PLUTARCH'S RHETORIC OF *PERIAUTOLOGIA*: *DEMOSTHENES* 1–3*

Abstract: This paper approaches Plutarch's prologue to the Lives of Demosthenes and Cicero *(*Dem. *1–3) from a novel perspective, seeking to examine Plutarch's prefatory self-display in light of his instructions in the essay* On Inoffensive Self-Praise. *It argues that Plutarch's unusual prefatory self-exposure in the* Demosthenes–Cicero *prologue constitutes an intriguing rhetorical device that Plutarch employs to enhance his authority as a narrator and researcher and develop and establish his readers' complicity. It also suggests that Plutarch's proemial self-portrait serves as a provocative reflection on significant aspects of the character of the two protagonists of the book, Demosthenes and Cicero, and their world, thus modelling Plutarch as a possible example for the reader to follow and emulate. The discussion proposes a new way in which Plutarch employs synkrisis in the* Lives*: it shows that Plutarch offers himself as part of the syncretic material of his biographies, as another "mirror" into which the readers gaze and thus reflect better on the character of the two men and on their own lives.*

Introduction

Speaking about oneself (*periautologia*) in antiquity presented several rhetorical and ethical problems. Ancient authors were highly sensitive regarding the difficulties and dangers inherent in it, particularly the offence and displeasure that self-praise can elicit in an audience,[1] and developed stratagems to mitigate and justify its effect. Self-commendation was advisable, for example, when one defended one's good name, tried to secure the benevolence of one's listeners, provided virtuous examples and generally promoted a higher moral goal.[2] Plutarch, an outright moralist, paid careful attention to the topic of *periautologia*. He wrote a whole essay on *On*

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[1] E.g. Isoc. *Antid.* 8; D. *De cor.* 3; Plb. 5.49.4; 36.12; Cic. *Fam.* 5.12.8; *Off.* 1.137; D.H. *Ant. Rom.* 1.1.1; *Th.* 45; Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.15–17; Hermog. *Meth.* 25 (441–2 Rabe); D.C. 43.15.6.

[2] Isoc. *Antid.* 6–8; Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.16.22; [Cic.] *Rhet. Her.* 1.5.8; Quint. *Inst.* 11.1.15–28; Aristid. *Or.* 28. 34–5, 141. For helpful overviews of the ancient tradition on self-praise see Forbes (1986) 8–10; Gray (1990); Marincola (1997) 175–82; Pernot (1998); Aune (2003); Gibson (2003) 238–41.

Inoffensive Self-Praise (Περὶ τοῦ ἑαυτὸν ἐπαινεῖν ἀνεπιφθόνως),[3] offering some helpful advice on the circumstances under which self-praise can be reasonably practised (539e–541f), the strategies one can use to make it tolerable for his audience (541f–544c), the useful purposes that one can accordingly achieve (544d–546a) and the situations under which one can drift into unseasonable self-approbation (546b–547c).[4]

In this article, I would like to examine Plutarch's rhetoric of *periautologia*, namely how he presents himself and to what ends, in Plutarch's most extensive autobiographical section in the *Lives*, the prologue to the *Lives of Demosthenes and Cicero* (*Dem.* 1–3).[5] There, as in the rest of the prologues, Plutarch reveals much of himself, his work method as well as his moral qualities, with which he also tries to imbue his readers,[6] and offers, in addition, some specific information from his own life. He says that he comes from the small city of Chaeronea and that despite the difficulties caused to his research he prefers to stay there so that his city might not become even smaller. He also refers to his political and philosophical preoccupations as well as his rhetorical education. In a sense, the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue constitutes an exceptional (not paralleled elsewhere in Plutarch's wider biographical work)[7] piece of Plutarch's autobiography.[8] In the course

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[3] For the text of Plutarch's *Moralia* I follow the Loeb editions (1927–69); for that of the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*, in particular, the edition by De Lacy and Einarson (1959). For the text of Plutarch's *Lives* I have consulted the Ziegler's (1957–73) Teubner edition, revised by Gärtner (1994–2002). The translations of Plutarch's texts are based on or adopted from those of the Loeb editions, unless otherwise noted. For the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book I follow (only with minor alterations at some points) Lintott (2013), unless otherwise notified.

[4] For an analysis of the structure and themes of this essay see Radermacher (1897); De Lacy and Einarson (1959) 110–13; Ingenkamp (1971) 62–9; Klaerr and Vernière (1974) 59–62; Betz (1978); Vallozza (1991); Aune (2003); Fields (2008). On Plutarch's alertness to the dangers lurking in self-praise, see also *De glor. Ath.* 345e; *Quaest. conv.* 2.1, 630c–d; *Arist.–Cat. Ma.* 5.3; *Cic.* 24.1–2; *Dem.–Cic.* 2; *Art.* 13.7; *Agis–Cleom.* 2.1.

[5] On the whole, instances of Plutarch's self-reference in the *Lives* are confined to matters related to ethical evaluation and methodology. He often expresses his personal moral view on the character and actions of the subjects of the *Lives* (e.g. *Cat. Ma.* 5.1; 5.6; *Lyc.* 28.13; *Alex.* 50.1–2; 59.7; *Nic.* 14.1–2; *Arist.* 8.1); he passes explicit judgements on other authors, which reveal his own stance on specific aspects of the lives of his heroes and his own work method (e.g. *Publ.* 17.2; *Nic.* 11.10; *Dem.* 30.6; *Alex.* 46; *Ages.* 33.1); and he includes numerous remarks on his own activity and qualifications as a writer and investigator (e.g. *Alex.* 4.4; *Cat. Ma.* 7.3; *Rom.* 15.3). Some very brief autobiographical notes can be found in the *Life of Antony* (28; 68.7) and the *Life of Themistocles* (32.6).

[6] Stadter (1988) 284–93; Pelling (2004); Zadorojnyi (2006) 103; Duff (2014) 340–2. On the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue, in particular, see Pelling (2004) 409–12; Zadorojnyi (2006) 107; Duff (2014) 341.

