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Atypical Lives: Systems of Meaning in Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus*

by

Joel Martin Street

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

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Committee in charge:

Professor Mark Griffith, Chair
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Abstract

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This dissertation takes Plutarch's paired biographies of Theseus and Romulus as a path to understanding a number of roles that the author assumes: as a biographer, an antiquarian, a Greek author under Roman rule. As the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus* makes clear, Plutarch himself sees these mythological figures as qualitatively different from his other biographical subjects, with the consequence that this particular pair of *Lives* serves as a limit case by which it is possible to elucidate the boundaries of Plutarch's authorial identity. They present, moreover, a set of opportunities for him to demonstrate his ability to curate and present familiar material (the founding of Rome, Theseus in the labyrinth) in demonstration of his broad learning. To this end, I regard the *Theseus-Romulus* as a fundamentally integral text, both of whose parts should be read alongside one another and the rest of Plutarch's corpus rather than as mere outgrowths of the traditions about the early history of Athens and Rome, respectively. Accordingly, I proceed in each of my four chapters to attend closely to a particular thematic cluster that appears in both *Lives*, thereby bringing to light the complex figural play by which Plutarch enlivens familiar material and demonstrates his virtuosity as author.

In chapter 1, I take the preface to the *Lives* as my starting point, placing particular emphasis on the cartographic metaphor by which Plutarch figures the writing of biography about these mythological figures as a journey outward into unknown territories. In accounting for the surprising and counterintuitive aspects of this metaphor, I argue that Plutarch is engaging with competing models of the world, correlated with generic distinctions, and resolving them by the rhetorical strategy of syneciosis, the alignment of opposites. He is, moreover, inviting the reader to attend closely to the spatiotemporal dynamics of the Theseus and Romulus narratives, which one can understand as a set of movements along various axes and which unfold both alongside and against the metanarrative journey upon which Plutarch imagines himself as embarking in the preface to these *Lives*.

In chapter 2, I build upon this spatial framework in order to explore the role of *opsis* (sight, vision) in Plutarch's approach to history and biography. Proceeding from Plutarch's intention, as he expresses it in the preface, to make the mythological material "take on the look of history," I argue that *opsis* serves as a thematic preoccupation for Plutarch in the *Theseus-Romulus*, both on the level of his biographical project and within the narratives of these *Lives*. In surveying incidents of sight in both parts, I note that way in which *opsis* can grant discursive authority to the one who sees something happen (most paradigmatically, a messenger such as Proculus at the

end of *Romulus*) but can also overwhelm or "captivate" viewers and deprive them of agency. Indeed, it is this twofold potential of *opsis* that informs Plutarch's nuanced model of how biography, myth, and history might "look."

For chapter 3, I turn to mimetic and imitative ideas in the *Theseus-Romulus* and underscore how Plutarch employs the recursive and iterative capacities of *mimēsis* to build large networks that serve to connect reader, author, and both biographical subjects in various ways. Since it is a term that can take a wide range of people and objects as "input" and "output," it appears in a particularly diverse set of circumstances in these *Lives*, and with a range of ethical evaluations that do not always align with the idea of ethical exemplarity implicit in Plutarch's project in the *Parallel Lives*. At the same time, engagement with mimetic behavior is a key respect by which Plutarch differentiates his two biographical subjects in the *Theseus-Romulus*: the former is heavily bound up in imitation, especially in his relationship to Heracles and his institution of the crane dance on Delos, while Plutarch emphasizes the latter's special status as founder of the new city of Rome by describing him as fundamentally non-imitative.

In the final chapter, I turn to the motif of *lēthē* (forgetting) in the *Theseus-Romulus*, taking as my starting point *Theseus* 22, where Theseus neglects to change the sail on his ship to indicate his survival and Aegeus kills himself in the mistaken belief that his son is dead. I contend that Plutarch's version of the story, which explains Theseus' lapse as the result of his joy, relies on the pseudo-etymological link between joy (*chara*) and (*choros*) that Plato lays out in *Laws* II (645a). Broadening my focus, I look to the rest of the *Theseus-Romulus* and argue that Plutarch constructs a model of *lēthē* as a necessary element in cultural survival rather than a solely negative or destructive process. To reinforce this model, I suggest the familiar Ship of Theseus paradox at *Theseus* 23 as well as the trough in which Romulus and Remus survive at *Romulus* 7-8 as emblems of preservation in the face of change. More broadly, I contend that the survival, in Plutarch's own day, of Greek identity in the face of Roman domination is bound up with the capacity of *lēthē* to accommodate cultural transformation without annihilation.

