In their variety and techniques they often remind one, as might be expected, of the essays of the Moralia. This study, after a summary account of earlier biographical proems, will explore the principal themes and techniques which Plutarch employs in the proems to the Parallel Lives, their relation to rhetorical theory, and some of the features which distinguish them from those of other writers.

\(^1\) The appendix contains a brief discussion of the proems to the Aratus, Artaxerxes, and Galba (the Otho does not have one, being part of the same work as the Galba), which are not part of the Parallel Lives.
There are twenty-two extant pairs of lives: of these thirteen have

3 That is, Sol.-Publ., Them.-Camb., Arist.-Cat.Maj., Cor.-Alc., Philop.-Flam., Pyr.-Mar., Lyc.-Num., Lys.-Sul., and Ages.-Pomp. The Ages.-Pomp has perhaps the weakest claim to having even an informal proem, but the treatment of Agesilas’ early life seems to fulfill that purpose. See below. Informal prefaces in Plutarch should be distinguished from the concealed preface or insinuatio (cf. Lausberg [cited n. 12], pp.150-51, #263-65; 160-61, #280-81, which is normally used when there is reason to think that the audience will resist a regular proem. Lucian seems to refer to something like this when, in reference to Xenophon’s Anabasis, he speaks of δυνάμει τινά προοίμια (How to Write History 23).

4 Per.3. 1 (γάρ), Phoc. 4. 1 (µίν οὖν), Demetr. 2. 1 (τοιςυν), Nic. 2. 1 (οὖν).

5 The first person is found in informal proems only at Lyc. 1. 7 (τετραοόμεθα) and Arist. 1. 3 (καθ’ ήμᾶς).

6 The Nic. neither names Crassus nor justifies the selection of the pair; the Alexander omits the justification. Plutarch may speak of choosing one or the other life first, and then seeking a companion. The Roman life was chosen first in Thes.-Rom., Cic.-Luc., Sert.-Eum., AgCl.-Grac. No precedence is indicated for Per.-Fab., Dem.-Cic., Aem.-Tim., Demetr.-Ant., Phoc.-Cat. (although Cato is introduced two chapters later than Phocion), Pel.-Marc., or Dio-Brut.

7 Cf. Dem. 3. 1, Per. 2. 5, Dio 2. 7. It is thus a mistake to shift the order of lives in a pair, or to move the proem from one life to another, as was done by the Aldine edition, still followed in the Budé edition. Ephorus’ use of proems to the books of his history are the first indication of a clear awareness of book-length units in a larger work. The histories of Herodotus and Thucydides and the Republic of Plato do not seem to have been divided by the author into book-length units.
average being about 97 pages. The extraordinary length of the Alexander-Caesar perhaps explains the loss of the beginning of the Caesar: the book would have been divided into two rolls, making the beginning of the second life vulnerable. Most of the pairs which can be identified as written early run below the average: the only exception is Lysander-Sulla at 100 pages. The three longest pairs, averaging 165 pages, were all written late. It is noteworthy that the Roman lives of these pairs are all drawn from the Civil War period, and average 90 pages in length.

It is clear from the proems that each book had a title, with the name of the author, since Plutarch did not indicate in the informal proems the second of the lives to be treated, and even neglects to mention Crassus in the formal preface of the Nicias. As has been pointed out by Pelling, the two lives should be read as a unit, in which the first life may establish themes or questions which are developed or resolved in the second. The body of the formal proems, as opposed to the indication and justification of the selection of heroes, may not relate to both lives, but only one: e.g., the first life in the Nicias, the second in the Cimon.

Before analyzing the proems of the Parallel Lives, it is useful to review the best preserved proems of pre-Plutarchean biography, in order to distinguish more precisely the achievement of Plutarch.

In the first half of the fourth century B.C. biography came into existence as a genre separate from both history and oratory. While much influenced by oral encomia, it shaped its own objectives in an intermediate ground between the epideictic oration of praise or blame and the historical narrative of men and events.

The earliest biographies, Xenophon's Agesilaus and Isocrates' Evagoras, reflect two opposing conceptions of the role of a proem, although both consider their work an ἐκποιήμα, or encomium. Isocrates opens his Evagoras with an elaborate proem (1–11) on the importance of fame to great men and the difficulties of writing a suitable encomium in prose. The first period draws an extended contrast between the honors which Nicocles has performed for his father and the still more valuable gift of praise of the dead king's life and of the dangers he underwent. A proper account would make Evagoras' arete immortal. The second point is the value of encomia for contemporaries as encouragement to great action. Such emulation, Isocrates writes, is currently discouraged by the comparison with heroes of the past and by the envy of contemporaries: this deadening situation should be broken by those willing to change the world for the better. Isocrates is

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8 These are rough counts, based on the latest Teubner edition. A more accurate count would use the TLG database to calculate the length of each life.
9 Alex.-Caes., 186 pp.; Ages.-Pomp. 156.5 pp.; Demetr.-Ant., 152 pp.
11 On the emergence of biography in the fourth century, see especially A. Mormigiano, The Development of Greek Biography (Cambridge, Mass. 1971).
willing to be such a pathbreaker. Although the resources of poetry for an encomium in many ways are superior to those of prose, he will dare to be the first to attempt an essay of this nature.

As a student of Gorgias and for many years the leading teacher of rhetoric in Greece, Isocrates employs a number of standard techniques developed by orators and teachers of rhetoric and later codified in written handbooks, from Aristotle and Anaximenes of Lampsacus to Cicero and the rhetoricians of the empire. These rules were meant especially for judicial speeches, but were transferred, with such modifications as were necessary, to other kinds of prose works. Isocrates himself was a major participant in this phenomenon, since he regularly presented his works, including the Evagoras, as speeches, even when they were clearly intended for a reading public. With regard to the proem or opening section of a speech, the rhetoricians established that it must accomplish three goals: 1) render the judge or juror interested in the speech, 2) create in him a sense of goodwill toward the speaker, and 3) make him willing to learn from the speech. To use the later Latin terms, the proem should render the audience attentus, benevolus, and docilis. This formula did not fit all speeches equally well, and Aristotle, for example, noted that particular emphases were necessary for an epideictic address as opposed to a judicial one. Even less did it apply to other prose forms, although the influence of rhetorical theory, because of its central role in the educational system, was omnipresent.

