

# L'ANTIQUITÉ CLASSIQUE

*Revue publiée avec l'appui de la Fondation Universitaire  
Tijdschrift uitgegeven met de steun van de Universitaire Stichting*

*Revue publiée avec l'aide financière du  
Fonds de la Recherche scientifique - FNRS*

## Plutarch on Cato the Younger and the Annexation of Cyprus

This article proposes that Plutarch's narrative of Cato's Cypriot expedition (58 BC) in the *Life of Cato Minor* is his own innovation, and it should be tailored to his unique literary programme and method of "historical-ethical reconstruction" of events in his biographies.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, comparison with the parallel sources for this incident offers insights into Plutarch's method of reshaping, expanding, reconstructing, or even inventing information, in order to inform his historical and moral investigation of the past. Our discussion reveals Plutarch's sustained interest in accentuating some engaging elements associated with Cato's moral character and the relationship between his conduct and the demands of statesmanship within the political circumstances of the late Republic. Plutarch's narrative of Cato's annexation and administration of Cyprus, I argue, is shaped towards unfolding and corroborating moral lessons that run throughout his biography of Cato the Younger and its pair, the biography of Phocion.<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Preliminaries to Cato's Cypriot expedition

Plutarch's narrative begins by stressing the fear (cf. ἐφοβοῦντο) that Julius Caesar and Pompey feel towards Cato, despite their violent predominance over the state (*Cato Minor* 34.1). "Even when they defeated him", Plutarch plainly states, "it was with difficulty and toils and not without the shame of exposure that they forced their measures through at last, and this was annoying and unpleasant to them" (*Cato Minor* 34.2).<sup>3</sup> This is nothing new for Plutarch's readers who, throughout the several chapters that precede this statement have very often been alerted to Cato's uncom-

---

<sup>1</sup> On this term, see BENEKER (2012: 58-102), referring to "the fleshing out of the moral component to the hardcore facts of history" (101).

<sup>2</sup> Throughout this paper my aim is to examine Plutarch's literary presentation, and not his historical truth, though an analysis of literary form certainly has a powerful effect on our understanding of Plutarch's writings historically. On the historical background of this episode, see HILL (1940: 205-211); OOST (1955); BADIAN (1965); ZECCHINI (1979); DILLON & GARLAND (2015: 512-514); MORRELL (2018: 199-204); VASSILIADES (2018: esp. 486-487 with n. 12 on p. 486), who gives a detailed list of modern bibliography and ancient sources. Most recently, see the excellent investigation by CALVELLI (2020).

<sup>3</sup> καὶ γὰρ, ἐν οἷς περιῆσαν αὐτοῦ, τό τε χαλεπῶς καὶ μετὰ πόνων καὶ μὴ χωρὶς αἰσχύνῃς, ἀλλ' ἐλεγχομένους βιάζεσθαι μόλις, ἀνιαρὸν ἦν καὶ πρῶσαντες. Throughout this paper I use the translation of Plutarch's *Life of Cato Minor* by SCOTT-KILVERT & PELLING (2010) as well as that by PERRIN (1919), slightly adapted at some points. Translations of other texts of Plutarch and other authors are based on, or adopted from, those of the Loeb Classical Library editions.

fortable operation in the social context of the late Republic.<sup>4</sup> Plutarch’s foregrounding of Caesar’s and Pompey’s perceptions, therefore, highlights an issue that looms large as both a narrative technique and a subject matter in his biography of Cato the Younger, and which is used to convey the climate of the time as well as to anchor Cato in his social background.

This interest in the relationship between Cato and contemporary Roman society also occurs in Plutarch’s subsequent explication of the underlying motives behind the desire of Clodius – “the boldest of the popular leaders at that time (*Cato Minor* 31.2)”<sup>5</sup> – to remove Cato from Rome. “Clodius was convinced”, as Plutarch says, “that he would not even be able to destroy Cicero if Cato were there” (*Cato Minor* 34.3)<sup>6</sup> – a rather misleading statement, for Cicero went to exile before Cato left for Cyprus.<sup>7</sup> Although at first, Plutarch proceeds, Clodius pretends to approach Cato in a friendly way – he in fact presents his decision to entrust to Cato the commission of dealing with Cyprus and Ptolemy as a favour which he wants to bestow upon Cato (*Cato Minor* 34.3-4) – he turns to treat him arrogantly (cf. ὑπερηφάνως) and contemptuously (cf. καὶ ὀλιγώρως) as soon as Cato exclaims outright the true meaning of the offer (*Cato Minor* 34.5). Accordingly, as Plutarch relates, Clodius goes before the people and has an edict passed to send Cato on the mission (*Cato Minor* 34.5), “giving him no ship, no soldiers, no staff for his journey, with the exception of just two secretaries, one of them a thief and a total villain, the other a client of Clodius himself” (*Cato Minor* 34.6).<sup>8</sup> As Plutarch stresses, Clodius also assigned to Cato the extra task of restoring some exiles to Byzantium in order to have him out of the way for as long as possible (*Cato Minor* 34.7).

Plutarch’s unfavourable portrayal of Clodius is reminiscent of Cicero’s highly critical tone against the same opponent in the *De domo sua* (20; 52). Plutarch can hardly have failed to read Cicero’s works either for his *Life of Cato Minor* or earlier for his *Life of Cicero* itself.<sup>9</sup> He, unlike Cicero, however, switches the narrative focus

<sup>4</sup> E.g. *Cato Minor* 20.3-8; 26.1; 26.5; 49.2. See DUFF (1999: 152-153). Cf. GEIGER (1971: 83-84); GEIGER (1988: 251-252).

<sup>5</sup> τοῦ τότε θρασυτάτου τῶν δημαγωγῶν. On Plutarch’s treatment of Clodius, see PELLING (2002: 98-100).

<sup>6</sup> ὁ δὲ Κλώδιος οὐδὲ Κικέρωνα καταλύσειν ἠλπίζε Κάτωνος παρόντος.

<sup>7</sup> PELLING (2010: 571 n. 180). PELLING (2002: 98-99) also notes that “the context (33.6, 34.1) ... makes it clear that he [i.e. Clodius] was serving the policy of the triumvirs”. Cf. Plutarch, *Caesar* 21.8; OOST (1955: 109 n. 3); VASSILIADES (2018: 492).

<sup>8</sup> ἐξίονται δ’ οὐ νῆες, οὐ στρατιῶται, οὐχ ὑπηρέτην ἔδωκε, πλὴν ἢ δύο γραμματεῖς μόνον, ὧν ὁ μὲν κλέπτης καὶ παμπόνηρος, ἄτερος δὲ Κλωδίου πελάτης. CALVELLI (2020: 162) notes that Plutarch’s narrative at this point seems to resort to *hyperbole* in order to favour Cato: according to numerous sources, CALVELLI (2020: 162) continues, “a Catone fu affidato un incarico di natura ufficiale, in base a una legge regolarmente approvata dai comizi. Come si è visto, tale provvedimento gli attribuiva un comando *pro quaestore pro praetore* e gli conferiva l’ausilio di un questore aggiuntivo, secondo quanto afferma esplicitamente Velleio Patercolo (*adiecto etiam quaestore*)”.

<sup>9</sup> See MOLES (1988: 28-29) on Plutarch’s use of the *Pro Sestio* and the *De domo sua* in the *Cicero*. On Plutarch’s knowledge of Cicero’s works, see PETER (1865: 129-135);

from the injustice of Clodius against Ptolemy, the king of Cyprus, to the arrogant and demeaning stance of Clodius towards Cato. Nevertheless, references to Cato abound in Cicero's work as well. More precisely, Cicero refers to Clodius' command that Cato should remove the money of Ptolemy and manage the war against him (20). Besides, he strikingly ascribes to Clodius an imagined *laudatio* of Cato – “‘Ah!’ you will say, ‘but what a magnificent man! The soul of uprightness, of sagacity, of fortitude, and of patriotism, whose virtues, principles, and whole philosophy of life gave him a surpassing and almost unique title to fame!’” (21).<sup>10</sup> Cicero, however, goes on to explicitly reveal Clodius' real intentions: “By express nomination, you, in your proposal, conferred an extraordinary distinction and command upon him whom you desired, not by so doing to promote to the position which his merits deserved, but to put [him] out of the way, in order to give you a free hand for your misdeeds” (21).<sup>11</sup> Cicero mentions next a letter that Clodius claims to have received from Caesar, and in which Caesar allegedly expressed with affection his approval of the actions that Clodius took against Cato (22). Cicero is doubtful about the authenticity of the letter (22), and he proceeds to praise Cato in an extreme and outspoken way: “But I will deal no further with Cato; for his splendid qualities, his great merits, and the loyalty and self-control with which he executed his commission, seemed to cast into the shade the unscrupulousness of your measure and of your policy” (23).<sup>12</sup>

If we turn to Plutarch's version, we see that the exceptional words of praise supposedly uttered by Clodius on Cato find their parallel in *Cato Minor* 34.3-4, where we read that “Clodius said that he regarded Cato as the most honest man at Rome, and was prepared to do something to demonstrate that confidence. There were many who were pressing for the commission of dealing with Cyprus and Ptolemy and begging to be sent upon it, but he thought that Cato alone was worthy of the task, and he was happy to give him that favour”.<sup>13</sup> Plutarch, just like Cicero, points to Clodius' insin-

---

HELMBOLD & O'NEIL (1959: 17-18); FLACELIÈRE & CHAMBRY (1976: 56-61); SCARDIGLI (1979: 114-119); PELLING (2002: 16-18, 39 n. 105); SCUDERI (2004); RAY (2020: 46 n. 5). On the earlier chronology of composition of the *Life of Cicero*, see JONES (1995: 106-111).

