

CHAPTER 26

Generic and Intertextual Enrichment: Plutarch's *Alexander* 30

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Abstract

This chapter examines Plutarch's engagement with other texts and genres in a single scene from the *Life of Alexander*, that of Darius' discussion with the eunuch Tiresus (*Alex.* 30), and the effects which such generic and intertextual interaction has on the texture and meaning of Plutarch's biography as well as on the reader's response to it. It argues that Darius' mourning for his wife Statira draws on conventional themes of the lament genre, which Plutarch adopts and manipulates in such a way as to illuminate Darius' mischief and call attention to important character traits of Darius and Alexander. Moreover, it suggests that an intertextual dialogue with Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* might be recognised in Darius' prayer. This has the effect of prompting reflection on the themes of human fragility and vulnerability, which are central to both the *Lives* of Alexander and Caesar.

1 Introduction

In chapter 30 of the *Life of Alexander*, Plutarch gives a detailed account of the discussion between the Persian king Darius III and Tiresus, one of Statira's attending eunuchs, who flees from the Macedonian camp and brings Darius the news about the death of his wife. The dialogue between the two men is written in very dramatic terms—nothing similar can be found in Arrian (*An.* 4.20.1–4) or Justin (*Epit.* 11.12.6–9)¹—and the scene, which has reasonably been considered as one of Plutarch's 'grandes scènes' (to use Françoise Frazier's terminol-

1 In Justin, in fact, the meeting is omitted completely. There is only a reference to Darius' learning about the death of his wife and Alexander's philanthropy towards Darius' family as well as Darius' confession that his enemy surpassed him in kindness. Curtius (4.10.25–34) gives a more detailed and dramatic presentation of Darius' encounter with the eunuch.

ogy),² is endowed throughout with poignant ‘tragic’ coloring.³ Tragic coloring, as shall be shown, serves to both illuminate several aspects of the character and moral standing of Alexander and Darius and to prompt reflection on larger themes that are central to Plutarch’s *Alexander-Caesar* book.⁴ Particularly significant for my argument is that Darius’ bereavement bears some important

- 2 F. Frazier, “Contribution à l’étude de la composition des ‘Vies’ de Plutarque: l’élaboration des grandes scènes,” in *ANRW* 11.33.6 (Berlin-New York: De Gruyter, 1992) 4496: “Par grandes scènes, j’entends des passages assez longs, dotés d’une certaine unité de temps et qui font l’objet d’un récit détaillé et mimétique.” Her study offers an elaborate discussion of how these ‘big scenes’ contribute to Plutarch’s technique of characterization and moralising through their mimetic qualities and vividness. She discusses the Darius-eunuch scene at 4527–4528, 4533; see also M. Beck, “Plutarch,” in I.J.F. De Jong & R. Nünlist (eds.), *Time in Ancient Greek Literature: Studies in Ancient Greek Narrative, Volume 2* (Leiden: Brill, 2007) 399 with n. 15.
- 3 By ‘tragic’ I refer both (more generally) to the ‘tragic’ feeling and “‘tragic’ elements of the human condition” that “spring from a writer’s vision and sensibilities” (C.B.R. Pelling, “Plutarch’s adaptation of his source-material,” in C.B.R. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* [London: Duckworth, 2002] 111 n. 27) and to an author’s more specific intertextual engagement with and evocation of the literary genre of tragedy. Scholars have been alert to the fact that many of Aristotle’s claims in the *Poetics* about tragedy are not confined to the tragic literary genre but can also be found in other genres of literature, such as epic and historiography. See C. Macleod, *Collected Essays* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 140–158; J. Mossman, “Plutarch, Pyrrhus, and Alexander,” in P.A. Stadter (ed.), *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition* (London: Taylor & Francis, 1992) 90–91; J. Mossman, “Tragedy and epic in Plutarch’s *Alexander*,” in B. Scardigli (ed.), *Essays on Plutarch’s Lives* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 213–214; R.B. Rutherford, “Tragic Form and Feeling in the *Iliad*,” in D.L. Cairns (ed.), *Oxford Readings in Homer’s Iliad* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001) 260–293; Pelling, *Plutarch and History*, 111 n. 27; R.B. Rutherford, “Tragedy and History,” in J. Marincola (ed.), *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography, Volume 2* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2007) 504–514; C.B.R. Pelling, “Tragic Colouring in Plutarch,” in J. Opsomer & G. Roskam & F.B. Titchener (eds.), *A Versatile Gentleman: Consistency in Plutarch’s Writing. Studies Offered to Luc Van der Stockt on the Occasion of his Retirement* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 2016) 113–116. Characteristically, S. Halliwell, *The Poetics of Aristotle* (London: Duckworth, 1987) 81, commenting on ch. 4 of Aristotle’s *Poetics*, stresses that “Epic poetry ... developed from the original impulse to portray and celebrate the actions of outstanding or noble men; but the essence of tragedy, both in its Homeric and in its later Attic form, involves such characters in great changes of fortune, or transformations, which arouse pity and fear in those who contemplate them.” I owe this reference to Mossman, “Tragedy and epic,” 214.
- 4 Scholars have mainly associated tragic coloring in the *Alexander* with the darker sides of Alexander’s character, which is not (always) the case, as we shall see. See esp. Mossman, “Tragedy and epic,” 211–213; T.E. Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford-New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 65. Most recently, Pelling, “Tragic Colouring in Plutarch,” 129–131 shifts attention to the importance of tragic coloring in the *Alexander* for interpretation, pointing especially to the interplay between reality and show and the subject’s more or less successful handling of showiness and theatricality.