[7] The *Moralia* afford very (even more) interesting material on Plutarch's self-display and self-characterisation, but their multivalent character demands a careful separate treatment of

of our analysis, Plutarch's instructions in the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise* will help us to gauge the tone of his prefatory self-depiction better.[9] Although scholars have occasionally discussed aspects of Plutarch's self-characterisation in this prologue,[10] none has analysed it in view of Plutarch's principles in the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*. I will argue that Plutarch's unusual self-exposure in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue constitutes an intriguing rhetorical device that Plutarch employs to enhance his authority as a narrator and researcher and develop and establish his readers' complicity. An important point that will be suggested throughout our discussion is that Plutarch's proemial self-portrait serves as a provocative reflection on significant aspects of the character of the two protagonists of the book, Demosthenes and Cicero, and their world, thus modelling Plutarch as a possible example for the reader to follow and emulate. Scholars have already called attention to the myriad, creative ways in which Plutarch employs synkrisis in the *Lives* both for literary and moral purposes as well as to the complex process of reflection that Plutarch's biographies suggest and promote. This paper goes beyond simply demonstrating that Plutarch's subjects provide syncretic material for moral investigation,[11] or that Plutarch expects his readers to use the biographies of great men of history as "mirrors" (cf. *Aem.* 1.1) for self-reflection and self-fashioning.[12] It argues that Plutarch offers himself as part of that syncretic material, as another "mirror" into

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each work, which I hope to pursue in the future. For some useful contributions on this topic see Russell (1993); Lamberton (2001) 2–12; Klotz (2007); Van Hoof (2010); König (2011); Pelling (2011); Xenophontos (2016) 173–94.

[8] It is not surprising that it is taken as such by modern critics who try to reconstruct Plutarch's biography: Barrow (1967) 37; Jones (1971) 20; Lamberton (2001) 20. I owe these references to Beneker (2016) 147 n. 1.

[9] The two works, according to Jones (1995) 113–14, 121–2 must have been written around the same time (the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book possibly before 116 and the essay after 100). Both Demosthenes and Cicero figure prominently in the treatise (Demosthenes: 541e; 542a–b; 543b; 547e–f; Cicero: 540f; 542a). The historical Demosthenes and Cicero were both sensitive to the issue of self-praise (cf. nn. 1 and 2 above on Cicero). Indeed, throughout the essay Plutarch acknowledges Demosthenes' speech *On the Crown*, in which Demosthenes defends his right to be awarded the crown for his service to his city, as the model for a morally and rhetorically palatable and legitimate self-praise (541e–f; 542a–b; 543b; 547f; cf. *Dem.-Cic.* 2).

[10] See esp. Mossman (1999); Burlando (2000); Pelling (2004) 409–12; Zadorojnyi (2006); Beneker (2016).

[11] See Larmour (1992); Swain (1992); Duff (1999) 424 (index of themes, s.v. *Synkrisis*) and (2000); Beck (2002); Pelling (2002) 349–63 and (2005); the essays in Humble (2010); Larmour (2014); Stadter (2015a) 243–5 and (2015b); De Pourcq and Roskam (2016).

[12] See esp. Duff (1999) 30–4; Stadter (2003–4) and (2015a) 237–45; Zadorojnyi (2010).

which the readers gaze and thus reflect better on the character of the two men and on their own lives.

Demosthenes–Cicero Prologue (Dem. 1–3)

Plutarch begins the prologue to the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book by rejecting the claim of Alcibiades' encomiast that a happy man must come from a famous city (*Dem.* 1.1). "I think," Plutarch says, "it makes no difference to the one who is going to enjoy the true happiness which for the most part lies in character and disposition to be born in a humble and undistinguished fatherland or to have a small and plain mother" (*Dem.* 1.1). It is ridiculous, Plutarch states, if one thinks that small cities like Iulis and Aegina can breed good actors and poets but not a man who is just, independent, intelligent and magnanimous (*Dem.* 1.2). In Plutarch's opinion, the other arts that have practical purposes and urge for fame are likely to "die away" (ἀπομαραίνεσθαι)—possibly an echo here of Plato's *Theaetetus* 177b referring to rhetoric (καὶ ἡ ῥητορικὴ ἐκείνη πως ἀπομαραίνεται)[13]—in obscure and humble cities, while virtue, like a strong and self-sufficient plant, takes root in any location, taking hold of a good nature and hardworking spirit (*Dem.* 1.3).[14]

In his essay *On exile*, Plutarch similarly propounds the universality of virtue, happiness, and wisdom (607e); and in his wider literary oeuvre he normally uses the "soul/soil" imagery to stress the significance of "paideutic cultivation."[15] If there is indeed an echo of Plato's *Theaetetus* here, then this recalls Socrates' comment on the dissatisfaction that the orators feel with themselves and their words when they need to give a personal account and receive one back about the things they oppose: "their rhetoric dies away (ἀπομαραίνεται)," Socrates says (177b). Readers who know this work will remember that Socrates' words occur in the digressional part of the dialogue, where Socrates juxtaposes the way of life of the philosophers with that of the orator-politicians (172c–177b). Socrates not only demeans the latter but also criticises the former for their neglect of political life, which makes them no better than the orator-politicians in their (deficient) self-knowledge and reflection on the good.[16] This portrayal of the Platonic ideal orator-

[13] Strikingly, the verb ἀπομαραίνω is used with reference to the arts in these two passages from Plato and Plutarch only. For other meanings see *LSJ* s.v. ἀπομαραίνω. On Plutarch's use of the verb throughout his work, see Holden (1893) 41.

[14] On Plutarch's use of plant imagery, see Fuhrmann (1964) 77–84.

[15] Zadorojnyi (2006) 108–9. Cf. *Cor.* 1.3; *Alc.* 4.1; *Nic.* 9.1; *Dion* 58.2; *Agis–Cleom.* 2.2. The image is Platonic: *Euthphr.* 2d; *Ti.* 87b; *Phdr.* 276e–277a; *R.* 492a.

