LIVING A GREAT LIFE

The narrative of Plutarch's *Themistokles* and the reader's experience

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1. Introduction

Themistokles (c. 524–c. 460 BC) is one of the most controversial figures in Greek history. Famous for his role in the Greek victory over Persia, in rebuilding Athens and connecting it to Piraeus, infamous for his subsequent betrayal and defection to the Persians. He appears both in Herodotus and Thucydides and their take on him differs very much. For Herodotus, Themistokles is the avaricious rogue that blackmails, claims other's ideas as his own and almost *plans* his defection to the Persians.[1] For Thucydides, he is the genius military strategist that got caught in someone else's conspiracy.[2]

Centuries later, while writing his *Parallel Lives*,[3] Plutarch needs to make sense of the contradicting sources he has available in writing Themistokles' biography.[4] The tension between different viewpoints is visible in his *Themistokles* and Plutarch is forced to frame certain situations in a way that suits his goals. Comparing him with Camillus, focused on virtue and character, he paints a different portrait of the man who was the key to the victory at Salamis during the Persian War *and* spent the later part of his life in service to the Persian King.

In doing so he makes interesting choices in presenting the material or leaving it out, hiding his personal preferences or trying to have his audience sympathize with his take on a story that has been famous throughout history.

1.1.1. Author[5]

Plutarch (c. 45- c. 120 AD) was from Chaeronea, where he received an education that prepared him for a socially and politically active life. After the usual rhetorical training, he studied under the Platonist Ammonius and dedicated himself to philosophy.[6] As part of the elite, he held both administrative and religious offices, that caused him to travel, spending his last thirty years as a priest in Delphi.[7].

Regardless of his busy public life, he wrote *a lot*.[8] His work is traditionally divided in *Parallel Lives* on the one hand and *Moralia* on the other, the latter containing more than 60 philosophical-ethical treatises. The great variety of topics treated and sources exploited is puzzling.

Not just in the *Moralia,* but in the *Lives* as well Plutarch applies his Platonic standards as he describes the lives of illustrious men from the past, comparing a Greek with a Roman on virtuous deeds (or lack thereof) and, closely connected, character.

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[1] Herodotus *Hist.* 8.57-58, 109-112.
[2] Thucydides *Hist.* 1.135-138. For a comparison of their treatments of Themistokles, see Blösel (2012).
[3] I have used Ziegler's (2000) edition for the Greek text, unless otherwise indicated.
[4] Other sources now lost were available to Plutarch as well (e.g. Pausanias, Simonides) which he mentions in the text.
[5] This section is heavily indebted to Roskam (2021) ch. 1, that details Plutarch's life and political circumstances of the first century AD.
[6] Roskam (2021) 6-8.
[7] Russell, (2015).
[8] The list of his works in Roskam (2021) is six pages long and does not include works that are lost.

Although he is not as openly lecturing as in the *Moralia,* the *Lives* are certainly a moral project, with a clear goal: education by example.[9]

1.1.2. Why pairs?

'One of the most important characteristics of the Parallel Lives is undoubtedly their comparative approach.', Roskam wrote.[10] It is the pairing that enables Plutarch to explore the virtues and vices of his Greek and Roman protagonists in many more ways than via a single biography.[11] The most important effect for this thesis is that by pairing Themistokles with Camillus, it is usually not necessary to explicitly state the moral lesson the audience should learn. This 'descriptive' and 'protreptic' rather than 'prescriptive' moralism,[12] invites the reader to actively think and see for themselves, aided by the contrasts and similarities of the two *Lives*.[13] As we will see, Plutarch is a fan of presenting multivalent anecdotes that make more sense when compared to the other *Life.*[14]

1.2. Method & Status quaestionis

Narratological analysis has since long been applied to modern and classical texts alike.[15] The focus on narrator (as opposed to author) and narratee, focalization, narrative time and space has illuminated our understanding of Homer, Herodotus and Plutarch.[16] Many scholarly articles have been written on the latter's narrative style in the *Lives* specifically, most notably by Pelling, Stadter and Duff.[17]

Most of this scholarship, however, has focused on the prologues and *synkriseis*, because there Plutarch's influence as narrator is most visible,[18] and they contain the most direct moral education.[19] The lack or loss of both prologue and synkrisis explains why the attention devoted to his *Themistokles-Camillus* has been mostly focused on mining historical details, [20] wherein the Camillus for lack of historical relevance is usually ignored.[21]

Only Duff (2010), building on an older article by Larmour (1992) and Roskam

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[9] Roskam (2021) 92-95.
[10] Roskam (2021) 95.
[11] Humble (2010) is specifically about Plutarch's parallelism. See for the debate on the purpose of pairing for example Tatum (2010), Roskam (2021) 92-95 with references, and §1.3.2. in this thesis.
[12] Pelling (2002) 237-239, 247-249.
[13] Duff (1999), esp. ch.2 is the place to start, see also Duff (2007, 2011a), Chrysanthou (2018).
[14] Duff (2011a) 69.
[15] De Jong (2014) chapter 1 for an overview of the history of narratology.
[16] For example, De Jong (1987) on Homer, Baragwanath (2008) on Herodotus, Pelling (2002) especially ch. 12 on Plutarch.
[17] Pelling (2002, 2007, 2009), Duff (1999, 2004, 2010, 2011a+b, 2015), Stadter (1983, 2002, 2014, 2015)
[18] Duff (2011a) 222 on the prologue, 253-259 on synkrisis.
[19] Chrysanthou (2018) 26, 128. (On *Them./Cam.* 154-155) Naturally this leads to the conclusion that the narrative directly supports the moral educational goals set out in the prologue and evaluated or problematised in the *synkrisis* by rewriting/reinventing/revaluating source material. By neglecting the *Them./Cam.* he fails to explore what Plutarch's narrative *qua* narrative can do.
[20] Whether the prologue and synkrisis are lost or never existed is a matter of debate see e.g., Duff 2008: 176–9 on the prologue, on the synkrisis: Roskam (2021) 125 with further references.
[21] Duff (2010).

(2021) have analysed the *Themistokles/Camillus* as a pair, and their analyses are the groundwork on which I built mine.[22] Although Duff in particular pays attention to (tragic) structure, recurring parallel themes and frequently compares Plutarch with Herodotus and Thucydides, his remarks on structure, reader responses, and plot deserve to be expanded on and revised a little, using techniques described below and more recent scholarship.

Where most scholars tend to focus on the first part of the Themistokles (till his ostracism) and his death, and disregard the parts in between, [23] Plutarch's narrative strategy is best understood when Themistokles' flight and entrance at the Persian court are incorporated into the analysis. This, I believe, will lead us to reevaluate the structure of the Themistokles as contributing to its educational goal.

There is more trouble concerning the missing prologue/synkrisis. As noted before, these are the parts where the narrator shows himself most visibly. He also takes them as an opportunity to make the connection with his narratees and to establish a firm common ground; a shared framework of moral values (by use of first person plural verbs, 'I' and 'you' statements).[24]

That does not mean that for this text we should assume a different framework than that of the author, rather that Plutarch establishes it in a more subtle way, leaving more room for discussion on what is and what is not part of this common ground.

1.2.1. 'Second-generation' cognitive theory

In the past decade or so, tools borrowed from the 'second-generation' cognitive theory focusing on the reader's *experience* have enriched our understanding of how narratives work in general and specifically what makes a text enchanting, vivid or immersive. [25]

The second-generation differs from the first in its conceptions of the mind. In Kukkonen's words:

'"First-generation" theories in the cognitive sciences conceive of the mind as based on abstract, propositional representations. Like a computer, the first-generation mind would process information as largely independent from specific brains, bodies, and sensory modalities. By contrast, "second-generation" approaches—a term coined by Lakoff and Johnson (*Philosophy* 77–78)—reject previous models of the mind as unduly limited to information processing, placing mental processes instead on a continuum with bioevolutionary phenomena and cultural practices.'[26]

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[22] Duff also makes some useful remarks on structure concerning *Them./Cam.* in Duff (2011), esp. 233.
[23] E.g. Pelling (2002), Roskam (2021) 116 devotes three sentences to this part of the narrative, apart from treating the journey in a women's carriage. Even Duff (2010) allows this half of the dialogue only three of the ten pages he uses for the complete text.
[24] Pelling (2002) ch. 12. Duff (2007) 2 adds: 'One could add to Pelling's list the occasional references, within the body of the *Lives* themselves, to what was still the case 'even now' or 'in our own day', or the appeals for the reader's indulgence in telling or cutting short a digression.' This is something Plutarch does in the Themistokles too.
[25] Caracciolo (2014) is my primary source for the second-generation reader-response theory, for further references to introductions and seminal studies see Huitink (2019) n.2.
[26] Kukkonen (2014) 261. See also Caracciolo (2014) 16-19.

According to enactivists, our interaction with texts is much like our interaction with the world around us. That interaction works roughly as follows. We receive sensorimotor cues with our bodies and combine them with our own background of 'experiential traces' to create reality. The process is dubbed 'structural coupling' by Caracciolo.[27] Because our perception of reality is by nature fragmented, we fill in the gaps to make sense of our world based on our 'experiential background'. The reality thus created again shapes our experiential background and influences the way we perceive reality afterwards.

For texts, enactivists hold that this process works about the same. The most important difference is that this experience is guided and limited by the text, because we are not free to move our bodies around in the story world as in the 'real' world. The focus then is on textual cues that help the reader reconstruct, or rather enact the experience called for by the author. The degree to which we successfully immerge in a story-world depends on our acceptance of this authorial framework.[28]

Although our structural coupling with a text is in this way limited, we remain free to fill in the gaps based on our individual experiential background. That means that we can point out 'expressive devices' or 'immersive qualities' in a text, and instances where the author aims at activating or correcting certain preconceptions that they expect in their readers, but we cannot fully reconstruct the ancient readerly experience. We can, however, combine our knowledge on Plutarch's environment and his supposed audience[29] with these textual cues to come as close to the envisaged reader-response as possible.

1.2.2. Application to classical texts

This second-generation reader-response criticism has recently been applied to ancient Greek authors such as Homer, Xenophon and Herodotus.[30] Plutarch's *Lives* too have not escaped narratological analysis in terms of enactivism and immersion.[31]

Now, it is clear that Plutarch knew how to write a vivid and supple, or immersive narrative. As Moorman recently demonstrated, he was aware how constructing such a narrative could pull the reader in to experience a perspective they would not have chosen themselves. She analyses in detail Miltiades' death by scaphism in the *Artaxerxes* and argues that the immersion hinders the reader to maintain comfortable (morally superior) distance to the Persian atrocities, complicating their judgement by making them complicit bystanders.[32] Many *Lives* are filled with highly immersive passages, though not in strict chronological order and

[27] Caracciolo (2014) 97-100.
[28] Caracciolo (2014) 42 adopting authorial framework means responding to a story in roughly same way as producer, he explains this with the term 'expressive devices'.
[29] Who exactly were the envisioned audience is not a done deal, see below.
[30] Allan et al. (2017), Grethlein & Huitink (2017) on Homer, Huitink (2019) on the similarity between enargeia and enactivism.
[31] Grethlein (2013) treats Plutarch among other ancient historiographers with respect to experience and teleology, Chrysanthou (2018) connects Plutarch's narratological devices in the *Lives* with the call for moral judgement on the audience's part.
[32] Moorman (2022).

frequently interrupted by narratorial comments as described below.[33]

In his role as a literary critic, Plutarch is also frequently cited by enactivists when discussing concepts like *enargeia*, the classical counterpart of immersion.[34] When praising Xenophon (*Art.* 8.1) for 'bringing the events for the readers eyes', he adds that he will not do what Xenophon has done already, merely supplying details that he passed over.[35] As we will see, the most vivid scenes are (usually) indeed those not found, or not extensively treated in other sources. In the *Themistokles* too Plutarch has to deal with predecessors famous for their vividness, namely Herodotus and Thucydides.[36] It will be illuminating to see if he adopted the same stance towards them as towards Xenophon, and how his narrative differs from theirs.

Although Chrysanthou recently applied the enactivist approach to Plutarch's *Lives*, he devotes almost no attention to the Themistokles/Camillus pair, (except again for noticing that it lacks both prologue and *synkrisis*).[37] That should not surprise us, given the apparent lack of *enargeia* or immersive qualities in this pair, compared to, e.g. *Alexander,* or to Herodotus' or Thucydides' version of the same story. Nevertheless, the passages that do immerse the reader are still worthy of analysis, as is Plutarch's deliberate avoidance of it.