<sup>10</sup> *Dices*: “*Quem uirum? Sanctissimum, prudentissimum, fortissimum, amicissimum rei publicae, uirtute, consilio, ratione uitae mirabili ad laudem et prope singulari!*” Cf. CICERO, *Pro Sestio* 60-63.

<sup>11</sup> *quem tu in ea re non pro illius dignitate produceres, sed pro tuo scelere subduceres ... ad hunc honorem et imperium extra ordinem nominatim rogatione tua detulisti*. Cf. CICERO, *De domo sua* 65; *Pro Sestio* 60. See also Velleius Paterculus 2.45.4: “Publius Clodius in his tribunate also removed Marcus Cato from the state, under the pretence of an honourable mission” (*Idem P. Clodius in tribunatu sub honorificentissimo ministerii titulo M. Catonem a re publica relegauit*).

<sup>12</sup> *Sed omitto Catonem, cuius eximia uirtus, dignitas et in eo negotio, quod gessit, fides et continentia tegere uideretur improbitatem et legis et actionis tuae*.

<sup>13</sup> και λόγους αὐτῷ προσήνεγκεν, ὡς πάντων ἐκείνων ἡγούμενος ἄνδρα Ῥωμαίων καθαρῶτατον, ἔργῳ διδόναι πίστιν ἔτοιμός ἐστι· πολλῶν γὰρ αἰτουμένων τὴν ἐπὶ Κύπρον καὶ Πτολεμαῖον ἀρχὴν καὶ δεομένων ἀποσταλῆναι, μόνον ἄξιον ἐκείνων ἡγεῖσθαι καὶ διδόναι τὴν χάριν ἠδέως. See *Ant.* 10.3, with PELLING (1988: 140) ad loc. for another example of Plutarch taking literally Antony's response in Cicero's speech (*Phil.* 2.72) and working it up. I owe this point to the anonymous reviewer.

cerity and real motives. He mentions that this was part of Clodius' 'ploy' to overthrow Cicero (cf. *Cato Minor* 34.3: διαμηχανώμενος), and he adds that Clodius' aim was to keep Cato out of his way for as long as possible (*Cato Minor* 34.7). Unlike Cicero, however, Plutarch includes (as noted earlier) an exchange between Cato and Clodius which illustrates not only Cato's alertness to Clodius' guile – a first sign of Cato's virtuous character – but also the growing antagonism between the two men.<sup>14</sup>

The difference between the two works can be reasonably explained by their different purposes and generic texture: in the *De domo sua*, a forensic speech, Cicero presents Clodius' decision to annex Cyprus as a criminal, legally immoral act (cf. *lege nefaria*), with a view to pillorying Clodius' inconsistency in his present assertion that "it is wrong for any extraordinary public command to be given to any one" (20-21). Plutarch, on the other hand, gives, in a biographical work about Cato, an account of the preliminaries to Cato's mission to Cyprus in such a way as to offer insights not only into the difficulties of the political reality of the times – something which Cicero clearly does as well – but also into Cato's specific interpersonal engagements in the world of the late Republic.

A comparison with the other accounts of the same incident clearly drives this point home. In Appian's *Roman History*, it is Pompey who appears to have "framed a decree that Cato should go to Cyprus and take the island away from King Ptolemy, in order that Cato might not cause obstruction by his presence" (*Bella ciuilia* 2.23).<sup>15</sup> A law, as the Appianic narrator relates, has been enacted by Clodius to that effect, "because once when Clodius was captured by pirates, the avaricious Ptolemy had contributed only two talents for his ransom" (*Bella ciuilia* 2.23).<sup>16</sup> It is true that Appian, like Plutarch, presents Cato's mission to Cyprus as deriving from the desire of Cato's opponents (here, Pompey in particular) to remove him from Rome; but, unlike Plutarch, he does not elaborate on Clodius' cognitive and emotional stances towards Cato or the other way round. Strikingly, it is Clodius' opposing relationship with Ptolemy rather than with Cato which comes in for special attention in Appian. Compare also Strabo (14.6.6).<sup>17</sup> In a similar vein, Velleius Paterculus mentions that

<sup>14</sup> GEIGER (1971: 274) ad loc. stresses that "this interview is not attested elsewhere, but this may be due to the much shorter versions of the other sources or/and to its private character (in our passage the information may ultimately derive from Munatius Rufus)".

<sup>15</sup> Κάτωνα μὲν ἐψηφίσσατο, ἵνα μὴ παρὼν ἐνοχλοῖη, Κύπρον ἀφελέσθαι Πτολεμαίου βασιλέως. On Appian's chronological mistake here, see CALVELLI (2020: 182-184).

<sup>16</sup> ὅτι οἷ ποτε ἀλόνηι ὑπὸ ληστῶν ὁ Πτολεμαῖος ἐς λύτρα ὑπὸ μικρολογίας δύο τάλαντα ἐπεπόμφει.

<sup>17</sup> "The chief cause of the ruin of the king [Ptolemy] was Publius Claudius Pulcher; for the latter, having fallen into the hands of the bands of pirates, the Cilicians then being at the height of their power, and, being asked for a ransom, sent a message to the king, begging him to send and rescue him. The king indeed sent a ransom, but so utterly small that the pirates disdained to take it and sent it back again, but released him without ransom. Having safely escaped, he remembered the favour of both; and, when he became tribune of the people, he was so powerful that he had Marcus Cato sent to take Cyprus away from its possessor" (μάλιστα δ' αἴτιος τοῦ δολέθρου κατέστη τῷ βασιλεῖ Πόπλιος Κλαύδιος Ποῦλχερ ἐμπεσῶν γὰρ εἰς τὰ ληστήρια, τῶν Κιλικῶν ἀμαρζόντων τότε, λύτρον αἰτούμενος ἐπέστειλε τῷ βασιλεῖ δεόμενος

Clodius “in his tribunate removed Marcus Cato from the state under the pretence of an honourable mission with instructions to dethrone Ptolemy, who by reason of his unmitigated viciousness of character well deserved this humiliation” (2.45.4).<sup>18</sup> No reference to Cato, on the contrary, occurs in Florus’ *Epitome of Roman History* (1.44), while later historians, such as Ammianus Marcellinus (14.8.15) or Festus (13.1) prefer to linger on Cyprus’ great wealth that caused (in their view) the greedy Romans to turn against a king who was bound to them with a treaty and annex the island. Plutarch’s account seems to come closer to that of Cassius Dio. The latter stresses Clodius’ wish “to get Cato out of the way, so that he might more easily succeed with his schemes, and likewise to avenge himself upon Ptolemy... because the latter had failed to ransom him from the pirates” (38.30.5).<sup>19</sup> Cassius Dio, moreover, refers to Cato’s great unwillingness (cf. *μάλα ἄκοντα*) to take up the mission (38.30.5). Plutarch, unlike Cassius Dio, focuses only on the motives that concern Clodius’ relationship with Cato, while at the same time he expatiates upon Cato’s ‘unwillingness’.<sup>20</sup>

There is also much to compare and contrast between Plutarch’s account of the preliminaries to Cato’s mission to Cyprus in the *Life of Cato Minor* and the other late Republican *Lives*.<sup>21</sup> In his *Life of Brutus*, for example, Plutarch simply notes that “while Brutus was still a youth, he made journey with his uncle Cato, who was sent out to Cyprus against Ptolemy” (*Brutus* 3.1).<sup>22</sup> In the *Life of Pompey*, Clodius appears to despise Pompey and take some most daring (cf. *θρασυτάτων*) measures (*Pompey* 48.8), among which (Plutarch says) were his banishment of Cicero and his sending away of Cato to Cyprus “under pretence of giving him military command (cf. *προφάσει στρατηγίας*)” (*Pompey* 48.9). There is something here of what we read in the *Life of Cato Minor* with reference to Clodius’ alleged motivation, but the main point is Pompey’s ‘passivity’ and his inability to exact control during the turbulent

---

πέμψαι καὶ ῥύσασθαι αὐτόν· ὁ δ’ ἐπέμψε μὲν μικρὸν δὲ τελέως ὥστε καὶ τοὺς ληστὰς αἰδεσθῆναι λαβεῖν ἀλλὰ ἀναπέμψαι πάλιν, τὸν δ’ ἄνευ λύτρων ἀπολύσαι. σωθεὶς δ’ ἐκεῖνος ἀπεμνημόνευσεν ἀμφοτέροις τὴν χάριν, καὶ γενόμενος δήμαρχος ἴσχυσε τοσοῦτον ὥστε ἐπέμψθη Μάρκος Κάτων ἀφαιρησόμενος τὴν Κύπρον τὸν κατέχοντα).

