



Tavola 4 P. Carlsberg 421 — Frammenti 5, 6, 7, 8 (dall'alto)

PLUTARCH'S VIEW OF ANCIENT ROME  
SOME REMARKS ON THE *LIFE OF PYRRHUS*

Guido SCHEPENS  
(Leuven)

In Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus* the narrative of his hero's war against the Romans (280-275 BC) occupies the very centre of his account. The relevant chapters (16-21 and 25) cover the battles of Heraclea (280), Ausculum (279) and Beneventum (275) as well as the attempted peace negotiations. The circumstantial narrative which Plutarch has devoted to these events betrays a genuine interest in describing and signifying the first encounter of Greeks and Romans in what had become, in his own days, a long-standing history. Such interest may be termed unsurprising for an author who conceived a biographical corpus organised into pairs of Greeks and Romans and who never stopped reflecting, throughout his entire work, on the political situation created by the Roman empire<sup>1</sup>. So

<sup>1</sup> At the turning point of the first to the second century AD Plutarch's ideas on being Greek in the Roman empire perhaps amount to the most important expression of Greek elite views on the relations between the Greek world and Rome. Fundamental is S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50-250*, Oxford 1996, esp. pp. 135-186. See also J. BOULOGNE, *Plutarque. Un aristocrate grec sous l'occupation romaine*, Lille 1994 (and the important review of this study by S. SWAIN in *Ploutarchos. Journal of the International Plutarch Society* 12.2, 1996, pp. 16-20). The extent to which Plutarch gave expression to his political concerns and views is still a matter of debate and may well have varied from one *Life* to another, as does, e.g. his presentation of Roman politics: see, for instance, L. DE BLOIS, *The Perception of Politics in Plutarch's Roman 'Lives'*, in *ANRW II* 33.6 (1992), pp. 4568-4615; C.B.R. PELLING, *Plutarch and Roman Politics*, in *Past Perspectives: Studies in Greek and Roman Historical Writing*, Cambridge 1986, pp. 159-187 (= B. SCARDIGLI [ed.], *Essays on Plutarch's Lives*, Oxford 1995, pp. 319-356). While admitting that Plutarch is a man "interested in Roman history and sympathetic to Rome" (p. 103), C.P. JONES, *Plutarch and Rome*, Oxford, 1971, esp. pp. 103-109, emphasizes the moral and artistic purpose of Plutarch's comparison of Greeks and Romans and remains rather reticent with regard to acknowledging a political purpose to the *Lives*. Such purpose, however, even if it is not expressed directly or in any formal way, may nevertheless be implied in Plutarch's narratives. As Françoise FRAZIER, *Histoire*

far, however, it has not been sufficiently noticed, that the biographer may, in fact, have shaped his account of the Pyrrhic War in such a way as to give expression to (at least some of) his ideas on being Greek in the Roman empire. Admittedly, in the episode under discussion, the author does not lose track of his biographical project. But, as I would like to argue here, the 'Roman chapters' can be more adequately understood if we read them as a literary unit, written to the format, so to say, of a βίος Ῥωμαίων and exhibiting a narrative strategy of its own.

It is undeniable that the Roman chapters are fraught with features which set them somewhat apart from the biographical discourse in the rest of the *Life*. A particularly arresting point is the weakness in the character portrayal of Pyrrhus<sup>2</sup>. The king's ever-changing moods in response to what he experiences, hears and sees of the Roman environment are lacking in psychological probability. At one moment he is proud of his victory, at another he is disheartened, disturbed or terrified and overcome with fear; but gradually more predominant is a feeling of great respect and boundless admiration for the Romans. At no time, however, is the psychological portrait very consistent or persuasive. Plutarch's reporting on Pyrrhus' reactions, I would like to suggest, seems more to be there in order to provide a biographical frame to his account of the Roman war than that it contributes in any meaningful sense to the character-portrayal of his hero. In a similar vein, when Pyrrhus comes face to face with Fabricius, the Roman ambassador (280/279) and consul (278), he is almost faded out to the benefit of his Roman counterpart. The syncritical method, so often used by Plutarch to throw his characters into high relief, by no means brings the protagonist of the *Life* into sharper focus. For that matter, Plutarch is plain about his purpose: the series of anecdotes presented in chapters 20 and 21 aim to show "what kind of man Fabricius was" (20.10: τοιοῦτος μὲν ὁ Φαβρίκιος). Another remarkable feature of the Roman chapters is the amount of historical deficiencies. After the critical

*et morale dans les Vies parallèles de Plutarque*, Paris 1996, p. 147, puts it, "la réflexion politique de Plutarque passe par l'évocation narrative d'une pratique particulière". Plutarch's perception of and views on politics are analysed in several recent contributions in I. GALLO – Barbara SCARDIGLI (eds.), *Teoria e prassi politica nelle opere di Plutarco* (Atti del V Convegno plutarco, Certosa di Pontignano, 7-9 giugno 1993), Napoli 1995.

<sup>2</sup> A more detailed justification for this critical appraisal can be found in my paper *Rhetoric in Plutarch's 'Life of Pyrrhus'*, in L. VAN DER STOCKT (ed.), *Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch* (Collection d'Études Classiques II), Namur 1999, pp. 387-415.

studies undertaken in this century by O. Hamburger, A.B. Nederlof, P. Lévêque and M.R. Lefkowitz<sup>3</sup> there is no longer need to draw the list of factual improbabilities and/or inconsistencies in order to establish the point that in this section of his biography Plutarch — in addition to his good and factually reliable Greek source, Hieronymus — has been rather too receptive of many stories from rather untrustworthy Roman origin. It may be enough to recall how his version of the peace negotiations after Heraclea reflects the typical characteristics of the patriotically biased and fictitious pro-Roman tradition<sup>4</sup>. We are told that Cineas laid a number of tempting and benevolent proposals before the senate, not one of which was taken with pleasure or enthusiasm: this in spite of the fact that Pyrrhus offered to release without any ransom all the prisoners and undertook to help the Romans to subdue the rest of Italy. All he asked in return was that he should be treated as a friend and the Tarentines left unmolested. As is made clear by the preceding description of Pyrrhus' reactions and motifs (18.2-3), the excessively friendly peace terms tend to represent the Epirote king as frightened by the military resilience and undaunted fighting spirit of the Roman people, and, therefore, as eager for peace with the Romans and ready to help them to subdue Italy. The idea that Pyrrhus was looking for peace out of admiration for the Romans is deeply entrenched in the Roman tradition<sup>5</sup>. Yet, even on a superficial