1.3. Audience and identification

To say anything conclusive about reader responses, we must know something about the identity of the reader and author[38]. Naturally, it is impossible to know who in reality read Plutarch's *Themistokles*/*Camillus,* let alone reconstruct individual responses.[39] We can however deduct a *constructed* audience and author from the text combined with our knowledge of Plutarch's time and social surroundings.[40] Therefore we should not think of 'Plutarch' in his texts as a necessarily accurate representation of the Plutarch that actually walked this earth in the first century AD. I will use Plutarch or 'the narrator' to indicate this literary persona. Likewise, his target 'audience' ('the reader') in the text may or may not correspond to actual readers of his time.

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[33] Grethlein (2013) notes that the *Alexander* is specifically suited for *enargeia* and contains lots of 'vignettes' that are highly immersive, precisely because Alexander's life wás quite dramatic, full of theatre-like scenes. See also §3.2.

[34] Huitink (2019), Allan et al (2017) holding that *enargeia* has to do with (among others) vivid descriptions, Gethlein & Huitink (2017) (contra 'pictorialist account').

[35] τὴν δὲ μάχην ἐκείνην πολλῶν μὲν ἀπηγγελκότων, Ξενοφῶντος δὲ μονονουχὶ δεικνύοντος ὄψει, καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν, ὡς οὐ γεγενημένοις, ἀλλὰ γινομένοις, ἐφιστάντος ἀεὶ τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐμπαθῆ καὶ συγκινδυνεύοντα διὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν, οὐκ ἔστι νοῦν ἔχοντος ἐπεξηγεῖσθαι, πλὴν ὅσα τῶν ἀξίων λόγου παρῆλθεν εἰπεῖν ἐκεῖνον. *Art.* 8.1.

[36] See Pelling (2000) for an extensive treatment on Plutarch's dealing with Thucydides in *Nicias.*

[37] Chrysanthou (2018) is criticised for in fact contributing little to already existing scholarship, though excellently summarizing and expanding on Duff and Pelling, see e. g. Fletcher (2019) who dismisses his conclusions as 'cross-genre', which I do not entirely agree with given the different and less rigid understanding of 'genre' in Plutarch's time.

[38] Plutarch is introduced very briefly in §1.1.1.

[39] Duff (2007) 9.

[40] This may lead to circular reasoning, so ideally we maintain balance between what we know of Plutarch's audience that is *not* constructed from his works, and what we do reconstruct from text. Unfortunately almost everything we know from Plutarch and his audience is mined from his own works, other sources, such as the Suda, are much later.

Πολιτικός, φιλόσοφος or both?

Although Plutarch dedicated his biographical project to Quintus Sosius Senecio, there is no scholarly consensus about its *intended* audience. The debate mainly concerns whether it must be constructed as Greek and/or Roman, and to what degree politically influential or 'just' interested in politics from a philosophical point of view.

First, the dedication combined with the design of comparing a Greek with a Roman, has led to the assumption that the audience must have been a combination of well-educated members of the elite, either Roman or Greek. The *exempla* of great political predecessors and their virtues is thought to be relevant to, for example, emperor Trajan, as well as Greek administrators. [41]

This assumption, however, is challenged by Plutarch's tendency to explain basic Roman institutions and only advanced or obscure Greek ones. He writes in Greek, in a Greek context, and seems to assume the audience shared that background. Thus, a primarily Greek audience is constructed.[42] Still, that does not exclude Roman elite readers, since in Plutarch's time, being refined and well educated (for a Roman) meant adopting a Greek cultural identity.[43] For the purposes of this thesis it is important 'that Plutarch's readers imagined as wealthy men, members of a landowning elite, and used to the exercise of some level of power'.[44]

The other issue, concerning the philosophical or pragmatic interest of the audience, is more relevant to this thesis. The question of audience, naturally, is closely related to the goal attributed to the biographical works. Roskam, after treating the much-cited proems on *Aemilius/Timoleon* and *Pericles/Fabius Maximus*, writes: 'All of these passages clearly show that Plutarch unmistakably saw his *Parallel Lives* as an essentially moral project. Yet a problem remains: there is a certain tension between these straightforward programmatic statements, on the one hand, and the subsequent Lives, on the other hand, where such a moral agenda is not always equally clear.'[45]

He continues to argue that, regardless of the 'descriptive moralism' as described by Pelling, some lives are still 'more historical' than others. *Themistokles/Camillus* is such a life, according to Roskam.[46] So, is this life just a historical diversion for an otherwise philosophical audience, or should we expect this pair to be aimed at a different audience than the rest? What was the audience's general orientation?

Jacobs argues for an audience that Plutarch himself describes as politically active (πολιτικός) and well-read (φιλόλογος).[47] Although that meant a certain familiarity with and awareness of the importance of philosophy for good

[41] Stadter (2002/2015) who argues for the presence in the text for Roman readership, noting that Greeks and Romans are about equally represented in the dedicatees of the treatises. Jacobs (2017) shares his view.
[42] Duff (2007), following Pelling (2002, repr. 2004).
[43] Roskam (2021) 3. For references concerning the intertwining of Roman and Greek cultural identities, see Jacobs (2017) 37, n. 122.
[44] Duff (2007) 8. The argument is more complicated, and includes issues on genre, assumed literary background, Plutarch's real life social circle, see in particular Duff (2007) and Stadter (2015).
[45] Roskam (2021) 93.
[46] Ibid. citing Pelling (2011) 23.
[47] Id. 10.

statesmanship, they were not philosophers (φιλόσοφοι). [48]

For the *politikos,* three political paths to power existed under Imperial rule in Plutarch's time, dependent on lineage and the possession of Roman citizenship.[49] There is evidence in Plutarch's work for people of all three paths. Consequently, Plutarch's social circle and therefore his audience was large and varied. It included Romans and Greeks, highly educated and with different degrees of political responsibility and freedom. Jacobs then argues that the *Lives* must be read not just as a philosophical thought-experiment on political virtue and vice, but as pragmatic instruction for men in politics. The incorporation of the Greek cities into the Roman imperium did not mean political lessons from 5th century Athens and Republican Rome were no longer relevant. Because the competition for desirable positions 'could be intense', reading about how their predecessors handled comparable challenges, was beneficial for an audience as Plutarch's.[50]

In other words, the reader is expected to be educated, interested, involved in politics at some level and willing to do the hard work of 'engaged and critical' reading.[51] The audience is expected to 'share the same moral values' as the author and the quest for morally just development of one's character is taken for granted.[52]

2. Structure and mess: an overview

Before diving into a close reading of several key passages to illustrate my argument on narrative style, it is necessary to present an overview of the *Themistokles*' structure and Plutarch's ways of turning it into a mess. I will briefly discuss chronology, plot, digressions and reader's evaluation.

The structure has, in any case, suffered modern criticism, dubbed 'not on the whole one of Plutarch's most thoughtful or incisive Lives' by Pelling.[53] He also accuses Plutarch of 'rather crude' manipulation of material to give a biographical focus.[54] Looking at the way Plutarch builds his narrative, the structure indeed looks all over the place.[55]

Throughout the biography the author thematically strings together anecdotes,[56] source criticism, alternative versions of events, interrupted by narratorial 'scholarly' comments. The scene with Molossian king Admetus (ch. 24), for example, during Themistokles' flight from Athens, first presents the peculiar supplication as

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[48] Jacobs (2017) ch. 1, esp. 25-31, following van Hoof (2010).
[49] Jacobs (2017) 31-36.
[50] Id. 38. Her view is challenged by Roskam (2021) 94, who believes that even the 'lengthy accounts of great military or political achievements' such as in *Camillus* 13-22 'do not undermine the traditional, moralizing interpretation. I do not think that their views are incompatible. Regardless of whether the *Lives* were meant as pragmatic instruction, they definitely could be read like that without losing their moral relevance.
[51] Duff (2011a) 59.
[52] Jacobs (2017) 28, Duff (2007) 4-7, Pelling (2002) 267-277.
[53] Pelling (2002) 132, also cited by Roskam (2021) 113. Marr (1998) *ad loc.* criticizes the structure in several places e.g. concerning ch. 18.
[54] Pelling (2002) 132.
[55] Contra Duff (2010) 65 who finds the thematic structure 'rather simple' compared to *Camillus.*
[56] Beck (2017) 34.

Themistokles' solo doing. After the short dramatic scene and a small explanation on the strange Molossian supplication habits, Plutarch suggests that is was actually Phthia, the queen, who gave him the idea of doing it this way and helped him carry it out. Or, in another version it was even Admetus himself who rehearsed it with Themistokles, in order to excuse himself should the Athenians demand the delivery of the supplicant. The narrator leaves us in the dark as to his preferred version. Where were we again?

Consequently, for lack of chronological sequence, the narrative rhythm can hardly be called summary, for scenic rhythm there is little actual scenes.
When comparing to *Camillus* it becomes clear that Plutarch is certainly able to describe a life full of war and political strife in a more consistent manner. Although the anecdotal structure is present here too, the narrative is much less chaotic and achronical.

However, we should not simply write the *Themistokles* off as one of lesser quality. My aim here is to reassess how the structure influences the experiential quality of its narrative and suggest a way of interpretation that makes sense of its 'chaotic structure'. For such structural analysis the comparison with *Camillus* is essential.

2.1. Chronology & thematic organisation

As Grethlein observed in the *Alexander*, Plutarch has a 'tendency to break the flux of time into episodes' the significance of which goes beyond the moment.'[57] We might look for a similar episodic structure narrative of the *Themistokles.*
As usual, the first chapters of the *Life* set out themes that will be developed later. The *Themistokles* starts *in medias res*[58] with a chapter on the protagonist's origins (τὰ μὲν ἐκ γένους), followed by early youth and education (ἔτι δὲ παῖς ὢν). As often in the *Lives,* his childhood is not really 'narrated', and it is only chronological in the sense that it starts with origins, youth and education, but the themes are often illustrated by anecdotes from a later period:[59]

[57] Grethlein (2013) 124.
[58] Whether the δέ in the first line signifies a lost proem or just the continuing of the *Lives* with the *Themistokles* is a matter for debate. See Duff (2008) 176-9 who holds that there is a lacuna, given that no other first Life begins with δέ (see Duff (2011b) 223-224). Contra Flacelière (1972) who stresses that antique texts more often start *in medias res*. Compare Xen. *Hell.* 1.1 μετὰ δὲ ταῦτα… This text more evidently follows on Thucydides' *Histories*, but *Themistokles-Camillus* certainly was not the first pair in the *Lives* (see Roskam (2021) 90) and it starts with his origins and touches upon the major themes that will run through the life, just like in the other pairs. Besides, other pairs lack a proem too (see Duff (2014) p 333 n. 6). The issue is irrelevant for my argument here.
[59] I agree with Duff (2010) 47-48, (2008) 175, Duff (2011b) 225-233, (2010) 47, 51 on the thematic organisation and lack of 'proper' narration (contra Beck (2017) 23 and 26 who notes that 'Plutarch frequently displays concern for chronological accuracy, e.g., *Them.* 2.5.'. In my opinion this passage centres around the issue of whether Anaxagoras or Menippus was Themistokles' teacher. Chronology is just an argument here, not Plutarch's major concern. As Duff noticed 'some of the stories concern later in life' mentioning 1.4 and 2.4. There is also the anecdote in 1.2 (on Cynosarges), in 2.3 (defence on lyre-playing) and 2.6. According to Beck (2017) these would all be flash-forward. See also Van der Stockt (2014) 325 on the effects of flash-forward and flashback.

‘(…) ἔπειθέ τινας ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς τῶν εὖ γεγονότων νεανίσκων καταβαίνοντας εἰς τὸ Κυνόσαργες ἀλείφεσθαι μετ᾽ αὐτοῦ. καὶ τούτου γενομένου δοκεῖ πανούργως τὸν τῶν νόθων καὶ γνησίων διορισμὸν ἀνελεῖν.’ (1.2)

‘(…) he tried to convince some of his upper-class peers to go down with him to Cynosarges to prepare for training. And because this happened/worked, he seems to slyly have removed the partition between bastards and legitimates.’

We have no clue where in the chronology we are, except for νεανίσκων indicating Themistokles is still young. Still, these two sentences contain a lot of ‘buzzwords’ connected to him in the rest of the narrative:[60] Not just the convincing (ἔπειθε), but also the cunning/sly (πανοῦργος) behaviour, and last but not least, that he is successful in introducing new ideas.[61] Two themes that will recur are also mentioned: training his fellow citizens and obtaining his political goals by empowering the lower classes.

The external perspective Plutarch creates does not encourage us to immediately form an opinion on Themistokles’ behaviour, with δοκεῖ (he *seems*) he creates distance between himself and the audience and judgements like πανοῦργος.