In the Evagoras, Isocrates arouses the interest of his reader, the dead king's son Nicocles. He speaks feelingly of the son's piety toward his father and the father's desire for praise. At the same time he stresses the newness of the attempt at prose epainos. The same statements also invite goodwill, since Nicocles will naturally be well-disposed toward someone praising his father, and understanding is to be expected for a speaker attempting a new and difficult task. The emphasis on Isocrates' own decision to write, the risks he is taking, and his expectation of a noble

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13 Lucian, for example, when discussing the writing of history, notes that a historical proem need not work for the goodwill of the reader, since that is presumed. The historian will concentrate on arousing the attention of the reader, indicating the greatness, the necessity, the relevance, or the usefulness of the subject, and encourage his grasp of the material by a presentation of causes and a summary of major points (How to Write History, 53). Cf. G. Avenarius, Lukian's Schrift zur Geschichtsschreibung (Meisenheim/Glan 1956) 113–18; H. Homeyer, Lukian, Wie man Geschichte schreiben soll (München 1965) 269–71.
accomplishment, involve the speaker with his subject and with his audience, while making an implied comparison with Evagoras' own benefactions. The use of comparisons and elaborate periods is appropriate to an epideictic proem, as later formulated in rhetorical treatises. There is little connection with the proems of Herodotus and Thucydides, with their emphasis on methods of handling sources and on accuracy, although Isocrates does note that the truth of an encomium of a contemporary is assured because the auditors are well-informed (5), a familiar, if illogical, *topos*.

Xenophon, instead, employs a very short four-line proem, simply stating that while it is difficult to write a eulogy in praise of a great man, it must be attempted, since it is not right for a man to lack praise for the sole reason that he was outstanding. He avoids both the historical topos of method and accuracy and the rhetorical claims for attention and good will, although the simple statement of Agesilaus' greatness does serve to arouse the attention of the reader, and may be paralleled with the historians' claim for the greatness of their subject.14 The notion of inadequacy to the topic, however, is itself a rhetorical *topos*, especially suitable to speeches of praise, and is found, for example, in Thucydides' Funeral Oration. Despite the presence of these *topoi*, Xenophon appears to reject Isocrates' conscious rhetorical development of proemial themes.15

After Isocrates and Xenophon, the paucity of extant biographies forces a leap to the first century B.C.16 The proem to the *Life of Augustus Caesar* by Nicolaus of Damascus exists only in fragments found in the *Excerpta de virtutibus* (FGrHist 90 F 125–26), so that its overall effect cannot be known. Like Xenophon (although at greater length), he notes that the virtues of his subject have made his task more difficult. In narrating Augustus' deeds he will make it possible for all to know the truth. A new

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15 This is not to take a stand on the relative priority of the two works. There is no external evidence, and the internal evidence cannot be considered probative in either direction. They were in any case written within a short time of each other.

16 The biography of Euripides by Satyrus, the only Hellenistic biographer of which sizeable fragments are preserved, does not include material from the proem.
feature is the divisio, which sets out the sections of the first part of the work, those particularly suited for a biography: origin (genos), nature (physis), parents, and rearing and education (trophe and paideusis). The fundamental theme seems to be the greatness of Augustus, which Nicolaus will attempt to present in the life. The list of benefactions and conquests both arouses interest in the reader and renders him docilis by giving a foretaste of the contents of the life. In the extant fragments, there is no special justification of the author's competence or of his method. Unfortunately, such comments if they existed would not have interested the excerptor.

The Lives of outstanding generals by Cornelius Nepos represents a change of method from earlier extant biographies, offering a collection of short lives rather than an isolated study of one person. Nepos precedes his collection with a formal proem, leaving the individual lives either without introduction or with a very short statement of the moral interest of the life.¹⁷ The proem, addressed to Atticus, attempts to justify hoc genus scripturae, arguing that it is useful to study great men of other nations, even though their customs and habits are often alien to Roman ways and expectations. As such it is an attempt to win the goodwill of the reader, who otherwise might be inclined to reject the book as un-Roman and useless for his own growth or recreation. Since Atticus himself was a philhelle, and would hardly have been scandalized, e.g., by the philosophical interests of Epaminondas, and since in general the educated Roman of this period was quite cosmopolitan, the problem could not be a real one. Nepos evidently is both employing a traditional topos of Roman self-sufficiency, similar to those employed by Cicero in his speeches and treatises, and at the same time suggesting the interest of these lives, that they record "exotic" customs. Nepos mentions his haste to complete his task, but is silent on questions of method, sources, or accuracy. The reader is expected to be interested because of what can be learned from these lives.

Since the beginning of the Divus Julius has been lost, it is uncertain whether Suetonius prefixed a proem to his Lives of the Caesars. The individual lives do not have proems, nor do those of the lives of the poets or other fragments. They represent a collection, like that of Nepos, but the lives are more tightly bound together both chronologically and thematically by the restriction of subject to the twelve Caesars from Julius to Domitian.

The Agricola, instead, opens with a powerful proem (1–3), in which Tacitus explores the implications for his own time of the act of recording the lives of distinguished men.¹⁸ Unlike Nepos or Suetonius, Tacitus does

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¹⁷ Epaminondas 1. 1–4 is an exception, a longer statement excusing the subjects' "inappropriate" interests in music and philosophy. The lives with no introductory statement are Miltiades, Cimon, Conon, Dion, and Datames.

¹⁸ On the proem to the Agricola, see the sensitive analysis by A. D. Leeman in "Structure and Meaning in the Prologues of Tacitus," YCS 23 (1973) 169–208 at pp. 199–208. Cf. also K.
not see himself as chronicling the past, but as making a statement for his own time through a presentation of one man's life. The proem's most impressive feature is the denunciation of the repression under Domitian and the sense of disgust for the subservience of the ruling class, including Tacitus himself. Rhetorically, this is the appeal for the reader's goodwill *ab adiunctis*, that is, from the circumstances of writing. But because of its stress on the new opportunity to write, the denunciation also powerfully arouses the reader to expect in this work something long desired but previously unavailable. At the same time, Tacitus includes a number of elements applicable to biography in general. He begins with a succinct definition of the genre: *clarorum virorum facta moresque posteris tradere.* But his own experience has made him aware that remembering greatness is not simply a question of convincing others that these men are worthy of praise, or a presentation of exempla to imitate, but a statement of values in a world which may oppose or despise them, an act of freedom dangerous to a tyrant, impossible for a slave. The traditional purposes of biography, praise of virtue and invitation to emulation, in Tacitus' proem are radically politicized. Throughout there is the implication that Agricola is indeed worthy of this honor, and at the end Tacitus employs the *topos* of an apology for his lack of skill in presentation. Tacitus closes the proem with a union of typical items and his own distinctive viewpoint, combining the naming of his subject, the explanation of his relation to him, and his particular reason for writing with an ironic awareness of the audience: *hic interim liber honoris Agricolaee societatis mei destinatus, professione pietatis aut laudatus erit aut excusatus.*