<sup>3</sup> O. HAMBURGER, *Untersuchungen über den Pyrrhischen Krieg*, Würzburg 1927; A.B. NEDERLOF, *Plutarchus' Leven van Pyrrhus. Historische Commentaar*, Amsterdam 1940; P. LÉVÊQUE, *Pyrrhos*, Paris 1957; M.R. LEFKOWITZ, *Pyrrhus' Negotiations with the Romans*, *HSCP* 64 (1959), pp. 147-177; A.B. NEDERLOF, *Pyrrhus van Epirus. Zijn achtergronden – zijn tijd – zijn leven (historie en legende)*, Amsterdam 1978.

<sup>4</sup> Πρὸς δὲ τὴν σύγκλητον ἐπαγωγὰ τοῦ Κινέου πολλὰ καὶ φιλόκροτα διαλεχθέντος, ἄσμενοι μὲν οὐδὲν οὐδ' ἐτοίμως ἐδέχοντο, καίπερ ἄνδρας τε τοὺς ἠλωκότας ἐν τῇ μάχῃ δίχα λύτρων ἀφιέντος αὐτοῖς τοῦ Πύρρου καὶ συγκατεργάσσεσθαι τὴν Ἰταλίαν ἐπαγγελλομένου, φίλων δ' ἀντὶ τούτων ἑαυτῶ καὶ τοῖς Ταρραντίνοις ἄδειαν, ἕτερον δὲ μὴδὲν αἰτουμένου (18.6). All references to sources without author or work-title are to Plutarch's *Life of Pyrrhus*, in the edition of R. FLACELIÈRE and E. CHAMBRÉ (CUF, Paris 1971). English translations quoted in this paper, have been borrowed, sometimes with minor modifications, from I. SCOTT-KILVERT: *The Age of Alexander. Nine Greek Lives by Plutarch* (Penguin Classics), Harmondsworth 1973, pp. 384-425.

<sup>5</sup> The parallel sources to the episode under discussion are conveniently brought together in *Retum Romanarum Fontes ab anno CCXCII ad annum CCLXV A.CH.N. collegit atque notis illustravit* Marina R. TORELLI (Biblioteca degli Studi Classici e Orientali 14), Pisa 1978, pp. 158-160.

reading of Plutarch's own account this view can be rejected as historically absurd: Cineas' gentle proposals are, indeed, not likely to have provoked Appius Claudius' furious reaction in the first place; but on top of that, they are contradicted by what Plutarch himself makes Appius Claudius declare on Pyrrhus being rewarded with the territories of the Samnites and the Tarentines!<sup>6</sup> Plutarch's rendering of Claudius' speech still, inadvertently, preserves an echo of the real terms of the peace. As we can learn from Appian's version of the peace terms<sup>7</sup>, these more truthful traditions were still current in Plutarch's day. It is obvious, that in this instance (as in many others in the Roman chapters) the biographer must have been

<sup>6</sup> See 19.4 (from Appius Claudius' speech):... μὴ τοῦτον οὖν ἀπαλλάξειν νομίζετε ποιησάμενοι φίλον, ἀλλ' ἐκείνους ἐπάξεσθαι καταφρονήσαντας ὑμῶν ὡς πᾶσιν εὐκατεργάστων, εἰ Πύρρος ἄπεισι μὴ δοῦς δίκην ὧν ὕβρισεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ προσλαβῶν μισθὸν τοῦ ἐπεγγελάσαι Ῥωμαίους Ταραντίνους καὶ Σαυνίτας. I understand Ταραντίνους καὶ Σαυνίτας as object of προσλαβῶν, constructed with the predicative adjunct μισθόν; τοῦ ἐπεγγελάσαι is object genitive with μισθόν. The translation by Flacelière and Chambry (CUF) — "en étant récompensé d'avoir fait des Romains un objet de risée pour les Tarentins et les Samnites"; compare also Scott-Kilvert: "but actually rewarded for having made Rome a laughing-stock to the Tarentines and the Samnites" — does not make much historical sense, in that it fails to indicate what reward (μισθόν) Pyrrhus takes from his smashing victory over the Romans. Admittedly, the translations proposed by Scott-Kilvert and Flacelière-Chambry are grammatically possible and they have the advantage of removing at least one inconsistency from Plutarch's narrative. I prefer, however, the view which makes Plutarch's rendering of Appius Claudius' speech still preserve inadvertently, so to say as a fossil, an authentic element (see following note). Compare P. LÉVÉQUE, *Pyrrhos*, p. 349 n. 2: "les clauses rapportées par Plutarque sont contredites par le discours d'App. Claudius dans le même Plutarque: l'abandon du Samnium à Pyrrhos y apparaît comme une des conditions de la paix (cf. 19.4)". For the extant evidence and the reception history of Appius Claudius' speech, see W. SUERBAUM, *Rhetorik gegen Pyrrhos. Zum Widerstand gegen den Feind aus dem Osten in der Rede des Appius Claudius Caecus 280/279 v. Chr. nach Ennius, Oratorum Romanorum fragmenta und B.G. Niebuhr*, in Ch. SCHUBERT – K. BRODERSEN – U. HUTTNER (eds.), *Rom und der Griechische Osten. Festschrift für Hatto H. Schmitt zum 65. Geburtstag dargebracht von Schülern, Freunden und Münchener Kollegen*, Stuttgart 1995, pp. 251-265. On the historical context, see P. LÉVÉQUE, *Pyrrhos*, pp. 351-355, and, more generally, K. RAAFLAUB – J.D. RICHARDS – L.J. SAMONS II, *Rome, Italy, and Appius Claudius Caecus before the Pyrrhic Wars*, in T. HACKENS e.a. (eds.), *The Age of Pyrrhus. Papers Delivered at the International Conference Brown University, 8-10 April 1988*, Providence – Louvain-la-Neuve 1992, pp. 13-50.