<sup>18</sup> *Idem P. Clodius in tribunatu sub honorificentissimo ministerii titulo M. Catonem a re publica relegavit ... ad spoliandum regno Ptolemaeum, omnibus morum uitiiis eam contumeliam meritum.*

<sup>19</sup> βουλευθεὶς ὁ Κλώδιος τὸν τε Κάτωνα ἐμποδῶν, ὅπως ῥᾶον ὅσα ἔπραττε κατορθώσῃ, ποιήσασθαι, καὶ τὸν Πτολεμαῖον ... ἀμύνασθαι ὅτι αὐτόν παρὰ τῶν καταποντιστῶν οὐκ ἔλύσατο. On the story about Clodius and the pirates in Dio’s *History* and elsewhere, see CALVELLI (2020: 111-123).

<sup>20</sup> CALVELLI (2020: 181-182) identifies some verbal similarities between Plutarch’s and Dio’s texts, which lead him to suggest that either Dio used Plutarch’s narrative as a source or both Dio and Plutarch used the same source.

<sup>21</sup> These biographies were written by Plutarch at roughly the same time and based on the same material: see PELLING (2002: 1-44).

<sup>22</sup> Ἔτι δὲ μειράκιον ὢν Κάτωνι τῷ θεῷ συναπεδήμησεν, εἰς Κύπρον ἐπὶ Πτολεμαῖον ἀποσταλέντι.

politics of the fifties.<sup>23</sup> Lastly, in the *Life of Caesar*, Plutarch records that Cato was not present at a debate in 56 BC because “they [i.e. the triumvirs] had deliberately spirited him away to Cyprus” (21.8).<sup>24</sup> We may clearly notice what very different biographies Plutarch was ready to write and how very different things interested him from one to another. Here the differences are mainly explained by biographical relevance: in the *Life of Cato Minor* it is precisely Clodius’ exchange with Cato on the matter of Cyprus’ annexation that is particularly unique and striking, in that it contributes to Plutarch’s characterization of Cato as a man of virtue, who dares to compete forcefully against his powerful political opponents. One may be reminded again of Cato’s reaction to Clodius’ supposedly friendly proposal (*Cato Minor* 34.5: “Cato cried out that the thing was a snare and an insult, not a favour”).<sup>25</sup>

Unlike Cicero in the *De domo sua*, Plutarch does not include a blunt, outspoken list of Cato’s virtues. Rather, he prefers to draw his readers by a variety of narrative means to observe, and thoughtfully reflect on, Cato’s qualities.<sup>26</sup> Plutarch allows Cato’s virtuous character to shine in contrast to Clodius, who tries to fulfill an imperialistic desire. We might make similar comments about Cato’s dealings with Cicero and Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, which Plutarch (unlike other accounts of the same events) places amidst his narration of Cato’s mission to Cyprus.

## 2. Cato the ‘wise counsellor’

Plutarch proceeds to relate that Cato “first advised Cicero, who was being driven into exile at the time, not to cause trouble nor to plunge the city into fighting and bloodshed, but instead to yield to circumstances, and return at some time in the future to become once again the saviour of his country” (*Cato Minor* 35.1).<sup>27</sup> Cato gives a similar piece of advice for avoiding civil war to Ptolemy Auletes, the king of Egypt, who after “an angry dispute with his citizens abandoned Alexandria and was sailing to Rome in the hope that Pompey and Caesar would restore him by force”

<sup>23</sup> See PELLING (2002: 100-102).

<sup>24</sup> ἐπίτηδες γὰρ αὐτὸν εἰς Κύπρον ἀπεδιοπομήσαντο.

<sup>25</sup> ἀνακραγόντος δὲ τοῦ Κάτωνος, ὡς ἐνέδρα τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ προπηλακισμός, οὐ χάρις, ἐστίν. CALVELLI (2020: 176) aptly compares Cato’s words in Plutarch’s biography with Cicero’s *Pro Sestio* 62-63 where (according to Cicero) Cato *yields* to the commission imposed on him concerning Cyprus for the sake of the Roman State.

<sup>26</sup> On Plutarch’s active and reflective ideal reader in the *Lives*, see esp. PELLING (2002: 267-282); DUFF (2011a); CHRYSANTHOU (2018a).

<sup>27</sup> Κικέρωνι μὲν ἐλαυνομένῳ παρήνεσε μὴ στασιάσαι μηδ’ εἰς ὄπλα καὶ φόνους τὴν πόλιν ἐμβαλεῖν, ἀλλ’ ὑπεκστάντα τῷ καιρῷ πάλιν γενέσθαι σωτῆρα τῆς πατρίδος. Cf. Cassius Dio 38.17.4. See also Plutarch, *Cicero* 31, where Cato’s advice is omitted. On Plutarch’s account of Cato’s advice here, see CALVELLI (2020: 170), who thinks that it serves to underline how Cato did not share any aspect of Clodius’ policy.

(*Cato Minor* 35.4).<sup>28</sup> Plutarch's narration of this incident, which is attested in no other extant source,<sup>29</sup> is remarkable in many respects, and is worth quoting at length:

Ptolemy wanted to meet Cato and sent a message to him, expecting that Cato would come to him. Cato happened to be taking a course of laxatives at the time, and sent instructions to Ptolemy to come to him if he wanted a meeting. When Ptolemy arrived, Cato did not get up or go forward to welcome him, but greeted him as if he were an ordinary person and told him to sit down. That was the first thing that disconcerted (cf. διετάραξε) Ptolemy, who was taken aback by the contrast between Cato's ordinary and simple habits and his arrogant and stern character (cf. θαυμάζοντα πρὸς τὸ δημοτικὸν καὶ λιτὸν αὐτοῦ τῆς κατασκευῆς τὴν ὑπεροψίαν καὶ βαρύτητα τοῦ ἥθους). Then Ptolemy began to speak about his predicament, and was treated to a lecture which was full of good sense and plain speaking (cf. ἡκροάσατο λόγων νοῦν πολλὸν ἐχόντων καὶ παρρησίαν), with Cato remonstrating with him and explaining how different from his previous happy existence would be the servility and the tribulations and the bribery and the greed of the powerful men at Rome to which he would have to subject himself (ἐπιτιμώντος αὐτῷ τοῦ Κάτωνος καὶ διδάσκοντος, ὅσῃν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀπολιπὼν ὅσαις ἑαυτὸν ὑποτίθησι λατρείαις καὶ πόνοις καὶ δωροδοκίαις καὶ πλεονεξίαις τῶν ἐν Ῥώμῃ δυνατῶν): even if all Egypt were converted into cash it would barely be enough for them. He also advised (cf. συμβουλεύοντος) him to sail back home and come to terms with his citizens, holding himself willing to sail with him and do what he could to bring about a reconciliation. These words had such an effect on Ptolemy that it was as if he had come to his senses after a fit of frenzy or derangement (cf. οἷον ἐκ μανίας τινὸς ἢ παρακοπῆς ὑπὸ τῶν λόγων ἔμφρων καθιστάμενος); and he recognized the wisdom of the man and the truth of what he had said (καὶ κατανοῶν τὴν ἀλήθειαν καὶ τὴν σύνεσιν τοῦ ἀνδρός), and did his best to follow that advice (ὤρμησε μὲν χρῆσθαι τοῖς ἐκείνου λογισμοῖς). His friends, however, proved too much for him, and he resumed his previous course; and as soon as he reached Rome and came to the doorstep of his first magistrate, he groaned over his own evil resolve (ἔστενε τὴν αὐτοῦ κακοβουλίαν), convinced that he had slighted, not the words of a good man, but the prophetic warning of a god (ὡς οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ λόγων, θεοῦ δὲ μαντείας καταφρονήσας). (*Cato Minor* 35.4-7)

Several things invite comment in this passage. First, Ptolemy draws a contrast between Cato's ordinary (τὸ δημοτικόν) and simple (λιτόν) habits and the arrogance and severity of his character (cf. τὴν ὑπεροψίαν καὶ βαρύτητα τοῦ ἥθους). We are told that Cato not only refuses to go to welcome Ptolemy, but also receives Ptolemy

<sup>28</sup> ὑπ' ὀργῆς τινος καὶ διαφορᾶς πρὸς τοὺς πολίτας ἀπολελοιπῶς μὲν Ἀλεξάνδρειαν, εἰς δὲ Ῥώμην πλέων, ὡς Πομπηίου καὶ Καίσαρος αὐθις αὐτὸν μετὰ δυνάμεως καταξόντων.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. LIVY, *Periochae* 104.6-7; Cassius Dio 39.12-16. See also GEIGER (1971: 279) ad loc. GEIGER (1979: 51) suggests that this lively scene of Cato's meeting with Ptolemy must have been derived from Munatius Rufus, Plutarch's main source for the Cypriot expedition.