[16] See Stern (2008) 162–82. On Plato's "philosopher in action," see also *R.* 5.473c–d and 6.487e.

politician/philosopher conforms to Plutarch's ideal man of action, who should combine political activity with philosophy,[17] and is significant (as we shall see) for Plutarch's fashioning of himself in the rest of the prologue as well as of Demosthenes and Cicero.

Notwithstanding his dismissal of the association between an individual's true happiness and the size of his city, in the second chapter of the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue Plutarch emphasises the importance of a famous well-equipped city—the repetition of τὰν πόλιν εὐδόκιμον at 2.1 and 1.1 draws the link between the first and second chapters—for a proper historical composition (*Dem.* 2.1):

> Τῷ μέντοι σύνταξιν ὑποβεβλημένῳ καὶ ἱστορίαν, ἐξ οὐ προχείρων οὐδ' οἰκείων, ἀλλὰ ξένων τε τῶν πολλῶν καὶ διεσπαρμένων ἐν ἑτέροις συνιοῦσαν ἀναγνωσμάτων, τῷ ὄντι χρῆν πρῶτον ὑπάρχειν καὶ μάλιστα 'τὰν πόλιν εὐδόκιμον' καὶ φιλόκαλον καὶ πολυάνθρωπον, ὡς βιβλίων τε παντοδαπῶν ἀφθονίαν ἔχων, καὶ ὅσα τοὺς γράφοντας διαφυγόντα σωτηρίᾳ μνήμης ἐπιφανεστέραν εἴληφε πίστιν, ὑπολαμβάνων ἀκοῇ καὶ διαπυνθανόμενος, μηδενὸς τῶν ἀναγκαίων ἐνδεὲς ἀποδιδοίη τὸ ἔργον.
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> The man, however, who has undertaken a historical composition, assembled from material which is not at hand or found at home but from readings which are mainly in foreign countries and scattered in other works, truly needs "a famous city," in the first place and above all else, and one that is cultured and populous in order that he may have all sorts of books in plenty, and may by hearsay and enquiry come into possession of all the things which, though they have escaped the writers, have been preserved with more fidelity in memory. He can thus produce a work lacking none of the essentials.

Against this backdrop Plutarch measures up his own personal experience of living in his small hometown Chaeronea (*Dem.* 2.2–4):

> (2.2) ἡμεῖς δὲ μικρὰν μὲν οἰκοῦντες πόλιν, καὶ ἵνα μὴ μικροτέρα γένηται φιλοχωροῦντες, ἐν δὲ Ῥώμῃ καὶ ταῖς περὶ τὴν Ἰταλίαν διατριβαῖς οὐ σχολῆς οὔσης γυμνάζεσθαι περὶ τὴν Ῥωμαϊκὴν διάλεκτον ὑπὸ χρειῶν πολιτικῶν καὶ τῶν διὰ φιλοσοφίαν

[17] E.g. *Prof. in Virt.* 78a–c; *Max. cum princ.* 776f–777b; *Dem.-Cic.* 3.2–4; *Num.* 20.7–12; *Phil.* 1; *Brut.* 1.3–4. Cf. [Plut.] *De lib. educ.* 7f–8a. On the complex theme of the "philosopher-king" in Plutarch's work, see De Blois and Bons (1992); Roskam (2002); Van Raalte (2005); Boulet (2005); Holland (2005); Dillon (2010); Boulet (2014); Pelling (2014).

> πλησιαζόντων, ὀψέ ποτε καὶ πόρρω τῆς ἡλικίας ἠρξάμεθα Ῥωμαϊκοῖς συντάγμασιν ἐντυγχάνειν, καὶ πρᾶγμα θαυμαστὸν μέν, ἀλλ' ἀληθὲς ἐπάσχομεν. (2.3) οὐ γὰρ οὕτως ἐκ τῶν ὀνομάτων τὰ πράγματα συνιέναι καὶ γνωρίζειν συνέβαινεν ἡμῖν, ὡς ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων, <ὧν> ἁμῶς γέ πως εἴχομεν ἐμπειρίαν, ἐπακολουθεῖν δι' αὐτὰ καὶ τοῖς ὀνόμασι. (2.4) κάλλους δὲ Ῥωμαϊκῆς ἀπαγγελίας καὶ τάχους αἰσθάνεσθαι καὶ μεταφορᾶς ὀνομάτων καὶ ἁρμονίας καὶ τῶν ἄλλων, οἷς ὁ λόγος ἀγάλλεται, χαρίεν μὲν ἡγούμεθα καὶ οὐκ ἀτερπές· ἡ δὲ πρὸς τοῦτο μελέτη καὶ ἄσκησις οὐκ εὐχερής, ἀλλ' οἷστισι πλείων τε σχολὴ καὶ τὰ τῆς ὥρας ἔτι πρὸς τὰς τοιαύτας ὑπάρχει φιλοτιμίας.
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> But we, for our part, living in a small city, and loving to stay there so that it may not become even smaller, and having no time when we visited Rome and other parts of Italy to practise the Latin language because of the political preoccupations and those who came to study philosophy with us, started at a later time and an advanced age to study Latin literature, and had an experience which was remarkable but true. For it was not so much through the words that we were enabled to grasp and understand the subject matters, but rather it was the subject matters of which we already had some sort of experience, which helped us to understand the words that denoted them. To be able to appreciate the beauty and the pithiness of the Roman style, the figures of speech, the oratorical rhythms and the other embellishments of the language we consider a most graceful and enjoyable accomplishment. But the study and practice required would be formidable, and we must leave such ambitions to those who have the youth and the leisure to pursue them.[18]

Reading these statements in the light of the previous chapter, we feel that Plutarch indulges himself in some sort of self-praise and self-advertisement. It is possible that happy and virtuous men come from a small city, Plutarch mentioned earlier; and he now says that he himself comes from a small city. It is not hard to see the self-applicability here, although Plutarch does not make it explicit.[19] In the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*, Plutarch suggests that an effective way of turning attention to ourselves without engaging in unpleasant self-laudation is to praise others who have similar aims, actions, and character so that our hearers will ask: "And are not you one of these

[18] Translation adapted from Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012) and Lintott (2013).