Since it contains so many features found in Plutarch, another proem to an individual life should be considered, even though it was written a century after Plutarch's *Lives*. The proem which introduces Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (1. 1–3) is perhaps the most elaborate preface to any ancient biography, befitting the extraordinary length of the life itself. After beginning with a digression on Pythagoras of Samos and his special relation to the gods, Philostratus turns to the similar practices of his subject,


19 The phrase is borrowed from Cato's *Origenes*: cf. Ogilvie-Richmond *ad loc.*

20 The introductory digression on Pythagoras is especially striking as a technique to arouse the reader's interest before introducing the actual subject of the life. Although apparently off the point, the transition to Apollonius is made smoothly. For parallels, see the very brief statement on the treatment of thieves and moneylenders at the beginning of Cato's *De agricultura*, or the account of Cicero's philosophical writings in *De divinatone* II, which seem more closely tied to the subject than the more elaborate excursus which introduces Sallust's *Catilina.*
Apollonius. He refers to Apollonius' many outstanding qualities, but notes that he has also been slandered as a *magos*, and defends him from that charge. Philostratus, in writing his biography, will not condone ignorance such as that shown by these attacks, but "be most precise *(ἐξακριβῶςοι)* both as to the times when Apollonius did or said something and to the habits of 'wisdom' by which he came to be considered δαιμόνιος and θεῖος." This statement on accuracy introduces a treatment of sources, which he asserts have been collected from many cities and temples, from the accounts of others and from Apollonius' own letters. A catalogue of sources follows this general statement. Philostratus has used the account of Damis of Nineveh, who studied with Apollonius and later wrote of his travels, opinions, discourses, and prophecies, the book of Maximus of Aegae on Apollonius' stay in Aegae, and the testament of Apollonius himself. He scorns as worthless the four books written by Moeragenes. The empress Julia Domna had provided the specific occasion for the biography, when she asked Philostratus to recast in a more elegant narrative *(ἀκογγελία)* the memoirs of Damis, which although most interesting, had not been skillfully told. Philostratus complied, and by adding new sources created a new biography as an honor for the sage and to instruct lovers of learning.

Philostratus' use of rhetorical structures and techniques is obvious. The proem arouses the interest of the reader by comparing Apollonius favorably with Pythagoras and indicating Apollonius' wondrous practices and prophecies. By refuting the charges that Apollonius was a *magos*, the preface invites the reader's goodwill toward him, while the allusions to the patronage of Julia Domna, to the excellences of the sources used, and to the author's care with style create a good disposition toward the work itself. Finally, the hints as to Apollonius' life and activities prepare the reader to learn more about him. Note especially that Philostratus has integrated the historians' treatment of sources and accuracy into the *captatio benevolentiae*. According to rhetorical theory, the use of such material *ab adiunctis*, that is, from matters indirectly related to the topic, was especially suitable for epideictic rhetoric, a category which could include both history and biography.21

21 A variation of the same technique can be seen in the geographical excursus which introduce books II, III, and V of the life. On this use of the excursus and other features of a literary proem, see Erren, *Einführung*, 66–84.

The introduction to Philostratus' *Lives of the Sophists* appeals more simply and directly to its dedicatee, the future emperor Gordian, expecting his interest because of Gordian's relationship to Herodes Atticus and their previous conversations on the orators. Nevertheless the author reinforces that interest by noting that he has not given a detailed treatment, but only presented the features most important to understand the subjects' virtues and vices, successes and failures. Its purpose is to lighten the worries of a busy man, not to overwhelm him with factual detail. The avoidance of many standard features suggests that the work may not be biography at all: cf. C. P. Jones, in G. W. Bowersock, *Approaches to the Second Sophistic* (University Park, PA 1974) 11–12. On the dedication, see I. Avotins, "The Date and Recipient of the *Vitae Sophistarum* of Philostratus," *Hermes* 106 (1978) 242–47.
This brief review of biographical proems reveals both similarities and differences in emphasis. The biographical proem often emphasizes praise of the subject, a theme also found in historical prefaces, although rarely as a major item.\(^{22}\) The importance of praise, however, does not hold true of all biography: there is a radical difference between the biography of a single person (Agesilaus, Evagoras, Augustus, Agricola, Apollonius) and a set of biographies (Nepos, Suetonius, Philostratus'\(^{25}\) Lives of the Sophists). The major emphasis in the latter is not praise (although that may be a component) but the variety of persons and ways of life treated, and the pleasure to be drawn from learning about them. Philostratus is unusual in referring specifically to his sources in the proem to the Apollonius, presumably because this too was an account of the past, not a contemporary encomium, as are the other individual lives.\(^{23}\) All employ proems which attempt to interest the reader in the work at hand.

When Plutarch's proems are considered in the light of those just reviewed, it becomes clear that he employs many of these same features to create a distinctive and flexible form which does not conform to any established pattern. The Theseus supplies an excellent example.\(^{24}\)

The proem to the Theseus opens with a striking comparison of the biographer to geographers preparing maps, which plays on the reader in several ways. The opening comparison, and the direct address to the dedicatee, Sosius Senecio, are standard rhetorical techniques meant to arouse the interest of the reader, the first purpose of a proem in rhetorical theory.\(^{25}\) The special request to the "listeners" to accept his presentation of τὸ μυθὸςες with goodwill (1. 5) addresses the second purpose, and the brief summary in chapter two of the common features of the lives of Theseus and Romulus the third, that is, to render the reader "ready to learn" (docilis), by giving him a foretaste of the subject. But the real focus of the proem is on Plutarch himself, and his relations to his subject and his reader. The elaborate introductory period,\(^{26}\) with its vivid simile, turns on the discomfiture of the author in reaching a "territory" where there are no clear markings or guideposts. By sharing with the reader this discomfiture, this sense of venturing into uncharted lands, he invites the reader's

\(^{22}\) History stresses the importance of the particular subject being presented, whether a given war, a special period, or the history of a nation. The utility of the history is also important, although this varies from the broadest insight into human nature and the historical process to specific exempla of human action, "of what to avoid as bad, and imitate as good," as Livy says.