affinities with the tradition of private lamentations, mainly found in tragedy and epic. Plutarch's presentation of Darius' discussion with Tireus (as we shall see) presents an especially apposite case study that affords us insight into the way(s) in which Plutarch enriches his biographies by evoking specific texts and other literary genres in the *Lives* as well as the effect(s) that such intertextual and generic enrichment has on the texture and meaning of his biographical narrative and the reader's response to it.⁵

2 *Alexander* 30: Darius' Encounter with Tireus

The scene of the discussion between Darius and Tireus can be divided into three main parts (30.1–6: first exchange; 30.7–10: second exchange; and 30.11–14: Darius' prayer). Each part is marked by highly emotive, non-verbal moments that introduce the arguments, thoughts, and feelings of the two men, which are strikingly rendered in *oratio recta*. In Plutarch's *Lives*, direct speech is used selectively to recount brief anecdotes (e.g. *Ant.* 4.9, 24.7–8, 46.6–7), discuss several political and philosophical themes (e.g. *Pyrrh.* 19.1–4; *Comp. Ag., Cleom. et Gracch.* 52; *Brut.* 40.5–9), and “illustrate *private* affections and tragedy, particularly ... the involvement of a man's family or loved one with the climax of his fate” (e.g. Aemilius in *Aem.* 36.4–9; Porcia in *Brut.* 13.7–10; Cleopatra in *Ant.* 84.4–7).⁶ In *Alexander* 30, direct speech allows Plutarch to bring all the more sharply into relief the private tragedy of Darius and his family and to mark the emotive and cognitive gap between Darius and the eunuch in a particularly vivid manner. This gap, as we shall see, is gradually closed down to highlight Alexander's virtuous character.

The scene begins with Plutarch's reference to Statira's death and Alexander's magnanimity (30.1). A transition follows from Alexander's to Darius' camp, its importance marked with a historical present following a series of aorist partici-

5 The term 'generic enrichment' is introduced by S.J. Harrison, *Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), who defines it “as the way in which generically identifiable texts gain literary depth and texture from detailed confrontation with, and consequent inclusion of elements from, texts which appear to belong to other literary genres” (1). Cf. G.B. Conte, *The Rhetoric of Imitation: Genre and Poetic Memory in Virgil and other Latin Poetry* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1986); W. Kroll, *Studien zum Verständnis der römischen Literatur* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 1924) 202–224 (“Die Kreuzung der Gattungen”).

6 See C.B.R. Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988) 316–317. The quotation is from p. 317.

ples:⁷ “One of her attendants, a eunuch named Tireus who had been captured with her, after he escaped (ἀποδράς) from the camp and made his way to Darius on horseback (ἀφιππασάμενος), told (cf. φράζει) him of his wife’s death” (30.2).⁸ When Darius heard about the death of his wife, as Plutarch recounts next, he beat upon his head (cf. 30.3: πληξάμενος τὴν κεφαλὴν) and wept aloud (30.3: ἀνακλαύσας). Darius’ reaction reveals a strong element of grief, which culminates in a lamenting outburst: “Alas (φεῦ) for the god of the Persians! Was it not enough that the king’s consort and sister should have become a prisoner while she lived, but she must also be deprived of a royal funeral (ἄμοιρον κείσθαι ταφῆς βασιλικῆς) at her death?” (30.3).

Darius’ mourning shows close similarities with the female-dominated genre of private lamentations, thus offering an example of an Easterner who is presented by Plutarch as feminized.⁹ Readers are irresistibly reminded of Xerxes in Aeschylus’ *Persians* 908–1077 and the Phrygian slave in Euripides’ *Orestes* 1381–1399.¹⁰ Lamentations in antiquity frequently begin with a series of questions that serve either to express the hesitation and caution of the mourner

7 On historical present, see A. Rijksbaron, “The Profanation of the Mysteries and the Mutilation of the Hermae: Two Variations on Two Themes,” in J. Lallot et al. (eds.), *The Historical Present in Thucydides: Semantics and Narrative Function* (Leiden: Brill, 2011) 187–194; G. Boter, “The Historical Present of Atelic and Durative Verbs in Greek Tragedy,” *Philologus* 156 (2012) 207–233. Cf. *Caes.* 61.5 for another example of historical present (καὶ γίνεται κρότος ... ἐκ παρασκευῆς), used by Plutarch to mark a momentous incident in a highly dramatic context, that of the Lupercalia.