as an ordinary visitor, neither getting up nor going forward to welcome him – a reaction which illustrates and corroborates one of Cato’s leading characteristics, that is, his unbending opposition to and often rude behaviour towards men of power. Second, Plutarch maintains focus on the advising words which Cato addresses to Ptolemy: these words were “full of good sense and plain speaking” (cf. νοῦν πολλὸν ἐχόντων καὶ παρρησίαν), for Cato censured Ptolemy’s course and explained (καὶ διδάσκοντος) to him the difference between his previous great happiness (cf. ὕσιν εὐδαιμονίαν ἀπολιπών) and the current state of political corruption in Rome. Lastly, Plutarch describes the effect of Cato’s advice on Ptolemy as well as Ptolemy’s process of learning and self-discovery: “He groaned over his own evil resolve, convinced that he had slighted, not the words of a good man, but the prophetic warning of a god (cf. ὡς οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ λόγων, θεοῦ δὲ μαντείας καταφρονήσας)” (35.7).<sup>30</sup>

Plutarch’s Cato appears here to assume the traditionally recognizable role of the ‘wise counsellor’, offering Ptolemy advice that is both morally correct and statesman-like.<sup>31</sup> In this regard, I suggest, Cato’s encounter with Ptolemy shows a number of interesting associations with the narratives of Plutarch and Herodotus, in the *Life of Solon* (27-28) and the *Histories* (1.30-33; 1.86-87) respectively, which both depict the famous story of the meeting between the Lydian king Croesus and Solon and that of Croesus and Cyrus. Indeed, just as Cato appears to despise Ptolemy in the *Life of Cato Minor*, so Solon remains indifferent to Croesus’ riches and grandeur in the *Life of Solon*.<sup>32</sup> Just as Cato, moreover, appears to follow an ordinary and simple way of life, so Solon is shown to proclaim and adopt a similar perspective. In the first case, Ptolemy (according to Plutarch) “was amazed (cf. θαυμάζοντα)<sup>33</sup> at the contrast between Cato’s ordinary and simple habits (cf. πρὸς τὸ δημοτικὸν καὶ λιτὸν αὐτοῦ τῆς κατασκευῆς) and his arrogant and stern character” (35.5), while, in the case of Solon, Plutarch relates that, after Solon judged Tellus to be the happiest man, “Croesus judged him to be a strange and rude fellow” because Solon “admired the life and death of an ordinary private man (cf. δημοτικοῦ καὶ ιδιώτου) more than all this display of power and rule” (*Solon* 27.6). Later, Plutarch has Solon draw before Croesus an opposition between the Greek popular/populist perspective, which Solon

<sup>30</sup> Cf. PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 42.6; 52.3; *Pompey* 48.6 on Cato’s prophetic power.

<sup>31</sup> On this motif in Plutarch, see XENOPHONTOS (2016: 97-99); CHRYSANTHOU (2018a: 16-25). In historiography, see BISCHOFF (1932); LATTIMORE (1939); PELLING (1991); FLOWER & MARINCOLA (2002: 7-8); SAÏD (2002: 122-123). See also PAPADI (2007: 162 n. 11), who cites several examples from Greek epic and tragedy. KLOOSTER (2018) and CHRYSANTHOU (2018a: 16-25) discuss the possibility that in Plutarch’s Solon readers may recognize an alter-ego of Plutarch himself, as a technique used to boost Plutarch’s authorial persona.

<sup>32</sup> PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 35.5: ὡς δ’ ἦλθεν οὐτ’ ἀπαντήσας οὐθ’ ὑπεξαναστάς, ἀλλ’ ὡς ἓνα τῶν ἐπιτυχόντων ἀσπασάμενος καὶ καθίσει κελεύσας ~ PLUTARCH, *Solon* 27.4: ἐπεὶ δ’ ὁ Σόλων ἄντικρος καταστάς οὐτ’ ἔπαθεν οὐδὲν οὐτ’ εἶπε πρὸς τὴν ὕψιν ὃν ὁ Κροῖσος προσεδόκησεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ δῆλος ἦν τοῖς εὖ φρονούσι τῆς ἀπειροκαλίας καὶ μικροπρεπείας καταφρονῶν.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Croesus’ reaction to Solon’s response in Herodotus 1.30.3: “ἜΩ βασιλεῦ, Τέλλον Ἀθηναῖον”. Ἀποθωμάσας δὲ Κροῖσος τὸ λεχθὲν εἶρετο ἐπιστρέφεις.

appears to share, and the Lydian regal one.<sup>34</sup> In Solon's view, Greek wisdom has a cautious (cf. ἀθαρσοῦς) and ordinary character (cf. δημοτικῆς), not a kingly and splendid one (cf. οὐ βασιλικῆς οὐδὲ λαμπρᾶς) (27.8).

Another interesting association between Cato and Solon is the lack of diplomacy and flexibility in their guidance of men of power. Plutarch notes that Cato's words to Ptolemy were "full of good sense and plain speaking" (cf. νοῦν πολλὸν ἐχόντων καὶ παρρησίαν), while he censures (cf. ἐπιτιμῶντος) Ptolemy's course of action (*Cato Minor* 35.6). In a similar manner, not only Plutarch but also Herodotus calls attention to Solon's recourse to a more explicit and less charming mode of communication.<sup>35</sup> Besides, Cato stresses (as we noted above) the importance of Ptolemy's earlier *eudaimonia*, especially in contrast to the current late-Republican political corruption. Indeed *eudaimonia* has been the focal point throughout Solon's discussion with Croesus in both Plutarch and Herodotus, albeit with a very different general attitude. Both Cato and Solon, moreover, fail in the end to impress their advice on their respective audience, even though Cato emerges as more successful than Solon. Ptolemy, as Plutarch relates, initially acknowledged the truth and wisdom of Cato's advice and decided to adopt it, but he was eventually turned back to his previous course by his friends (*Cato Minor* 35.7). Solon, on the other hand, left Sardis (as Plutarch narrates) "leaving Croesus distressed and without (successfully) giving him any advice (*Solon* 27.9)".<sup>36</sup> In the end, nevertheless, both Ptolemy and Croesus appear to have learnt (at least most of) the lessons of their teachers (cf. *Cato Minor* 35.7; *Solon* 28.2-6; Herodotus 1.86.3-5). Ptolemy's conversion, in fact, evokes Croesus' enlightenment in Herodotus: "As Croesus stood on the pyre, even though he was in such a wretched position it occurred to him that Solon had spoken with god's help" (Herodotus 1.86.3).<sup>37</sup> Compare *Cato Minor* 35.7: "As soon as Ptolemy reached Rome and came to the doorstep of his first magistrate, he groaned over his own evil

<sup>34</sup> PLUTARCH, *Solon* 27.8: "Ἐλλῆσιν" εἶπεν "ὦ βασιλεῦ Λυδῶν, πρὸς τε τᾶλλα μετρίως ἔχειν ἔδωκεν ὁ θεός, καὶ σοφίας τινὸς ἀθαρσοῦς ὡς ἔοικε καὶ δημοτικῆς, οὐ βασιλικῆς οὐδὲ λαμπρᾶς, ὑπὸ μετριότητος ἡμῖν μέτεστιν."

<sup>35</sup> Herodotus 1.30.3: Σόλων δὲ οὐδὲν ὑποθωπεύσας, ἀλλὰ τῷ ἐόντι χρησάμενος, λέγει. Cf. PLUTARCH, *Solon* 27.8: καὶ ὁ Σόλων, οὔτε κολακεύειν βουλόμενος αὐτὸν οὔτε περαιτέρω παροξύνειν. See also Plutarch, *Solon* 28.1: Ὁ δὲ λογοποιὸς Αἴσωπος... ἠχθέσθη τῷ Σόλωνι μηδεμιᾶς τυχόντι φιλανθρωπίας, καὶ προτρέπων αὐτὸν "ὦ Σόλων" ἔφη, "τοῖς βασιλεῦσι δεῖ ὡς ἤμισα ἢ ὡς ἡδιστα ὀμιλεῖν". καὶ ὁ Σόλων "μὰ Δία" εἶπεν, "ἀλλ' ὡς ἤμισα ἢ ὡς ἄριστα". Cf. PLUTARCH, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur* 58d-e; 69f. See also PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 50.2-3, where Cicero blames Cato for "not trying to win the people by kindly intercourse with them" (cf. οὐδ' ὑπῆλθεν ὀμιλίᾳ φιλανθρωπῶ τὸν δῆμον). Cato replies that "no man of sense would change his manners to please others (cf. οὔτε μεταθέσθαι πρὸς ἐτέρων χάριν), nor, keeping them unchanged, would he again suffer a like disaster". Cato's exchange with Cicero is reminiscent of that of Solon with Aesop.

<sup>36</sup> Λυπήσας μὲν, οὐ νοουθετήσας δὲ τὸν Κροῖσον. Cf. Herodotus 1.33: Ταῦτα λέγων τῷ Κροίσῳ οὐ πως οὔτε ἐχαρίζετο, οὔτε λόγου μιν ποιησάμενος οὐδενὸς ἀποπέμπεται, κάρτα δόξας ἀμαθέα εἶναι, ὅς τὰ παρεόντα ἀγαθὰ μετεῖς τὴν τελευταίην παντὸς χρημάτων ὀραν ἐκέλευε.