\(^{23}\) A statement on method, justifying the new history, appears regularly in historical proems. Histories of the past concentrate on the use of good sources and the improvement over past accounts, in style and completeness.


\(^{25}\) For the use of comparisons, see H. Lausberg, \textit{Handbuch der literarischen Rhetorik}\(^{2}\) (München 1960) 155, \#271 6, 8' citing Quintilian 4. 1. 70.

\(^{26}\) For the use of periods in proems, see Lausberg, \textit{Handbuch} p. 469, \#947.
comprehension and sympathy, and forestalls the potential objection against the mythical element in this pair of lives. In the following sentence Plutarch expresses his determination to “purify” the mythical element, and give his account the appearance of history (ιστορίας δύνη, 1. 5), but asks the indulgence of the reader for those passages where the intractability of the material rejects any mixture of probability. The personification of τὸ μυθόδευς is remarkable: the biographer would like it to be subject to reason (λόγῳ ὑπεκούσαι), but it “ rashly scorns the credible” (ἀφθάδος τοῦ πιθανοῦ περιφρονή). The mythical is a wild beast, with a mind of its own, not easily tamed. Whereas in the well-known Alexander-proem Plutarch reminds his reader that he is writing biography, not history, here he stresses his affinity with the historian, working in areas “accessible to reasoned argument (ἐφικτὸν εἰκότι λόγῳ)” and “ well-grounded on history clinging to facts” (βάσιμων ιστορία προειμάτων ἐχομένη).

But why does Plutarch choose to write on Romulus and Theseus at all? The answer comes in carefully phased stages: first Romulus is chosen, as already being quite close in time to Numa and Lycurgus, the most recent pair treated (all belong to the eighth century). Thinking of Rome’s founder then suggests to Plutarch the founder of Athens, even though this man, Theseus, takes him back another five centuries, well into the mythical world prior to the Trojan war, populated with monsters and heroes, the τερετάδη καὶ τρεγγικά described by poets and mythographers, to which he had earlier alluded. While Romulus is the stuff of legend, it is only with Theseus that Plutarch truly enters the realm of myth, and it is immediately after mentioning him that Plutarch warns that the material is indomitable and invokes the goodwill of the reader. That done, the rest follows easily. Once the choice of subjects is accepted (indicated by δ’ ὁ νῦν at 2. 1), Plutarch can go on to the other similarities with Romulus which justify the choice of Theseus. Note also in this proem the two “heroic” quotes from Aeschylus and the Iliad, which both ornament the passage and set the atmosphere for the heroic stories which will follow in the lives. This proem thus prepares the reader for the lives which follow by capturing his interest, winning agreement on the treatment of the subject, and creating a bond of interest and sympathy between the author and the reader. It sets the tone of mythical-heroic narrative, and invites the reader to share with the author the sense of exploring a strange land, where there is no reliable information. The Theseus represents a breakthrough into mythical time, beyond the frontier of history. The proem warns the reader of the danger, while assuring him of the conscientiousness of his guide.

Although concerned with a very particular problem, the proem to the Theseus is not unusual. The thirteen formal proems in the Parallel Lives each respond to the particular needs of a pair of lives, displaying similar patterns of themes and techniques.

The most frequent theme is Plutarch’s purpose in writing the Lives. Simply stated, he intends to incite his readers to virtue, as he asserts most
clearly in the *Pericles*. There he argues that it is the duty of every person to focus and nourish his mind on the best objects, especially actions which derive from virtue, since those inspire one to noble imitation. His biographies of Pericles and Fabius will provide just such examples. In the *Aemilius*, Plutarch speaks of the lives as similar to a mirror, in that they provide an image by which one can order one's own life according to the virtues of those men. Again, they are like being a guest in someone's house, sharing their life. In this way one assumes a conscious control over one's mental images, expelling anything ignoble, and concentrating on the finest paradigms. Negative examples can also serve an educative purpose, as Plutarch notes in the *Demetrius*. An awareness of human weakness should make the readers “be more zealous spectators and imitators of better lives” (1. 6).

Other proems explore the moral features of the *Lives* not simply as exempla, but by posing fundamental questions of the ethical life. The *Cimon* argues that the biographer must not give undue attention to the weaknesses of his subject, but emphasize his strengths, recording only enough of the imperfections as to insure a recognizable likeness. The fact is, Plutarch notes, that human nature is imperfect, and no one is without failings.

Several proems focus on the dominant role of external factors in a man's life. Often the successes or failures of great men are not determined by their own qualities, but by circumstances over which they have no control. The proems to *Dio-Brutus* and *Eumenes-Sertorius* relate the final defeats of these men to their fortune: as Plutarch states in the former, τὸ ὑπερτείρασθαι τὸν ἐξερευνάτος καὶ διακαμουσόντες τούτους. The accounts of parallel supernatural appearances to Dio and to Brutus before their deaths raise the question whether τὰ δαμάσκοντα τούτων shake the philosophical conviction of the wise man and challenge the whole notion and utility of conscious progress in virtuous living. In the *Sertorius*-proem, Plutarch considers “tyche flowing now here, now there in the infinity of time.” The ostensible theme of the proem is historical coincidences, but there is a moral facet as well, since along with their similarities of character and life-stories, both Sertorius and Eumenes “met a violent and unjust tyche at the end.”

Phocion and Cato Uticensis are men fighting not their personal tyche, but that of the times. Phocion was fighting with his arete the τὸ χαίρειν τὴν Ἑλλάδος. Cato, according to Plutarch, “fought a great battle with tyche, which seized and threw down the republic through other men, but because of Cato and his arete the republic almost survived. Fortune won only with difficulty, and slowly, and after a long time” (Phoc. 1. 4, 3. 4). Cato, or

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27 Cf. also *Aratus* 1, where Plutarch commends consideration of noble ancestors as paradigms for one's own behavior.