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Introduction

Cracking a Biographical Code

Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus* is a pair of his *Parallel Lives* that is notable for the anteriority of its subjects. For Plutarch, just as they would be for a modern reader, Theseus and Romulus are mythological figures, about whom any biographical information would have to be acquired by a scrutiny of rich and varied cultural traditions that would, in turn, yield tentative or uncertain historical conclusions. Our biographer himself, writing around the year 100 of the common era, finds them to be atypical targets for his biographical project in the *Parallel Lives* and, consequently, a reader in the twenty-first century cannot seek to interpret them without accounting for their oddity. An Athenian culture-hero and the founder of Rome, respectively, Theseus and Romulus stand out against the pairs of *Lives*[1] that one might see as more typical of Plutarch's biographical project, the bulk of whose biographical subjects lived between the sixth century BCE and the end of the Roman Republic.

The unusual nature of the choices of Theseus and Romulus also represents, however, an opportunity for us to better understand the underlying logic of Plutarch's approach to biography. Since, as I will note frequently, Plutarch registers this shift back in time as an expansion of or adjustment to his model of biography, the anteriority of the subject material also offers us the chance to understand with greater clarity where the essence of Plutarchan biography lies. This is bound up closely with the problem of rationalizing myth. After all, if myth and legend could be uniformly transformed into history by any consistent and reliable process, then the choice of subject matter would not necessitate great adjustments in the approach to biography. Even in antiquity, however, a prose writer such as Plutarch would find that much of his material cannot be resolved beyond a reasonable doubt. Unlike the modern reader, he would seem to have no doubt of the existence of a figure such as Theseus or Heracles, but the ability to gain access to the historicity of such individuals requires some tolerance for probabilities over certainties and, as he notes in his preface to these *Lives*, a pardoning attitude from these readers.[2]

Rather than a project of rationalizing, then, the *Theseus-Romulus* is at its core an expansion of the *Parallel Lives* into domains (myth, epic, poetry) that are under normal circumstances held distinct from the category of biography. I would argue, however, that the new turn apparent in this pair of *Lives* is in fact an aid to better understanding Plutarch's model of biography and of the uses of the genre. In particular, it should serve to remind the reader that Plutarch's corpus (comprising a number of *Lives,* most of them Greek-Roman parallels, and a large mass of surviving and authentic *Moralia*) has its own preoccupations and its own centers of gravity, and that Plutarch's texts can be the start, rather than the endpoint, of a great number of inquiries.

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1. Note that capitalized and italicized *Life* (and *Lives*) will refer to Plutarch's biographies.
2. *Theseus* 1-2.

After all, many readers come to Plutarch by virtue of his influence on later European authors. In the case of Montaigne, he is a frequently quoted source of fodder for the essayist's ruminations.[3] For readers of Shakespeare, he is also an indirect source through Thomas North's translation (itself a translation of Jacques Amyot's French translation from two decades prior) of overarching plotlines and of small turns of phrase.[4] Even for those interested more directly in the ancient world, one might expect that Plutarch is presented not only as a means of satisfying interest in other topics, but as himself a focus of interest. In practice, however, even classics and those disciplines most closely allied with it often turn the Chaeronean writer into a conduit for other interests and still struggle to contextualized his words within the texts to which they belong and, in turn, his texts within the broader intellectual currents out of which they have emerged.