<sup>7</sup> Appian, *Samnitica* 10.3 (= Torelli No. 156); compare also *Ineditum Vaticanum* 2 (= Torelli No. 144) and Eutropius (II 12.4 = Torelli No. 167). For a comparative study of Cineas' peace proposals to the Roman senate, see P. LÉVÉQUE, *Pyrrhos*, pp. 347-350.

lending a sympathetic ear to traditions with an outspoken pro-Roman, patriotic bias.

The inconsistency in the character portrayal of Pyrrhus and the prominence given to historically questionable Roman traditions are startling features of Plutarch's account, which prompt us to ask the question why the author may have shaped his narrative in this peculiar way. In order to avoid possible wrong answers to such a question, it is important to realise that Plutarch, as many studies in the last decades have shown, is to be considered as an author in his own right, in full command of his methods: the selectivity and adaptation which he shows in dealing with his source materials and the variety of pattern in the composition of the *Lives* establish beyond any doubt how very much the biographer was the master of his material<sup>8</sup>. Hence, it would be less than convincing to put the blame for the aforementioned biographical and historical 'shortcomings' on any 'technical' deficiency. In the section of the *Life* under examination Plutarch is following his familiar methods of eliciting biographical material and meaning from his main historiographical sources and of using strings of anecdotes to draw portraits of his characters. The right question, then, is: what purpose made Plutarch write the 'Roman chapters' as they are? The answer I would like to suggest is that, at this point of the *Life*, the narrative gradually shifts away from a biography of Pyrrhus to what may be called a βίος Ῥωμαίων. The predicate "βίος Ῥωμαίων" takes its inspiration — and actually picks up an element — from Plutarch's description of the additional task which Cineas set himself while on his peace mission to Rome. "Cineas, it is reported, took special care to study the life and customs of the Romans, and to acquaint himself with the peculiar virtues of their form of government" (λέγεται δὲ Κινέααν ... σπουδάσαντα τῶν τε βίων γενέσθαι θεατὴν καὶ τῆς πολιτείας τὴν ἀρετὴν κατανοῆσαι)<sup>9</sup>. Among the many things he had to report on his return, Plutarch singles out that "the Senate impressed him as an assembly of many kings" (ὡς ἡ σύγκλητος αὐτῷ βασιλέων πολλῶν συνέδριον φανείη) and "that he feared that to fight against the Roman masses would be like fighting the Lernean Hydra" (περὶ δὲ τοῦ πλῆθους

<sup>8</sup> Illustrations of this point with regard to the *Pyrrhos* will be found in my paper *Rhetoric in Plutarch's 'Life of Pyrrhus'* (see n. 2); cf. also Françoise FRAZIER, *Histoire et morale, passim*.

<sup>9</sup> 19.6

δεδιέναι, μὴ πρὸς τινα φανῶσι Λερναίαν ὕδραν μαχόμενοι). After their defeat, so the ensuing narrative continues, "the Romans had not only brought the depleted legions back to full strength, but had doubled their number. And there were still many times this number of Romans who were able to bear arms" (19.6-7).

In a way comparable to Cineas taking advantage of his visit to Rome, Plutarch seizes the occasion of the first meeting of Greeks and Romans in real history to draw — albeit in a nutshell — a picture of early Rome before Hellenic culture was introduced<sup>10</sup>. Both directly (through descriptions or comments; by way of Cineas' report and with the help of a whole string of anecdotes) and indirectly (through Pyrrhus' frightened or admiring reactions) Plutarch draws an idealised picture of the *senatus populusque Romanus*. Such a portrayal almost naturally included a few political pointers not to be missed by his contemporary Greek audience. Within the limits of this brief paper it is impossible to deal in detail with all the features of Plutarch's presentation of early Roman life and customs. I will confine myself to the more salient features.

To be listed among them in the very first place is Pyrrhus' appreciation of the Romans as he saw them for the first time, upon his arrival at the Siris. Expressing his amazement at their army discipline, the arrangement of their watches, their orderly movements and the planning of their camp, he said to one of his friends who stood nearby: τάξις μὲν ... αὐτῆ τῶν βαρβάρων οὐ βάρβαρος (16.6-8). In an interpretative rendering the phrase means: "Although they are no Greeks, their battle array is in no way inferior to anything Greek". As is the case with most anecdotes and sayings in the Roman chapters, this one is definitely of dubious historicity. The anecdote developed later, in a Roman context, into an attempt to refute the tradition according to which the Romans had learned from

<sup>10</sup> Taken as a whole, Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes* may constitute an interesting parallel to the 'Roman chapters' included in the *Pyrrhus*. Artaxerxes was, as U. von Wilamowitz rightly remarked, "not a character worthy of a biography". But Plutarch, finding it desirable "to develop a closer acquaintance with Persian ways... produced a book which gives a fair picture of the βίος Περσῶν, the way of life of the barbarian court". These quotations come from the English version of U. VON WILAMOWITZ, *Reden und Vorträge II* (1922), in Barbara SCARDIGLI (ed.), *Essays*, pp. 47-74, esp. p. 68.

<sup>11</sup> Frontinus, *Stratag.* IV 1.14; Ammian. Marc. XXIV 1.3; see P. LÉVÉQUE, *Pyrrhos*, p. 324 and pp. 540-541.