28 In practice, however, Plutarch devotes a surprising amount of attention to the faults of both Cimon and Lucullus, as has been shown by R. McComb in an unpublished paper.
rather Cato's arete, wrestled with tyche, and was almost able to conquer it. Two other heroes, Aemilius Paullus and Timoleon, shared both good personal choices and good fortune, so that the reader must ask "whether they succeeded more from good luck (eυποτμία) or intelligence (φρονήσει)" (Aem. 1.6). The search for fame can also affect virtue. The proem to Agis and Cleomenes considers the relation between δόξα and ἀρετή: the discussion in chapter two could easily come from one of the Moralia. Arete is confirmed by praise, but "an excess of political ambition is destructive," since it leads to a mania and senselessness.

The proems thus arouse interest by posing an inquiry which Plutarch clearly considers most significant to his readers, the nature of arete, how it manifests itself, how it is affected by the differing circumstances in which it is expressed, and how it can be imitated.

The second major theme is the discussion of method, and is closely related to the moral purpose, since the method used in the lives is meant to bring out the arete of the heroes. Plutarch's statement of method in Alexander I is well known: since he writes biographies, not histories, he will concentrate on small matters—jokes, sayings, anecdotes—which often reveal more of character than do great battles. His method, that is, is determined by the desire to explore the ethos of his subjects. Military campaigns and political decisions are relevant only in so far as they help the biographer toward this goal. The Cimon notes that a portrait should be accurate and not omit (as an encomium would) a person's faults, but also argues that excessive precision in presenting weaknesses of character is not suitable. Again, historical detail is relevant only in so far as it contributes to the portrait being painted. Yet the proem to the Theseus reveals Plutarch's uneasiness when he moves beyond the normal domains of history to the poetic and mythological, and reminds the reader that Plutarch wishes to base his lives on firm historical material. In fact, several of the formal proems are devoted to the questions of sources and accuracy in the Lives. In the Nicias, overwhelmed by the excellence of Thucydides' narrative, which he cannot improve upon in style or vividness, he nevertheless justifies his account by the additional decrees, dedications, and other material which he will include, and which he hopes will better illuminate Nicias' character. The Demosthenes notes the difficulty of working in Chaeronea, away from the libraries and learned conversation of a city like Athens, at a time when Plutarch needed to collect passages drawn from scattered foreign writers. Moreover, his knowledge of Latin is insufficient to attempt the kind of literary comparison which might be expected in a book on Demosthenes and Cicero (Dem. 2). In fact, in the Demosthenes Plutarch cites over twenty

29 The contrast of luck and virtue is a standard philosophical and rhetorical debating point: cf. Plutarch's De fortuna Romanorum and De fortuna an virtute Alexandri.

30 Note Plutarch's comment at the end of the Demosthenes, "Now you have, Sosius, the life of Demosthenes, from what we have read or heard" (31. 7), and again at the beginning of the
sources, including historians, philosophers, comic poets, and orators, but for the Cicero he restricts himself chiefly to a few of Cicero's own works. According to Pelling, "the second half of Cicero, in particular, is scrappy and ill-informed." Later, when composing other Roman lives of the Civil War period, he would investigate the matter more thoroughly, revealing that despite his lament in the Demosthenes proem he had by that time been able to get access to other sources.

References to unusual or contradictory sources are also the most frequent means of augmenting the rhetorical effectiveness of the informal proems found in nine pairs of the Parallel Lives. As has been noted, in the openings of these nine lives, which lack formal proems, Plutarch adapts the common biographical categories of origin and family, education, and physical appearance to fulfill the standard proemial functions of arousing interest in his book and establishing goodwill toward the author. His consideration of the source problem in connection with one of these categories usually involves as well a question of character, and thus focuses once more on the ethos of his subject.

For example, the Solon opens with an abstruse quotation from Didymus giving a unique identification for Solon's father. Another quotation from Heraclides Ponticus introduces the question of Solon's relationship as kinsman and lover to Peisistratus, which is explored at some length. The discussion concludes with a reference to Peisistratus' relationship to Charmus and the statue of Eros in the Academy connected with that affair. The chapter combines the themes of special knowledge of sources, family history, and friendship, erotic or not, with a famous tyrant. In the opening chapter of the Aristides-Cato Major pair, Plutarch examines and systematically refutes the arguments of Demetrius of Phaleron concerning the wealth of Aristides' family. He is clearly trying to catch the reader's attention by deploying a variety of evidence: he quotes the inscription on the choreic tripod; he recalls the cases of Epaminondas and Plato, who were helped by their wealthy friends Pelopidas and Dion to pay for choruses; he cites the researches of Panaetius; he inserts his own knowledge of the ostracism of Pericles' counselor Damon and makes a passing mention of a variant found in Idomeneus; and finally, he gives his own sceptical judgement of Demetrius' motives. Plutarch converts what might have been a simple statement on Aristides' justice despite his relative poverty into an elaborate historical analysis. Thus he both emphasizes the importance of the notion of the just man's independence from money and

Comparison, "This is as much of what is worth recalling or what has been investigated concerning Demosthenes and Cicero as has come to our knowledge."


32 On the sources used in these later lives, see Pelling, "Plutarch's Method . . ." pp. 83–91.
draws the reader into his work by involving him in the scholarly disputes which had arisen around Aristides' archonship.

In a similar manner, in the proem to the Themistocles Plutarch explores Themistocles' humble parentage, from which he rose to such great heights, through the citation of an epigram, quotations from Phanias and Neanthes, a discussion of the Cynosarges gymnasium, and a reference to the shrine at Phyle mentioned by Simonides. In the three cases of Solon, Aristides, and Themistocles the category of origin and family has been elaborated to serve a proemial function, exploiting the wealth of sources that Plutarch had available.

Other lives employ different formulas. The Pyrrhus opens with an extended history of Pyrrhus' house, beginning not with Achilles, which might have been enough, but with the flood. The mythological references to Phaethon, Deucalion, and Pyrrha precede the heroic figures of Achilles, Neoptolemos and his wife Lanassa (granddaughter of Heracles). Finally, semi-historical times are reached with the first Hellenized king, Tharrupas, and his descendants. The graceful display of erudition (even to noting that Achilles receives divine honors in Epirus, under the name Aspetos) arouses the attention and interest of the reader. In addition, the barbarian interlude in the genealogy suggests a certain rawness in Pyrrhus' ambition, which is confirmed in the course of the life, and further paralleled in the companion figure of Marius.