8 Transl. adapted from I. Scott-Kilvert & T.E. Duff, *Plutarch: The Age of Alexander* (London: Penguin, 2012) throughout. The translations of the rest of Plutarch’s texts are based on or adopted from those of the Loeb editions, unless otherwise noted.

9 In *Sol.* 21.5–6 Plutarch refers to Solon’s legislation to restrict the laments of women and death rituals. He then continues to say that most of these practices are also forbidden in his own days, although there is an additional proviso that those who do not obey “shall be punished by the board of censors for women, because they indulge in unmanly (ὡς ἀνάνδροις) and effeminate (καὶ γυναικώδεσι) extravagances of sorrow when they mourn” (*Sol.* 21.7). In Plutarch’s eyes excessive grief and lamentation is hardly admirable: see his consolatory advice in the *Cons. ad ux.*, with the excellent discussion by H. Baltussen, “Personal Grief and Public Mourning in Plutarch’s *Consolation to His Wife*,” *American Journal of Philology* 130.1 (2009) 76–94. Cf. *Consol. ad Apoll.* 113A: “Mourning is verily feminine, and weak, and ignoble, since women are more given to it than men, and barbarians more than Greeks, and inferior men more than better men.”

10 On Xerxes’ lament as feminized, see G. Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices: Women’s Laments and Greek Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992) 130–133; E. Hall, *Aeschylus: Persians* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1996) 13, 168–169; C.B.R. Pelling, “Aeschylus’ *Persae* and History,” in C.B.R. Pelling (ed.), *Greek Tragedy and the Historian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 13–19; H.P. Foley, *Female Acts in Greek Tragedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001) 29. Cf. A. Suter, “Male Lament in Greek Tragedy,” in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament:*

or to emphasize the extent of the mourner's sorrow.¹¹ Darius' opening question not only stresses his suffering, but also brings to the fore the (presumed) plight of his wife. Equally common in tragic, private laments are movements, sounds, gestures, and wailing,¹² all of which occur in Darius' mourning for Statira. Besides "weeping aloud" (*ἀνακλάσας*), Darius exclaims *φεῦ* ("alas!"), a marked term, denoting grief or anger (mainly) in tragedy.¹³ He also "beats upon his head," a common gesture of mourning (e.g. *A. Th.* 855–856) and an expression of intense sorrow (e.g. *Hdt.* 3.14.7; *J. AJ* 16.329).¹⁴ Closely relevant is Darius' emphasis on Statira's earlier, kingly status and (what he presumes is) her current miserable state in life and death. Tragic mourners regularly draw such contrasts between the (glorious) past and (miserable) present of the deceased and express their own fear lest the dead does not receive a proper, honorable burial (cf. Briseis in *Iliad* 19.288–289 or Electra in Aeschylus' *Choephoroi* 429–433).¹⁵ Darius' appeal, moreover, to several unearthly forces throughout the scene—"Alas for the god of the Persians!" (30.3); "tell me, I charge you as you revere the great light of Mithras" (30.8); "You gods of my race and my kingdom" (30.12)—evokes tragic scenes where supernatural forces are directly addressed in lamentations (e.g. *A. Supp.* 79–133; *A* 1468; 1313–1330).¹⁶ Particularly significant is Dar-

Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 161–163, 169, 175 n. 37. On the Phrygian slave, see Suter, "Male Lament," 165.

- 11 M. Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament in Greek Tradition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002, 2nd ed.) 161–162.
- 12 See Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 6; K. Derderian, *Leaving Words to Remember: Greek Mourning and the Advent of Literacy* (Leiden: Brill, 2001) 137–138.
- 13 See *LSJ*, s.v. *φεῦ*.
- 14 Cf. the beating of one's breast as a typical mourning sign (e.g. *Il.* 18.50–51; 19.284–285), with C.C. Tsagalis, *Epic Grief: Personal Laments in Homer's Iliad* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2004) 59–60. See also Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 105–106, 108, 143; Derderian, *Leaving Words*, 35–36 n. 81, 54–55, 137–138.
- 15 See Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 4, 165–171, 206 n. 2. Cf. A. Suter, "Lament in Euripides' 'Trojan Women,'" *Mnemosyne* 56.1 (2003) 3, 7; Derderian, *Leaving Words*, 36; Tsagalis, *Epic Grief*, 15, 30, 44–45. The comparison between past and present is also present in the laments found in the extant ancient Greek novels, see J. Birchall, "The Lament as a Rhetorical Feature in the Greek Novel," in H. Hofmann & M. Zimmerman (eds.), *Groningen Colloquia on the Novel Volume VII* (Groningen: Egbert Foster, 1996) 10–11; K. De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters: Heroes and Heroines in the Ancient Greek Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 43–44. This also occurs in Latin lament, e.g. *Luc.* 8.759–775, 9.81–82, with A. Keith, "Lament in Lucan's *Bellum Civile*," in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 246–248.
- 16 See Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 113–116 and 227 n. 29 for further examples. Cf. Birchall, "The Lament as a Rhetorical Feature," 10 on similar addresses in the laments of Greek novels. (e.g. *Hld.* 1.8; *Longus* 4.8.3–4).