[19] Flacelière and Chambry (1976) 10; Pelling (2004) 410; Zadorojnyi (2006) 103 ("disguised self-promotion").

people?" (542c–d).

Here Plutarch stresses in particular his love for his homeland. "I enjoy staying there," he says, "so that it may not become even smaller." This statement might be explained at first glance by Plutarch's worry that his small city might lose even one citizen;[20] but it could equally point to and underline the glory that Plutarch brings to Chaeronea[21]—in that case a covered and implicit self-assertion again. The next lines add to this sense of self-disclosure, for Plutarch takes pride in the way he acquired knowledge of Latin. He refers to his dealing with both politics and philosophy—these details are taken to be especially self-flattering if the *Theaetetus* passage is evoked in the earlier chapter—and he mentions that the way he found he was learning the language was a remarkable thing (θαυμαστόν) but true (ἀληθές). He could understand, Plutarch says, what the words meant because he was already familiar with the events they were describing (whether this familiarity was gained from his active political involvement—mentioned a few lines before—or his experience in reading). Plutarch's emphasis on the value of his distinctive personal experience might recall the historians, who often assert in their prologues their personal experience in affairs in order to qualify their writing and establish their authority,[22] although it is true that Plutarch's claim is being phrased in an unusual and individual way. At the same time, however, Plutarch discloses his deficient knowledge of Latin style and rhetoric.[23] He finds it useful, but he is old, as he says, and has no free time for such ambitions. Whether real or affected, Plutarch's apology for his linguistic and stylistic shortcomings mitigates his self-display and makes it tolerable—a practice that Plutarch recommends in the essay (543f–544b)—allowing him to emerge as a moderate man who acknowledges both his skills and the limits of his power.[24]

This aspect of Plutarch's self-portrayal becomes all the more evident in the following chapter of the prologue where Plutarch qualifies his method in

[20] Burlando (2000) 63. Titchener (2002) 137–8 compares Plutarch's claim with Juvenal, 3.1–3 and suggests that Plutarch uses the "one citizen" joke to gracefully express his antipathy towards Roman and/or urban life.

[21] Plutarch pays due attention to his city's role in history and makes sure that Chaeronea is properly recognised: e.g. *Dem.* 19–21; *Alex.* 9; *Sull.* 16–20 with Pelling (2010) xvi. On Plutarch's references to Chaeronea in his works, see Fuscagni (1994) 158 n. 3.

[22] See Marincola (1997) 133–48; Chrysanthou (2017) 132.

[23] Cf. Plutarch's discussion of the oratory of Cato the Elder: "such questions must be decided by those who are more capable than we are of discerning the traits of Roman oratory" (*Cat. Ma.* 7.3).

[24] This is "both apology and self-recommendation," as Russell (1993) 428 asserts. See also Duff (2014) 341: "it constructs Plutarch the narrator as modest and knowing his limits." Cf. Beneker (2016) 153.

writing about Demosthenes and Cicero (*Dem.* 3.1–2):

> (3.1) Διὸ καὶ γράφοντες ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ, τῶν παραλλήλων βίων ὄντι πέμπτῳ, περὶ Δημοσθένους καὶ Κικέρωνος, ἀπὸ τῶν πράξεων καὶ πολιτειῶν τὰς φύσεις αὐτῶν καὶ τὰς διαθέσεις πρὸς ἀλλήλας ἐπισκεψόμεθα, τὸ δὲ τοὺς λόγους ἀντεξετάζειν καὶ ἀποφαίνεσθαι, πότερος ἡδίων ἢ δεινότερος εἰπεῖν, ἐάσομεν. (3.2) 'κακὴ' γὰρ ὥς φησιν ὁ Ἴων (TGF p. 744 N²) 'δελφῖνος ἐν χέρσῳ βία', *** ἣν ὁ περιττὸς ἐν ἅπασι Καικίλιος ἀγνοήσας, ἐνεανιεύσατο σύγκρισιν τοῦ Δημοσθένους λόγου καὶ Κικέρωνος ἐξενεγκεῖν. ἀλλὰ γὰρ ἴσως, εἰ παντὸς ἦν τὸ 'γνῶθι σαυτὸν' ἔχειν πρόχειρον, οὐκ ἂν ἐδόκει τὸ πρόσταγμα θεῖον εἶναι.
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> Therefore, even when we write in this book, which is the fifth of the *Parallel Lives*, about Demosthenes and Cicero, we shall compare and examine their natures and dispositions on the basis of their actions and policies, but we shall leave aside any comparative investigation of their oratory and demonstration of which was the more agreeable and effective speaker. For, as Ion remarks, "The dolphin's might is feeble on dry land." In ignorance of this, Caecilius, who is excessive in everything, was rash enough to produce a comparison of the oratory of Demosthenes and Cicero. Nevertheless, if everyone had "Know yourself" readily available, perhaps the instruction would not have been thought to be divinely inspired.

Plutarch projects himself as a man who unlike Caecilius does not try to write about things for which he is not qualified. There is again self-recommendation, crafted in a way that makes it palatable and acceptable to the reader. In the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*, Plutarch acknowledges that one of the most treacherous situations in which one is prone to unseasonable self-praise is when denigrating and humiliating others. He stresses that old men are especially susceptible to this, for they tend to magnify themselves whilst advising other people and judging unworthy habits and unwise acts. This sort of self-laudation can be accepted, Plutarch states, if those people are not simply distinguished by old age but by reputation and virtue, which can arouse emulation and ambition in the persons they rebuke. If, however, criticism is done merely for the sake of criticism, intended to secure self-glory through the humiliation of another person, then, as Plutarch suggests, it is vulgar and odious (546f–547a).