Pyrrhus himself how to construct an army camp<sup>11</sup>. However, the only thing that matters for our purposes is that Plutarch deemed it suitable to open his sketch of Roman life with this very assessment. It is significant that he strikes the same key-note in his *Life of Flamininus* "when for the first time Greece itself was brought into close contact with the Romans" (*Flam.* 2.5)<sup>12</sup>. Flamininus brought the war against Philip V of Macedon to a conclusion and proclaimed the freedom of the Greeks at the Isthmian Games of 196 BC. Plutarch is keen to emphasize that Roman rule, perceived by the Greeks as an ἀλλόφυλος ἀρχή (*Flam.* 2.5), was not in any way βάρβαρος (*Flam.* 5.6). It is noteworthy that, in this very context, Plutarch makes his point with explicit reference to Pyrrhus' earlier words. The people, he says, who first met with Flamininus were bound to have used language similar to Pyrrhus<sup>13</sup>. It seems likely that the thoughts put into the mouths of the others are largely Plutarch's own<sup>14</sup>. The political overtones in Pyrrhus' *prima verba*<sup>15</sup> should, clearly, not be overlooked.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. R. SCUDERI, *L'incontro fra Grecia e Roma nelle biografie plutarchee di Filopemene e Flaminio*, in E. GABBA - P. DESIDERI - S. RODA (eds.), *Italia sul Bactis. Studi di storia romana in memoria di Fernando Gascó*, Torino 1996, pp. 65-89.

<sup>13</sup> *Flamininus* 5.6: Πύρρον μὲν οὖν λέγουσιν, ὅτε πρῶτον ἀπὸ σκοπιῆς κατεῖδε τὸ στρατεύμα τῶν Ῥωμαίων διακεκοσμημένον, εἰπεῖν οὐ βαρβαρικὴν αὐτῷ φανῆναι τὴν τῶν βαρβάρων παράταξιν οἱ δὲ Τίτῳ πρῶτον ἐντυγχάνοντες ἠναγκάζοντο παραπλησίως ἀφιέναι φωνάς. The fact that Plutarch does not refer to the *passage* in the *Pyrrhus* can perhaps be interpreted as indirect evidence for the view propounded by C.P. JONES, *Towards a Chronology of Plutarch's Works*, in *JRS* 56 (1966), pp. 61-74, that the pair *Pyrrhus-Marius* was written ca. 116 AD as the last couple in the series of parallel lives; see now also G. DELVAUX, *Plutarque: chronologie relative des Vies Parallèles*, in *LEC* 63 (1995), pp. 97-113.

<sup>14</sup> The passages under discussion are convincingly analyzed by S. SWAIN, *Plutarch's Philopoemen and Flamininus*, in *ICS* 13 (1988), pp. 335-347, esp. pp. 340-343. For an investigation of some aspects of Plutarch's presentation of the binary Greek - Barbarian, see A.G. NIKOLAIDIS, *Ἑλληνικός-βαρβαρικός. Plutarch on Greek and Barbarian Characteristics*, in *WS N.F.* 20 (1986), pp. 229-244. According to K. ZIEGLER, art. *Plutarch*, in *RE XXI* (1951), col. 903, Plutarch wanted to bring home the idea that the Romans were no barbarians; cf. also col. 897. On the other hand, Plutarch held the view that the Romans had a 'potentiality' for 'barbarism': see S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 142-145, and D.A. RUSSELL, *Plutarch*, London 1973, p. 132.

<sup>15</sup> Pyrrhus' words recall, to some extent, the ideas Dionysius of Halicarnassus tried to bring home. Cf. E. GABBA, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome*, Oxford 1991, esp. chapter VI: "The Political Meaning of Dionysius' History", pp. 190-216; see also F. HARTOG, *Rome et la Grèce: les choix de Denys d'Halicarnasse*, in S. SAID (ed.), *Ἑλληνισμός. Quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque* (Actes du colloque de Strasbourg

Nor must we suppose Plutarch's readers to have taken no notice of the answer Fabricius gave to Pyrrhus' request to join him as "the chief of his companions and generals". The Roman replied that it would be very unwise for Pyrrhus to do so. "The same men," he retorted, "who now admire and honour you, if they came to know me, would rather have me to rule them than yourself" (20.8-10).

The anecdote just cited is but part of a much larger set of stories, which focus on the senator as the a perfect embodiment of Roman virtue. These anecdotes occupy the very centre of Plutarch's picture of early Roman life and testify to the truth that "no part of Roman history has been more wilfully turned into a moral lesson for readers than the Pyrrhic War"<sup>16</sup>. In Roman republican and imperial literature the figure Fabricius appears as a 'catalyst' for edifying stories on the *virtus Romana* of old<sup>17</sup>. The sheer ubiquity of such texts does not weaken their significance. Quite the reverse: the more frequent, insistent and prolific these stories, the more central the role of such stuff of lore is likely to have been in the imaginative recreations of early Roman history<sup>18</sup>. At the

25-27 octobre 1989), Leiden 1991, pp. 149-167; P.M. MARTIN, *L'écuménisme dans la vision de Rome par l'historien Denys d'Halicarnasse*, in L. AIGNER FORESTI – A. BARZANÒ e.a. (eds.), *L'écuménisme politico nella coscienza dell'Occidente*, Roma 1998, pp. 295-306. Dionysius of Halicarnassus is not incidentally an important source for Plutarch's 'Roman section' (chapters 16-21; 25) in the *Life*.

<sup>16</sup> Thus W.E. HEITLAND, *The Roman Republic*, Cambridge 1926, p. 154.

<sup>17</sup> A combined TLG-TLL search revealed no less than 179 instances of stories, *exempla* or sayings connected with Fabricius. The Fabricius-anecdotes figure as a stock ingredient in the *exempla* literature: on the proposal to poison Pyrrhus, see W.M. BLOOMER, *Valerius Maximus and the Rhetoric of the New Nobility*, Chapel Hill 1992, pp. 127-133; cf. also Cicero, *De officiis* I 40: "our ancestors established the greatest example of justice shown an enemy... *maximum exemplum... iustitiae*"; cf. *ibid.* III 86; see also Gellius III 8.1. Concerning the anecdote on Fabricius and Epicureanism, see W.M. BLOOMER, *Valerius Maximus*, pp. 134-135; and, more generally, on Fabricius "as the stuff of lore", p. 143. On the influence of the tradition of praising the good old days on Plutarch, see S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, p. 154 n. 57.