For the Lycurgus, the theme of the informal proem must be the obscurity of the subject: "Concerning Lycurgus the lawgiver one can say absolutely nothing certain, since his origin, his journey abroad, his death, and especially his legislation are reported variously; the greatest differences are found with regard to the time when he lived." There follow a series of citations from Aristotle, Eratosthenes, Apollodorus, Timaeus, and Xenophon which illustrate the different positions taken on Lycurgus' lifetime. Finally, Plutarch contrasts the name the poet Simonides gives for Lycurgus' father, Prytanis, and the common account of his descent from Heracles, in which his father was Eunomos the son of Prytanis. The hope Plutarch expresses to "provide a narrative with as few contradictions and as many prominent witnesses as possible" (Lyc. 1. 7) is at risk from the beginning.

Plutarch exploits his own special knowledge of Delphi in the Lysander, which opens with a digression on the statue at the treasury of the Acanthians. This, he asserts, is a statue of Lysander, not of Brasidas, as commonly supposed. The reason for the error is the inscription on the treasury, "Brasidas and the Acanthians, from the Athenians." The statue shows Lysander to be a man tied to the old traditions of Lycurgan Sparta, with long hair and a noble beard. The hair style permits Plutarch to correct those, including Herodotus, who did not think that this was a custom deriving from Lycurgus, and at the same time to set the tone for his portrait
of Lysander as an upright man and preserver of the old ways. In this case the category of physical appearance has been adapted to serve as proem.  

Three of the proems which discuss the method of the biographer may be seen as meeting potential objections to the works in question, a standard proemial function. In the Nicias, Plutarch explains that he is not attempting to rival the brilliance of Thucydides' Sicilian narrative, while in the Alexander and Theseus he asks the indulgence of the reader, either for passing over so quickly famous battles and other historical set pieces, or for presenting material so patently fabulous.

Intimately related to the problem of moral growth and the development of virtue is the question of education. In two of the informal proems Plutarch uses the standard biographical topic of early training as the peg on which to hang his proem. The story of Cleandrus of Mantinea, who came as an exile to Megalopolis and became the guardian of Philopoemen after the death of his father, opens the Philopoemen. The young hero was trained by Cleandrus as Achilles was by Phoenix. Later the young man's education was completed with the knowledge of philosophy and freedom, learned from Ecdelus and Demophanes, men trained in the Academy and active in political affairs, the very men who freed Megalopolis of the tyrant Aristodemus, helped Aratus expel Nicocles tyrant of Sicyon, and reorganized the government of Cyrene. Inspired by their teaching and example, Philopoemen was ready to become "the last of the Greeks," the last fighter for Greek freedom. Education plays a different role in the Coriolanus: the hero was noble by nature (φύσις), but suffered from lack of training (παραισθεια). Therefore the book opens with some of the illustrious figures of the Marcian gens, which indicate and assure Coriolanus' inborn nobility, but then focuses on the absence in his early years of proper formative influences, as a result of which he lacked also the measure and disposition which is necessary for greatness. The same lack of παραισθεια was found also in the companion hero, Alcibiades, though in a quite different way. Finally, in the Agesilas, which comes closest of all the lives to having no preface at all, Plutarch writes that thanks to being first a private citizen, Agesilas came to ruling "having already been trained to rule," and so was uniquely able to be in tune with his subjects.

A standard theme of historical proems is the praise of history, both of its usefulness and the pleasure it brings. The praise of biography, and especially of the moral biography which he writes, is Plutarch's principal topic in the Aemilius proem and a major element of that of the Pericles,

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33 The proem of Sertorius also takes advantage of a physical feature, Sertorius' loss of one eye, to build its discussion of τύχη.

34 The figure, called προφητεία or anticipatio, forms part of the praeparatio which begins in the proem. See Lausberg, pp. 424–25, #854–55 and Quintilian 9. 2. 16. 4. 1. 9.

35 The first chapter of Agesilas, which seems to fill the role of informal proem, is less than one page, as against the total for Agesilas-Pompey of 156.5 pages.
both of which have already been discussed. In general, however, Plutarch in his proems prefers to express the value of biography indirectly through his statements of purpose and method.

In developing the themes of his proems, Plutarch employs rhetorical techniques to achieve the goals of attention and docility. He occasionally strives also for good will, but more often presumes that his reader is already well-disposed toward him and his work. The variety and sophistication of these techniques, and the success with which they are adapted to the individual lives, establishes Plutarch as a master of proemial style. Rhetoricians noted that the reader's interest might be aroused by *chreiai*, *gnomai*, comparisons, digressions, metaphors, and indirection—and Plutarch uses all of these, usually several in a given proem.36 Thus in the *Pericles* Plutarch opens with a *chreia*, a short historical anecdote focusing on the words of (Augustus) Caesar, who asked, when he saw some foreigners fondling monkeys and puppies in their arms, "Don't their wives bear children?" Then Plutarch moves, via a consideration of τὸ φιλητικόν in humans, to an extended analogy between the proper objects of the senses and of the mind, an analogy enriched by comparisons with the occupations of dyeing, perfume-making, and sculpture. The thought is reinforced by additional *chreiai* from Ismenias the flute-player and Philip of Macedon. Finally, he concludes with a general *gnome* on the effect of τὸ καλὸν in moving the soul to noble action.

The *chreia* is Plutarch's favorite opening technique, sometimes used as an authority, to reinforce the argument, as in the *Pericles*, sometimes as a foil for Plutarch's own opinions, as in the *Demosthenes*. There Plutarch begins by quoting the encomium of Alcibiades' Olympic victories, which asserted that for happiness a man needs first of all a famous city. Plutarch, however, rejects this, and affirms his own opinion that happiness depends most on character and interior condition. The use of *chreiai* is flexible, and leaves much room for variety. Other lives are introduced by related forms of traditional discourse, such as proverbs or fables. For example, the opening of the *Aratus* corrects one version of a proverb with an older one; *Agis-Cleomenes* begins with anonymous interpreters of the Ixion myth. Of the thirteen formal prefaces in the *Parallel Lives*, five begin with some form of *chreia*.37

A different technique is found in opening of *Cimon-Lucullus*. The vivid short story of Damon, the descendant of a founding family of Chaeronea who killed a Roman officer and turned outlaw, is exceptional as

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36 Cf. Lausberg, *Handbuch*, pp. 155–56, #2718. A *chreia* is a saying ascribed to a famous person, whose authority guarantees the value of the statement, whereas a *gnome* or *sententia* is a general statement not tied to a particular historical figure. See Lausberg pp. 536–40, #1117–20 and pp. 431–34, #872–79.