The situation that Plutarch deems permissible in the essay closely resembles that of his polemic against Caecilius in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue. As we have already noticed, Plutarch presents himself as old for the

study of Latin style and rhetoric (*Dem.* 2.4), and he now blames Caecilius for acting rashly or more precisely with a "youthful spirit"[25] (cf. ἐνεανιεύσατο) in taking up the writing of a stylistic comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero as orators. His polemic allows him not only to define his own work method and set his readers expectations—he will focus on the two men's actions, not their rhetoric or style, to explore their character—but also to appropriate for himself the virtues of moderation and self-consciousness, which brings him closer to the Socratic ideal (especially significant if the *Theaetetus* passage is recalled).[26]

Over the course of the prologue to the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book, therefore, readers are drawn to notice that Plutarch is a man who can be good and produce a virtuous work, although coming from a small city; who is well qualified to explore the natures and dispositions of Demosthenes and Cicero on the basis of their actions and policies; and who, unlike others, is aware of his limitations. Plutarch's *periautologia*, I contend, works towards turning the reader's attention to the moral qualities of Plutarch's character. This is the sort of *periautologia* that Plutarch accepts in the essay as advantageous and helpful (543c–d), for it is neither offensive—Plutarch, as we noticed, employs several devices to restrain his self-exposition and lessen the dangers attendant upon it—nor *kenē* ("empty") aiming at a vainglorious self-elevation (540a). Rather, it has advantages in it and some worthy ends in view.

Plutarch uses self-promotion in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue in order to defend himself and his city against slanders that his work may arouse—Plutarch suggests in the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise* that "self-praise goes unresented if you are defending your good name or answering a charge" (540c).[27] His emphasis on the need for a big, cultured, and populous city for proper historical composition (*Dem.* 2.1) as well as his failure to give a stylistic comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero might provoke criticism,[28] especially if the reader is assumed to be a cultured individual, like

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[25] *LSJ* s.v. νεανιεύομαι.

[26] Cf. Plutarch's criticism of Timaeus in the *Nicias–Crassus* prologue (*Nic.* 1), on which see Wardman (1974) 154–7; Citti (1983); Duff (1999) 14–22 and (2014) 339–40 with 346 n. 36. On Plutarch's defining himself and his work against other people, especially writers, in the prologues, see Duff (2014) 340–2. On the use of polemic against other authors in the prologues of historical works, see Marincola (1997) 217–57.

[27] In other prologues Plutarch openly anticipates and responds to the plausible objections of his uneasy reader, e.g. *Alex.* 1.1; *Nic.* 1.1, 1.5; *Thes.* 1.5. See Stadter (1988) 289 with n. 34, who notes that this is a prefatory commonplace, known in rhetorical theory as πρόληψις (Lausberg (2008) 425, §855).

[28] On Plutarch's resistant reader in the *Demosthenes–Cicero* prologue, see Russell (1993) 428; Pelling (2004) 411, 417; Duff (2014) 341.

the dedicatee of the book Sosius Senecio (*Dem.* 1.1).[29] Plutarch thus tries to establish his own character with his audience and guarantee their complicity—this is exactly what Plutarch craves for in all of the prologues to his books.[30] "For when men are trusting and friendly," Plutarch stresses in the essay, "it is pleasant and easy to do them good; whereas in the presence of distrust and dislike it is impossible to put one's merit to use and force benefits on those who shun them" (539f). This is one way in which Plutarch's *periautologia* works.[31]

Another way is that Plutarch wants through his own example to "exhort his readers and inspire them with emulation and ambition"—to use Plutarch's own words in the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise* (544d). In the essay Plutarch states that "exhortation that includes action as well as argument and presents the speaker's own example and challenge is living: it arouses and spurs the hearer, and not only awakens his ardor and fixes his purpose, but also affords him hope that the end can be attained and is not impossible" (544e). In that regard, Plutarch extols Lycurgus for proposing to the young men paradigms that were "close at hand and closely akin to them (τὰ πλησίον καὶ οἰκεῖα παραδείγματα)" (544f). In the *Lives*, however, Plutarch, unlike Lycurgus, offers his readers paradigmatic figures from the distant past. Still, I believe that, as the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book progresses, the readers can feel Plutarch's own example speaking to the concerns of both the present and the past, and encapsulating central facets of the life, character, and world of Demosthenes and Cicero. Readers can thus hope that the past is still alive, the examples are still *oikeia*, and "the ends can be attained and are not impossible;" a sort of self-elevation itself on Plutarch's part, who himself appears to have attained at least some of these ends and can now inspire others through his own life and writings.

Indeed, Plutarch's unusual tendency towards self-commendation in the prologue bespeaks a notorious feature of Demosthenes and Cicero. In the *Cicero*, Plutarch dwells on the unpopularity and hatred that Cicero causes through his continuous self-praise (*Cic.* 24.1–2; cf. 6.5); and in the final

[29] Elsewhere in the prologues Sosius is addressed at *Dion* 1.1 and *Thes.* 1.1. See Pelling (2004) 407–8, 410; Zadorojnyi (2006) 107 ("The figure of Senecio is important in itself, but it also acts as a deputy for the wider readership") and 106–7 with nn. 24 and 26; Duff (2011) 219 with n. 29; (2014) 334, 345 n. 13.

[30] See Stadter (1988) 293; Pelling (2004) 413–6, 419–21; Zadorojnyi (2006) 103; Duff (2014) 340.

[31] Cf. Burlando (2000) and Zadorojnyi (2006) 106, 120–1, both stressing Plutarch's worry in this prologue about ensuring the benevolence of his readers, a prefatory *topos* according to rhetorical theory: Lausberg (2008) 151–60, §266–79. Cf. Luc. *Hist. conscr.* 52–4 on prologues in historiography: they should not appeal for a favorable hearing, but simply give the audience what will interest and instruct them.