<sup>18</sup> Indeed, some of the most exciting work in Roman historiography in recent years has taken up the challenge of exploring the specific significance of imaginative recreations of early Roman history. See T.P. WISEMAN, *Historiography and Imagination. Eight Essays on Roman Culture* (Exeter Studies in History 33), Exeter 1994; M. FOX, *Roman Historical Myths. The Regal Period in Augustan Literature*, Oxford 1996, esp. chapter 3: "The Account of the Regal Period in Dionysius of Halicarnassus' *Antiquitates Romanae*", pp. 49-95; and chapter 4: "Livy's Representation of the Regal Period", pp. 96-141.

beginning of ch. 20, Plutarch too seems willing to introduce Fabricius as an emblematic figure<sup>19</sup>: he evokes the image of the ideal citizen-soldier of old, whose so-called poverty did not by any means prevent him from serving the *res publica* in the capacity of senator and consul. Plutarch describes him, in Cineas' words, "as enjoying the highest reputation among the Romans both as a fine soldier and as a man of honour, but also as extremely poor" (20.1). The ensuing selection of stories illustrates how his incorruptible frugality<sup>20</sup>, undauntedness, piety<sup>21</sup> and unwavering sense of justice and honour are — successfully — put to the test and "filled Pyrrhus with admiration for the man's spirit and character, and made him desire more than ever to make the Romans his friends" (20.8). The most famous of these anecdotes is perhaps the one in which Fabricius prevents Pyrrhus from being poisoned by his own physician. The Roman indignantly refuses to make a deal with the traitor, and, instead of becoming a 'black hunter' he warns Pyrrhus in a letter of the danger that is threatening his life. The letter, which he writes in conjunction with his colleague in the consulate, offers, once more, an occasion to display the key values of justice, honesty, honour and virtue underlying early Roman political and military life:

You will see when you read the letter I have sent you that you choose to make war against just and virtuous men and put your faith in rogues and traitors. We do not send you this information because of any love we bear you, but because we do not wish your downfall to bring any reproach upon us, nor to have men say of us that we brought this war to an end by treachery because we could not do so by our own valour.

In sum, if Roman tradition, from Ennius onwards, portrays Pyrrhus as a basically good man and as a generous king<sup>22</sup>, his noblesse is there to be surpassed by the still greater virtues of Fabricius.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H. SONNABEND, *Pyrrhos und die "Furcht" der Römer vor dem Osten*, in *Chiron* 19 (1989), pp. 319-345, esp. pp. 335-336.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. also Gellius, *NA* I 14.1 and the comments by T.P. WISEMAN, *Clio's Cosmetics. Three Studies in Greco-Roman Literature*, Leicester 1979, pp. 37-40, on the study, in Antiquity, of history as an incentive to virtue.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Cicero, *Case Maior de senectute* 43 (anecdote on Epicureanism).

<sup>22</sup> The earliest traces of Roman historiographic traditions about the war against Pyrrhus go back to Ennius, *Annales*, Book VI, written some one hundred years after the events: see P. LÉVÊQUE, *Pyrrhos*, pp. 44-46. The surviving but heavily mutilated fragments

One should note that the Fabricius-anecdotes are not just there to enliven the account or to offer the reader a moment of welcome relaxation. An essential trait of Plutarch's working method in the *Lives* is to confer structural meaning to the retelling of anecdotes with regard to the development of his main theme. The individual stories cling together to make a forceful and vividly represented argument about the superior moral strength of the Romans<sup>23</sup>. In the present case, the analysis of the old-Roman character certainly contributes to the justification of the course of events leading up to the final victory over Pyrrhus. In his own manner, by contrasting Fabricius' portrait with that of Pyrrhus, Plutarch seems to restate the theme of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, namely that Rome, from its founding onwards, displayed all the virtues, and that "no city, either Greek or barbarian, showed greater piety, justice, moderation or bravery"<sup>24</sup>. It is also telling for the larger political purpose which informs this part of the biography that the conclusion to the Roman chapters looks beyond the victorious ending of the war and includes a hint at Rome's future development (25.8-9). Plutarch points out how "the victory gave the Romans the military power to establish their hegemony" (25.8: τὸ κράτος τῆς ἡγεμονίας). "These battles", he adds, "not only steeled their courage and their fighting qualities, but also earned them the reputation of being invincible: the result was that they at once brought the rest of Italy under their sway, and soon after Sicily as well"<sup>25</sup>.

contain glimpses of the main themes which would be developed by later writers of *Annales*: the liberation of the prisoners of war without ransom, Appius Claudius' reaction to Cineas' proposals, and the elephants. See W. SUERBAUM, *Der Pyrrhos-Krieg in Ennius' Annales VI im Lichte der ersten Ennius-Papyri aus Herculaneum*, in *ZPE* 106 (1995), pp. 31-52. On Ennius' overall positive view of Pyrrhus, see T. FRANK, *Two Historical Themes in Roman Literature: Pyrrhus, Appius Claudius and Ennius*, in *CPh* 21 (1926), pp. 314-316 (cf. ID., *Life and Literature in the Roman Republic*, Berkeley 1971, pp. 38-39); cf. also A.B. NEDERLOF, *Pyrrhus van Epirus*, pp. 220-221, who rather thinks of Ennius as spokesman of an earlier, already established oral tradition.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. already B. NIESE, *Zur Geschichte des Pyrrhischen Krieges*, in *Hermes* 31 (1896), pp. 281-507, esp. pp. 481-485.

<sup>24</sup> Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* I 5.3.