ius' invocation of "the great light of Mithras (Μίθρου τε φῶς μέγα)" (30.8).¹⁷ Light imagery and symbolism appearing as the sacred source of life, knowledge, joy, and warmth constantly recur in the Greek lamentation of all periods.¹⁸

In terms of structure, ancient Greek laments generally consisted of catechistic questions, stichomythic dialogues, and refrains that accompanied a soloist mourner, which often echoed her/his laments or expressed antiphonally conflicting emotions and ideas.¹⁹ Tiresus' exchange with Darius, although not a stichomythia, constitutes a highly moving dialogue that increases the dramatic tension between the two men. Tiresus may be seen as performing the antiphonal role of the chorus in tragedy, driving Darius (as we shall see below) to eventually think more like a Greek than a Persian. It might be instructive to compare the scene with the ghost of Darius I in Aeschylus' *Persians* (681–842), whose response to Xerxes' enterprise closely maps principal Greek values and assumptions.²⁰

The contrast between the two men's understandings of Alexander is initially expressed through a series of cumulative repetitions of Darius' words in Tiresus' response,²¹ which serve to amend (cf. ἀλλά at 30.4) Darius' thoughts and underline the proper honors that his family enjoyed at Alexander's hands (30.4–5). From this particular instance, Tiresus moves on to pass a more general paradigmatic appraisal of Alexander's gentleness in both the private and military arenas: "Alexander is as gentle after victory as he is terrible in battle" (30.6).

This very idea is reinforced in the next part of the dialogue, when Tiresus tries to remove Darius' suspicions that Alexander offended Statira. Darius expresses his sorrow in a supremely self-centered lament (30.8–9):

ἄρα μὴ τὰ μικρότατα τῶν Στατεΐρας κλαίω κακῶν, οἰκτρότερα δὲ ζώσης ἐπάσχομεν, καὶ μᾶλλον ἂν κατ' ἀξίαν ἐδυστυχοῦμεν ὡμῶ καὶ σκυθρωπῶ περιπεσόντες ἐχθρῶ; τί γὰρ εὐπρεπὲς ἀνδρὶ νέω πρὸς ἐχθροῦ γυναικία μέχρη τιμῆς τοσαύτης συμβόλαιον;

17 See also Tiresus' words at *Alex.* 30.5: "To my knowledge neither your queen Statira while she lived, nor your mother nor your children, lacked any of their former blessings, except for the light of your countenance (ἢ τὸ σὸν ὄρᾶν φῶς), which the Lord Oromazes will surely cause to shine (ἀναλάμψειε) again in its former glory."

18 See Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 187–189; Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 146; Derderian, *Leaving Words*, 120 with n. 21, 121; C.C. Tsagalis, *Inscribing Sorrow: Fourth-Century Attic Funerary Epigrams* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008) 63–86.

19 See Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 131–160; Tsagalis, *Epic Grief*, 15, 30–32, 46–51, 83–86.

20 See Pelling, "Aeschylus' *Persae* and History," 14–16.

21 30.4 (Tiresus: ταφῆς γε χάριν) ~ 30.3 (Darius: ταφῆς βασιλικῆς); 30.4 (Tiresus: τὸν πονηρὸν δαίμονα Περσῶν) ~ 30.3 (Darius: τοῦ Περσῶν ... δαίμονος); 30.5 (Tiresus: οὐτ' ἀποθανοῦσα κόσμου τινὸς ἄμοιρος γέγονεν) ~ 30.3 (Darius: τελευτήσασαν ἄμοιρον κείσθαι ταφῆς βασιλικῆς).

Was not her death which I am now lamenting the least of Statira's misfortunes? Did I not suffer an even crueller blow of fate while she was still alive? Would not my unhappy destiny at least have been more honourable if I had met a harsher and more inhuman enemy? For how can a young man's treatment of his enemy's wife be virtuous, if it expresses itself in such tributes?

Darius' speech is given in a very confused and complicated syntactical structure: it begins with the present tense (*κλαίω κακῶν*), then is juxtaposed with the imperfect (*οικτρότερα δέ ... ἐπάσχομεν*), followed by the potential imperfect (*καὶ μάλλον ἂν ... ἐδυστυχοῦμεν*), and completed with a question in (implied) present tense (*τί γὰρ εὐπρεπές ...*). The befuddled mixture of tenses, I suggest, is reflective of the befuddled mindset of Darius (cf. 30.7: *ἡ ταραχὴ καὶ τὸ πάθος ἐξέφερε πρὸς ὑποψίας ἀτόπους*, "his agitation and misery were so great that he was quite carried away and began to entertain the most extravagant suspicions"), which Tireus finally comes to set aright again.