<sup>37</sup> τῷ δὲ Κροίσῳ ἐστεῶτι ἐπὶ τῆς πυρῆς ἐσελθεῖν, καίπερ ἐν κακῷ ἐόντι τοσοῦτῳ, τὸ τοῦ Σόλωνος, ὡς οἱ εἶη σὺν θεῷ εἰρημένον.

resolve, convinced that he had slighted, not the words of a good man, but the prophetic warning of a god".<sup>38</sup>

If we accept the parallels between these two different stories, then we are led to a much larger and more complex question: has Plutarch designed the account of Cato's encounter with Ptolemy as a literary parallel to, or even echo of, Solon's meeting with Croesus? At first glance, it is not completely impossible to sense some echoing of the *Life of Solon* in the *Life of Cato Minor*, especially if we trust Jones' or Nikolaidis' relative chronology of Plutarch's *Lives*, according to which the pair *Solon-Publicola* was being composed earlier than or at roughly the same time as the *Phocion-Cato Minor* book.<sup>39</sup> Plutarch was certainly familiar with Herodotus' *Histories* – we may think in particular of his *On the Malice of Herodotus*<sup>40</sup> – and he might have used material from Herodotus' work for both his *Life of Solon* and his *Life of Cato Minor*.<sup>41</sup>

We should keep in mind, however, that the order of composition does not necessarily coincide with the order of publication: Plutarch's biographical books may have been composed within a short time of each other, but they may have not been published simultaneously.<sup>42</sup> Accordingly, even if Plutarch's portrayal of Cato was meant to recall Solon, this does not mean that Plutarch's contemporary readers were necessarily in the position to grasp this connection, though some general verbal and thematic echoes of the story of Solon and Croesus in Herodotus (as we saw) might have been felt.<sup>43</sup>

Still, if we allow the possibility that Plutarch wants to suggest a connection of Cato with Solon's model, and that Plutarch's readers, at least those of later generations, are able to acknowledge this connection, then Solon's example might serve to enrich and enhance the stature of Cato as a 'wise councillor' of powerful men of politics, which is one of the recurrent and suggestive themes of the *Life of Cato Minor* and the paired *Life of Phocion*.<sup>44</sup> Crucially, for Plutarch, in the comparative epilogue of his *Solon-Publicola* book, Solon "is the wisest" (σοφώτατος) of all men (*Solon-Publicola* 1.8), someone whose political measures had a long-term beneficial effect

<sup>38</sup> ἄμα τῷ πρώτῳ ἐν Ῥώμῃ γενέσθαι καὶ θύραις ἐνὸς ἄρχοντος προσελθεῖν ἔστανε τὴν αὐτοῦ κακοβουλίαν, ὡς οὐκ ἀνδρὸς ἀγαθοῦ λόγων, θεοῦ δὲ μαντείας καταφρονήσας.

<sup>39</sup> JONES (1995: 110-111). Cf. NIKOLAIDIS (2005: 286-287, 303-305, 309-312). On relative and absolute chronologies of Plutarch's biographical books, see the detailed bibliography cited by DUFF (2011b: 261 n. 216-217).

<sup>40</sup> The *On the Malice of Herodotus* probably belongs to the period when the *Lives* were being written: PELLING (2007: 157 n. 41).

<sup>41</sup> On Plutarch's working method with his sources, see DUFF (2011b: 261 n. 220) citing also PELLING (2002: 1-44, 45-63, 65-90). Cf. NIKOLAIDIS (2005: 289-290).

<sup>42</sup> See DUFF (2011b: 261). Cf. PELLING (2002: 7).

<sup>43</sup> On the familiarity of Plutarch's readers with Herodotus, see PELLING (2002: 267-268); ZADOROJNYI (2012: 193-198).

<sup>44</sup> On Cato's 'charismatic impact on his friends and followers' see PELLING (2010: 173), who cites PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 16; 18; 32; 36; 46; 64; 65; 66; 69-71; 73. On this theme in the *Life of Phocion* and the *Life of Cato Minor*, see esp. DUFF (1999: 131-160).

on the Romans through Publicola's adoption of many of Solon's laws in his reformation of the Roman constitution (*Solon-Publicola* 2.1).<sup>45</sup>

In the *Life of Solon* and the *Life of Cato Minor*, therefore, Plutarch's readers are similarly drawn to think more deeply about the way in which Solon and Cato, two wise advisers, treat powerful men and try to impart to them their own paradigmatic *logoi*. This ideal of the philosopher/counsellor-statesman is one that Plutarch probes on many occasions in his work,<sup>46</sup> and it is one that is central to the intellectual *milieu* of his time too.<sup>47</sup>

### 3. Cato's settlement of the island and return to Rome

Cato's interpersonal role figures prominently in the rest of Plutarch's account of Cato's mission to Cyprus as well. In the next chapter Plutarch refers to the suicide of Ptolemy, king of Cyprus (*Cato Minor* 36.1), and Cato's manner of confiscating the royal wealth (*Cato Minor* 36.2). In this episode Plutarch lays especial attention on Cato's distrust of his friends and his inconsiderate conduct towards them, which gives offence to some of them (*Cato Minor* 36.2-37.1).<sup>48</sup> An illustrative example is Munatius, Cato's closest friend, who – Plutarch gives here Munatius' own report of events – came last to Cyprus and found that no hospitality was shown to him (*Cato Minor* 37.2). Munatius, as he himself reports, “when he went to Cato's door, was repulsed, for Cato was busy inside on some business with Canidius. He protested mildly but the response from Cato was anything but mild” (*Cato Minor* 37.3).<sup>49</sup> Plutarch underlines Munatius' dissatisfaction and long-lasting anger (*Cato Minor* 37.5-6).

<sup>45</sup> See KLOOSTER (2018: 254-255).

<sup>46</sup> E.g. the *Dion-Brutus* or the *Demosthenes-Cicero* books, with PELLING (2004) and CHRYSANTHOU (2019). In the *Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum* 776a-777b Plutarch corroborates the ideal of the philosopher whose associations with men in power benefit many through one. Cf. DUFF (1999: 150 with n. 64). For a detailed overview of Plutarch's references to the ideal combination of politics and philosophy, see CHRYSANTHOU (2019: 47-48 n. 28) with further bibliography cited there. Besides, it is worth noticing that on many occasions Plutarch advocates this ideal through his own narratorial self-presentation: see e.g. the prologue to the *Demosthenes-Cicero* book (*Dem.* 1-3), with CHRYSANTHOU (2018b); or the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* 798b-c, with VAN HOOF (2010: 74-76). See also KLOOSTER (2018) and CHRYSANTHOU (2018a: 16-25), who associate Plutarch's presentation of Solon as 'wise adviser' with his own authorial persona.

<sup>47</sup> E.g. Philo, *De fuga et inuentione* 33; *De migratione Abrahami* 89-90; *De decalogo* 101; Dio Chrysostomus, *Orationes* 2.26; 49.3-14; Maximus of Tyre 15.7. See ROSKAM (2009: 64-65 n. 270).

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Brutus* 3.3. See DUFF (1999: 152).

<sup>49</sup> ἐλθὼν δ' ἐπὶ θύρας ἀπωσθῆναι, σκευωρουμένου τι τοῦ Κάτωνος οἴκοι σὺν τῷ Κανιδίῳ· μεμψάμενος δὲ μετρίως οὐ μετρίως τυχεῖν ἀποκρίσεως. CALVELLI (2020: 189-190) corrects 'Canidius' to 'Caninius', pointing out that the individual mentioned here is Lucius Caninius Gallus.

This incident, which is found in no other extant source that relates Cato's mission to Cyprus, once again reveals Cato's harsh and overbearing attitude towards other people, which goes hand in hand with his stand on high principles (cf. *Cato Minor* 37.4 where Cato lingers upon Canidius' experience and honesty). Plutarch's Cato turns into a complex and multi-layered character, especially as, by the end of this story, Plutarch highlights Cato's kindness and benevolence in his dealing with Munatius (*Cato Minor* 37.9). At this point, Plutarch inserts an authorial methodological comment, which is quite apologetic and seems to engage in dialogue with the assumed expectations and perplexities of his readers: "Such incidents, now, in my opinion, quite as much as deeds of greatness and publicity, shed considerable light upon the perception and manifestation of character, and I have therefore recounted them at greater length" (*Cato Minor* 37.10).<sup>50</sup> This statement illustrates a programmatic principle of Plutarch's biography in general and offers a most revealing insight into Plutarch's technique of embedding anecdotes in the biographies with a view to illuminating character and morality.<sup>51</sup>

Indeed, Plutarch's exploration of character together with a heavy moral perspective culminates in the remainder of his narrative of Cato's return from Cyprus to Rome. Here Plutarch mentions the measures that Cato took in order to transport the money safely home and the loss of the two notebooks including all the transactions (*Cato Minor* 38.1-3). As regards this last incident, Plutarch is particularly concerned to emphasize Cato's annoyance, for "he had hoped", as Plutarch says, "to use the accounts not to defend himself but to serve as a model of meticulousness for others" (*Cato Minor* 38.4).<sup>52</sup>

Upon Cato's arrival in Rome, Plutarch is prepared again to underline Cato's sternness and the gravity of his character. It is remarkable that here, as very often in the *Lives*, Plutarch uses the opinion of onlookers to offer his own judgement implicitly, guiding his readers' moral response magisterially, and characterizing the protagonist of his biography by the reaction of contemporary people.<sup>53</sup> He says: "Cato's arrival was just as grand and honorific as any triumph. Still, some regarded it as ill-judged and stubborn that, when the consuls and praetors were present, Cato did

<sup>50</sup> ταῦτα μὲν οὖν οὐχ ἥττον οἰόμενοι τῶν ὑπαίθρων καὶ μεγάλων πράξεων πρὸς ἔνδειξιν ἤθους καὶ κατανόησιν ἔχειν τινὰ σαφήνειαν, ἐπὶ πλέον διήλομεν. Cf. PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 24.1; *Alexander* 1.2, with GEIGER (1988: 251); DUFF (1999: 15-16 n. 6, 135).