<sup>25</sup> For a critical appraisal of ancient and modern views which see the Pyrrhic war as a turning point in ancient Mediterranean history, see R.E. MITCHELL, *The Historical and Historiographical Prominence of the Pyrrhic War*, in J.W. EADIE - J. OBER (eds.), *The Craft of the Ancient Historian. Essays in honor of Chester G. Starr*, Lanham 1985, pp. 303-330.

Plutarch's justification for the Romans' invincibility refers not only to the verdict of the battlefield (ἐκ τῶν ἀγώνων), but characteristically rejoins the theme of their eminent moral and military virtue (ἐκ τῆς ἀρετῆς ἐκείνης).

While making this assessment of the successful beginning of Rome's expansion, Plutarch, in his capacity of Pyrrhus' biographer, quite startlingly has nothing or next to nothing to offer on how the Epirote king himself experienced and looked upon his final defeat. To be sure, by way of transition to his narrative of the next stage in Pyrrhus' life, the author makes the objective comment that "in this way Pyrrhus' hopes of the conquest of Italy and Sicily were finally demolished" (26.1). Yet, earlier in the *Life*, there are some remarks which seem to look forward to Beneventum as a dramatic turning point. The attentive reader will, for instance, notice that the epithet ἄμαχος which earlier had been associated with Pyrrhus himself<sup>26</sup>, has now passed to his Roman rivals. In a similar vein, what Plutarch observes, at 25.8, on the Romans' military strength to establish their hegemony, turns out to be a confirmation of the warning, given earlier to Pyrrhus by his counsellor Cineas. Before embarking on the Roman expedition the latter remarked: "Pyrrhus, everyone tells me that the Romans are said to be good soldiers and that they rule over many warlike nations..."<sup>27</sup>. Cineas' words, we are then told, "only disturbed Pyrrhus, but did not convert him" (14.2). These passages, which set the scene for an interpretation of Beneventum as a dramatic setback in Pyrrhus' life, make it appear all the more surprising that Plutarch has nothing to offer on his hero's views or *état d'âme* at the end of his Roman campaign.

At this point, the imbalance of his account in terms of a biography of Pyrrhus stands still more strikingly revealed, when we compare it with the way in which Dionysius of Halicarnassus commemorates the ending of the Pyrrhic Wars. Although this historian writes his *History of Archaic*

<sup>26</sup> When, in 288 BC, he became king of Macedon: see 11.8: ἐπεὶ δὲ παρεστρατοπέδευσεν αὐτόθι, πολλοὶ τῶν ἐκ τῆς Βεροίας ἀφικνούμενοι τὸν Πύρρον ἐνεκωμάζον ὡς ἄμαχον μὲν ἐν τοῖς ὅπλοις καὶ λαμπρὸν ἄνδρα, πρῶως δὲ καὶ φιλανθρώπως τοῖς ἡλωκόσι χρώμενον.

<sup>27</sup> πολεμιστὰι μὲν ὃ Πύρρῳ Ῥωμαῖοι λέγονται καὶ πολλῶν ἐθνῶν μαχίμων ἄρχοντες (14.5).

Rome from a straightforwardly Roman point of view<sup>28</sup>, he dwells at some length on Pyrrhus' own reflections on his defeat. Dionysius draws for this information on Proxenus, who is generally believed to have been Pyrrhus' court historian, and who, in this capacity, may very well have had a hand in the final redaction of Pyrrhus' *Memoirs*<sup>29</sup>, which are referred to as the ultimate source for this episode. We learn from Dionysius' narrative that Pyrrhus put the blame for the failure of the Western expedition on the wrath of Persephone<sup>30</sup>. On his way back from Sicily towards his final encounter with the Romans, Pyrrhus, being short of money and misled by flattering counsellors, had looted the shrine of Persephone in Locri. Although the goddess seemed already to have exacted quick punishment in the form of the annihilation of the ships carrying the stolen goods<sup>31</sup>, Pyrrhus, on second thought, held her wrath equally responsible for the disastrous course of affairs at Beneventum. Dionysius' text may be quoted here in full:

It was for this reason that Pyrrhus was defeated by the Romans also in a battle to the finish. For it was no mean or untrained army that he had, but the mightiest of those then in existence among the Greeks and one that had fought a great many wars; nor was it a small body of men that was then arrayed under him, but even three times as large as his adversary's, nor was its general any chance leader, but rather the man whom all admit to have been the greatest of all the generals who flourished at that same

<sup>28</sup> Cf. E. GABBA, *Dionysius and the History of Archaic Rome*, Oxford 1991, *passim*. The latest study of the narrative of the Pyrrhic Wars, in books XIX and XX, is Maria Teresa SCETTINO, *Tradizione annalistica e tradizione ellenistica su Pirro in Dionigi (A.R. XIX-XX)*, Bruxelles 1991.

<sup>29</sup> See V. LA BUA, *Proseno e gli υπομνήματα Πύρρου*, in *Miscellanea greca e romana* 3 (1971), pp. 1-61, esp. pp. 18-24.

<sup>30</sup> *FGrHist* 703 F 9 & 10. Pace M.T. SCETTINO, *Tradizione annalistica*, pp. 61-62, these texts cannot be seen as a parallel for Pyrrhus' self-inculpation in Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* XX 6. The idea that Proxenus himself would have represented the Romans as the most religious and just of all peoples is hard to accept. This idea is clearly of Roman vintage.

<sup>31</sup> Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* XX 9. Pyrrhus' sacrilege at Locri and the subsequent shipwreck of his fleet are also recalled by Diodorus (XXVII 4. 2-3) as an example of deserved punishment, speedily inflicted by Divine Providence. On the epigraphical evidence testifying to the reliability of the episode of the looting of Persephone's treasure, see P. MARCHETTI, *Témoignages épigraphiques concernant Pyrrhus*, in T. HACKENS e.a. (eds.), *The Age of Pyrrhus* (see n. 6), pp. 51-72.

period; nor was it any inequality in the position he occupied, nor the sudden arrival of reinforcements for the other side, nor any other mischance or unexpected excuse for failure that ruined the cause of Pyrrhus, but rather the wrath of the goddess whose sanctity had been violated, a wrath of which not even Pyrrhus himself was unaware, as Proxenus the historian relates and as Pyrrhus himself records in his own *Memoirs* (ἀλλ' ὁ τῆς ἀσεβηθείσης θεᾶς χόλος, ὃν οὐδ' αὐτὸς ἤγνώει Πύρρος, ὡς Πρὸξενος ὁ συγγραφεὺς ἱστορεῖ καὶ αὐτὸς ὁ Πύρρος ἐν τοῖς ἰδίοις υπομνήμασι γράφει)<sup>32</sup>.