37 *Per., Dem., Phoc., Dio, and Pel.*, to which may be added *Sol.* from the informal proems, *Arat.* from the individual lives, and *Galba* from the *Lives of the Caesars*. Negatively cited *chreiai* are found in *Sol., Phoc., Arat.* and *Galba.*
an opening for one of the Parallel Lives.\footnote{They are frequently found in the separate introductory pieces called prolalai or lalai found in Lucian. A description of a beautiful object was also recommended as an opening: cf. Lausberg, Handbuch, p. 155, #271 e, α'}. However, this kind of short narrative is one form of digression, which is a common device in proems to arouse interest. Other examples include Philostratus' digression on Pythagoras at the beginning of the Life of Apollonius, as well as Sallust on the development of leadership in the Catiline or Cicero on his philosophical works in De divinatione II. Their purpose is to arouse the interest of the reader, and need not be connected with the work that follows, although Plutarch's story in the Cimon is in fact tied to the pair of lives it introduces, since Lucullus' testimony saved the city from Roman punishment for Damon's murders. The discussion of historical coincidences which opens the Sertorius serves a similar purpose. The first two chapters of Agis-Cleomenes discuss the relation of δόξα and ἄρετή, starting with an interpretation of the myth of Ixion which sees Ixion's fate as analogous to the situation of the φιλόδοξοι, who pursue δόξα as an έδοξον τῆς ἄρετής. Only in the third chapter does Plutarch turn to the particular case of the Gracchi, and then of the revolutionary Spartan kings. The Demetrius begins with a discussion of the manner in which persons understand through opposites, in the crafts and other skills, and then develops a comparison between the perceptions and crafts. The specific reference to the subjects of the pair of lives does not come until I. 7-8. As has been seen, the Aemilius takes its start from the biographer's own delight in his work, and the usefulness he finds in it, while the Theseus begins with a comparison between biography and map-making.

The writing of proems was apparently a common school exercise. Even experienced writers could prepare collections of proems at leisure, so that they would be available to add to a new essay or treatise. In one letter to Atticus (16. 4. 4), Cicero admits shamefacedly that by mistake he had prefaced his newly composed De gloria with a proem from his private collection which had already been used for Academics III. He noticed the error only later when he was rereading the Academics. A major fault for a proem was that it could be attached to any work indiscriminately. Plutarch usually avoids this charge, taking some pains to integrate the theme of the proem to the pair of lives which follow. Nevertheless, some general proems, such as those of the Aemilius on biography or of the Pericles on the contemplation of virtuous deeds, would fit a number of lives. The preface to the Alexander, distinguishing biography from history, might equally have been applied to Agesilaus-Pompey, though it is true that the latter pair had received less treatment from historians.

Comparison of Plutarch's proems with those found in other biographical works reveals the variety of techniques and approaches he has employed. The format of the Parallel Lives required an exceptional number
of proems, and he took the opportunity to explore diverse modes of introducing his pairs of lives. Those essays of the *Moralia* which preceded the *Lives* would have given him practice in opening treatises on a broad spectrum of topics, and in fact the proems owe much to the philosophical and moral considerations so common in those essays. Many show the same technique of discussion by means of comparison and analogy, freely flowing between verse quotations, *chreiai*, and examples from the arts and natural sciences. Another sort of model was offered by histories with multiple books, each introduced by a proem, such as were found in Ephorus and are known from Diodorus. However, being part of a predetermined and structured whole, those prefaces would have a different function from the proems to pairs of lives written one at a time, the author adding to them as the fancy struck him. The treatment of method and emphasis on research in out of the way sources, although present in later historians, is rare for biography. Even Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius*, which makes a point of identifying and justifying the sources it employs, gives proportionately less weight to the question than has been found in Plutarch.

Throughout all the proems, formal and informal, the most distinctive feature is the way in which Plutarch uses them to establish his own ethos. Those with dedications to Sosius Senecio (*Dem.*, *Dio*, *Thes.*, *Aem.*, *AgCl.*) clearly are meant to express an air of friendship, intellectual pleasure, and high moral values. But the others continue that same warmth, the feeling of being in contact with an understanding and intellectually curious person, someone who is serious yet not stuffy, aware of life in all its manifestations, yet deliberately avoiding the unseemly and trying to present the best side of his subjects. Plutarch does not usually give his readers biographical details, as do, e.g. Dionysius of Halicarnassus or Appian (the proem to the *Demosthenes* is an exception). But he often unselfconsciously shares with them his feelings and assessments: his discomfiture at leaving the bounds of known history in the *Theseus*, his delight in writing biographies, which he sees as an aid to his own moral development (*Aem.*), his disdain for the profession of sculptor (*Per.* 2), and his fears that something might shake the calm of the philosopher (*Dio*).

What notion of the audience for these lives can be derived from these proems? His readers were male, upper-class, and leisured. They were distrustful of the populace and the errors of *hoi polloi* (*Phoc.* 2. 1, 8), scornful of dyers and perfumers (*Per.* 1. 5), and supportive of the Roman order, even though they recognized that individual Romans would misuse their authority. On this point the story of Damon in *Cimon* 1–2 is most revealing: although Damon comes from an old Chaeronean family and has been sexually harassed by a Roman officer, the sympathy of the narrative is with the town officials who outlaw him after he murders his tormentor. Lucullus is seen as the fair and honest Roman official who saves the city when the hostility of a neighboring Greek town might have destroyed it. Plutarch's readers were also politically active, and expected to learn from the
lives of statesmen and to imitate their virtues and avoid their errors in their own everyday affairs. Yet Plutarch never suggests, as is frequent in proems, that his readers were hurried and had to be presented with important material as rapidly as possible.

Though involved in government, Plutarch’s audience were also intellectuals, well-read and familiar with the science of their day. They enjoyed tragic quotations, were familiar with maps of strange places (Thes. 1), and with histories of Alexander the Great. They understood metaphors drawn from the philosophy of perception or astronomy (Per. 1. 3, Phoc. 2. 6). They admired Thucydides, but were wary of the fabulous (Thes. 1), and did not read for pleasure—or at least admit to reading—stories of scandal and sexual dalliance (Demet. 1. 5). They were philosophically inclined and interested in moral growth (Aem. 1). While they admired writing as a means of understanding philosophical and ethical truths (Per. 2, Aem. 1), they considered the other arts on a different level, and their practitioners—flautists, sculptors—as low class, since what they produced, while beautiful, was fundamentally useless (Per. 1. 5–2. 1).