Synkrisis he explicitly blames Cicero for praising his deeds and speeches immoderately, "as if he were sparring with the sophists … not claiming to lead and direct the Roman people" (*Dem.–Cic.* 2). The Romans, as Plutarch stresses, were warriors—Plutarch uses a line from an unknown play of Aeschylus to draw parallels between the Romans and the Greek warrior of Aeschylus' era[32]—and thus in need of Cicero's leadership rather than his sophisticated rhetoric. Plutarch does not deny that politicians should use rhetoric to prevail;[33] but he rejects the idea that they should lust for the vain fame that springs from it. On this account, Demosthenes emerges as more impressive and magnificent. According to Plutarch, he not only handles self-praise cautiously, without causing offence, and in need of some weightier end, but "declares that his power in speaking is a mere matter of experience (ἐμπειρίαν τινά) which requires great goodwill from his listeners" (*Dem.–Cic.* 2; cf. *Dem.* 7–8).

This complex interrelation between self-promotion, rhetoric, and political involvement in the careers of Demosthenes and Cicero recalls Plutarch's proemial self-positioning in a number of ways. We saw earlier that Plutarch talks about himself in a self-conscious and moderate manner. He acknowledges the importance of the study of rhetoric and style but claims he is above all a philosopher-politician who is avoiding acting like Caecilius who writes "with a youthful spirit" (cf. ἐνεανιεύσατο) a stylistic comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero (*Dem.* 3.2)—contrast Cicero, who, although also a philosopher-politician, is presented in the *Synkrisis* as "vying like a lad"[34] (διαμειρακιευόμενος) with the sophists (*Dem.–Cic.* 2). Plutarch clearly states that his understanding of the Latin words stemmed from his earlier experience of the subjects retold in the Latin texts (cf. *Dem.* 2.3: ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων, <ὧν> . . . εἴχομεν ἐμπειρίαν), although this experience, so Plutarch implies, did not extend to include any sort of thorough study of the style and rhetoric of Latin language (*Dem.* 2.4). For this reason, Plutarch claims, he will treat Demosthenes and Cicero as politicians rather than orators (*Dem.* 3.1). Just as for Demosthenes rhetorical power is a mere matter of experience (ἐμπειρίαν τινά) requiring great goodwill from his listeners, so for Plutarch the ability for rhetorical and political analysis is presented as a matter of experience too, which appeals (as we noticed above) to the goodwill of his readers. A triangle for comparison and reflection, comprising not just Demosthenes and Cicero but Plutarch too, is already

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[32] Lintott (2013) 212.

[33] Cf. *Cat. Mi.* 4.3; *Alc.* 10.2–3; *Per.* 8; 15; *Fab.* 1.7; *De aud. poet.* 33f; *Praec. ger.* 801c; 802b–e.

[34] Cf. Flacelière and Chambry (1976) 126 ("on aurait dit un adolescent").

developed; or indeed a quadrilateral, also entailing the readers, who might be so inspired by the reading.

It is telling that as the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book progresses, Plutarch's prefatory self-presentation is nuanced and enriched in an illustrative way, for Plutarch focuses not only on the actions and policies of the two men in order to examine in parallel their natures and dispositions, as the prologue led us to expect, but on their oratory as well, exemplifying how rhetoric can be used to underscore moral lessons—a point that is significant, as we shall see, for Plutarch's characterisation of himself as well as for his characterisation of Demosthenes and Cicero. In the *Demosthenes*, Plutarch includes several references to Demosthenes' way of speaking as well as to the style of his written and oral discourse (*Dem.* 4–11). Plutarch has even more to say about Demosthenes' humor, as he admits, but feels that he should stop, for "the other traits of his [i.e. Demosthenes'] disposition, and his character, should be examined on the basis of his actions and statesmanship" (*Dem.* 11.7). In the *Cicero*, there are several comments on the biting witticism in Cicero's oratory (*Cic.* 5.6; 7.6–8; 26–7) as well as the pleasant and unpleasant quality in his discourse (*Cic.* 13; 24; 39.7). In the *Synkrisis*, Plutarch also makes some comparison of the characteristics of the two men's speaking, "which," as he says, he "has left aside so far" (*Dem.–Cic.* 1.2)—this is somehow contradictory to what precedes, for most of the details given in the *Synkrisis* can also be found in, or easily extracted from, the *Lives*.[35] In the *Synkrisis*, moreover, Plutarch explicitly uses the oratory of Demosthenes and Cicero to make points about their characters (*Dem.–Cic.* 1–2). He emphasises that "it is also possible to distinguish the character of each in their speeches (ἐν τοῖς λόγοις)" (*Dem.–Cic.* 1.4).[36]

Plutarch, true to his proemial thesis, neither discusses oratory for its own sake nor provides any thorough stylistic comparison between Demosthenes and Cicero. But the temptation to study their oratory as well as their praxeis is hard for him to resist.[37] Dealing with two important figures of letters and politics, Plutarch is ready to fluctuate between political and literary

[35] On contradictions between the final *Synkriseis* and the previous *Lives*, see Duff (1999) 263–86; (2000).

[36] Cf. *Cato Ma.* 7.3: "we shall now record a few of his famous sayings, believing that men's characters are revealed much more by their speech than, as some think, by their looks."

[37] Similarly, in other *Lives* too: *Per.* 5.1; 8; *Fab.* 1.7–8; *Cat. Ma.* 7; *Ant.* 2.8; *Gracchi* 2.3–6; *Lyc.* 19–20; *Phoc.* 5; *Cat. Mi.* 5. 2–4; *Alc.* 10.3–4. See also Pelling (1988) 119–20; Duff (1999) 15–16 n. 6; Mossman (1999) 81–2 with n. 14; Pelling (2002) 339–47; Billault (2001); Zadorojnyi (2006) 105; (2014) 306 with n. 13 on p. 314: "The Plutarchan refusal to compare Demosthenes and Cicero as orators (*Dem.* 3.1) is something of a red herring."

analyses.[38] Plutarch's own rhetoric in the prologue does not perfectly correspond to his practice in the rest of the book. This sort of mismatch between rhetoric and praxis is an important aspect of Plutarch's self-construction which Demosthenes and Cicero share too (this point is well made by Judith Mossman).