Tireus emphatically (cf. *καὶ μήτ' Ἀλέξανδρον ... μήτε ... μήθ' αὐτοῦ*) reverses Darius' line of thinking, following a wholly opposite movement (30.10). Darius lamented, first, his own fate (cf. 30.8: *ἄρα μὴ τὰ μικρότατα ... κλαίω κακῶν, οἰκτρότερα δέ ... ἐπάσχομεν ... καὶ μάλλον ἂν ... ἐδυστυχοῦμεν*), making a parallel reference to his wife (cf. 30.8: *τὰ μικρότατα τῶν Στατεΐρας ... οἰκτρότερα δέ ζώσης*), and concluded with Alexander (cf. 30.8–9: *ὠμῶ καὶ σκυθρωπῶ περιπεσόντες ἐχθρῶ ... τί γὰρ εὐπρεπές ἀνδρὶ νέῳ*). Tireus, in reverse order, urges him neither to wrong Alexander (cf. 30.9: *καὶ μήτ' Ἀλέξανδρον ἀδικεῖν*), nor to shame his dead sister and wife (cf. 30.10: *μήτε τὴν τεθνεῶσαν ἀδελφὴν καὶ γυναῖκα καταίσχύνειν*), nor to deprive himself of the greatest consolation for his disasters (cf. *μήθ' αὐτοῦ τὴν μεγίστην ὧν ἔπταικεν ἀφαιρεῖσθαι παραμυθίαν*). Such an equibalanced exchange, well suggestive of Darius' demeaned status at the magnitude of his catastrophe, allows Tireus to declare again, in a more elaborate 'refrain' (cf. 30.4–6), Alexander's "superiority to human nature," his restraint (*σωφροσύνην*) towards Persian women, and his military valor (*ἀνδρείαν*). Tireus concludes his speech with a discussion of Alexander's general self-restraint (cf. *ἐγκρατείας*) and magnanimity (*μεγαλοψυχίας*), which has the effect of changing Darius' (moral) stance towards Alexander (30.10–11).

Tireus' implied discourse on Alexander's virtues (cf. *περὶ τῆς ἄλλης ἐγκρατείας καὶ μεγαλοψυχίας τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου λέγοντος*) is rather similar to Plutarch's discussion of Alexander's qualities throughout the *Life*.²² It also keeps with

22 See J. Beneker, *The Passionate Statesman: Eros and Politics in Plutarch's Lives* (Oxford:

Alexander's own conception of kingship, most clearly shown in his treatment of the captive Persian women—Alexander displays chastity (cf. ἐγκρατείας) and self-control (σωφροσύνης) towards them, for he “thought it more worthy of a king (βασιλικώτερον) to subdue his own passions than to conquer his enemies” (21.7)—and in his capture of Darius' tent. There, Alexander alienates himself from the vastness of Darius' luxury and ironically comments on it: “So this, it seems, is what it is to be a king (τὸ βασιλεύειν)” (20.11–13). Just before the narration of the final encounter between the two men at Gaugamela (31–33), then, Tireus' reflection draws the readers to remember Alexander's virtuous character, and thus retrospectively interpret Alexander's victory over Darius in terms of the two men's different understandings of kingship. Alexander gives an alternative, superior idea of kingship to that of Darius, one of contempt for wealth and softness,²³ which might call to mind the analogous instances of Caesar and Pausanias. In the *Pompeius*—and strikingly *not* in Alexander's paired *Life of Caesar* (cf. 46.1)—, Plutarch dwells on how the Caesarians incredulously gazed on their enemies' vanity and folly when Caesar entered the Pompeian camp after Pharsalus (72.5–6).²⁴ Pausanias' response to the captured Persian luxury may also be evoked here (Hdt. 9.82.2–3). Plutarch's knowledgeable readers, nevertheless, may recall that neither Caesar nor Pausanias, nor even Alexander, lived up to those high moral standards,²⁵ the last two drifting into that sort of ‘Oriental’ lifestyle that they had actively despised earlier.²⁶

Indeed, in the last part of the scene of the Darius-Tireus encounter, readers may notice that the strong and simple polarity of Alexander and Darius,

Oxford University Press, 2012) 103–139 on Alexander's virtuous character as presented by Plutarch.

23 See T.S. Schmidt, *Plutarch et les Barbares: La rhétorique d'une image* (Leuven-Namur: Peeters, 1999) 288–291.

24 It might be natural for the *Caesar* (46.1) to include what is most relevant to the subject of his biography and thus suppress the details about the foolish confidence and infatuated hopes of Pompey and his army; but it might also be unnecessary to delineate this idea, for it has already been introduced in the *Life of Alexander* (20). Plutarch might expect his alert reader to recall the similar scene of Alexander's capture of Darius' tent in the preceding *Alexander* and think deeply about Caesar's victory as well as his subsequent failure. See further C.S. Chrysanthou, *Plutarch's Parallel Lives: Narrative Technique and Moral Judgment* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008) 79–80 on Plutarch's varied approach in the *Caesar* and the *Pompeius*.

25 See A.V. Zadorojnyi, “Mimesis and the (plu)past in Plutarch's *Lives*,” in J. Grethlein & C.B. Krebs (eds.), *Time and Narrative in Ancient Historiography: The ‘Plupast’ from Herodotus to Appian* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012) 194–198 who offers an excellent discussion of that intertextual triangle of comparisons and connections.