According to this text, which may be considered a fair rendering of the gist of Pyrrhus' own statement<sup>33</sup>, the Epirote king made his searching analysis of the true cause of his defeat by elimination: since neither the strength, experience or size of his army, nor his own outstanding qualities as its general, nor the peculiarities of the terrain or whatever unexpected turn of fortune could account for the failure, the only explanation left to him was the wrath of the goddess<sup>34</sup>.

The fact that Plutarch passes over in total silence an autobiographical document — βασιλικά υπομνήματα — that should be deemed of the highest significance to any biographer calls for some further remarks. Firstly, although Plutarch was apparently not acquainted first-hand with

<sup>32</sup> Dion. Hal., *Ant. Rom.* XX 9 (Loeb translation by E. Cary); *FGrHist* 703 F 9 & 10. Proxenus' version, as one can expect from a court-historian, may be considered as apologetic, putting the blame for the eventual disaster on Pyrrhus' bad counselors, who persuaded him to plunder the sacred treasures of Persephone (Dion. Hal. XX 9); cf. V. LA BUA, *Proseno e gli υπομνήματα Πύρρου*, pp. 17-18.

<sup>33</sup> *FGrHist* 229. F. Jacoby prints the text in small typeface, thus expressing his doubts as to the authenticity of the *Memoirs* ascribed to Pyrrhus; see his commentary in *FGrHist* IIB, Berlin 1929, p. 653; cf. also B. MEIßNER, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof. Studien zur Stellung der Geschichtsschreiber in der griechischen Gesellschaft in spätclassischer und frühellenistischer Zeit*, Göttingen 1992, pp. 308-310. Most commentators, however, agree that Jacoby's scepticism is unwarranted: see P. LÉVÊQUE, *Pyrrhos*, pp. 20-22; Jane HORN-BLOWER, *Hieronymus of Cardia*, Oxford 1981, p. 137; Cinzia BEARZOT, *Storia e storiografia ellenistica in Pausania il periegeta*, Venezia 1992, pp. 242-244 (with a detailed discussion of the 'testimony' of Pausanias I 12. 2).

<sup>34</sup> A local Argive tradition, voiced (and perhaps created) by Lyceas (*FGrHist* 312 F 1 = Pausan. I 13. 8), has it that Persephone's wrath eventually also caused Pyrrhus' death, in 272 BC, in the streets of Argos. See Cinzia BEARZOT, *Storia e storiografia ellenistica in Pausania*, pp. 133-136; and M. PIÉART, *La mort de Pyrrhos à Argos*, in *Études Classiques* (Publications du Centre universitaire de Luxembourg. Département des Lettres et Sciences Humaines 1), Luxembourg 1990, pp. 2-19.

Pyrrhus' Ὑπομνήματα<sup>35</sup>, a reasonable case can nevertheless be made for the assumption that he was not unaware of the story of the sacrilege at Locri and of the subsequent interpretation which the Epirote king had given of this incident. As we may surmise in the case of Proxenos, and as we know for a fact in the case of Dionysius, Plutarch read and used their accounts as a major source throughout his biography<sup>36</sup>. It is therefore highly improbable that he would not have come across these stories, which were treated at some length in both these works. Secondly, we know Plutarch as an author who — far from shunning stories involving the supernatural in human affairs — takes a genuine interest in these materials<sup>37</sup>. Also with regard to Rome's rise to power, which is at issue here, Plutarch can be shown to believe in the guiding force of 'Providence'<sup>38</sup>. The question then arises why our author thought it inopportune, in this particular instance, to suggest, or even to create the impression by simply telling these biographically relevant stories, that through their punishment of Pyrrhus the gods had, in fact, contributed to the Romans' final victory.

Any attempt to explain why an author fails to include a narrative which we expect him to tell must remain speculative. When we try to determine the reason for such an omission, we are trying to communicate with the mind of a man long dead, on the imperfect basis of how

<sup>35</sup> There is but one instance in the *Pyrrhus*, where Plutarch mentions the Ὑπομνήματα, namely at 21.12 (=FGHist 229 F2). His manner of citation points only to indirect acquaintance, through the intermediary of Hieronymus of Cardia. B. MEISNER, *Historiker zwischen Polis und Königshof*, p. 356, writes somewhat misleadingly: "Auch Plutarch zitiert die βασιλικὰ ὑπομνήματα ...".

<sup>36</sup> Plutarch's use of Proxenos as a source is amply discussed in my paper *Rhetoric in Plutarch's Life of Pyrrhus* (see n. 2), pp. 387-415 (with bibliography). As far as Dionysius of Halicarnassus is concerned, he is mentioned at 17.7 (on the losses after the battle of Heracleia), and, again, at 21.12-13 (concerning the battle of Ausculum). Together with Hieronymus of Cardia, Dionysius of Halicarnassus is to be considered as a major source for Plutarch's narrative of Pyrrhus' Roman campaign. For more details see my paper cited above.

<sup>37</sup> Plutarch's treatise *De sera numinis vindicta* may only be quoted here as the most striking illustration of his keen interest in divine retribution.