Mossman showed through a detailed analysis of the problematic relation between rhetoric and practice in the *Demosthenes*—with some astute comparative remarks on the *Cicero* as well—that the two men's actions do not always match their words (although, as Mossman correctly observes, Cicero is better at reconciling the two).[39] Nevertheless, Plutarch has both men succeed and be duly rehabilitated at the end. In a dream before his death, as Plutarch says, Demosthenes saw that he was acting in a tragedy and competing with Archias, and that, although he gave a good performance and won the attention of the audience, he lost victory because of his lack of costumes and production (*Dem.* 29.2). The dream recalls Demosthenes' physical and rhetorical failings, a theme much more important in the earlier career of Demosthenes, which caused him many difficulties in his dealing with his listeners (*Dem.* 4; 6.3–5; 7–8; 11). Now, at the end, however, Demosthenes has full control over his final act. He does not yield to Archias' promises, but unveils his hypocrisy. He dies bravely, as Plutarch recounts, while pretending to write, thus overshadowing the mockery of his bystanders who laugh at his cowardice and call him soft and unmanly (*Dem.* 29.3–5).[40]

Cicero, in turn, is betrayed by Philologus (whose name denotes someone fond of learning and literature) at the end, a youth who, as Plutarch says, was educated by Cicero in liberal arts and studies (*Cic.* 48.2). The question as to whether and how far Cicero succeeds as a literary man living up to his philosophical principles is under scrutiny throughout the *Cicero*;[41] and it seems to still be present at the end of the *Life* through Plutarch's mention of the betrayal of Cicero by Philologus (strikingly found in no other surviving source).[42] In his description of Cicero's murder, Plutarch mentions that "they cut off his head and the hands with which he had written the *Philippics*" (*Cic.* 48.6). The *Cicero* closes with an emphasis on the survival of Cicero's books—"and up to the present day they are called *Philippics*" (*Cic.* 48.6)—and an anecdote about Augustus, who takes a book of Cicero

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[38] See also Billault (2001) 256; Pernot (2004) 406.

[39] Mossman (1999). Cf. Pecorella Longo (2015) 134–7, 141 on Demosthenes.

[40] For a detailed analysis of the theatricality of Demosthenes' death-scene, see Mossman (1999) 97–8; Várzeas (2009) 336–8.

[41] See Moles (1988) 150–1; Swain (1990) 196–7.

[42] Lintott (2013) 209.

from his nephew, returns it to him, and says about Cicero: "a learned man, my child, a learned man and a lover of his country" (*Cic.* 49.5).[43] The terminal reference to Cicero's *Philippics* calls to mind not only Cicero's fighting against Antony but also Demosthenes' own speeches in defence of Greece against Philip of Macedon (cf. *Cic.* 24.6). Mossman rightly concludes:

> So in both *Lives* the pen finally is mightier than the sword, even though it may not appear so all the time; but only when the pen is worthily employed, and the benchmark of that is not stylistic, but moral. Rhetoric—mere rhetoric—fails, but virtue triumphs.[44]

This is one way in which Plutarch parallels Demosthenes and Cicero, diverging to some extent from his programmatic statements in the prologue and making himself an example for comparison and imitation: Plutarch, a man of action himself, uses rhetoric—in the sense of both the rhetoric of his own self-presentation and that of Demosthenes and Cicero—not for stylistic purposes but for ethico-political instruction.[45]

Another way in which Plutarch resembles the two men, echoing a theme of the prologue and presenting himself as a potential model for ethico-political reflection, is seen in the endings of both *Lives* (and at the beginning of the *Synkrisis*) where Plutarch comes back into the presentation to rehabilitate not only Demosthenes and Cicero (as we noted above) but himself too.[46] In the last chapter of the *Demosthenes*, Plutarch includes the story about the soldier's gold that remained untouched in the hands of Demosthenes' statue standing in the Athenian agora (*Dem.* 31.1–3). This happened, as Plutarch says, "a little while before I arrived in Athens" (*Dem.* 31.1).[47] The *Life* closes, as it began, with an address to Sosius Senecio: "You have then, Sosius, the life of Demosthenes, based on what we have read or

[43] See also Mossman (1999) 99–101. The translation here is from p. 101.

[44] Mossman (1999) 101.

[45] See Billault (2001); Pernot (2004) 410–11. As Zadorojnyi (2006) 105 emphasises, Plutarch as a philosopher prioritises the subject-matter over the style in the reception of all formats of discourse. See, for example, the *Pericles–Fabius* prologue (*Per.* 1–2) with Van der Stockt (1992) 32–7; Duff (1999) 34–45 and (2001). Cf. *Phoc.* 5.10; *Prof. in virt.* 78e–80a; *Con. praec.* 142a–b. See also Zadorojnyi (2014) 305–6 and the references cited in n. 33 above.

[46] On the endings of the *Lives*, see Pelling (2002) 365–86; Duff (2011) 242–53 (discussing in detail transitional phrases or sentences from the first to the second *Life* and from the second *Life* to the *Synkrisis*); Cooper (2014).

[47] Translation by Scott-Kilvert and Duff (2012).

heard (ἐξ ὧν ἡμεῖς ἀνέγνωμεν ἢ διηκούσαμεν)" (*Dem.* 31.7). In the last chapter of the *Cicero*, Plutarch mentions a story about Augustus and his nephew, which (as he says) he learns (whether by hearsay or inquiry) to have happened many years later (cf. *Cic.* 49.5: πυνθάνομαι … χρόνοις πολλοῖς ὕστερον).[48] In the first lines of the comparative epilogue he declares: "these, then, are the memorable items (cf. ἄξια μνήμης) that have come to our knowledge (εἰς τὴν ἡμετέραν ἀφῖκται γνῶσιν) in what has been recorded (τῶν … ἱστορουμένων) about Demosthenes and Cicero" (*Dem.–Cic.* 1.1).