26 On Pausanias, see Th. 1.130.1.

Greek and barbarian, is challenged and qualified. More specifically, Darius' closing speech to Tireus, although a prayer to the gods of his race and kingdom (cf. 30.12: θεοὶ γενέθλιοι καὶ βασιλῆιοι), has nothing typically Persian in it, nothing, for example, to suggest that Darius prays for wealth, prosperity, and expansionism. Darius rather asks the gods to re-establish for him the prosperity of the Persian Empire (cf. εἰς ὀρθὸν ἀΐθις σταθεῖσαν) in order to reward Alexander's favors (30.12).²⁷ Darius' lament becomes reflective and thought provoking. It moves out of the female world of private grief into a male, public, non-Orientalized setting, embodying the suffering in the civil register of the Greek public laments, where a good example is normally set for the audience to emulate. Darius' praise keeps well with the laudatory, consolatory, and gnomic style of the *elegos*, the *epitaphios logos*, and the *epikēdeion*,²⁸ but again, Plutarch's divergence from and innovatory enrichment of that tradition is most striking. The commemorative, proverbial, and expressive character of Darius' last speech does not arise from a praise or commemoration of the *dead* but of the *enemy*.²⁹ It comes from a proper appreciation of Alexander's qualities, which sets an example that can inspire the readers to follow suit. This progress from personal grief and lament to civic concerns and the *epitaphios logos*-type speech fits well with the "pattern of moral improvement and restoration for the male lamenter during and after his lament" that Ann Suter identifies in many of the male lamentations in Greek tragedy,³⁰ although here there is no self-criticism (at least explicitly) and no re-integration of the lamenting male into "his proper place in society" (as is normally found in tragedy according to Suter), despite Darius' civic concern at the end.³¹

In Darius' request to the gods, moreover, there can be further extrapolations than first meet the eye. In Darius' appeal one can find an intertextual link with the speech of the aged priest in Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*,³² who, in a mis-

27 Cf. *Alex.* 43.4; *De Al. Magn. fort.* 338F. There is no mention of Darius' desire to make firm his rule in order to pay back Alexander's kindness in Diodorus (17.54.7), Athenaeus (13.603C), Curtius (4.10.34), and Arrian (*An.* 4.20.3).

28 On these kinds of laments, see Alexiou, *The Ritual Lament*, 104–108; Holst-Warhaft, *Dangerous Voices*, 124.

29 In Plutarch's work it is common to weep for one's dead foe out of sensibility, respect, and awareness of human fragility: Eumenes for Craterus (*Eum.* 7.13), Antigonos for Pyrrhus (*Pyrrh.* 34.8), Caesar for Pompey (*Caes.* 48.2; *Pomp.* 80.7). See Pelling, *Plutarch: Life of Antony*, 309.

30 Suter, "Male Lament," 166.

31 See Suter, "Male Lament," 159–166. The phrase is cited from p. 166.

32 Ziegler notes the parallel in his edition of the text. Cf. Frazier, "Contribution à l'étude," 4528 with n. 135, who draws attention to the Sophoclean intertext and the whole tragic atmosphere of the scene.

erable state, describes to Oedipus the plight of the city, tells him that Thebes is dying, and urges him not to let them remember of his reign that they “were first restored and then thrown down, but to uplift this state so that it fall no more” (cf. *OT* 50–51: στάντες τ' ἐς ὀρθὸν καὶ πεσόντες ὕστερον | ἀλλ' ἀσφαλεία τήνδ' ἀνόρθωσον πόλιν ~ *Alex.* 30.12: εἰς ὀρθὸν αὐθις σταθείσαν). Plutarch's readers who are able to recognize the tragic intertext might notice that the suppliant priest is broken and despondent in a manner that parallels Darius. The priest is an example of human suffering and articulates thoughts about human fragility and instability (cf. “they were first restored and then cast down”), which Darius similarly calls attention to in the closing lines of his prayer (*Alex.* 30.13):

εἰ δ' ἄρα τις οὗτος εἰμαρτὸς ἤκει χρόνος, ὀφειλόμενος νεμέσει καὶ μεταβολῇ,
παύσασθαι τὰ Περσῶν, μηδεὶς ἄλλος ἀνθρώπων καθίσειεν εἰς τὸν Κύρου θρόνον
πλήν Ἀλεξάνδρου.

But if the fated time is at hand when the rule of the Persians must cease, and if our downfall is a debt we must pay to the envy of the gods and the laws of change, grant that no other man but Alexander shall sit upon the throne of Cyrus.

“That fated time, the envy of the gods, and the laws of change”³³—favorite themes of tragedy, not least of *Oedipus Tyrannus*—cast Darius as a tragic hero whose life is subject to the unearthly laws of change and reversal. Should we think then of heavenly forces as a possible explanation for Darius' downfall and accordingly Alexander's victory over Darius? Plutarch makes clear that it is Alexander's superior conception of kingship that allowed him to prevail over Darius. The *De Alexandri Magni fortuna aut virtute* displays this in a particularly explicit manner. Darius was still one of those who believed that Alexander's victory was through Fortune (338E), but Plutarch counter-suggests that it was because of his virtues that Alexander defeated Darius: “Darius yielded in virtue and greatness of soul, in prowess and justice, and marvelled at Alexander's invincibility in pleasure, in toil, and in the bestowal of favors” (339A–B).