Camillus’ youth is skipped, probably for lack of sources, but his early political adventures are recorded, even including an extravagant triumph that is judged a juvenile error (ch. 7). However, the opening is filled with a comparable overview of his life and the virtues Plutarch will be discussing. But, contrary to the *Themistokles*, from ch. 2 the *Camillus* is mostly in chronological order.[62] Plutarch still recounts anecdotes to illustrate character traits, but they are firmly planted in time (e.g. the Falerian teacher’s affair during the siege of Falerii in ch. 9). And the chronology is often made explicit (e.g. ‘the tenth year of the war’).[63]

That lack of clear context in time (and often space) is the first feature in the *Themistokles* that adds to the chaos. In accordance with his famous statement in *Alex* 1.2-3 were he separates biography from historiography,[64] there is a large ‘gap’ in ch. 3 from 493-483.[65] Not that nothing interesting happened in Greek history, but since Themistokles had no significant part in the battle of Marathon,[66] it is passed over

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[60] Duff (2008) on the opening scenes of the *Themistokles* as ‘proemial’ for the complete biography.
[61] The term used is καινοτομία, innovation, or the literal opening of a new vein in a mine. See *Them.* 3.2 and 29.4. Duff (2010) 56-57.
[62] Duff (2011b) 225.
[63] εἰς τὸ δέκατον ἔτος τοῦ πολέμου (5.1) A similar example later in the *Life:* ἐγένετο δ᾽ ἡ μάχη μετὰ τροπὰς θερινὰς περὶ τήν πανσέληνον 19.1.
[64] οὔτε γὰρ ἱστορίας γράφομεν, ἀλλὰ βίους, οὔτε ταῖς ἐπιφανεστάταις πράξεσι πάντως ἔνεστι δήλωσις ἀρετῆς ἢ κακίας, ἀλλὰ πρᾶγμα βραχὺ πολλάκις καὶ ῥῆμα καὶ παιδιά τις ἔμφασιν ἤθους ἐποίησε μᾶλλον ἢ μάχαι μυριόνεκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων, ὥσπερ οὖν οἱ ζῳγράφοι τὰς ὁμοιότητας ἀπὸ τοῦ προσώπου καὶ τῶν περὶ τὴν ὄψιν εἰδῶν, οἷς ἐμφαίνεται τὸ ἦθος, ἀναλαμβάνουσιν, ἐλάχιστα τῶν λοιπῶν μερῶν φροντίζοντες, οὕτως ἡμῖν δοτέον εἰς τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα μᾶλλον ἐνδύεσθαι καὶ διὰ τούτων εἰδοποιεῖν τὸν ἑκάστου βίον, ἐάσαντας ἑτέροις τὰ μεγέθη καὶ τοὺς ἀγῶνας *Alex.* 1.2-3 Though that distinction between genres is not as strict and omnipresent as in modern times, see Duff (1999) 17-21, Grethlein (2013) 92 n 1.
[65] Pelling (2002) 153.
[66] Plutarch implies that he was not involved because he was still young (νῶστε νέος ὢν ἔτι τῆς ἐν Μαραθῶνι μάχης πρὸς τοὺς βαρβάρους γενομένης 3.3) but in *Aristeides* 5.2 he is reported to have fought in that battle, which is the more logical option. Cf. Marr (1998) *ad loc.*

quickly. Even when the narrative seems to start out chronologically (3.1), the narrator apparently does not feel any restraint in interrupting it for a discussion of character (ch. 5).[67]

2.2. War with Persia: a proper narrative.

Then the Persian War narrative (ch. 6-16) starts, but even though the chronological order (meetings with generals, Artemisium, further politics, Salamis, aftermath, trouble with Sparta) is taken up in between anecdotes, the order serves to illustrate the character trait that is being highlighted, not chronology.[68] Chapter six is still very much in the fragmentary style of the opening, with some noteworthy achievements haphazardly recounted with ellipses of unknown duration in between.[69] This is something Plutarch frequently does (e.g. also in ch. 18 and 29). The most important achievement is reconciling the Greek cities.[70] His role as reconciler (also in 29.6 between Demaratus and Artaxerxes) will form a sharp contrast with him being the cause of civil strife later on.[71]

In chapters 7-16 we can finally speak of 'narrative'. The narrative rhythm is fast-paced, and decelerates when we reach grand scenes like Artemisium in ch. 8, the evacuation in ch. 10, and from the discussion with Eurybiades in ch. 11 until the end of the battle at Salamis in ch. 16.[72] Because Themistokles had no role in the battle of Plataea, it is mentioned only in passing and that's the end of the Persian War.[73]

Chapter 17, designated the pinnacle of his success by Duff,[74] also disregards the usual constraints of time, and is followed by 'a hotch potch of a chapter' according to Marr consisting only of sayings and one-liners 'with a rather lame end'.[75] I will return to this chapter later.

During the set up to Themistokles' downfall (ch. 19-22) the narrative accelerates again, interrupted only by Timocreon's hateful poetry and some noteworthy sayings on the part of Themistokles.[76] The downfall is anticipated because of the tragic plot, Themistokles is not, however, hopelessly destroyed.[77]

The part with the most chronological and spatial 'feel' is Themistokles' flight from Greece to Persia (23-26) although Marr & Frost had to go through a lot of trouble to

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[67] Duff (2011b) 233.
[68] Contra Duff (2011b), esp. 230-3. Though I agree that there is a transition from the proem to the 'narrative proper' the features that usually mark this transition as noted by Duff do not apply to the Themistokles. In ch. 6 he is not the subject of the starting narrative, nor is it specifically situated at the beginning of his political career. This is the case for chapter 7, although the account on the Persian Wars clearly starts in ch. 6. The lack of chronology also persists for the rest of the narrative.
[69] Beck (2017) 29.
[70] μέγιστον δὲ πάντων τὸ καταλῦσαι τοὺς Ἑλληνικοὺς πολέμους καὶ διαλλάξαι τὰς πόλεις ἀλλήλαις, πείσαντα τὰς ἔχθρας διὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἀναβαλέσθαι 6.3.
[71] ἀπωσαμένου δὲ τὸν Δημάρατον ὀργῇ διὰ τὸ αἴτημα τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ δοκοῦντος ἀπαραιτήτως ἔχειν πρὸς αὐτόν, ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς δεηθεὶς ἔπεισε καὶ διήλλαξε. 29.6. On Themistokles as the cause of civil strife, see Duff (2010) 58, 65-70, Pelling (2002) 132-133.
[72] Beck (2017) 28. Duff (2015) 138-148.
[73] Pelling (2002) 132 writes that after Salamis 'the Persian Wars are dismissed with astonishing perfunctoriness.'
[74] Duff (2010) 54.
[75] Marr (1998) 117.
[76] Again Pelling (2002) 132 is critical in his assessment of ch. 17-22, calling them 'notoriously skimpy'.
[77] See the next section on tragic plot.

date the related events and to fit them into a timeline.[78] Plutarch discusses other writers and their sequence of events, trying to determine when and from where Themistokles set sail to the Ionian coast. Consequently, the reader has some grip on when and where the story is going, although the string of alternative version obscures the final sequence that Plutarch supposedly agrees with.

Curiously, for a large part of his biography, Camillus is off-stage due to banishment (ch. 13-22),[79] while Themistokles is constantly centred at all costs. Camillus' absence is detrimental to his city, while Themistokles' absence looks detrimental primarily for himself. When Camillus returns, he succeeds in setting everything right. When things go wrong again, 'the people' are at fault, not Camillus. In *Themistokles*, it is not always clear who is at fault, but it can certainly be Themistokles.

To summarize, it is not for temporal obscurity in his sources (from which we can reconstruct a logical order, as Marr frequently does) or incompetence or carelessness of the author in this particular pair (compare *Camillus*) that this narrative is so lost in time. Even when we take into account that the chronology is assumed to be familiar to the reader, the narrator does not provide precise cues to put the anecdotes in chronological context, simply because he prefers thematic organisation and the chaotic feel it brings about.

2.3. Plottwist!

Combine blind ambition and lack of refined education with intelligence, unstable power and arrogance, and the audience will have felt the core ingredients for a cultural master plot present already: tragedy.[80] And indeed, after an extraordinary high (ch. 17-18), follows the fall (ch. 22) and Themistocles is banished and on the run.

The narrative slows and the timelessness returns at the hero's arrival at the Persian court (ch. 27). His rise and achievements in Persia (ch. 28-30) are recounted in a way comparable to his rise in Athens, filled with anecdotes. However, the narrative feels a lot more organised and 'calm'. The lack of a new war is only part of the explanation, for Themistokles is also shown to have learned from past mistakes (ch. 31) and behaves more carefully (παρεῖχεν ἑαυτὸν εὐλαβέστερον, 31.2).[81] His banishment is not the tragic end, indeed, as he himself says, it is an unexpected second rise to fame and power.[82] Again the audience is misguided though the unfulfilled tragic set-up.

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[78] Marr (1998) and Frost (1980) *ad loc.*

[79] *Camillus* 13-22 is about the Gallic sack of Rome, during which Camillus was exiled.

[80] Duff (2010) 47 also observes the resemblance to tragedy. See Caracciolo (2014) 42 for the 'cultural masterplot' as part of authorial framework that shapes our reading experience. See Duff (2008) 168, 172-3 for similarities between Themistokles and Heracles (a tragic figure as well) and their shared lack of interest in fine arts. See also the section on plot in the next chapter.

[81] This change of heart and plot is foreshadowed in 2.5 (see n. 50 for the Greek text), where Themistocles reflects on his younger self, stating that stabilizing his character by 'breaking it in' through education would have been a good idea.

[82] αὐτὸν δὲ τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα φασὶν ἤδη μέγαν ὄντα καὶ θεραπευόμενον ὑπὸ πολλῶν λαμπρᾶς ποτε τραπέζης αὐτῷ παρατεθείσης2 πρὸς τοὺς παῖδας εἰπεῖν: 'ὦ παῖδες, ἀπωλόμεθα ἄν, εἰ μὴ ἀπωλόμεθα.' 29.7.

For Camillus, no such tragic set up is present. Rather, his plot follows along the lines of the epic hero that is undeserving of the hate and problems he encounters, but manages to overcome them by his virtue. If anything is tragic, it is Rome's fate without Camillus.

2.4. Death and other endings[83]

At the end too, the tendency to reverse expectations and the contrast with Camillus is visible. Camillus' conduct and the narrative structure are straightforward. He is sent to lead a military campaign once more, and notwithstanding his age, does so virtuously and calmly. When they lose a battle, it is because of the young and hot-headed commanders' impulse, not the hero's (*Cam.* 37-40). Themistokles on the contrary is recorded to be in high esteem at the Persian court in general, but in an anecdote (ch. 31) his almost-downfall is recounted because he cared too much still for a statue that commemorated his political apex in Greece (31.1-2).

Even their deaths are fundamentally different. Camillus' is clear: his life is fulfilled (βίου τελειότητος),[84] he dies from the plague and is mourned by his people (*Cam.* 43). The end. There is no information on offspring or legacy as Plutarch usually gives.

Themistokles, on the contrary, dies by suicide. Plutarch discusses again several explanations and methods and comments which one he considers the most likely (31.4-5). Thucydides, however, shoved the suicide story aside in favour of a deadly illness, something the audience undoubtedly knew. They might have felt surprised at Plutarch opting for the more dramatic and heroic explanation, given his following of Thucydides' portrayal elsewhere. On the other hand, regardless of the unfulfilled tragic plot set up in the opening, and Themistokles' new-found cautiousness, his new rise to power and fame (μέγας, 29.10) again caused jealousy.[85] After the murder attempt (ch. 30) you could argue he is set up for an end that does not sound like 'and he died peacefully in his sleep'.