Although Plutarch's fate and esteem have improved greatly within the discipline of classics within the past decades,[5] it might be helpful to note how the generalist typically encounters Plutarch: in translation. Although Dryden's translations from the seventeenth century are widely available, contemporary translations of Plutarch's *Lives* are typically *Parallel* in name only.[6] The Penguin editions, for instance, sort the biographical material by milieu (Athens, Sparta, the Age of Alexander, Rome) and, in the case of one volume, includes Xenophon's *Constitution of Sparta*.[7] Another recent volume, called *Lives That Made Greek History*, takes the dismemberment one step further, omitting any of Plutarch's prefaces (in as much as they address the parallelism with the Roman biographical subject) and, in the case of Theseus, much of the mythological material that so drew Plutarch to the difficult project. The title is deceptive, then: if these short *Lives*, themselves halves of Plutarch's pairings, really "made" Greek history, one might at least expect them to appear unabridged.[8] Of course, these are not scholarly editions by any stretch, but the fact remains that Plutarch is encountered by the typical English-language reader in a thematic collection or, failing that, in the language of Restoration England. So while the scholars involved in the above collections may believe in the fundamental integrity of Plutarch's corpus, the contemporary marketplace for books makes clear the persistent headwinds against which good scholarship must struggle.

Bearing this context in mind, my own approach proceeds from a few fairly simple premises. The first is that parallelism, with apologies to Euclid,[9] is by necessity a textual "contact" be-

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3. See Calhoun (2015) pp. 13-48 for recent work on the "two Plutarchs" that appear in Montaigne and Plutarch's embedding of autobiography into the biography of others.
4. The best treatment remains Hongimann (1959).
5. See, however, below (p. 10ff) for the ways in which similar perspectives appear even in more specialized and serious works.
6. Because they are somewhat more expensive and include facing Greek and rudimentary apparatus critici, I am setting aside the Loeb editions in my argument here.
7. Talbert and Pelling (2005).
8. Romm and Mensch (2012).

tween the two biographical subjects, which Plutarch, after all, would introduce overtly as comparanda for one another. Second, the underlying anatomy of the *Lives* bears recognition as well as interpretations that reconcile the parts to one another: outside of the predictable biographical material, a pair of *Lives* may consist of prefatory material, concluding comparisons (*synkriseis*), and, as I will repeatedly note, all manner of digressions from the overarching topic. As something of a counterpoint, my last tenet is that the texts of Plutarch's *Lives* allow, or even demand reading not exclusively as a derivative text or a source text, but rather as a literary text that can stand in any variety of relationships with other texts, whether they are part of Plutarch's corpus (*Moralia* and portions of other *Lives*) or works by other authors.

Implicit in this last assertion is the underlying drive to understand Plutarch as an author, and to reinforce the sense that inhabits a meaningful political and intellectual context that will necessarily inform the subtlest crannies of his textual labyrinths. If one is encountering a mere curator or collector, one expects to understand their criteria of inclusion, but I will posit that a fully authorial reading demands that the elements of the text be read alongside one another. Certainly, I do not have the space in this introduction to propose a full theory of the author,[10] but I would suggest at the very least that an author will, whatever his or her stated intentions, shape the elements he assembles to a degree beyond simply selection and arrangement.

The nature and extent of this authorial imprimatur will, of course, vary from author to author and from text to text, but the reader will by and large be steered toward a reading that integrates the elements that comprise the text rather than searching solely for their sources. Accordingly, I will begin my readings of Plutarch not with a passage from the *Theseus-Romulus* itself but rather, perhaps counterintuitively, with a brief discourse on cryptography to be found in the first half of the *Lysander-Sulla*, a pair of *Lives* that is much more typical in the historicity of its subjects. While my readings in the chapters to come will, of course, emerge from key passages in the *Theseus-Romulus*, I bring in the description of a Spartan technology of cryptography, called the *skytalē*,[11] as a kind of proof of concept for my approach to reading those *Lives*.[12]

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9. See the definition in *Elements* 1.23.

10. See however Talamo (2013), Irwin (2002), North (2001), Ede and Lunsford (2001), Trimbur (2000), Stillinger (1991), Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1989), Pappas (1989), Foucault (1977), Benjamin (1973) and Barthes (1967).

11. Throughout the text, I will use transliteration and italicizing where the Greek term functions syntactically as part of an English sentence. This includes a few fairly common terms (*synkrisis, mimēsis*) that might appear elsewhere in less markedly Greek forms ("syncrisis," "mimesis"). When, on the contrary, the Greek is matched with an English translation and is placed in a block quote or parentheses, I will retain the original Greek. Depending on context, some Greek could be seen as either explaining my claim *or* as generally translated by my English, and so both transliterated and untransliterated Greek may appear within parentheses.