Still, Darius' prayer may invite the readers' empathy, for it captures a cosmic pattern and exemplifies a human fragility that can be recognized as universal, common to every nation or man, victor or vanquished. The idea is familiar in tragedy—Odysseus feels pity for his enemy Ajax, for he reflects on human vulnerability (*S. Aj.* 121–126)—and Herodotus too, whose work is full of tragic

33 No such emphasis in *Arr. An.* 4.20.3 and *Curt.* 4.10.34.

elements. Xerxes weeps at the futility of human life (Hdt. 7.46).³⁴ It also recurs later on in the *Life of Alexander* when readers are told that the inscription on Cyrus' tomb "made a deep impression on Alexander, since they reminded him of the uncertainty (τὴν ἀδηλόγητα) and mutability (καὶ μεταβολήν) (of mortal life)" (69.5). For Plutarch's knowledgeable readers, who are well aware of Alexander's (and Caesar's, whose *Life* is paired with that of Alexander) final decadence, the notion of human fragility and mutability that Darius' prayer and the Sophoclean intertext suggest (cf. *OT* 50: στάντες τ' ἐς ὀρθὸν καὶ πεσόντες ὕστερον) might have a particularly sinister force. Just like Darius, Alexander and Caesar will also fall due to human reasons. In both the *Alexander* and the *Caesar*, the deterioration of the morals of the two men will prove to be detrimental to their politics and careers, and thus central to their final collapse.³⁵ But, just as in the case of Darius, there seems to be a sense of a cosmic pattern as well. The presence of divine forces and their workings on the lives of both Alexander and Caesar are constantly stressed and probed throughout the *Alexander-Caesar* book, generating the maximum tragic effect.³⁶ Alexander (and Caesar) will eventually be unable to avoid a Darius-like fate. Human suffering, uncertainty and vulnerability prove to be universal.

In fact, by the end of Darius' prayer, as well as in the following chapters of the *Alexander*, readers are primed to find a thought-provoking discovery of Alexander in Darius and Darius in Alexander, especially now that Darius ends up thinking more like a Greek and Alexander heads eastwards. The scene of Darius' meeting with Tireus begins by drawing a simple polarity of Alexander

34 See Mossman, "Tragedy and epic," 227.

35 On Alexander's decline, see Mossman, "Tragedy and epic," 218–227; Schmidt, *Plutarque et les Barbares*, 296–299; T. Whitmarsh, "Alexander's Hellenism and Plutarch's Textualism," *CQ* 52 (2002) 181–191. On Plutarch's explanation of Caesar's downfall, see C.B.R. Pelling, "Plutarch on Caesar's Fall," in J. Mossman (ed.), *Plutarch and his Intellectual World: Essays on Plutarch* (London: Duckworth, 1997) 215–232; Chrysanthou, *Plutarch's Parallel Lives*, 78–85.

36 See e.g. *Alex.* 50–52 (Cleitus' murder); *Alex.* 74.1 and 75 (the effect of the portents). On the role of the divine in Alexander's life, see Mossman, "Tragedy and epic," 209–228, stressing that "Plutarch evidently felt it more appropriate to explain ... Alexander's vicissitudes in terms of tragedy, epic, and divine wrath" (226). Divine forces figure prominently in the *Caesar* as well: see e.g. *Caes.* 32.9 (Caesar's ambiguous dream before crossing the Rubicon), with C.B.R. Pelling, *Plutarch: Caesar* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) 314; *Caes.* 63 (omens foretelling Caesar's death); 66.1 (the presence of a heavenly power at Caesar's murder; cf. 66.12). Cf. Pelling, *Plutarch and History*, 380–381, who notes that "however much anyone—Olympias, Roxane, Plutarch himself, Caesar—tries to evade a divine involvement, there will still be some supernatural accompaniment and concern with events so momentous as these, and men so great" (381).

and Darius, Greeks and barbarians; but Darius' lament closes with a prayer that suggests a more universal note and explicitly acknowledges Alexander's virtuous character (cf. Darius' dying words a little later on at *Alex.* 43.4). We may remember the similar function of the laments at the end of Aeschylus' *Persians* "where after so much Oriental Otherness ... some at least of the audience may come, doubtless disconcertingly, to feel contact with this strange and alien culture."³⁷ Plutarch constructs a 'big scene' that encourages readers to empathize with Darius and eventually to ponder the previously clear-cut differentiation between Alexander and Darius. By the end of the *Alexander*, a strong and simplistic national polarity is challenged and probed, and the Greek and barbarian categories are profoundly entangled.³⁸ The effect is very similar to the end of the *Iliad* and Herodotus' *Histories*;³⁹ it is not implausible that an intertextual triangulation is developed here. Achilles, Priam and Troy, Athens and Persia, Alexander and Darius seem to be very distinct from one another at the beginning; but, by the end of the works, universal moral questions are posed in a particularly powerful manner that brings readers to ponder on, qualify, if not destabilize, any univocal national stereotyping.