<sup>51</sup> On Plutarch's use of anecdotes in the *Lives*, see RUSSELL (1995); STADTER (1996); BECK (1999); BECK (2000); DUFF (2003); VERDEGEM (2010: 119-130); NIKOLAIDIS (2014: 362).

<sup>52</sup> οὐ γὰρ εἰς πίστιν ὑπὲρ αὐτοῦ τοὺς λόγους, ἀλλὰ παράδειγμα τοῖς ἄλλοις ἀκραιβείας ἐξεργεῖν φιλοτιμούμενος. See also Cassius Dio 39.22.4 on Cato's excellent administration of affairs. Cf. [Aurelius Victor], *De uiris illustribus* 80.2; Valerius Maximus 4.3.2 on Cato's abstinence and continence. See GEIGER (1988: 252) for further examples of Cato's uprightness in Plutarch's *Life*.

<sup>53</sup> On this technique, see PELLING (1988: 335) (index 2. subjects, s.v. characterization by reaction); DUFF (1999: 421) (index of themes, s.v. onlookers as mouthpiece for author); DUFF (2011a: 65-67, 71-72); NIKOLAIDIS (2014: 361); DE POURCQ & ROSKAM (2016: 168-170); CHRYSANTHOU (2018a: esp. 66-102).

not disembark to meet them nor halt the ship, but carried on rowing swiftly past the river-bank... and did not stop until he brought the fleet to anchor in the dockyard” (*Cato Minor* 39.1-2).<sup>54</sup> This criticism is also present in Velleius Paterculus (2.45.5), and it possibly has its origins in Caesar’s *Anticato*.<sup>55</sup>

Is Cato’s behaviour here not highly reminiscent of his earlier contemptuous attitude towards Ptolemy, the king of Egypt, or his quarrel with Munatius, his best friend (at least at the beginning)? Just as before, however, Plutarch is also ready to use material that redounds to Cato’s credit. He tells us that Cato rejects the honours paid to him (*Cato Minor* 39.3),<sup>56</sup> and persuades the senate to bestow freedom upon Nicias, the steward of the royal household, after he “attested his diligence (ἐπιμέλειαν) and integrity (πίστιν)” (*Cato Minor* 39.4).<sup>57</sup> This is no different from Cato’s earlier reconciliation with his friend Munatius or his respect for the virtues of Canidius.

### Conclusion

The foregoing discussion was divided into analysing the three main parts of Plutarch’s account of Cato’s mission to Cyprus: the preliminaries; Cato’s advice to Cicero and Ptolemy; and Cato’s settlement of the island and return to Rome. In the first part, it was shown that Plutarch, through his presentation of Caesar’s and Pompey’s hostile perceptions of Cato as well as his vivid description of Cato’s encounter with Clodius, primes his readers to gain insights into the complexities of the political reality of the time as well as Cato’s specific interpersonal engagements, an abiding characteristic of which has been the strong antagonism between Cato and

---

<sup>54</sup> καὶ θριάμβου μηδὲν ὄψει καὶ φιλοτιμίᾳ λείπεσθαι τὸν ἀνάπλουον αὐτοῦ. Καίτοι σακιδὸν ἐνίοις τοῦτ’ ἐφαίνετο καὶ αὐθαδές, ὅτι τῶν ὑπάτων καὶ τῶν στρατηγῶν παρόντων οὐτ’ ἀπέβη πρὸς αὐτούς, οὐτ’ ἐπέσχε τὸν πλοῦν, ἀλλὰ ῥοθίῳ τὴν ὄχθην παρεξελάυνων...οὐκ ἀνήκε πρότερον ἢ καθορμίσαι τὸν στόλον εἰς τὸ νεώριον. Cf. Valerius Maximus 8.15.10 on Cato’s enthusiastic reception in Rome: “As he left the ship, the consuls and other magistrates and the entire senate and the Roman people were on hand to greet him, rejoicing that the fleet brought, not a great mass of gold and silver, but M. Cato safe and sound” (*cui naue egredienti consules et ceteri magistratus et uniuersus senatus populusque Romanus officii gratia praesto fuit, non quod magnum pondus auri et argenti sed quod M. Catonem classis illa incolumem aduexerat laetatus*). On the connections between Plutarch’s and Valerius Maximus’ texts, see CALVELLI (2020: 260-261), arguing that both authors might have followed (directly or indirectly) the same source, namely Munatius Rufus’ memoirs.

<sup>55</sup> DUFF (1999: 152 n. 73). MORRELL (2018: 205 with n. 89) interestingly suggests that Cato’s return (PLUTARCH, *Cato Minor* 39.1-3; Velleius Paterculus 2.45.5) is described in terms that make it resemble Aemilius Paulus’ homecoming (Livy 45.35.3; PLUTARCH, *Aemilius* 30.2-3). Cf. CALVELLI (2020: 277-278, 279-280), who associates Cato’s return with that of Pompey from the East in 61 BC. In addition, CALVELLI (2020: 265) does not reject the possibility that the source here is Munatius Rufus who might have referred to the accusations made against Cato, in order to refute them.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. Valerius Maximus 4.1.14.

<sup>57</sup> See the parallel in PLUTARCH, *Phocion* 18.6 with DUFF (1999: 144 n. 50).

other political players.<sup>58</sup> This feature of Plutarch's narrative, as has been noticed, is clearly brought into relief if we compare the other sources for this event, some of which Plutarch was acquainted with (for example, Cicero, Strabo, Valerius Maximus),<sup>59</sup> as well as Plutarch's elaborate shifts of emphasis and content in the other late Republican *Lives*.

In the second part, which concerned Cato's advice to Cicero and Ptolemy, we stressed not only Cato's resistance towards powerful men of politics but also his ability to instruct them. With reference to his encounter with Ptolemy Auletes, the king of Egypt, in particular, an incident which is otherwise unattested, we recognized the possibility that Plutarch may be playing with conventional stereotypes and link Cato with Solon intertextually. This connection with Solon has the effect of elevating Cato in his role as a 'wise adviser' of other people and enriching this image of him by highlighting a number of key characteristics which they share with each other (such as their inconsiderate attitude towards their listeners, their liking for ordinary things [*dēmotika*], and their lack of diplomacy). Plutarch's scene is powerful enough to serve as a vehicle for reflecting on the way in which Cato interacts with men of power and tries to offer them moral and political instruction; a theme which is central to Plutarch's *Life of Solon* as well.

Finally, we noticed that the last section, which relates Cato's management of the royal treasure in Cyprus and his return to Rome, prompts consideration of the same themes which the earlier narrative of Cato's Cypriot expedition pointed to: Cato's harsh and overbearing treatment of other people, as well as his high moral values and qualities of character.

It is arguable that Plutarch's account of Cato's mission to Cyprus reveals some important aspects of Plutarch's biographical *modus operandi*. Plutarch's primary interest in narrating this historical event, as has been repeatedly noticed, lies in elucidating Cato's character and moral values. This emphasis is not missing from other sources for the same event. One may especially be reminded of Cicero's *De domo sua* (23) or *Pro Sestio* (60-63), where Cato's mission to Cyprus is used to evoke a wholly positive picture of Cato. Crucially, however, Plutarch's Cato is characterized more clearly in terms of virtue and vice. Cato, as we saw, gets good press for his virtuous character and actions as well as his promotion of praiseworthy values. At the same time, however, he appears to assume a harsh, and often brutal, behaviour towards others which seems to leave too much of a shadow over his character and

---

<sup>58</sup> Cf. VASSILIADES (2018: 492), who discusses a plausible allusion to Cato's mission to Cyprus in Sallust's preface to the *Histories* (cf. fr. 1.10 M [= 1.2 La Penna-Funari = 1.7 Ramsey]): "La mission chypriote semble donc bien s'inscrire dans le contexte des rivalités de politique intérieure entre les divers partis". In the rest of his discussion Vassiliades draws attention to the importance of this allusion for commenting upon the deterioration of Roman foreign policy as well.