As is customary in the *Lives*, it ends with an external prolepsis recounting the fortunes of his offspring and memorials of the life still visible in Plutarch's time.[86] Themes from the opening resurfaced, such as his greatness and φιλοτιμία and close the ring composition.[87] In addition, it also prepares a thematic connection to the second life.[88]

2.5. Narratorial comments and digressions

Second, not just the chronology is constantly obscured, or the plot-related expectations disappointed, exciting passages with supple narrative are often interrupted by narratorial comments as well.[89] A practice not *that* confusing if they really concern the

[83]Cooper (2014), see Pelling (2002) 378 for the 'irregularity' of the end of this pair.
[84] Duff (2010) 65.
[85] Id. 56-57.
[86] Beck (2017) 33-35.
[87] Duff (2011b) 242-46.
[88] Id. 246-250, esp. n. 164.
[89] Marr (1998) 147 calls them 'scholarly'.

events at hand. But as I will show, such comments often form a digression that may feel random instead, or a transition to a different strand of narrative while the previous is left open.[90] Other writers are frequently discussed, naming (and sometimes shaming) the historian responsible.[91]

In a narrative that is characterized by its anecdotal structure, pointing out digressions is not self-explanatory. For the purpose of this thesis I consider all passages a digression that become either irrelevant to the life of Themistokles or meander too far to concern the main thread.[92]

2.6. Evaluation

Lastly, it is usually unclear what stance the audience ought to take towards Themistokles. The relevance of the *Themistokles* as *exemplum bonum* is made clear at the start of biography:

ἔτι δὲ παῖς ὢν ὁμολογεῖται φορᾶς μεστὸς εἶναι, καὶ τῇ μὲν φύσει συνετός, τῇ δὲ προαιρέσει μεγαλοπράγμων καὶ πολιτικός. (…)
ἐπεὶ καὶ τῶν παιδεύσεων τὰς μὲν ἠθοποιοὺς ἢ πρὸς ἡδονήν τινα καὶ χάριν ἐλευθέριον σπουδαζομένας ὀκνηρῶς καὶ ἀπροθύμως ἐξεμάνθανε, τῶν δὲ εἰς σύνεσιν ἢ πρᾶξιν λεγομένων δῆλος ἦν ὑπερερῶν[93] παρ᾽ ἡλικίαν, ὡς τῇ φύσει πιστεύων. (2.1-2)[94]

‘And also, as a boy, it is agreed that he was full of energy, and by nature intelligent, by choice inclined to great deeds and politically active. (…)
And, since of the things he should study he mastered the character-forming subjects or those that strive towards some pleasure and liberal grace sluggishly and reluctantly, but he was clearly avid, beyond his age, on those aimed at so called intelligence or practice as if trusting in his nature.’

The narrator describes Themistokles as μέγας, which will be a recurring theme, and by nature intelligent (τῇ φύσει συνετός), resembling Thucydides’ portrayal (1.138).[95] The latter also names his innate intelligence (οἰκεια ξυνέσις) his most distinctive feature and praises our hero for it with many superlatives.[96] Besides intelligent, he is also by choice inclined to great deeds (μεγαλοπράγμων) and politically active (πολιτικός).[97] The audience would definitely identify with these characteristics and evaluate them positively.

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[90] As the digression on the saffron-like stone, discussed below.
[91] E.g. in 2.3 when discussing his teacher, or concerning the veracity of Themistokles’ trip to Sicily in the digression about from which city he left for Persia (ch. 25), or on whether it was Xerxes or Artaxerxes that was King (27). Chrysanthou (2018) 165 on source criticism.
[92] I am aware that this is not a conclusive criterium and discussion on whether something is part of the main thread or not is in many cases possible.
[93] Accepting the emendation by Madvig. The manuscripts read ὑπερορῶν, disregarding, but that would undo the contrast (τὰς μέν... τῶν δέ) Plutarch builds. See Marr (1998) *ad loc.* for further discussion and references.
[94] All translations are my own, although I have consulted Perrin (1914) as well as Marr (1998).
[95] Roskam (2021) 114, Duff (2010) 48, and (2008) 165-167.
[96] ἦν γὰρ ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς βεβαιότατα δὴ φύσεως ἰσχὺν δηλώσας καὶ διαφερόντως τι ἐς αὐτὸ μᾶλλον ἑτέρου ἄξιος θαυμάσαι: οἰκείᾳ γὰρ ξυνέσει καὶ οὔτε προμαθὼν ἐς αὐτὴν οὐδὲν οὔτ᾽ ἐπιμαθών, τῶν τε παραχρῆμα δι᾽ ἐλαχίστης βουλῆς κράτιστος γνώμων καὶ τῶν μελλόντων ἐπὶ πλεῖστον τοῦ γενησομένου ἄριστος εἰκαστής (…). Thuc. *Hist.* 1.138.
[97] Duff (2008) 165.

That also applies to those that Themistokles shows no interest in: ἦθος, ἡδονή, χάρις ἐλευθέριος.[98] This is further illustrated by the anecdote, wherein he has to defend himself for lack of refinement by emphasizing his political successes. He does this quite crudely (φορτικώτερον), no doubt to the contempt of the men who had received a proper *paideia*. Then again, the 'refined gentlemen' are described with a certain sarcastic undertone, warning the audience not to judge a man of this size too quickly. [99]

Themistokles is then called inconsistent and unstable, ἀνώμαλος καὶ ἀστάθμητος for letting his nature run wild. This, I contend, is what characterizes him the most. Indeed he is always motivated by φιλοτιμία, but love for honour does not cause all the troubles, the excessiveness and lack of balance (in everything) does.

The narrator illustrates this statement with a small digression on the importance of education.[100] The Platonic language alerts the educated reader to its broader philosophical relevance. The narrator talks about ὁρμαί, impulses, their volatile nature and tendency to deteriorate when unchecked by λόγος, reason, and finishes with a quote of the hero comparing his younger self to a horse in need of breaking in.[101] Plutarch's Themistokles indeed provides a good example of how something can go wrong when a character is not balanced.

2.6.1. Φιλοτιμία: admirable virtue or condemnable vice

Starting in chapter three, the narrator recounts Themistokles' rise to power. He illustrates his φιλοτιμία by comparing him to Aristeides and recounting his vehement response to Miltiades' triumph and subsequent κλέος. He is portrayed opposing this man (Aristeides) who clearly embodies virtues that Plutarch commends[102] and introducing many innovations and new policies (not good).[103] Just as we are ready to condemn this behaviour, he is then shown to be *the only one* who saw the next Persian war coming,[104] and had the guts to talk the people (μόνος εἰπεῖν ἐτόλμησε) into directing their funds towards the constructing of a fleet. He does so very subtly, judging the Athenian sentiment correctly and employing it for the best. Our narrator takes the time to elaborate on the consequences of this seawards development in flash-forwards: although Themistokles is accused of moral corruption of the people for it, he was undeniably *right* at that time and led the Athenians to victory and power (good).[105]

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[98] As Duff (2010) 48 and Roskam (2021) 114 note, lack of proper education is usually not a good omen in Plutarch.

[99] ὅθεν ὕστερον ἐν ταῖς ἐλευθερίοις καὶ ἀστείαις λεγομέναις διατριβαῖς ὑπὸ τῶν πεπαιδεῦσθαι δοκούντων χλευαζόμενος ἠναγκάζετο φορτικώτερον ἀμύνεσθαι… 2.3.

[100] Whereas Thucydides emphasizes the extraordinary abilities Themistokles had *without* any training 1.138.3.

[101] ἐν δὲ ταῖς πρώταις τῆς νεότητος ὁρμαῖς ἀνώμαλος ἦν καὶ ἀστάθμητος, ἅτε τῇ φύσει καθ' αὑτὴν χρώμενος ἄνευ λόγου καὶ παιδείας ἐπ' ἀμφότερα μεγάλας ποιουμένῃ μεταβολὰς τῶν ἐπιτηδευμάτων καὶ πολλάκις ἐξισταμένῃ πρὸς τὸ χεῖρον, ὡς ὕστερον αὐτὸς ὡμολόγει, καὶ τοὺς τραχυτάτους πώλους ἀρίστους ἵππους γίνεσθαι φάσκων, ὅταν ἧς προσήκει τύχωσι παιδείας καὶ καταρτύσεως. 2.5

[102] Duff (2007) 3-4.

[103] Aristeides was forced (ἠναγκάζετο) to stand up to Themistokles (τῷ Θεμιστοκλεῖ τὸν δῆμον ἐπὶ πολλὰ κινοῦντι καὶ μεγάλας ἐπιφέροντι καινοτομίας ἐναντιοῦσθαι πολλάκις, ἐνιστάμενος αὐτοῦ πρὸς τὴν αὔξησιν. 3.2) to prevent too many innovations. 'New' usually had a negative connotation for authors in Plutarch's era.

[104] οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἄλλοι … Θεμιστοκλῆς δὲ. 3.4.

[105] As argued by Pelling (2002) 132. εἰ μὲν δὴ τὴν ἀκρίβειαν καὶ τὸ καθαρὸν τοῦ πολιτεύματος ἔβλαψεν ἢ μὴ ταῦτα πράξας, ἔστω φιλοσοφώτερον ἐπισκοπεῖν (…) 4.2 Whether or not Athens becoming a naval superpower was a positive thing, depended greatly on the personal political preferences of ancient authors.

So, within the course of two chapters our opinion of Themistokles' chase of δόξα, fame, and his eagerness to πρωτεύειν, be foremost, is swayed from condemnation to applause.[106] These opposite views are then *both* reinforced by two contrary anecdotes on his handling of money, a completely different (though related) trait. He is painted as a big spender in the first, but a scrooge in the other, after which the theme of ambition (φιλοτιμία) is taken up again.

Again, the narrator nudges us first towards condemnation via the negative perspective of the elite, then towards approval via the perspective of the common people (5.2). Note that both the negative examples (the hiring of the harpist, the lavish banqueting, the stèle commemorating him as choregus) and the positive ones (remembering everyone's name by heart, being an impartial judge and incorruptible magistrate, going up against a famous yet unjust poet) are anecdotes without clear context in time or space. Marr even calls the last one 'quite irrelevant to Plutarch's purpose'.[107] But if the purpose, as I believe, is countering the negative examples right before this anecdote, it is an essential addition.

This part on Themistokles' rise to power (ch. 3-5) ends with his success in ostracizing Aristeides, an ambiguous achievement in itself, since it meant success for Themistokles, but the loss of a valuable and just politician for Athens.[108]

In short, the absence of clear chronology, the reversal of a tragic plot, the frequent narratorial interruptions and digressions and the constant switching of intended evaluation result in a narrative that feels like it unsubtly jerks the reader from one place to another. It is easy to feel 'lost' and this makes it both an interesting and frustrating book to read, especially when compared to the linear clarity of the Camillus. Remarkably, Plutarch's usual method of establishing a 'baseline' in the first life, and then problematizing and complicating it in the second is subverted,[109] so it must be constructed like this *on purpose*.

[106] Chrysanthou (2018) on Plutarch's habit of mixing praise and blame. See Marincola (2015) for a better explanation.
[107] Marr (1998) 82.
[108] Compare *Aristeides* ch. 7 for the same event from the opposite perspective. Because Aristeides here is the protagonist, Plutarch does explain ostracism.
[109] Roskam (2021) 97, Duff (2010) 65 also mentions this pattern and also recognises it in the *Them./Cam.*, which I do not completely agree with.

3. Immersion and *enargeia*, what makes it vivid?

On to a close reading of vivid passages. First, a phenomenon that modern readers *expect* in a biography, but is hardly there: the experience of the protagonist. I will look at the development of a 'mind style' for Themistokles, (lack of) access to his consciousness, followed by a short treatment of speech.

Then I will discuss other expressive devices, like the experience of bystanders and surprisingly immersive digressions. All passages are selected on based on their *enargeia,* and/or immersive qualities, to see how these qualities and the narrators use of time, plot, digression and, most of all, the complicated evaluation on the part of the audience just described, construct the reader's experience.

3.1. Theory of mind & consciousness enactment

One expressive device to make narrative immersive is allowing the reader access to the consciousness of a character. Here we must distinguish between consciousness-attribution and consciousness-enactment. We ascribe a consciousness to a character that, based on our experiences in the real world, seems to express one. From a third-person perspective we draw conclusions on their inner reflections and motivations based on what they do or say. We develop a theory of mind. In fact, it is impossible to *not* to attribute a consciousness to a talking/moving agent.[110]

But via text, as Caracciolo (2014) holds, we have the opportunity for direct access to the mind of a (fictional) character.[111] Not just by phrases that explicitly represent experience ("he thought" "she saw"), but also punctuation and layout, or, as he puts it: 'anything from the choice of a word reminiscent of the character's idiolect to the use of phenomenological metaphors (…) can be interpreted as strongly expressive of a character's experience, giving rise to what stylisticians term a 'mind style'.' These techniques encourage us to *enact* a character's consciousness, instead of just theorizing about it. If we successfully follow the cues of such an 'internally focalized' passage, we feel empathy.[112]

When your goal is moral education, this could be a very useful approach: what better way to make an audience invested in the ethical dilemmas faced by the protagonist than to put them in his shoes?

3.1.1. Themistokles' 'mind style'

However, only in a few instances the narrator gives (possible) introspection on Themistokles' part.[113] We see him acting and talking in a way that encourages us to contemplate his character, but often we receive little cues enabling us to enact his consciousness. The reason we do not often gain inside information on Themistokles'

[110] Caracciolo (2014) ch. 5.1.
[111] For example, Sluiter et al (2013) on the devices Euripides exploits to enable empathy with a figure as controversial and often dehumanized as Medea.
[112] The intensity of the immersion is naturally mediated by experiential background (e.g. familiarity with situation) and the empathetic skills of the reader. Caracciolo (2014) 130, ch. 5.3.
[113] For example, both in the story about the water ornament, and on his motivations for suicide (ch. 31).

reasoning[114] probably has to do with conceptions in Plutarch's time on the relation between character, virtue and actions. Where a modern audience would look for motivations and inner monologues more than to the resulting actions to determine morality and character, for ancient writers character, morality and the resulting deeds are almost the same thing. [115]

Where the narrator *does* show explicitly what Themistokles thinks or feels, the presence of many verbs for 'realizing in advance' or 'quickly putting two and two together' are noteworthy. If he is said to feel anything, it is mostly ambition, or fear for his enemies. I will quickly run through the verbs (and other words) that show us a glimpse of his mind.