Plutarch's terminal emphasis on research recalls his methodological claims in the prologue. There he stressed, as we saw at the beginning of this paper, that a historian needs to live in a famous, cultured, and populous city in order to write a complete historical work. "For he will be able to have access to all kinds of books," Plutarch stated in the prologue, "and learn by hearsay (cf. ὑπολαμβάνων ἀκοῇ) and enquiry (διαπυνθανόμενος) all the things which, although they have eluded writers, have been preserved in memory (cf. σωτηρίᾳ μνήμης) with more obvious conviction" (*Dem.* 2.1).[49] Whether this prefatory thesis reflects a genuine confession by Plutarch with regard to the practical difficulties he experienced in his small hometown Chaeronea, as Alexei Zadorojnyi finds reasonable,[50] or another false apology, part of the rhetorical technique of *praeteritio*, which Plutarch, as Judith Mossman thinks,[51] employs in the prologue, his closing statements certainly lend strength to his self-qualification and authority. Plutarch presents himself as a man who *tries to* surmount the difficulties of living in a small town and offer a work, which, being as complete as possible, can contribute to the ethical progress of his readers.

Here again Demosthenes and Cicero are not so far apart. They are two men who become great after being powerless and undistinguished (*Dem.* 3.4). Plutarch says that, according to Aeschines, the mother of Demosthenes was of humble origins (*Dem.* 4.2); a statement which, although not verified

[48] Burlando (2011) 242 n. 280: "La scelta del verbo πυνθάνομαι ('ho saputo') tradisce una probabile tradizione orale dell'edificante aneddoto narrato." Cf. Flacelière and Chambry (1976) 62, 124 n. 1.

[49] Zadorojnyi (2006) 113–20 reads *Dem.* 2.1 against Polybius' criticism of Timaeus in Book 12 and suggests that a plausible dialogue between the two authors encourages reflection on how history was written in Plutarch's times: "The pervasiveness of order and control under the Empire means a shortage of material that writers of *historia* can explore in the field … For the Greek world the death of politics leaves the narrators increasingly beholden to earlier texts" (119).

[50] Zadorojnyi (2006) 105, but he does not preclude that "Plutarch's disclaimer in *Demosth.* 2.2–4 is tongue-in-cheek" (105 n. 14). Cf. Plutarch's similar complaint in *De E* 384e, with Obsieger (2013) 99–100.

[51] Mossman (1999) 81–2, 100.

by Plutarch, harks back to his proemial claim that "a man can be truly happy even if he has a mother who is plain and of low stature" (*Dem.* 1.1). Plutarch also notes that Demosthenes was left an orphan by his father, wronged by his guardians in their handling of his patrimony, and educated inadequately in the studies that suited a freeborn boy (*Dem.* 4.3–4). He mentions, in addition, that according to a tradition Cicero was born and bred in a fuller's shop (*Cic.* 1.2). In Plutarch's telling both Demosthenes and Cicero had physical and rhetorical failings and had to work hard (as Plutarch himself appears to have done) in order to be able to succeed with their audience and put their noble goals in action.[52]

Conclusions

It might be good to sum up the observations made above. Reading the prologue to the *Demosthenes–Cicero* book—an exceptional instance where Plutarch offers much direct information about his own life and personal achievements in purely autobiographical terms—in the light of the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise*, we saw that Plutarch, following closely the procedure suggested in his essay, employs several devices to restrain his self-display and make it palatable and useful for his readers. We argued that Plutarch's *periautologia* is designed to turn the attention of the audience to Plutarch's moral qualities of being good, moderate, and self-aware. It thus functions as a key-mechanism for Plutarch's self-defence against the plausible objections of his readers, especially with regard to his living in a small city and not writing a stylistic comparison of Demosthenes and Cicero as orators. Besides, it serves as a provocative reflection not only on Plutarch's self but on Demosthenes and Cicero too, particularly with reference to their use of self-praise and rhetoric as well as their (successful or not) reconciliation of practical/political and scholarly/intellectual activities. In this regard, as we noticed, Plutarch models himself for his readers to ponder on and emulate (cf. *De se ipsum laud.* 544d).

Plutarch's *periautologia*, I suggest, becomes a sophisticated technique that works towards developing and establishing complicity between Plutarch and his readers. It enhances his stature as a narrator and moralist, one who appears to have the right moral mental framework and attained some of the exemplary aspects of the character of the men of history so that he can now inspire others to do the same through his own life and narrative. Equally, it

[52] See *Dem.* 4; 6.3–5; 7–8; 11; *Cic.* 1; 3.7; 4.4; 5.4; 8. Beneker (2016) 151–2 discusses how the prefatory theme of the relationship between stature/origin and happiness/virtue is developed in the two *Lives*, but he does not lay emphasis on the connections between the characterisation of Plutarch and that of Demosthenes and Cicero.

constitutes an elaborate "zooming device,"[53] which has the effect of bringing the world of the past and the world of the present nearer to each other and making it easier and more attractive for the readers to join in the milieu of moral investigation of the past. Through Plutarch's own example the readers can feel that the examples of Demosthenes and Cicero are still *oikeia*, that the past is still alive and that "the ends can be attained and are not impossible" (cf. *De se ipsum laud.* 544e).[54] Plutarch sets up a triangle of interactions, a relationship among himself, his audience, and indeed the historical actors.

Plutarch's *periautologia* then is good and helpful, "having in prospect some great advantage to his hearers and to himself," exactly as Plutarch recommends in the *On Inoffensive Self-Praise* (547f). It is hardly accidental that Plutarch chooses in this prologue to put the full power of his rhetoric into an expression of his own perception of the proper use of rhetoric. This is the prologue to the *Lives* of the two orator-politicians (cf. *Dem.* 3.4), and the questions as to how and how far the man of action can usefully employ rhetoric are constantly raised. Plutarch's rhetorical self-display anticipates and gives answers to such questions.

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[53] Sourvinou-Inwood (1989) 136 and (2005) 296–303.

[54] On the instructive role of *oikeia* paradigms in Plutarch, see also *Praec. ger.* 825d; *Arat.* 1. Cf. [Plut.] *De lib. educ.* 14a.

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