12. Compare the reading of the plot of Poe's "Purloined Letter" for theoretical models of

Plutarch's biographical subject in this passage, the Spartan admiral Lysander, is being summoned, which sets the author up to diverge from the narrative mode to a non-narrative digression. In this case, the subject matter is the technology by which the Spartans communicate privately: amid growing criticisms of Lysander's character, the Spartan ephors have sent a message, encoded by means of this system of *skytalē*, that orders him to leave the Hellespont and return home to them in Sparta. Indeed, this message itself is called a *skytalē*. The word had originally referred to the pieces of wood with which the messages were encrypted and decrypted, but here refers to the very message that Lysander receives. In a relatively intuitive sort of semantic extension,[13] however, the document itself had also acquired the name in the typical Greek of Lysander's day (19.5-7):[14]

> Ἔστι δὲ ἡ σκυτάλη τοιοῦτον. ἐπὰν ἐκπέμπωσι ναύαρχον ἢ στρατηγὸν οἱ ἔφοροι, ξύλα δύο στρογγύλα μῆκος καὶ πάχος ἀκριβῶς ἀπισώσαντες, ὥστε ταῖς τομαῖς ἐφαρμόζειν πρὸς ἄλληλα, τὸ μὲν αὐτοὶ φυλάττουσι, θάτερον δὲ τῷ πεμπομένῳ διδόασι. ταῦτα δὲ τὰ ξύλα σκυτάλας καλοῦσιν. ὅταν οὖν ἀπόρρητόν τι καὶ μέγα φράσαι βουληθῶσι, βιβλίον ὥσπερ ἱμάντα μακρὸν καὶ στενὸν ποιοῦντες περιελίττουσι τὴν παρ' αὐτοῖς σκυτάλην, οὐδὲν διάλειμμα ποιοῦντες, ἀλλὰ πανταχόθεν κύκλῳ τὴν ἐπιφάνειαν αὐτῆς τῷ βιβλίῳ καταλαμβάνοντες. τοῦτο δὲ ποιήσαντες ἃ βούλονται καταγράφουσιν εἰς τὸ βιβλίον, ὥσπερ ἐστὶ τῇ σκυτάλῃ περικείμενον· ὅταν δὲ γράψωσιν, ἀφελόντες τὸ βιβλίον ἄνευ τοῦ ξύλου πρὸς τὸν στρατηγὸν ἀποστέλλουσι. δεξάμενος δὲ ἐκεῖνος ἄλλως μὲν οὐδὲν ἀναλέξασθαι δύναται τῶν γραμμάτων συναφὴν οὐκ ἐχόντων, ἀλλὰ διεσπασμένων, τὴν δὲ παρ' αὐτῷ σκυτάλην λαβὼν τὸ τμῆμα τοῦ βιβλίου περὶ αὐτὴν περιέτεινεν, ὥστε, τῆς ἕλικος εἰς τάξιν ὁμοίως ἀποκαθισταμένης, ἐπιβάλλοντα τοῖς πρώτοις τὰ δεύτερα, κύκλῳ τὴν ὄψιν ἐπάγειν τὸ συνεχὲς ἀνευρίσκουσαν. καλεῖται δὲ ὁμωνύμως τῷ ξύλῳ σκυτάλη τὸ βιβλίον, ὡς τῷ μετροῦντι τὸ μετρούμενον.

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authoring and reading. See Muller and Richardson (1988), especially Lacan's reading in the first quarter of the volume.

13. Cf. how a Xerox is made by means of a Xerox machine.

14. Compare, in turn, Aulus Gellius' highly derivative account (17.9-15), where the practice is described entirely in the past tense and the Latin "surculus" is employed instead of the Greek term until the end. Compare Gellius' phrasing for the parts of Plutarch's explanation that I have underlined: “pari crassamento eiusdemque longitudinis” (7); “resolutio autem lori litteras truncas atque mutilas reddebat membraque earum et apices in partis diversissimas spargebat” (12); “atque ita litterae per eundem ambitum surculi coalescentes rursum coibant integramque et incorruptam epistulam et facilem legi praestabant. hoc genus epistulae Lacedaemonii skytalen appellant” (14-15).