In the opening (3.4), Themistokles is referred to as a 'lover of great deeds' (ἐραστής πράξεων μεγάλων).[116] He is reported to desire (βουλόμενος) to stand out (18.1 and 18.8), and to 'surpass everyone in love for honour' (5.2).[117]

Soon, (3.5) he already expects the Persian invasion (προσδοκῶν) way before it happens. The same verb is used for his correct assessment of Pausanias' betrayal (23.2), namely that someone will discover it before it causes trouble.[118]

His foresight leads him to honourable actions for the greater good. Fearing (δείσας) that a cowardly commander would ruin the whole Greek enterprise (6.1) he buys off his aspirations.[119] When he understands (συνιδών) the danger of division (7.3) in the army command, he surrenders his own position. We find the same word when he rightly figures out the best place and time for the sea battle (14.2).[120] He even recalls his political *nemesis* Aristeides from banishment (11.1) when he notices (αἰσθόμενος) the people's sentiments about him.

Themistokles does not use his σύνεσις only to the benefit of the city, but very much to his own benefit too, even if it harms the city. He anticipates (προσαισθόμενος) that the Athenians will come to arrest him, and flees in time (24.1). He is aware (same verb) that he is a much wanted criminal in Cyme and acts cautiously (26.1).[121]

Regardless of his outstanding intelligence, Themistokles too makes mistakes and miscalculates. Although he foresaw that Pausanias' conspiracy came to nothing, he did not see the personal consequences (ostracism) coming. Had he better sensed the jealousy of the Athenian demos, he would not have felt compelled (ἠναγκαζετο) to

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[114] 'The *Lives* tend to be brief on the motives of their character.' Grethlein (2013) 121, contra Chrysanthou (2018) 7.
[115] This is a gross simplification, Duff (2011) 65-66, esp n. 17 for further reference on ancient conceptions of character. Cf. the case of Lucretia that explicitly treats the question of guilt in resulting behaviour versus in motivation Livius *Ab Urbe Condita* 1.57-58. See Pelling (2002) chapter 13 for characterization in Plutarch.
[116] Another occurrence of the central theme μέγας and its compounds.
[117] τῇ δὲ φιλοτιμίᾳ πάντας ὑπερέβαλεν (…) φιλοτιμούμενος πολλοὺς τὴν οἰκίαν ζητεῖν... 5.2, Roskam (2021) 114.
[118] εἴτε παύσεσθαι προσδοκῶν αὐτόν, εἴτ' ἄλλως καταφανῆ γενήσεσθαι σὺν οὐδενὶ λογισμῷ πραγμάτων ἀτόπων καὶ παραβόλων ὀρεγόμενον. 23.2.
[119] Interpreting δείσας not as captured by fear, rather as predicting an unfavourable outcome.
[120] δοκεῖ δ' οὐκ ἧττον εὖ τὸν καιρὸν ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς ἢ τὸν τόπον συνιδὼν… 14.2.
[121] ἐπεὶ δὲ κατέπλευσεν εἰς Κύμην καὶ πολλοὺς ᾔσθετο τῶν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ παραφυλάττοντας αὐτὸν λαβεῖν 26.1.

arrogantly repeat his successes (2.4 and 22.2).[122] Were we filled with admiration first, now the balance starts to tip again.

Sacrifice (13.3)

As regards the people, Themistokles more frequently does not know what to do. He is at a loss (ἀπορῶν) to get the Athenians to evacuate their city (but devises a scheme to make it happen anyway). During his flight from Athens he has to put his hopes in former enemies, fearing (φοβηθείς) the Athenians more than Admetus (24.3),[123] and even more than the Persians.[124]

But Themistokles' low occurs right before the battle of Salamis, which is his highest success. In a vivid scene, he, for a moment, completely loses control over the people (οἱ πολλοί), with horrible consequences:

Θεμιστοκλεῖ δὲ παρὰ τὴν ναυαρχίδα τριήρη σφαγιαζομένῳ τρεῖς προσήχθησαν αἰχμάλωτοι, κάλλιστοι μὲν ἰδέσθαι τὴν ὄψιν, ἐσθῆσι δὲ καὶ χρυσῷ κεκοσμημένοι διαπρεπῶς. ἐλέγοντο δὲ Σανδαύκης παῖδες εἶναι τῆς βασιλέως ἀδελφῆς καὶ Ἀρταΰκτου. τούτους ἰδὼν Εὐφραντίδης ὁ μάντις, ὡς ἅμα μὲν ἀνέλαμψεν ἐκ τῶν ἱερῶν μέγα καὶ περιφανὲς πῦρ, ἅμα δὲ πταρμὸς ἐκ δεξιῶν ἐσήμηνε, τὸν Θεμιστοκλέα δεξιωσάμενος ἐκέλευσε τῶν νεανίσκων κατάρξασθαι καὶ καθιερεῦσαι πάντας ὠμηστῇ Διονύσῳ προσευξάμενον: οὕτω γὰρ ἅμα σωτηρίαν τε καὶ νίκην ἔσεσθαι τοῖς Ἕλλησιν. ἐκπλαγέντος δὲ τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους ὡς μέγα τὸ μάντευμα καὶ δεινόν, οἷον εἴωθεν ἐν μεγάλοις ἀγῶσι καὶ πράγμασι χαλεποῖς, μᾶλλον ἐκ τῶν παραλόγων ἢ τῶν εὐλόγων τὴν σωτηρίαν ἐλπίζοντες οἱ πολλοὶ τὸν θεὸν ἅμα κοινῇ κατεκαλοῦντο φωνῇ καὶ τοὺς αἰχμαλώτους τῷ βωμῷ προσαγαγόντες ἠνάγκασαν, ὡς ὁ μάντις ἐκέλευσε, τὴν θυσίαν συντελεσθῆναι. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν ἀνὴρ φιλόσοφος καὶ γραμμάτων οὐκ ἄπειρος ἱστορικῶν Φανίας ὁ Λέσβιος εἴρηκε. (13.3)

'But while Themistokles was sacrificing next to the admirals trireme, three prisoners of war were brought to him, with the most handsome face, and their clothing exquisitely decorated with gold. They were said to be the children of Sandauke, the King's sister, and Artayktos.

Once the seer Eufrantides saw them, because simultaneously a great and bright flame shot up from the sacrifices, and a sneeze gave an omen from the right, he grabbed Themistokles' right hand and ordered him to consecrate the young men and sacrifice them all to Dionysos the Raw-Eater after praying, because in this way the Greeks would have both salvation and victory.

With Themistokles in shock because of the great and terrible oracle, the people, whenever they are in great struggles and difficult situations, they are accustomed to put their hope of rescue in unreasonable rather than reasonable things, at once called upon the god with one voice, dragged the prisoners to the altar and forced, as the seer

[122] Whether or not the narrator absolves Themistocles with ἀναγκάζω of the responsibility, or signifies Themistokles' focalization is unclear. For the relation between leaders and their people, Duff (2010) 69-70.
[123] ἔρριψεν αὐτὸν εἰς ἐλπίδας χαλεπὰς καὶ ἀπόρους καταφυγὼν πρὸς Ἄδμητον. 24.1.
[124] εἰσῆγεν αὐτὸν οὐδὲν ἐλπίζοντα χρηστὸν ἐξ ὧν ἑώρα τοὺς ἐπὶ θύραις. 29.1.

ordered, the sacrifice to be finished off. This, at any rate, a man of philosophy and well versed in historical literature, namely Phanias of Lesbos, has authored.'

This is the only scene filled with sensory cues that enable the audience to really experience the situation from Themistokles' point of view. It is grounded in space, Themistokles sacrifices next to (παρά) his ship, and a good omen comes from his right side (ἐκ δεξιῶν). Visual details on the appearance of the prisoners and aural cues or a combination of both in a roaring flame (ἀνέλαμψεν μέγα καὶ περιφανὲς πῦρ), things happening all at the same time (ἅμα... ἅμα… ἅμα) recreate the chaotic scene for the mind's eye. The sense of touch is involved too by the seer clasping Themistokles' right hand.

Themistokles is completely overwhelmed and stunned (ἐκπλαγέντος) for a moment, and even though he considers the oracle great and terrible, he is quickly overpowered by the irrational mob (they compel, ἠνάγκασαν, the sacrifice) that is already yelling and dragging the prisoners to the altar. Where he put their superstition (παράλογος, literally *besides* reason) to good use before (ch. 10), now they are unresponsive to any persuasion towards the right reasoning (εὔλογος). Themistokles can only watch as the sacrifice is indeed performed.[125]

For such an incredible and negative story, Plutarch needs a good source and an even better reason to include it. [126] The source takes the form of a philosopher (therefore respectable), Phanias. The reason for inclusion is a harder to pin down. Often, this scene is interpreted as an example of Themistokles' opportunism; notwithstanding his personal horror, he sees through with the sacrifice to please the mob.[127] I want to argue for a different interpretation as a complication (or reversal even) of Themistokles' usual relation to the people. Generally, he rouses the rabble with his persuasive powers, [128] here he does not stand a chance to make himself heard, let alone *prevent* the sacrifice. This is Plutarch questioning the unstable relation between the people and its demagogues, and foreshadowing the detrimental consequences for the protagonist when he loses their support. [129]

This theme is also frequently explored in *Camillus* with different outcomes. In an equally vivid scene, Camillus maintains control when the Falerian teacher hands over the boys of the besieged city (ch. 10). Instead of accepting the hostages, Camillus finds the act terrible (δεινός) and sends them back, trusting in his own virtue (ἀρετή) to win the war. He gains the city without bloodshed, but incurs the wrath of the people by denying them the sack of Falerii and forcing them to decline a law in their favour (ch. 11).

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[125] For a comparable view, see McKechnie (2015) 132.
[126] For its chronological impossibility, see Marr (1998) *ad loc.* Marr notes that Plutarch also included the story in *Arist.* 9.1-2 and *Pelopidas* 21.3.
[127] Roskam (2021) 115-116, Marr (1998) *ad loc.*
[128] E.g. in ch. 3. Or right before the evacuation: τῷ δὲ χρησμῷ πάλιν ἐδημαγώγει, λέγων μηδὲν ἄλλο δηλοῦσθαι ξύλινον τεῖχος ἢ τὰς ναῦς 10.3. see also Duff (2008) 169.
[129] Marincola (2010). A theme he frequently explores, e.g. in *Cam.* 36.3 where Manlius rouses the people, see Duff (2010) 63.

Although his actions and motivations are just, Plutarch presents them as the cause for the sentiment leading up to his banishment (ch. 12).[130]

3.1.2. Speech

The 'mind style' the narrator develops for Themistokles is not only dependent on his explicit thinking and feeling, but also in his acting and talking.[131] Usually Themistokles concocts plans and strategies,[132] convinces,[133] threatens or tempts,[134] feigns or lies,[135] and is almost always successful in it.

Confronting the King (28.1)

As the narrator states in the opening, Themistokles is a skilled politician, trained in public speech and persuasive. Even though Camillus barely talks,[136] Plutarch showcases Themistokles dexterity in words by converting Thucydides letter to the Persian King (1.137.3-4) to a personally delivered speech:

'ἥκω σοι, βασιλεῦ, Θεμιστοκλῆς ὁ Ἀθηναῖος ἐγὼ φυγὰς ὑφ' Ἑλλήνων διωχθείς, ᾧ πολλὰ μὲν ὀφείλουσι Πέρσαι κακά, πλείω δὲ ἀγαθὰ κωλύσαντι τὴν δίωξιν, ὅτε τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐν ἀσφαλεῖ γενομένης παρέσχε τὰ οἴκοι σωζόμενα χαρίσασθαί τι καὶ ὑμῖν. (28.1)

"I have come to you, King, I, Themistokles the Athenian, as a fugitive pursued by the Greeks, to whom the Persians owe many disasters, but more benefits to the one that prevented the pursuit, when, after Greece was brought to safety, the preservation of my domestic affairs gave me a chance to do you a favour too."

Immediately after making himself known, he starts twisting history to his advantage. Where Plutarch (contrary to Herodotus' version) made it clear that Themistokles' second message to the king was an agreed-upon patriotic thing (16.5), now Themistokles uses it to fashion himself the saviour of Greece *and* Persia! Is the audience supposed to admire his skill or condemn his lying, or both?