<sup>59</sup> On Plutarch's knowledge of Strabo and Valerius Maximus, see HELMBOLD & O'NEIL (1959: 68, 74); PELLING (2002: 39 n. 104). On Cicero, see above, n. 9.

political conduct.<sup>60</sup> This chiaroscuro not only turns Cato into an arresting and subtle character but also invites the reader to reflect further on the basic moral lesson of the *Life of Cato* as well as that of its biographical pair, the *Life of Phocion*, which concerns the complexities and dangers lying in the government of a state at a time of violence and misfortune (cf. *Phocion* 1-3). Indeed, in the introduction to his book on *Phocion and Cato Minor*, Plutarch emphasizes that Cato's virtuous character and gravity were not suited to the corrupted circumstances in which he lived and operated (*Phocion* 3.1-3).<sup>61</sup>

Although it falls beyond the scope of the present article to give any discussion of the relationship between private morality and public good, principle and the necessities of statesmanship in Plutarch's *Cato Minor* – this has already been the focus of other interpreters with great success<sup>62</sup> – it is important to notice that Plutarch's account of Cato's Cypriot expedition contributes considerably to this thematic strand, which remains central throughout the *Phocion-Cato Minor* book. It thus serves to problematize further the complex relationship between Cato's virtuous and unbending character, and the political realities of the late Republic.

Unfortunately, Plutarch's main source for the Cypriot material, Munatius Rufus' memoirs (*FRHist* 37), which Plutarch read directly or indirectly through Thræsea Pæctus' *Life of Cato* (cf. *FRHist* 81),<sup>63</sup> does not allow us to examine in full Plutarch's reworking of his sources. Still, the discussion of parallel treatments of the same event in other works (with some of which Plutarch was certainly familiar), as well as Plutarch's own account of the same incident in other biographies, has shown

---

<sup>60</sup> This is consistent with Plutarch's programmatic statement in the prologue to the *Cimon-Lucullus* book, namely that one should not hide one's faults but also not emphasize them all too zealously in one's narrative and research of the past (*Cimon* 2.3-5). On Plutarch's complex portrait of Cato, see GEIGER (1971: 80-91, 94-96); DUFF (1999: 139-141, 147-154) (p. 150: "Ultimately, then, Cato is a failure: a man of great virtue – Plutarch never denies that – but one who fails in that point that Plutarch sees so clearly illustrated in Phokion, the ability to mix sternness and gentleness and to compromise when necessary"); PELLING (2010: 173-175, 176-177); JACOBS (2018: 389-415). On plausible Stoic associations with Cato's inflexibility, see DUFF (1999: 155-158). Cf. SWAIN (1990: 193, 197-201). ZADOROJNYI (2007: 222-223) points out, in addition, that Cato is not a perfect Stoic. More generally, on Plutarch's complex moralism and characterization in the *Lives*, see esp. PELLING (1988: 10-18); PELLING (2002: 237-251); DUFF (1999); DUFF (2007/8); ALEXIOU (2007); NIKOLAIDIS (2014).

<sup>61</sup> On this passage, see DUFF (1999: 139-141, 150). These 'circumstances' are central to Plutarch's strategies of moral evaluation in other biographies as well. See *Solon-Publicola* 4.4-5 with CHRYSANTHOU (2018a: 23-24).

<sup>62</sup> See the excellent discussion by DUFF (1999: 131-158) on the *Phocion-Cato Minor*; cf. GEIGER (1971: 92-96); GEIGER (1988: 255-256); SWAIN (1990: 197-201); ZADOROJNYI (2007: 222-224); PELLING (2010: 176-177); JACOBS (2018: 396-402, 407-414); RAY (2020: 33-52).

<sup>63</sup> See PETER (1865: 65-68); GEIGER (1979: 49-52); ZADOROJNYI (2007: 220) with detailed bibliography on 220 n. 28; PELLING (2010: 573 n. 192). On the works on Cato of Thræsea and Munatius, see GEIGER (1979).

how artfully Plutarch reads, adds, reshapes, expands, or reconstructs things to inform his moral investigation in this pivotal moment of the history of Cyprus.<sup>64</sup>

*Seminar für Klassische Philologie, Heidelberg*      Chrysanthos S. CHRYSANTHOU  
*Marstallhof 2-4*  
*(Kollegiengebäude), 69117*  
*chrysanthou@uni-heidelberg.de*

### Bibliography

- ALEXIOU (2007) = E. ALEXIOU, *Πλουτάρχου Παράλληλοι Βίοι. Η Προβληματική των 'Θετικών' και 'Αρνητικών' Παραδειγμάτων*, Thessaloniki, 2007.
- BADIAN (1965) = E. BADIAN, "M. Porcius Cato and the Annexation and Early Administration of Cyprus", *JRS* 55 (1965), p. 110-121.
- BECK (1999) = M. BECK, "Plato, Plutarch and the Use and Manipulation of Anecdotes in the Lives of Lycinus and Agesilaus. History of the Laconic Apophthegm", in A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, J. GARCÍA LÓPEZ, R.M. AGUILAR (eds.), *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la I.P.S. (Madrid-Cuenca, 4-7 de mayo de 1999)*, Madrid, 1999, p. 173-187.
- BECK (2000) = M. BECK, "Anecdote and the Representation of Plutarch's Ethos", in L. VAN DER STOCKT (ed.), *Rhetorical Theory and Praxis in Plutarch. Acta of the IVth International Congress of the International Plutarch Society, Leuven, July 3-6, 1996*, Leuven, Namur, 2000, p. 15-32.
- BENEKER (2012) = J. BENEKER, *The Passionate Statesman. Eros and Politics in Plutarch's Lives*, Oxford, 2012.
- BISCHOFF (1932) = H. BISCHOFF, *Der Warner bei Herodot*, Leipzig, 1932.
- CALVELLI (2020) = L. CALVELLI, *Il tesoro di Cipro. Clodio, Catone e la conquista romana dell'isola*, Venice, 2020.
- CHRYSANTHOU (2018a) = C.S. CHRYSANTHOU, *Plutarch's Parallel Lives. Narrative Technique and Moral Judgement*, Berlin, Boston, 2018a.
- CHRYSANTHOU (2018b) = C.S. CHRYSANTHOU, "Plutarch's Rhetoric of *Periautologia*. *Demosthenes* 1-3", *CJ* 113 (2018b), p. 281-301.
- CHRYSANTHOU (2019) = C.S. CHRYSANTHOU, "Orator-politician vs. Philosopher. Plutarch's *Demosthenes* 1-3 and Plato's *Theaetetus*", *CW* 112 (2019), p. 39-55.
- DE POURCQ & ROSKAM (2016) = M. DE POURCQ & G. ROSKAM, "Mirroring Virtues in Plutarch's Lives of Agis, Cleomenes and the Gracchi", in K. DE TEMMERMAN, K. DEMOEN (eds.), *Writing Biography in Greece and Rome. Narrative Technique and Fictionalization*, Cambridge, 2016, p. 163-180.
- DILLON & GARLAND (1999) = M. DILLON, L. GARLAND, *Ancient Rome. Social and Historical Documents from the Early Republic to the Death of Augustus*, London, New York, 2015.
- DUFF (1999) = T. E. DUFF, *Plutarch's Lives. Exploring Virtue and Vice*, Oxford, 1999.
- DUFF (2003) = T. E. DUFF, "Plutarch on the Childhood of Alcibiades", *PCPS* 49 (2003), p. 89-117.

---

<sup>64</sup> I warmly thank the journal's anonymous reviewers for their very helpful comments and suggestions. I gratefully acknowledge the generous support of the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG).