> The *skytalē* is like this: when the ephors dispatch an admiral or general, making two round pieces of wood match exactly in length and width so their cross-sections fit one another, they keep one and give the other to the person dispatched. They call these pieces of wood *skytalai*. Accordingly, when they want to communicate some great secret, they make a parchment like a long narrow strap and coil it around the *skytalē*, leaving no interstice but pulling its surface tight around the document on all sides. After doing this they write what they like on the parchment just as it is surrounding the *skytalē*. But when they write, they remove the parchment and send it to the general without the piece of wood. After receiving it, he cannot read any of the letters, since they lack connection and are pulled apart, except by taking the *skytalē* that he has and winding the strip of parchment so that, with the spiral likewise restored, after placing what goes next after what goes first he can apply his sight in a circle to find what is continuous. And the parchment is called by the same name as the piece of wood, skytalē, as the thing measured is called by the name of the measurement.

As I will also do in the chapters to come, I have underlined here certain segments here in both Greek and in my English translation as a way of drawing closer attention to specific wording in a given passage and setting the stage for interpretive moves to follow. In the case of this passage, however, before examining the underlined segments, I will briefly examine earlier uses of the *skytalē* in Greek texts. Plutarch is, after all, writing about his subject (Lysander) and his topic (*skytalai)* from the remove of half a millennium: Lysander died in 395 BCE, and Plutarch in 120 CE. As a consequence of this temporal distance, and something that is indeed a frequently noted attribute of many of Plutarch's accounts, our author is neither the only nor even the oldest source to mention this cryptographic practice. On the contrary, both Pindar and Aristophanes furnish passages that merit examination.[15]

In the sixth of the Olympian odes, composed prior to Lysander's day, the poet Pindar calls the *chorēgos,* Aeneas, "an upright messenger, a message-stick of the fair-haired Muses" (*ἄγγελος ὀρθός, / ἠϋκόμων σκυτάλα Μοισᾶν*) (91). The image takes what appear to be two independent domains—poetry and strategic communication—and blends them together. If we construe the genitive with both nominative nouns, then Aeneas is both a metaphorical messenger and, by an added layer of metonomy, the means of encoding and decoding their messages. Certainly, one would be tempted to understand Aeneas as the second, decoding *skytalē*, but Pindar's figural complexity, along with his famous obscurity, means that it is possible to see some ambiguity in the image. Suffice it to say, in any case, the Theban lyricist figures Aeneas as a "medium" engaged in a process of strategic communication and who is entrusted to disclose it only to the correct party.[16]

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15. For cryptography in antiquity, see Leighton (1969) and Reinke (1962).
16. The third image in the sequence, of Aeneas as "a sweet mixing-bowl of resounding songs"

By the time of the Peloponnesian War, the practice had clearly entered into the Athenian imagination as well. In his *Lysistrata,* Aristophanes puts a Spartan herald, who claims that his erection is actually a *skytalē*, in dialogue with his Athenian counterpart,[17] who jokes that he must be carrying one as well (981-984):

Κι Τί δ' ἐστί σοι τοδί;
Κη Σκυτάλα Λακωνικά.
Κι Εἴπερ γε, χαὔτη 'στὶ σκυτάλη Λακωνική.
Ἀλλ' ὡς πρὸς εἰδότ' ἐμὲ σὺ τἀληθῆ λέγε.
Τί τὰ πράγμαθ' ὑμῖν ἐστι τἀν Λακεδαίμονι;

Athenian What's that you've got?
Spartan A Laconian *skytalā*.
Athenian If so, this is a Laconian *skytalē* too.
But tell the truth to me, as one in the know.
What are affairs like for you back in Lacedaemon?