Themistokles continues by pleading for refuge, and making his request sound profitable for the King (28.2). He does not shy away from open flattery, comparing Artaxerxes to Zeus when explaining the oracle that brought him to Persia (28.3). Note that while his whole plea has been in forceful direct speech, Plutarch now relegates the account of the dream (that is already detailed in the chapter before) and accompanying

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[130] Roskam (2021) 121, Duff (2010) 62.

[131] Unfortunately there is no space to mention all instances where these verbs occur, that would result in citing most of the verbs in this biography anyway. For speech in Plutarch's *Lives* see Mossman (2022) 566-572.

[132] E.g. ποιεῖται στρατήγημα 10.4, ἐβουλεύετο καὶ συνετίθει τὴν περὶ τὸν Σίκιννον πραγματείαν. 12.3. Θεμιστοκλῆς δὲ καὶ μεῖζόν τι περὶ τῆς ναυτικῆς διενοήθη δυνάμεως (…) ὁ μὲν Θεμιστοκλῆς ἔφρασε τῷ Ἀριστείδῃ, τὸ νεώριον ἐμπρῆσαι διανοεῖσθαι τῶν Ἑλλήνων. 20.1-2.

[133] E.g. μέγιστον δὲ πάντων τὸ καταλῦσαι τοὺς Ἑλληνικοὺς πολέμους καὶ διαλλάξαι τὰς πόλεις ἀλλήλαις, πείσαντα τὰς ἔχθρας διὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἀναβαλέσθαι. 6.3.

[134] καὶ κατεπράϋνε τοὺς Ἀθηναίους, ὑπισχνούμενος (…) 7.3, he threatens and bribes Architeles in 7.6 and the captain of a ship: καὶ τὰ μὲν δεόμενος, τὰ δ' ἀπειλῶν καὶ λέγων ὅτι κατηγορήσοι καὶ καταψεύσοιτο πρὸς τοὺς Ἀθηναίους 25.2.

[135] φησὶν ἀπολέσθαι τὸ Γοργόνειον ἀπὸ τῆς θεοῦ τοῦ ἀγάλματος: τὸν οὖν Θεμιστοκλέα προσποιούμενον ζητεῖν 10.4.

[136] Exceptions in direct speech: Camillus' vows and prayers (ch. 5), against the Falerian teacher in 10.3-4).

flattery to indirect speech. In this way his narrative resembles a piece of Themistoclean cleverness: we notice the flattery, like the King undoubtedly did, but it is subtle and muted.[137]

Arrogant one-liners, smart comebacks and chaos (18)

In other circumstances Themistokles' speech shows him to be annoying but correct, at least when it concerns war strategy (ch. 11). In peacetime it is not that straightforward. As argued before, the narrative constantly flips the audience's evaluation of Themistokles when treating his rise to power. During the Persian wars great achievements (evacuating the city, recalling Aristeides, winning the war) are alternated with great horrors (the sacrifice of three Persian men) and questionable methods (threatening to desert the rest of the fleet to force a fight at Salamis, sending a possibly treacherous message to Xerxes). But his star continues to rise, and at the end of chapter 17 he has everything his heart desires in terms of fame and honour and for a moment, he is happy, ἡσθείς (17.2).[138]

Themistokles' rise then culminates in a collection of 'memorable sayings' (ἀπομνημονευομένοι). The narrator introduces it as follows: 'καὶ γὰρ ἦν τῇ φύσει φιλοτιμότατος, εἰ δεῖ τεκμαίρεσθαι διὰ τῶν ἀπομνημονευομένων.' (18.1) 'Because he was by nature most desiring of honour, as is necessary to judge from his memorable quotes.'

Simultaneously the chaos *qua* narrative reaches its peak in chapter 18. The sayings follow each other in quick succession, connected by δέ and with very little context. Marr (1998) comments: 'As a matter of fact, not all the anecdotes in this chapter do illustrate Themistokles' *philotimia* (as distinct from his gift for repartee) particularly well, and one cannot help feeling that the chapter has not been given very careful thought.'[139]

Considering Plutarch's purpose is to show character, I find it highly unlikely that he put no effort in a chapter consisting of what he confesses to be most important. In the *Alexander* he clearly states that writing a biography is like painting a face. In a painting the eyes are the most revealing of character, for a biography that applies to quotes.[140] So, rather Pelling's words describing another collection of sayings seem applicable here too: "the watchwords are economy, directness, and simplicity, with everything subordinate to the forceful direct speech itself."[141]

And indeed all anecdotes concern Themistokles' φιλοτιμία, from the description of amassing al his business on one day 'so that by handling many issues at the same time,

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[137] Mossman (2022) 570-572.

[138] λέγεται δ' Ὀλυμπίων τῶν ἐφεξῆς ἀγομένων καὶ παρελθόντος εἰς τὸ στάδιον τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους, ἀμελήσαντας τῶν ἀγωνιστῶν τοὺς παρόντας ὅλην τὴν ἡμέραν ἐκεῖνον θεᾶσθαι καὶ τοῖς ξένοις ἐπιδεικνύειν ἅμα θαυμάζοντας καὶ κροτοῦντας, ὥστε καὶ αὐτὸν ἡσθέντα πρὸς τοὺς φίλους ὁμολογῆσαι τὸν καρπὸν ἀπέχειν τῶν ὑπὲρ τῆς Ἑλλάδος αὐτῷ πονηθέντων. 17.2 This is the only time he is explicitly called happy/pleased.

[139] Marr (1998) 116.

[140] See n. 35 for the Greek, and Grethlein (2013) 126-129 for extensive treatment of the painting metaphor.

[141] Pelling (2002) 75, also cited by Stadter (2014) 675, both discussing *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum.*

and meeting all kinds of people, he would seem to be grand and very powerful.'[142] This, of course, is vain, but it is not *evil.* The first saying recorded in direct speech is arrogant and patronizing towards a friend, when the richly decorated Persian corpses wash up on the shore:

αὐτὸς μὲν παρῆλθε, τῷ δ' ἑπομένῳ φίλῳ δείξας εἶπεν· 'ἀνελοῦ σαυτῷ· σὺ γὰρ οὐκ εἶ Θεμιστοκλῆς.' (18.2)

'He passed them by himself, but pointed them out to a following friend and said: 'Pick them up for yourself: after all, you are not Themistokles.'

With such an attitude it is easy to make the common people your enemy. Yet the next quote on how he declines former flame Antiphates' is easier to empathize with. Arrogantly (ὑπερήφανος) turned down by Antiphates in his youth, we will allow our hero a sharp remark.[143] The next saying might even invoke pity, with Themistokles feeling used by his citizens in times of need, but disregarded in times of peace.[144]

Even his defence against other people trying to steal his shine (18.3-4) is understandable and, although all quotes clearly show that he held himself in high regard, most are not necessarily negative. Only the one on the Persian bodies and the next clearly overstep the line from justly proud to overly boasting:

τὸν δὲ υἱὸν ἐντρυφῶντα τῇ μητρὶ καὶ δι' ἐκείνην αὐτῷ σκώπτων ἔλεγε πλεῖστον τῶν Ἑλλήνων δύνασθαι· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ Ἕλλησιν ἐπιτάττειν Ἀθηναίους, Ἀθηναίοις δ' αὐτόν, αὐτῷ δὲ τὴν ἐκείνου μητέρα, τῇ μητρὶ δ' ἐκεῖνον. (18.5)

'About his son, because he bossed his mother around, and through her, himself, he said jokingly that he was the most powerful of the Greeks; for the Athenians give orders to the Greeks, and he to the Athenians, and his mother to him, and he to his mother.'

For a Greek it is completely unembarrassing to loudly draw attention to your own achievements,[145] but this is overstepping the line, even in a joke.[146] As we are used to by now, this negative example is followed by two more positive ones.

ἴδιος δέ τις ἐν πᾶσι βουλόμενος εἶναι χωρίον μὲν πιπράσκων ἐκέλευε κηρύττειν, ὅτι καὶ γείτονα χρηστὸν ἔχει· τῶν δὲ μνωμένων αὐτοῦ τὴν θυγατέρα τὸν ἐπιεικῆ τοῦ πλουσίου προκρίνας ἔφη ζητεῖν ἄνδρα χρημάτων δεόμενον μᾶλλον ἢ χρήματα ἀνδρός. ἐν μὲν οὖν τοῖς ἀποφθέγμασι τοιοῦτός τις ἦν.

'In his wish to be someone peculiar in everything, he ordered to announce at the sale of a piece of land that it had a good neighbour, and, preferring of the suitors of his

[142] 'ἵν' ὁμοῦ πολλὰ πράττων πράγματα καὶ παντοδαποῖς ἀνθρώποις ὁμιλῶν μέγας εἶναι δοκῇ καὶ πλεῖστον δύνασθαι.' 18.1.
[143] 'ὦ μειράκιον,' εἶπεν, 'ὀψὲ μέν, ἀμφότεροι δ' ἅμα νοῦν ἐσχήκαμεν.' 18.2.
[144] ἔλεγε δὲ τοὺς Ἀθηναίους οὐ τιμᾶν αὐτὸν οὐδὲ θαυμάζειν, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ πλατάνῳ χειμαζομένους μὲν ὑποτρέχειν κινδυνεύοντας, εὐδίας δὲ περὶ αὐτοὺς γενομένης τίλλειν καὶ κολούειν. 18.3
[145] Pelling (2000) 60.
[146] Especially when they are so telling of character, see n. 64.

daughter the apt/suitable one to the rich, he said to look for a man without money rather than money without a man. He really was somebody like in these sayings.'

The narrator switches from φιλοτιμία to peculiarity (ἴδιος), and neither is shown to be wrong in itself. Choosing the better man over the rich is no doubt a choice you can only make if your own family is wealthy enough, but it is certainly applaudable.

By quickly alternating funny, annoying, despicable and respectable quotes at the centre of the biography, Plutarch again emphasizes that Themistokles' greatness and his bragging know no boundaries, and it is often hard to judge whether he was justifiably self-confident, or blatantly arrogant.

To summarize, apart from the sacrificial scene that has us experience the uncontrollable force of the irrational mob, insights into Themistokles' experience are scarce, compared to immersive passages that do contain these cues. If we then cannot *enact* his conscience, we are most certainly encouraged to develop a theory of mind. In short, Themistokles' 'mind style' enables us to reconstruct a smart and ambitious character, a great man clever with words but also arrogant, vain, sometimes frightened and often roguish (πανοῦργος) in his methods and motivation.
This construct of Themistokles and its evaluation may vary considerably between readers. Their personal experiential background will inform their reconstruction of the protagonist's mind and actions, and since the narrative deliberately alternates positive, negative and multivalent evaluations, this provides room for excellent discussions.

3.2. Other perspectives

Given the fact that the experience of the protagonist is hard to reconstruct, the *enargeia* in this *Life* must be the result of other expressive devices. The other's or bystander's perspective is a very important device in all Plutarch's biographies.[147] I will discuss two passages, a short one from Themistokles' youth, and a larger one from the Persian War-narrative.