<sup>38</sup> For a perceptive, introductory discussion of the evidence, see S. SWAIN, *Plutarch: Chance, Providence, and History*, in *AJPh* 110 (1989), pp. 272-302. Cf. also J.P. HERSHBELL, *Plutarch's Concept of History: Philosophy from Examples*, in *AncSoc* 28 (1997), pp. 225-243, esp. pp. 242-243.

we understand his writings, and it ought to be obvious that any explanation can only be tentative. As argued above, the Roman chapters detach themselves in a peculiar way from the rest of biography, in that Plutarch seems more interested in writing a βίος Ῥωμαίων than in pursuing the biographical sketch of his protagonist. In drawing a picture of early Roman life Plutarch, moreover, focuses exclusively on the *human* and *moral* explanation of the Romans' success in their war against Pyrrhus. That the Romans eventually prevailed and established their reputation for invincibility in arms is due to their military resilience, selfless patriotism, courage, honesty, incorruptibility... Given the focus of the Roman chapters, Plutarch may have felt that to disclose, at the very end of this account, Pyrrhus' own view about the role of divine interference, may have undercut, at least in part, the message about the Romans' κράτος τῆς ἡγεμονίας which he wanted to convey. Plutarch, I would like to suggest, did not, in this particular case, allow a preoccupation with the supernatural to disfigure his analysis of the human factors underlying the greatness of Rome.

If anything, Plutarch's contemporaries could gather from his account of the first hostile meeting between Greeks and Romans that the latter were fully and justly entitled to their role as ruling power. The idea that Roman power was achieved δικαίως is far from isolated in the *Lives*. Another formal expression of this conviction is to be found in the *Flamininus* (ch. 10-12), where Plutarch records the reactions of the Greeks after Flamininus' announcement of his liberation of Greece in 196 BC. "In the case of Flamininus and the Romans the gratitude of the Greeks for the benefits they received led not only to expression of praise, but also and rightly (δικαίως), to confidence among all men and to power"<sup>39</sup>. The Roman chapters are written in a spirit of absolute loyalty to Rome and echo familiar patterns of a long-standing Roman historiographic tradition celebrating the high point of Roman moral virtue in an idealised past<sup>40</sup>. In his

<sup>39</sup> On this passage, see S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 148-149. Translation Swain.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, p. 154 n. 57. E. LEFÈVRE, *Argumentation und Struktur der moralischen Geschichtsschreibung der Römer am Beispiel von Livius' Darstellung des Beginns des römischen Freistaats* (2,1-2,15), in *FS Burck80*, pp. 31-57; and M. FUHRMANN, *Narrative Techniken im Dienst der Geschichtsschreibung (Livius, Buch 21-22). Eine Skizze*, *ibid.* pp. 99-106, provide interesting discussion of the guiding themes in Roman historiography.



recent discussion of Plutarch's attitude to Rome, S. Swain makes the point — well worth repeating — that the idealisation of early Rome is complemented, in Plutarch too, by complaints about 'maladministration', 'treason', new greed etc<sup>41</sup>. In the present case, the parallel life devoted to *Marius* may be read as a counterpart to the picture drawn in the Roman chapters of the *incorruptae mores*. Although my main and limited purpose is this paper has been to show that Plutarch wrote his account of the Pyrrhic War with one eye on his contemporary Greek audience living under Roman rule, the nature of the story, the first war fought by a Greek on Roman soil, required him to give attention to his Roman readers too. This too may lead us some way towards explaining why Plutarch was so indulgent with the many, historically distortive Roman traditions. Yet, as opposed to his fellow-Greek Dionysius of Halicarnassus, writing about the same events in books XIX and XX of his *History of Archaic Rome*, and in spite of the remaining inconsistencies, the author from Chaeronea seems to have carefully avoided all cruder expressions of Roman bias which tend to put the Greeks in an undignified light<sup>42</sup>. The attitude Plutarch shows in the *Pyrrhus* thus corresponds to the bottom line of his political advice: knowing that they rule cities "subject to the proconsuls and the procurators of Caesar" (*Praec. ger. reip.* 813d-e), local Greek politicians under Roman rule should act with responsibility, but, at same time, not be unnecessarily subservient and preserve their integrity and dignity<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>41</sup> S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 155-156.

<sup>42</sup> On the difference between Plutarch and other Greek authors, esp. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, see S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 160-161. A characteristic of Plutarch is his genuine positive appreciation of Rome's *separate* development.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. S. SWAIN, *Hellenism and Empire*, pp. 165-172, commenting on Plut., *Praec. ger. reip.* 813c-816a.

## PHILADELPHUS' PROCESSION: DYNASTIC POWER IN A MEDITERRANEAN CONTEXT

Dorothy J. THOMPSON  
(Cambridge)

At noon on 1 January 1877 Queen Victoria acceded to her new title of Empress of India. The ceremony took place in Delhi, in a magnificent assemblage of princes and representatives from all India. The viceroy, Lord Lytton, stood in for his queen as he entered the amphitheatre to the strains of the march from Tannhäuser. As the viceroy and his wife descended from their carriage, six trumpeters in medieval costume blew a fanfare. The viceroy mounted his throne to the accompaniment of the national anthem. His throne stood on a hexagonal dais with sides 40 foot long, built on masonry 10 feet high; over the dais a large canopy was stretched, supported by shafts festooned with laurel wreaths, imperial crowns, gargoyle-like eagle and banners displaying the Cross of St. George and the Union Jack. The frieze that hung from the canopy was embroidered with the rose (for England), the shamrock (for Ireland) and the thistle (for Scotland), combined with the Indian lotus. The queen's proclamation of her new title as Empress was read out in English by the chief herald, the tallest English officer in the Indian army, and was then repeated in an Urdu translation pronounced by the foreign secretary of the government of India. A salute of 101 salvos was fired; the assembled troops fired into the air with joy. (The noise of the cannon and rifle fire caused the horse and elephants to stampede, creating an unplanned for cloud of dust.) The viceroy made a speech in which he dwelt on the strife and anarchy of the past that now were replaced by the strong hand of Imperial power. Four more days of celebrations followed, both in Delhi and elsewhere in the country, with rifle matches, horse races, dinners and receptions, musical and literary activities — the offerings of poems and odes in Sanskrit and other languages — parades of schoolchildren with sweets for them all, the



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