3 Conclusion

In this chapter I focused on a single scene from Plutarch's *Life of Alexander*, that of Darius' discussion with the eunuch Tireus (*Alex.* 30). The scene, a clear example of Plutarch's 'grandes scènes,' affords a unique opportunity (1) to examine how Plutarch deploys in the *Lives* features of other genres and evokes spe-

37 C.B.R. Pelling, "East is East and West is West—or Are They? National Stereotypes in Herodotus," *Histos* 1 (1997) 65. Cf. Pelling, "Aeschylus' *Persae* and History," 18–19.

38 See Schmidt, *Plutarque et les Barbares*, 297: "les défauts auxquels succombe le Macédonien dans la seconde partie de la *Vie* ... ont une connotation barbare évidente ... Ajoutés à des signes plus manifestes, comme l'habit, les coutumes et la *προσκύνησις*, ils contribuent à assimiler peu à peu Alexandre à un monarque oriental". Cf. Whitmarsh, "Alexander's Hellenism," 182–191 (p. 191: "As Alexander heads East, then, he begins to 'mix' Eastern and Western"). On Alexander's complex negotiation of his identity, see also Schmidt, *Plutarque et les Barbares*, 294–299; J. Mossman, "Travel Writing, History, and Biography," in B. McGing & J. Mossman (eds.), *The Limits of Ancient Biography* (Swansea: Classical Press of Wales, 2006) 289–292.

39 See Pelling, "East is East and West is West," 65–66. On national stereotypes and polarities in Plutarch, see esp. A.G. Nikolaidis, "Ελληνικός-βαρβαρικός: Plutarch on Greek and Barbarian Characteristics," *Wiener Studien* 20 (1986) 229–244; Schmidt, *Plutarque et les Barbares*, *passim*; C.B.R. Pelling, "Plutarch the Multiculturalist: Is West Always Best?" *Ploutarchos* 13 (2016) 33–52.

cific texts from other literary traditions; and (2) to understand the effects that such generic and intertextual interaction has on the texture and meaning of Plutarch's biography as well as on the reader's response to it. I argued that Darius' mourning for his wife Statira draws on conventional themes of the lament genre (most commonly found in epic and tragedy), and that Plutarch adopts and manipulates some traditional lament features and uses their potentialities to illuminate Darius' mischief in order to call attention to some of the most important aspects of the characters of Darius and Alexander—the kind of *eidopoia* described in *Alexander* 1.⁴⁰

More particularly, we can see Plutarch's interest in delineating Darius' moral growth by bringing out his progress from the private, feminizing, personal lamentation to the public, male, *epitaphios logos*-type speech of civic concern and laudation of Alexander (a striking divergence from male funeral speech, which tends to extol the dead and not the enemy). We can also see how Darius' lament and overall exchange with Tiresias invite consideration of Alexander's virtuous character and his idea of kingship that has relevance for the paired *Life of Caesar* as well, thus contributing to the coherence of the *Alexander-Caesar* book.

Finally, I discussed how Darius' prayer, including a plausible intertextual dialogue with Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*, becomes a vehicle for reflection on human fragility and vulnerability—two distinctively tragic themes that transcend national categories and provide frameworks for pondering Darius, Alexander, and Caesar alike. Generic and intertextual enrichment, then, works

40 Laments are traditionally used in epic and tragedy to promote the plot and/or engage the reader with the characters or the basic themes of the work: see e.g. the essays in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008). Characteristically, C. Perrell, "Reading the Laments of *Iliad* 24," in A. Suter (ed.), *Lament: Studies in the Ancient Mediterranean and Beyond* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008) 108, commenting on the function of laments in the *Iliad*, notes that "all these features of lament in a poem result from the poet's choices and operate in service of the poet's overall purposes in the text ... the meaning of lamentation in any given poetic text ... must be seen to be a function of the poet's artistic or thematic choices". Cf. Tsagalis, *Epic Grief*, 25: "Their incorporation [i.e. of personal laments] into the *Iliad* is so intricate that they tend to represent, albeit in miniature form, both a summary and an emotional commentary on the entire epic". For the importance of laments as tools for characterization, see De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters*, 134 who mentions that "lamentations were likely to be recognized by contemporary readers [sc. of the novels] as examples of *ethopoeia*, a rhetorical exercise often fashioned as a lamenting monologue in ancient theory and practice". See e.g. Lib. *Prog.* 372–437, R. Förster, *Libanii opera, Volume 8: Progymnasmata. Argumenta orationum Demosthenicarum* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1915) cited by De Temmerman, *Crafting Characters*, 134 n. 69.

well towards injecting Plutarch's narrative with tragic coloring that can probe readers' empathy and thoughtfully engage them with not just the character of great men from the past, but also powerful, universal moral lessons of history.