The teacher (2.1)

The narrator paints Themistokles' portrait from an *external* perspective from the beginning. Consider the passage partly cited in §2.6:

ἔτι δὲ παῖς ὢν ὁμολογεῖται φορᾶς μεστὸς εἶναι, καὶ τῇ μὲν φύσει συνετός, τῇ δὲ προαιρέσει μεγαλοπράγμων καὶ πολιτικός. ἐν γὰρ ταῖς ἀνέσεσι καὶ σχολαῖς ἀπὸ τῶν μαθημάτων γινόμενος οὐκ ἔπαιζεν οὐδ' ἐρρᾳθύμει, καθάπερ οἱ λοιποὶ παῖδες, ἀλλ' εὑρίσκετο λόγους τινὰς μελετῶν καὶ συνταττόμενος πρὸς ἑαυτόν. ἦσαν δ' οἱ λόγοι κατηγορία τινὸς ἢ συνηγορία τῶν παίδων. ὅθεν εἰώθει λέγειν πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ διδάσκαλος ὡς 'οὐδὲν ἔσῃ, παῖ, σὺ μικρόν, ἀλλὰ μέγα πάντως ἀγαθὸν ἢ κακόν.' (2.1)

'And also, as a boy, it is agreed that he was full of energy, and by nature intelligent, by choice inclined to great deeds and politically active. In his spare moments and time off, when he was free from his studies, he didn't play or relax like the rest of the kids, but was found occupying himself with some speeches and refining them to/for himself. The speeches then were accusations off or defences for someone of the children. Thus, his teacher used to say to him: 'You will be nothing small, child, but grand in any case, good or bad.'[148]

The anecdote has the same order as a 'natural narrative'.[149] You could imagine an eyewitness (Themistokles' father, or the teacher himself) spontaneously recounting it over a cup of tea. Plutarch wastes no words in describing a school scene familiar to the educated audience.[150] Focalisation rests with the teacher, with whom we look for missing Themistokles, feel the expectation of finding him up to no good and experience surprise at the actual situation. The peak illustrates the strangeness of the situation: ordinary children do not practice legal speeches against other children in

[147] Duff (2015) 130. See Moorman (2022) 66 for the effect of assimilation of the reader and bystander.
[148] The exact moment in time is again irrelevant (παῖς ὢν, somewhere in his youth) and it's simply connected to the passage before by ἔτι δὲ 'oh, and also...'. The story is told by a reported narrator; ὁμολογεῖται alerts us to Plutarch's use of other sources (like Simonides in the previous passage) from which this part of the story might be known to us. (See DeJong (2014) ch. 2) The use of imperfects gives us the impression that this was a recurring event and εἰώθει further underlines this.
[149] De Jong (2014) 40-1 on the order of a natural narrative and its occurrence in classical literature. It starts with an abstract: Themistokles' characteristics this tale is going to illustrate, followed by an orientation (in his time off of school). The complication (Themistokles is not playing with the other kids) is followed by the peak: when his teacher goes to have a look, he is not found doing anything mischievous, but studying. Then follows the resolution: he is not occupied by any childish subject, but honing politically important skills. The account ends with the coda: the teachers one-liner forms the moral of the story.
[150] Gaps are just as important for reconstructing experience as details, see §1.2.1.

their spare time.[151] But Themistokles is not 'precisely as the other children' (καθάπερ οἱ λοιποὶ παῖδες), but found literally and figuratively (ἀλλ᾽ εὑρίσκετο) to be interested in completely different things. The one-liner in the coda is given the extra force of direct speech. Thus, the teacher emphasizes the young hero's future greatness, but it sounds ominous: we see a powerful and potentially dangerous politician in the making.[152]

Architeles (7.5-6)

The first *fait accompli* of Themistokles as a politician is Aristeides' banishment. We again learn nothing of his personal feelings, and without further comment the narrator plunges into the Persian War.[153] What follows are a number of short stories, or glimpses, of Themistokles in action. They are connected by δέ,[154] and the pace is fast. The anecdotes *seem* to be in chronological order, though comparison with Herodotus and Thucydides reveals Plutarch's manipulation of time to enlarge Themistokles' role.[155] We are easily drawn in because of the 'scenic narratorial standpoint'; the narrator seems to be in the room with Themistokles or other characters, even when they are, in fact, alone or acting in secret: [156]

ἐναντιουμένου δ᾽ αὐτῷ μάλιστα τῶν πολιτῶν Ἀρχιτέλους, ὃς ἦν μὲν ἐπὶ τῆς ἱερᾶς νεὼς τριήραρχος, οὐκ ἔχων δὲ χρήματα τοῖς ναύταις χορηγεῖν ἔσπευδεν ἀποπλεῦσαι, παρώξυνεν ἔτι μᾶλλον ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς τοὺς τριηρίτας ἐπ᾽ αὐτόν, ὥστε τὸ δεῖπνον ἁρπάσαι συνδραμόντας. τοῦ δ᾽ Ἀρχιτέλους ἀθυμοῦντος ἐπὶ τούτῳ καὶ βαρέως φέροντος, εἰσέπεμψεν ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς πρὸς αὐτὸν ἐν κίστῃ δεῖπνον ἄρτων καὶ κρεῶν, ὑποθεὶς κάτω τάλαντον ἀργυρίου καὶ κελεύσας αὐτόν τε δειπνεῖν ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ μεθ᾽ ἡμέραν ἐπιμεληθῆναι τῶν τριηριτῶν· εἰ δὲ μή, καταβοήσειν αὐτοῦ πρὸς τοὺς παρόντας ὡς ἔχοντος ἀργύριον παρὰ τῶν πολεμίων. ταῦτα μὲν οὖν Φανίας ὁ Λέσβιος εἴρηκεν. (7.5-6)

'Because the man who offered him resistance the most of all citizens, Architeles, who was captain of the sacred ship, but not in possession of money to pay the sailors, and hasty to sail away, Themistokles provoked the rowers against him even more, so that they ran up to him to steal his meal. With Architeles then disheartened about this and not taking it lightly, Themistokles sent him a meal of bread and meat in a box under which he had placed a talent of silver, and ordered him to eat now, and to take care of the rowers by day; if not that he would call him out in front of the crowd as the receiver of silver from the enemies. This, at least, Phanias of Lesbos has authored.'

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[151] Later too, Themistokles' interest in practical training (τῶν δὲ εἰς σύνεσιν ἢ πρᾶξιν λεγομένων) is called unusual for his age (παρ᾽ ἡλικίαν) 2.2.
[152] See also Duff (2010) 48.
[153] Another instant of spotlighting Themistocles: given that he does not necessarily expects his audience to fully understand ostracism, as is shown by his explanation later on, when Themistokles himself is ostracized in 22.4. Here Themistokles' political success is emphasized, and later Plutarch needs to defend his protagonist against the possible idea that ostracism was a punishment.
[154] According to Duff (2011) a sign that we have indeed reached the part that can be called 'narrative'.
[155] Marr (1998), 88 *ad loc.*
[156] As is custom in Homer, see Allan et al. (2017) 43, who compare it to a 'medium shot' in filmmaking.

The narrator presents his version of events as facts, not open for multiple interpretation. The usual devices for creating distance ('λέγουσι', 'δόκει') are absent. Whether it was Themistokles who prompted the crew to steal Architeles' dinner (παρώξυνεν… ὥστε…), what the contents of the hidden message were or his purpose with it, is not up for debate. The narrator knows exactly what is going on.

We are drawn in even closer as Architeles' focalisation is embedded, his situation and feelings are described. He is poor, eager to sail home (ἔσπευδεν ἀποπλεῦσαι), feels disheartened (ἀθυμοῦντος) and probably hungry and takes the matter really seriously. The indicators for time, eat now- pay your crew tomorrow (ἐν τῷ παρόντι καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν) revive the moment of his reading of the hidden message.[157]

Only at the end Plutarch gives the narratee some wiggle room, when he affirms that this, at least (ταῦτα μὲν οὖν) is how Phanias recounts it. The narrator does not take full credit for the examples of the more questionable methods that the protagonist uses to achieve the crucial unity. He leads us to identify with people around Themistokles, watch him work his effective yet dubious magic, then distances himself from it, effectively sowing doubt about the veracity of the anecdotes.

So what does this tell us about Themistokles? He bribes, though it is not necessarily negatively portrayed. He strives for unity, the only achievement of Themistokles the narrator takes credit for himself, but does Themistokles promote this for the sake of the virtue of concordance or as a means to an end?[158] Without unity, they will lose the war that will give him the opportunity for glory.

As often in Plutarch, we do not know how the situations ends. Architeles' reaction is unknown, so it is open for debate and leaves the audience with a lot of questions[159]: Is Themistokles' behaviour justified? Does the end justify the means? Would unity also have been achieved without blackmail?

This is exactly the kind of questions Plutarch would have us ponder. In accordance with his method of 'descriptive' rather than proscriptive moralism he does not provide the answers.

3.3. Digressions come in different sizes

Digressions in Plutarch take many shapes. From explaining a cultural habit as is the case for the Persian strictness on women (26.4-6), or what ostracism was (22.3), or to small history lessons concerning the development of so-called σοφία (2.6). We also, ironically, find discussions on chronology (27.1-2), and *a lot* of alternative versions (e.g. on the non-existent trip to Sicily 24.6-25.1) accumulated from Plutarch's many sources. I will discuss three that stand out for their vividness.

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[157] The imperfect (and present participles) is more often connected to an internal perspective as Duff (2015) and Allan et al (2017) 48 n 21 note. However, the debate concerning aspect and tense in relation to perspective is outside the scope of this thesis.

[158] As Roskam (2021) 117-118 notes, Themistokles achieves many successes for the Greeks, but it serves his own interests as well, and when those are not aligned, he usually prioritizes himself.

[159] Contra Marr (1998) 84 who deems the actions praiseworthy and patriotic. See §1.1.2 and 1.3.2 for Plutarch's descriptive moralism, or Chrysanthou (2018) 12.

Artemisium (8)

Usually the digressions serve to develop key motives that Plutarch develops, as in the case of the evacuation, but also with the wars between Romans and Gauls in *Camillus* 13-22.[160] Sometimes, though, they feel as if they are getting out of hand. In the following passage the digression is even more immersive than the main narrative. We have reached the battle of Artemisium, and the narrator starts with an exciting and vivid description of the sea battle:

αἱ δὲ γενόμεναι τότε πρὸς τὰς τῶν βαρβάρων ναῦς περὶ τὰ στενὰ μάχαι κρίσιν μὲν εἰς τὰ ὅλα μεγάλην οὐκ ἐποίησαν, τῇ δὲ πείρᾳ μέγιστα τοὺς Ἕλληνας ὤνησαν, ὑπὸ τῶν ἔργων παρὰ τοὺς κινδύνους διδαχθέντας, ὡς οὔτε πλήθη νεῶν οὔτε κόσμοι καὶ λαμπρότητες ἐπισήμων οὔτε κραυγαὶ κομπώδεις ἢ βάρβαροι παιᾶνες ἔχουσι τι δεινὸν ἀνδράσιν ἐπισταμένοις εἰς χεῖρας ἰέναι καὶ μάχεσθαι τολμῶσιν, ἀλλὰ δεῖ τῶν τοιούτων καταφρονοῦντας ἐπ᾽ αὐτὰ τὰ σώματα φέρεσθαι καὶ πρὸς ἐκεῖνα διαγωνίζεσθαι συμπλακέντας. ὃ δὴ καὶ Πίνδαρος οὐ κακῶς ἔοικε συνιδὼν ἐπὶ τῆς ἐν Ἀρτεμισίῳ μάχης εἰπεῖν·

> ὅθι παῖδες Ἀθαναίων ἐβάλοντο φαεννὰν
> κρηπῖδ᾽ ἐλευθερίας·
>
> ἀρχὴ γὰρ ὄντως τοῦ νικᾶν τὸ θαρρεῖν.’ (8.1-2)

‘The battles that then took place against the ships of the Barbarians about the narrows were not decisive in the grand scheme of things, but for experience they benefitted the Greeks the most, because they were taught by their actions in the face of danger, that neither multitude of ships, nor decorations and splendour of figureheads nor boastful cries, nor wild war songs have anything fearsome for men who know how to come to blows and dare to fight, but that it is necessary, despising such things, to make a move on the bodies themselves and fight it out with *those*, engaged in close combat. This, of course, Pindar too seems to have adequately seen, when he says about the battle at Artemisium:

“Where the sons of the Athenians laid down the shining foundation of Liberty”

Because the origin of prevailing is to be bold.’

The quotation of Pindar is short and contributes to the main point. After this wholehearted encouragement of bravery, the reader might expect narrative to continue in the same style. Or maybe a discussion of another virtue that is essential in war. Or just what happened immediately after Artemisium. Yet the narrator continues instead with a digression about the geographical environment of Artemision, that culminates in an elaborate description of the *stone* in which the next related piece of poetry is carved:

[160] Roskam (2021) 121-124 holds this view, see Pelling (2002) 150 for a different view on these chapters as a sign of ‘historical interest’.

ἔστι δὲ τῆς Εὐβοίας τὸ Ἀρτεμίσιον ὑπὲρ τὴν Ἑστίαιαν αἰγιαλὸς εἰς βορέαν ἀναπεπταμένος, ἀντιτείνει δ᾽ αὐτῷ μάλιστα τῆς ὑπὸ Φιλοκτήτη γενομένης χώρας Ὀλιζών. ἔχει δὲ ναὸν οὐ μέγαν Ἀρτέμιδος ἐπίκλησιν Προσηώας, καὶ δένδρα περὶ αὐτῷ πέφυκε καὶ στῆλαι κύκλῳ λίθου λευκοῦ πεπήγασιν: ὁ δὲ λίθος τῇ χειρὶ τριβόμενος καὶ χρόαν καὶ ὀσμὴν κροκίζουσαν ἀναδίδωσιν. [3] ἐν μιᾷ δὲ τῶν στηλῶν ἐλεγεῖον ἦν τόδε γεγραμμένον: (…)
δείκνυται δὲ τῆς ἀκτῆς τόπος ἐν πολλῇ τῇ πέριξ θινὶ κόνιν τεφρώδη καὶ μέλαιναν ἐκ βάθους ἀναδιδούς, ὥσπερ πυρίκαυστον, ἐν ᾧ τὰ ναυάγια καὶ νεκροὺς καῦσαι δοκοῦσι.