- DUFF (2007/2008) = T. E. DUFF, “Plutarch’s Readers and the Moralism of the Lives”, *Ploutarchos* 5 (2007/2008), p. 3-18.
- DUFF (2011a) = T. E. DUFF, “Plutarch’s Lives and the Critical Reader”, in G. ROSKAM, L. VAN DER STOCKT (eds.), *Virtues for the People. Aspects of Plutarchan Ethics*, Leuven, 2011, p. 59-82.
- DUFF (2011b) = T. E. DUFF, “The Structure of the Plutarchan Book”, *ClAnt* 30 (2011), p. 213-278.
- FLACELIÈRE & CHAMBRY (1976) = R. FLACELIÈRE & É. CHAMBRY (eds.), *Plutarque, Vies, tome xii: Démosthène-Cicéron*, Paris, 1976.
- FLOWER & MARINCOLA (2002) = M.A. FLOWER & J. MARINCOLA (eds.), *Herodotus. Histories Book IX*, Cambridge, 2002.
- GEIGER (1971) = J. GEIGER, *A commentary on Plutarch’s Cato Minor*, Diss. Oxford, 1971.
- GEIGER (1979) = J. GEIGER, “Munatius Rufus and Thræsea Paetus on Cato the Younger”, *Athenaeum* 57 (1979), p. 48-72.
- GEIGER (1988) = J. GEIGER, “Nepos and Plutarch. From Latin to Greek Political Biography”, *ICS* 13 (1988), p. 245-256.
- HELMBOLD & O’NEIL (1959) = W.C. HELMBOLD & E.N. O’NEIL, *Plutarch’s Quotations*, Baltimore, 1959.
- HILL (1940) = G. HILL, *A History of Cyprus*, vol. 1, Cambridge, 1940.
- JACOBS (2018) = S.G. JACOBS, *Plutarch’s Pragmatic Biographies. Lessons for Statesmen and Generals in the Parallel Lives*, Leiden, Boston, 2018.
- JONES (1995) = C. JONES, “Towards a Chronology of Plutarch’s Works”, in B. SCARDIGLI (ed.), *Essays on Plutarch’s Lives*, Oxford, 1995, p. 95-123.
- KLOOSTER (2018) = J. KLOOSTER, “Solon of Athens as a Precedent for Plutarch’s Authorial Persona”, *Mnemosyne* 71 (2018), p. 247-264.
- LATTIMORE (1939) = R. LATTIMORE, “The Wise Adviser in Herodotus”, *CPh* 34 (1939), p. 24-35.
- MOLES (1988) = J. MOLES, *Plutarch: The Life of Cicero*, Warminster, 1988.
- MORRELL (2018) = K. MORRELL, “‘Certain gentlemen say...’. Cicero, Cato, and the Debate on the Validity of Clodius’ Laws”, in C. GRAY, A. BALBO, R.M.A. MARSHALL, C.E.W. STEEL (eds.), *Reading Republican Oratory. Reconstructions, Contexts, Receptions*, Oxford, 2018, p. 191-210.
- NIKOLAIDIS (2005) = A.G. NIKOLAIDIS, “Plutarch’s Methods: His Cross-References and the Sequence of the Parallel Lives”, in A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ, F.B. TITCHENER (eds.), *Historical and Biographical Values of Plutarch’s Works. Studies Devoted to Professor Philip A. Stadler by the International Plutarch Society*, Málaga, Utah, 2005, p. 283-324.
- NIKOLAIDIS (2014) = A.G. NIKOLAIDIS, “Morality, Characterization, and Individuality”, in M. BECK (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch*, Malden, MA, Oxford, Chichester, 2014, p. 350-372.
- OOST (1955) = S.I. OOST, “Cato Uticensis and the Annexation of Cyprus”, *CPh* 50 (1955), p. 98-112.
- PAPADI (2007) = D. PAPADI, *Tragedy and Theatricality in Plutarch*, Diss. London, 2007.
- PELLING (1988) = C.B.R. PELLING (ed.), *Plutarch. Life of Antony*, Cambridge, 1988.
- PELLING (1991) = C.B.R. PELLING, “Thucydides’ Archidamus and Herodotus’ Artabanus”, in M.A. FLOWER, M. TOHER (eds.), *Georgica. Greek Studies in Honour of George Cawkwell*, London, 1991 (*BICS suppl.* 58), p. 120-142.
- PELLING (2002) = C.B.R. PELLING, *Plutarch and History. Eighteen Studies*, London, Swansea, 2002.

- PELLING (2004) = C.B.R. PELLING, "Do Plutarch's Politicians Never Learn?", in L. DE BLOIS, J. BONIS, T. KESSELS, D.M. SCHENKEVELD (eds.), *The Statesman in Plutarch's Works. Proceedings of the Sixth International Conference of the International Plutarch Society, Nijmegen/Castle Hernen, May 1-5, 2002, vol. 1. Plutarch's Statesman and His Aftermath. Political, Philosophical, and Literary Aspects*, Leiden, Boston, 2004, p. 87-103.
- PELLING (2007) = C.B.R. PELLING, "De Malignitate Plutarchi. Plutarch, Herodotus, and the Persian Wars", in E. BRIDGES, E. HALL, P. J. RHODES (eds.), *Cultural Responses to the Persian Wars. Antiquity to the Third Millennium*, Oxford, 2007, p. 145-164.
- PELLING (2010) = C.B.R. PELLING, "Introduction and Notes", in I. Scott-Kilvert, C.B.R. Pelling, *Rome in Crisis. Nine Lives by Plutarch*, London, 2010.
- PERRIN (1919) = B. PERRIN (ed.), *Plutarch's Lives, vol. 8. Sertorius and Eumenes, Phocion and Cato the Younger*, London, New York, 1919.
- PETER (1865) = H. PETER, *Die Quellen Plutarchs in den Biographien der Römer*, Amsterdam, 1865.
- RAY (2020) = C. RAY, *Defining Statesmanship. A Comparative Political Theory Analysis*, Lanham, London, 2020.
- ROSKAM (2009) = G. ROSKAM, *Plutarch's Maxime cum principibus philosopho esse disserendum*, Leuven, 2009.
- RUSSEL (1995) = D.A. RUSSEL, "Plutarch, Alcibiades 1-16", in B. SCARDIGLI (ed.), *Essays on Plutarch's Lives*, Oxford, 1995, p. 191-207.
- SAÏD (2002) = S. SAÏD, "Herodotus and Tragedy", in J. BAKKER, I.J.F. DE JONG, H. VAN WEES (eds.), *Brill's Companion to Herodotus*, Leiden, Boston, Köln, 2002, p. 117-147.
- SCARDIGLI (1979) = B. SCARDIGLI, *Die Römerbiographien Plutarchs*, Munich, 1979.
- SCOTT-KILVERT & PELLING (2010) = I. SCOTT-KILVERT & C.B.R. PELLING, *Rome in Crisis. Nine Lives by Plutarch*, London, 2010.
- SCUDERI (2004) = R. SCUDERI, "Cicerone come fonte delle biografie di Plutarco", in I. GALLO (ed.), *La Biblioteca di Plutarco. Atti del IX Convegno plutarco, Pavia, 13-15 giugno 2002*, Naples, 2004, p. 317-329.
- STADTER (1996) = P.A. STADTER, "Anecdotes and the Thematic Structure of Plutarchean Biography", in J.A. FERNÁNDEZ DELGADO, F. PORDOMINGO PARDO (eds.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco. Aspectos Formales. Actas del IV Simposio Español sobre Plutarco. Salamanca, 26 a 28 de Mayo de 1994*, Madrid, 1996, p. 291-304.
- SWAIN (1990) = S. SWAIN, "Plutarch's Lives of Cicero, Cato, and Brutus", *Hermes* 118 (1990), p. 192-203.
- VAN HOOF (2010) = L. VAN HOOF, *Plutarch's Practical Ethics. The Social Dynamics of Philosophy*, Oxford, 2010.
- VASSILIADES (2018) = G. VASSILIADES, "Salluste, la *lex Clodia* sur l'annexion de Chypre, et la reconstitution de la préface des *Histoires*", *Latomus* 77 (2018), p. 482-506.
- VERDEGEM (2010) = S. VERDEGEM, *Plutarch's Life of Alcibiades. Story, Text and Moralism*, Leuven, 2010.
- XENOPHONTOS (2016) = S.A. XENOPHONTOS, *Ethical Education in Plutarch. Moralising Agents and Contexts*. Berlin, Boston, 2016.
- ZADOROJNYI (2007) = A.V. ZADOROJNYI, "Cato's Suicide in Plutarch", *CQ* 57 (2007), p. 216-230.
- ZADOROJNYI (2012) = 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, 2012, p. 175-198.

ZECCHINI (1979) = G. ZECCHINI, "Catone a Cipro (58-56 a.C.). Dal dibattito politico alle polemiche storiografiche", *Aevum* 53 (1979), p. 78-87.

## › Articles – Artikels

---

- **Filip DE DECKER**, An Analysis of the Modal Particle in Homer Based on the Instances of the Root *\*wek\** “speak” . . . . . 1
- **Chrysanthos S. CHRYSANTHOU**, Plutarch on Cato the Younger and the Annexation of Cyprus . . . . . 27
- **Jean VANDEN BROECK-PARANT**, Pausanias au sanctuaire de Poséidon à l’Isthme : topographie littéraire et paysage archéologique . . . . . 47
- **Ana Clara SISUL & Juan Manuel DANZA**, La apertura del código épico en Virgilio y en Prudencio. Modelos heroicos femeninos: de la amazona Camila a la mártir Eulalia . . . . . 59
- **Renée UCCELLINI**, Modelli di alternativa mascolinità: aspetti della presenza della poesia elegiaca nell’*Achilleide* di Stazio . . . . . 77
- **Davide MORASSI**, Roman Republican Cavalry Shock Tactics: the Case Study of *Detrabere frenum* . . . . . 97
- **Vanessa MONTEVENTI**, Les pantomimes dans les sources astrologiques . . . . . 111
- **Michel CHRISTOL**, *Clementia* et *Pietas* : les mots du rétablissement des provinces au tournant du III<sup>e</sup> et du IV<sup>e</sup> siècle dans le langage officiel . . . . . 129

## › Mélanges – Miscellanea – Short Notes

---

- **Antonio TIBILETTI**, Osservazioni sulla *Nemea* 2 di Pindaro . . . . . 151
- **Marco GEMIN**, Il sole figlio del Bene (*Resp.* VI, 508-509) . . . . . 165

## › Chronique – Kroniek – Chronicle

---

- **Peter GROSSARDT**, Ausgewählte textkritische Probleme im *Heroikos* des Flavius Philostrat und die Frage nach der Überlieferung des Dialogs. Einige Überlegungen aus Anlass der neuen Edition von Simone Follet . . . . . 175

## › Comptes rendus – Recensies – Book Reviews . . . . . 197

---

## › Résumés d’auteurs – Samenvattingen – Abstracts . . . . . 437

---

- **Table des matières – Inhoudstafel – Table of Contents.** . . . . . 441