Such a portrait could easily match the dedicatee of the Lives, Sosius Senecio, or at least the way he would like to see himself. It would also match Plutarch himself, and this is perhaps one of the secrets of the Lives, that Plutarch envisions an audience so much like himself, not only interested in but sharing his feelings on moral improvement, duty, and the importance of philosophy in guiding one’s life. If the reader did not actually live this way, he wished to. Plutarch does not write up to his audience, as a client to his patron or an inferior to a superior, nor down, as a teacher to his pupils, the expert to the uninitiated. Rather he establishes a relation of friendship and equality, in which he has pride of place because of his reading and devotion to higher ideals. Plutarch accepts that he is on the road to wisdom, but implies that his reader is too, and invites him to walk with him. It is this unpretentious and unquestioned unity of interests between author and reader, so apparent in the proems, which creates much of the charm and the power of the Parallel Lives.

This examination of the proems of the Lives should naturally lead to comparison with those of Plutarch’s other essays, and of other works intended for a general readership, such as Seneca’s letters or some of the essays of Galen. However, this attempt to set the lives in the context of belles-lettres in general must be set aside, as Plutarch would say, “for another essay.” But even with this examination of Plutarch’s proems, it is possible to appreciate the variety of techniques that he has employed, and the importance of a few major themes. The ethos of his heroes is central, meant to be an example and often an inspiration to his readers. The formation of character is complex, since, as the proems frequently assert,

39 Cf. e.g. Nepos, or Philostratus’ Life of the Sophists.
favorable or adverse circumstances and the training one receives can significantly shape even a virtuous man's career. Finally, the proems often demonstrate Plutarch's delight in employing a variety of sources, while keeping their focus on his primary goal, to understand the nature of the man, not merely to describe his deeds.

Appendix: The non-parallel Lives

Four of Plutarch's Lives do not belong to the set of Parallel Lives: Aratus, Artoxerxes, Galba and Otho. Of these the last two belong to another set, Lives of the Emperors. The proem of the Galba introduces a new book, which would have included the Otho and the lost life of Vitellius, thus concluding his series of the emperors. Suetonius also had combined the three emperors of 69 A.D. in one book. The Otho has no proem, but continues directly after the Galba, with the first day of the new emperor's reign. Otho had already been introduced in the course of the former Life. Like the formal proems of the Parallel Lives, that of the Galba is set off by the asyndeton at 3.1 from the body of the life. The life itself is concerned almost completely with the events of 68 and 69 (4.3 to the end, 28 of 29 pages). The opening is provided by a chreia, which here introduces the theme of the corruption of the soldiery by money and pleasure. The theme is expanded with other chreiai by Aemilius Paullus and Plato, then applied to the particular case of the events after Nero's death. Another chreia introduces the comparison of the Romans with the sufferings of the Titans, and a comparison with the ten-month reign of the tyrant Polyphron emphasizes the disintegration at Rome, where four emperors ruled in a like period. The theme of corruption of the soldiery is reintroduced, this time specifically applied to Nymphidius Sabinus, who by his payments to the troops destroyed not only Nero, but also Galba. Finally, there is a recusatio, similar to that in the Alexander-proem: a detailed account belongs to πραγματική ιστορία, but Plutarch will not pass over the ἀξία λόγου of the actions and sufferings of the Caesars. Here, contrary to the Alexander, Plutarch does not say he is looking for ethos, or virtue and vice, and leaves quite vague what exactly he considers ἀξία λόγου and how much he thinks he should include of that which is not "actions and sufferings." The Galba is given a kind of epilogue in c. 29, in which Plutarch takes the sum of Galba's attempt to be emperor and suggests the strengths and weaknesses of his character. From this it appears that Plutarch's principal aim in fact has been to illuminate the character of the emperors, and what they did and suffered is used as indications of the character. In this the Lives of the Emperors were similar to the Parallel Lives, but did not (apparently) include the emphasis on education and life before the accession, which is so

40 For a more detailed study of the proem to the Galba and its relation to the Otho see the paper of A. Georgiadou, No. 10 in this volume.
important in most of the Lives. Obviously, however, an Augustus or Tiberius would be much richer than a Galba or Otho.

The Artoxerxes does not have a formal proem, but the account of the family and of Artoxerxes' pre-accession name serves as an informal proem, moving the reader into the world of Persia and introducing two of Plutarch's major sources, Deinon and Ctesias (the third, Xenophon, will be mentioned in c. 4). However, other proemial themes are lacking. Plutarch does not say why he chose to write this life: was he considering a collection of Persian kings, similar to that of the Roman emperors? Or was he attracted because of the confluence of first-hand sources in Xenophon and Ctesias? The Aratus, on the other hand, has a full formal proem, marked off by the asyndeton which begins c. 2.41 The proem is divided into two parts, the general considerations on praising one's ancestors, and the particular statement of Plutarch's decision to write on Aratus and his reasons for it. The two are united by the references to the dedicatee, Polycrates, at 1. 1, 3, and 5.42 The proem opens with the quotation of a proverb, as quoted by Chrysippus, but then corrected according to the grammarian Dionysodorus. The point is that while some bad men substitute praise of their distinguished ancestors for their own good actions, it is right for good men also to praise their ancestors, using them as "homegrown examples" for their lives. This notion of paradeigmata which ties together the generations, leads naturally to Plutarch's desire to write the biography of the famous Aratus for the children of his friend, himself a descendant of Aratus, so that they can be nourished by these examples, and learn what they should imitate. The use of lives as sources of virtues to imitate is one of the fundamental objectives of the Parallel Lives: see especially the proems to Pericles and Aemilius, and in a negative sense, the Demetrius. The sententia which concludes the proem generalizes again the notion to the wider readership which Plutarch expects. At the very end of the Life (54. 8), however, Plutarch recalls the personal dedication, noting that the family of Aratus "survives in Sicyon and Pellene to our own day."

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41 See on the proem A. J. Koster, Plutarchi Vita Arati (Leiden 1937) XVII-XVIII, XXVIII-XXIX.
42 Polycrates is probably to be identified with the friend mentioned at De Pyth. Or. 409B and Quaest. Conv. 667E ff., and with the Helladarch Tib. Claudius Polycrates (PIR² C969, SIG³ 846): cf. C. P. Jones, Plutarch and Rome (Oxford 1971) 26, n. 41, 40.