‘Artemisium is a part of Euboia above Hestiaia, a beach lying open to the north, and just opposite of it lies Olizon in the land that has been under Philoctetes’ rule. It has a temple, not that big, of Artemis, nicknamed Proseoia, and trees have grown around it and stèlai stand fixed in a circle of white stone: the stone then, when rubbed by hand, emits both smell and colour like saffron. In one of these stelas there was the following elegiac inscription: (…)
The place in the shore is pointed out surrounded by a big heap and giving up from the depth black dust, like ashes, as if burnt, where they seem to have burnt their shipwrecks and dead bodies.’

If anywhere, we would have expected a description of the surroundings before, not after the battle. The digression itself is still immersive enough. It contains many perceptive cues for experiencing the location of the battle.[161] For anyone who has been there, or to any beach, this is not hard to view it through your mind’s eye. Artemisium is (note the present) situated above Hestiaia, a beach open to the north, and just opposite of it lies another town. The narrator then gradually zooms in. The description of the enclosed temple brings about a feel of sacral calm and silence and our sense of touch and smell (χρόαν καὶ ὀσμὴν κροκίζουσαν) are explicitly involved (besides of course, sight). Compare my translation to Perrin’s: ‘This stone, when *you* rub it with your hand, gives off the colour and the odour of saffron’[162] Although that is a bit further from the original Greek structure (τῇ χειρὶ τριβόμενος), it is precisely what it *means.* After recording the elegy on the stone, he lends immediacy to his description of the remnants with δείκνυται, the place ‘is pointed out’ as if we are standing on the shore with a local guide doing exactly that.

But what is the point? Even though Plutarch famously denounces descriptions of battles where thousands die in favour of sayings and gestures that reveal character,[163] it is hard to see the relevance of the rubbing of a saffron-emitting stone for either Themistokles’ character or the Athenian valour. It has its use for the narrative, though. The calm and smallness of the experiences form a beautiful contrast to the impressive battlesights and noises, the poetry cited counters the wild war-songs, and the ending with burial remnants the victorious feeling of the previous scene. In this way it also forms a smooth transition to the next topic of the political situation that precedes Salamis.

Besides (or maybe above all), it demonstrates Plutarch’s learnedness and his

[161] Herodotus *Hist.* 7.176 describes the location in even more detail. An altar for Heracles is only mentioned.
[162] Perrin (1914).
[163] *Alex.* 1.2-3, see n. 64.

meticulous research. He has obviously been to the place and recorded the elegy on the spot, something that he wants his audience to be very aware of. The black spot in the sand is not only pointed out to us, but it was really pointed out to Plutarch when he visited.

The evacuation of Athens (10.5-6)

Other digressions do carry moral relevance, even though it is not obvious at first sight. Shortly after Artemisium, Xerxes advances through Attica, and the Athenians are left in the cold by their allies, leading them to despair about their city. Themistokles devises a divine support for his evacuation plan, which involves tricking the people, but is necessary. He explains correctly the oracle on Salamis (good). He then (or the Senate) arranges in his sly ways for payment of the rowers by confiscating it during a feigned search for the Gorgon-mask. This is definitely morally ambiguous again, stealing from citizens, even though the money was necessary as well. Note how Plutarch does not take full credit for this story. Eventually, the audience learns what the evacuation was like:

ἐκπλεούσης δὲ τῆς πόλεως τοῖς μὲν οἶκτον τὸ θέαμα, τοῖς δὲ θαῦμα τῆς τόλμης παρεῖχε, γενεὰς μὲν ἄλλῃ προπεμπόντων, αὐτῶν δ᾽ ἀκάμπτων πρὸς οἰμωγὰς καὶ δάκρυα γονέων καὶ περιβολὰς διαπερώντων εἰς τὴν νῆσον. καίτοι πολλοὶ μὲν διὰ γῆρας ὑπολειπόμενοι τῶν πολιτῶν ἔλεον εἶχον· ἦν δέ τις καὶ ἀπὸ τῶν ἡμέρων καὶ συντρόφων ζῴων ἐπικλῶσα γλυκυθυμία, μετ᾽ ὠρυγῆς καὶ πόθου συμπαραθεόντων ἐμβαίνουσι τοῖς ἑαυτῶν τροφεῦσιν. ἐν οἷς ἱστορεῖται κύων Ξανθίππου τοῦ Περικλέους πατρὸς οὐκ ἀνασχόμενος τὴν ἀπ᾽ αὐτοῦ μόνωσιν ἐναλέσθαι τῇ θαλάττῃ καὶ τῇ τριήρει παρανηχόμενος ἐκπεσεῖν εἰς τὴν Σαλαμῖνα καὶ λιποθυμήσας ἀποθανεῖν εὐθύς: οὗ καὶ τὸ δεικνύμενον ἄχρι νῦν καὶ καλούμενον Κυνὸς σῆμα τάφον εἶναι λέγουσι.

‘While the city was sailing out, the sight aroused compassion in some, amazement at the venture in others, sending their families that way, although they, unmoved by cries, tears of their parents and hugs, crossed over to the island. In fact, many of the citizens who were left behind because of their age evoked pity, yet there was on the part of the tame domestic animals something of a moving sweetness, as they were running with howls and longing alongside their embarking caretakers. Among them, of the dog of Xanthippus, Pericles’ father, a story is told, that he, not enduring the separation from him, sprung into the sea and, swimming alongside the trireme, got out of the water at Salamis, lost his consciousness and died immediately. They say that it is his tomb, that is now still pointed out and called ‘Sign of the Dog’.’ (10.5-6)

In wat Roskam calls ‘a moving scene’, and rightly so, the focus is once again not even near Themistokles.[164] Instead, the experience of the ordinary Athenian is constructed, in a typical specimen of a ‘grand scene’.[165] The scenery is not very detailed, yet it is very lively and definitely fits in with the concept of *enargeia.*

[164] Roskam (2021) 118. For a completely different analysis of this passage, see Graniger (2010).
[165] Beck (2017) 28, see also §2.2.

Movement is described by the compound verbs, 'whose prefixes create a strong spatial deixis'[166]: the families are sent one way (ἄλλῃ προπεμπόντων), and they cross over to the island (διαπερώντων εἰς τὴν νῆσον), while the pets run along (συμπαραθεόντων) and Xanthippus' dog even swims along (παρανηχόμενος).

Although Plutarch calls it a sight or spectacle (τὸ θέαμα), not only vision is involved. Tears (δάκρυα) and embraces (περιβολὰς) are felt, cries (οἰμωγὰς) are heard, as well as howling (ὠρυγῆς). Most importantly, the narrator evokes feelings: some feel compassion (οἶκτον), others amazement (θαῦμα). They remain unmoved (ἀκάμπτων) by their family's emotions, and at the same time feel for (ἔλεον) the old citizens left behind. As reader, you easily experience through your mind's eye the perspective of an eyewitness standing on the beach as the families embark.

Even the pets' experience is given attention; their affection is described as moving (ἐπικλῶσα) and they feel a yearning (πόθου) for their masters. Xanthippus' dog forms a special case. He cannot stand (ἀνασχόμενος) to be left behind and faithfully crosses the strait next to his master's trireme. This valiant enterprise costs him his life, and earns him a tomb, still visible now (ἄχρι νῦν). The dog serves to illustrate an important virtue; faithfulness even when undeservedly cut off from those that feed you (τοῖς τροφεῦσιν), and even when it costs you your life.

Beautiful and touching as this story is, it forms a sharp contrast to Themistokles' behaviour towards his city that fed him after his ostracism. Readers already know that he will defect to the Persians, and although they know that Aristeides, for example, does better during his banishment,[167] Themistokles here is surpassed by a *dog.*

Aristoboule (22.2)

In between the scenes and large digressions like those just discussed, Plutarch entertains his audience with smaller digressions as well. In his explanation of the sentiments that led to Themistokles' ostracism, he narrates the construction of a temple for Artemis Aristoboule (Best Counsellor) close to his home. According to the narrator, Themistokles arrogantly implies that himself had been the best counsellor for the city (22.1) and upsets the people. A small digression on the location of the temple follows:[168]

πλησίον δὲ τῆς οἰκίας κατεσκεύασεν ἐν Μελίτῃ τὸ ἱερὸν, οὗ νῦν τὰ σώματα τῶν θανατουμένων οἱ δήμιοι προβάλλουσι καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ τοὺς βρόχους τῶν ἀπαγχομένων καὶ καθαιρεθέντων ἐκφέρουσιν. ἔκειτο δὲ καὶ τοῦ Θεμιστοκλέους εἰκόνιον ἐν τῷ ναῷ τῆς Ἀριστοβούλης ἔτι καθ' ἡμᾶς: καὶ φαίνεταί τις οὐ τὴν ψυχὴν μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἡρωϊκὸς γενόμενος. (22.2)

'Close to his home in Melite he constructed the shrine, where now the officials throw out the bodies of the executed and carry out the clothing and the nooses of the ones

[166] Grethlein (2013) 122.
[167] And Camillus will do better as well! See Roskam (2021) 123.
[168] Duff (2010) 56.

executed by hanging. And a small image of Themistokles lies in the temple of Aristoboule still in our time: and it seems he *was* someone, not just in essence, but also in countenance, heroic.'

This is one of the references to the contemporary situation (νῦν), and remnants of the story still visible 'in our time' (ἔτι καθ' ἡμᾶς).[169] The first reference is a macabre one, casting the original location of the temple on a field now covered in bodies of executed people. The contrast between the former sacrality and current death and decay is already impressive, as it was believed that dead bodies contaminated a sanctuary. Then, just as we want to write off the whole temple-enterprise as repulsive (both for its arrogance and for the pollution), Plutarch describes a small statue of Themistokles still present in the temple as heroic, in passing complimenting the protagonist on his heroic spirit too! On this micro level as well, we are at a loss for how to evaluate what we have just read.

[169] Duff (2007) 5. The shrine is excavated and was indeed destroyed around Themistocles' banishment, McKechnie (2015) 138.

4. Conclusion

The *Themistokles/Camillus* is a peculiar pair. Given its lack of prologue and *synkrisis* it offers and exciting opportunity for analysing the narrative *qua* narrative. I have tried to do that by using insights from 'second-generation' reader response theory. I have argued that the narrator's time management, the flouting of chronology in particular, and the alternation of anecdotes, narratorial comments and digressions makes the reader feel 'lost' in the narrative. With the main thread regularly obscured, Plutarch plays with our expectations. He alters Herodotus' and Thucydides' version of events, sets up a tragic plot and reverses it. This makes for an interesting, albeit frustrating read, full of loose endings, twists and turns.

Moreover, every time we think we have a clear hold for moral judgement, when an event or act is explicitly presented as good or bad, Plutarch follows with a contrasting story, explanatory comment or alternative version to complicate our evaluation of Themistokles.

In his application of immersion-inducing expressive devices, he supports this jerking movement of the narrative. Plutarch usually refuses to ground us in the story by having us view it through Themistokles' eyes. The one time he does that, we are dealing with a terrifying story on human sacrifice (13.3) representing his turbulent relation with the people. Shortly after, he reaches a peak in the victory at Salamis.

Through his portrayal of speech and the usage of particular words for Themistokles like σύνεσις, φιλοτιμία, μέγας and πανοῦργος, to name a few, but also the verbs indicating foresight and a quick understanding, the author creates a 'mind style' for Themistokles. But, the way our hero employs his talents is ambiguous to say the least.

Via other people's perspectives his greatness is emphasized, but we view an insatiable, arrogant defector as well. Plutarch's audience of philosophically interested πολιτικοί is drawn to identify with Themistokles, and repulsed as well by his instability and lack of refinement.

The constant interruptions of the narratorial voice sometimes amount to immersive digressions, small or large. Apart from showing us Plutarch's quality as a writer, they support the feeling of shooting back and forth in the narrative through surprising emphasis. Where some are designed primarily to show Plutarch's learnedness, to highlight a virtue or vice (a dog's focalization!) they always flip the narrative: from a loud and fast battle to a calm shrine, a faithful dog versus cheating Themistokles, and the decay of the executed with his heroic features.

In this way, the narrative mimics the content, cumulating in the variety of sayings in chapter 18. I would argue, apart from descriptive moralism, for the presence of experiential moralism in this text. Not necessarily by immersing the reader into the story-world, but by creating a readerly experience that resembles the protagonist's character.

The contrast is enhanced by Themistokles' counterpart Camillus. Camillus is intelligent too, but moderate, instead of unlimited in ambition, and usually in control

of the people instead of vice versa. Although the same themes of war, strife and unruly people are treated, the *Camillus* narrative is much more straightforward and calm.

Naturally, Themistokles' life *was* turbulent, with extreme ups and downs, and a lot of plot-twists, making it easier for Plutarch to arrange a narrative full of contrasts that causes the same feelings of surprise, confusion and frustration that are the consequences of an imbalanced character. In the end, the only thing that is explicitly clear, is that, both in success and failure, Themistokles was great indeed.

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