The underlying joke, about the correspondence between the *skytalē* and the comedic phallus, is by no means a complicated one, but there is also a playful correspondence to the operation of the *skytalē* as Plutarch describes it. In a loose sense, the Spartan is "encrypting" his erection by calling it a *skytalē*, while the Athenian is attempting to "decrypt" it by claiming that he, too, (just like the recipient of a proper message) possesses a matching *skytalē* in the form of his own erection. Another layer of comedy arises, in turn, from the self-disqualifying ways in which the Athenian tries to "hijack" the message and gain the Spartan's confidence: he asks to be told what is happening back in Sparta while claiming already to be in the know, and he refers to the Laconian message-stick by the Attic form of the word (*skytalē*) rather than the Doric form, *skytalā*, that the Spartan herald has used just prior in their exchange.

In the references to the *skytalē* in both Pindar's epinician and Aristophanes' comedy, we can discern an assumption on the authors' part of a certain level of familiarity with the workings of the Spartan technology of encryption and decryption. Otherwise, both images of the *skytalē*, as phallus and as poetic and divine utterance, would go over the heads of their audiences. Indeed, even historical prose from the period of the Peloponnesian War also assumes a similar degree of

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(*γλυκὺς κρατὴρ ἀγαφθέγκτων ἀοιδᾶν*) brings the implement into the domain of song and symposium, and implies an open (yonic?) role for the *chorēgos* that contrasts with the closed and phallic role in the first two images. See also *Theaetetus* 209d for a very different image of the *skytalē*, which makes mention of it with respect to its "rolling" (*περιτροπή*), which is as proverbial as the rolling of the pestle.

17. See Henderson (1987) *ad loc.* for the identity of the Athenian interlocutor.

familiarity on the reader's part with the uses of the *skytalē*, although it would require less of an understanding of its workings than would, for instance, Aristophanes' exchange. In two examples from the prose tradition of the Peloponnesian War, both Thucydides' *History* (1.131) and Xenophon's *Hellenica* (3.3), the reader would need to understand that a *skytalē* is a means by which the Spartans transmit information among one another, but would gain little additional insight from understanding how the messages are encrypted by the sender and decrypted by the recipient.[18] This is far less knowledge than is required in the passage from Aristophanes, where the audience must know the shape and the cultural provenance of the *skytalē*, but it assumes a certain degree of familiarity nonetheless.

Upon returning to the age of Plutarch in this brief survey of the literary appearances of the word, we consequently become aware of what our biographer, writing many centuries later, does that we do not find in the earlier passages: he describes the use of the *skytalē* as a practice that might be fully unknown to his reader. On one level, there is nothing remarkable about this. Under the relative stability of Roman rule, Plutarch's Greeks would not have made frequent recourse to secret communications among their own, and so his giving the account of Lysander's recall from the Hellespont creates a notable opportunity for Plutarch to give a fuller account of the nature and uses of the *skytalē*. Indeed, to imagine that on some basic level Plutarch is doing, *mutatis mutandis*, something even roughly equivalent to, say, Xenophon would be to miss a good deal of the uses to which a skilled biographer is able to put his material. Plutarch, we might say, is not just forced to digress into a description of the *skytalē* by gaps in the knowledge of his audience. Rather, he can make use of this digression as an opportunity to point, as I will demonstrate, at the "encoding" and "decoding" implicit in the reading of literature.

After all, the roughly five hundred years of temporal distance between Plutarch's present day and the life of Lysander grants him the opportunity to describe cultural practices more fully; he is, we might suppose, keeping his ancient readership entertained with material with which they have, at best, a passing familiarity. We thus see an opportunity for Plutarch to make use of his creative approach toward the treatment of antiquarian material: the greater the gap between one's subject matter and one's own time, the greater the chances for explanatory digression, which can verge on necessity in the case of a technology unknown to the bulk of one's readership. We might thus say that temporal distance also constitutes an opportunity for exegetic digression, which puts Plutarch in the position to represent himself, in his authorial undertakings, as an explainer of general practices in addition to a narrator of specific events.

Of course, no one who has encountered Greek ethnographies of non-Greek cultures (say, Herodotus' description of Egypt in the second book of his *Histories*) would believe that Plutarch is unique in his tendencies toward exegesis. What is unique, in this case, is Plutarch's position

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18. All the above examples are from *LSJ s.v.* See also *Crassus* 32.5, *Agesilaus* 10.5 and 15.5. Most uses of the word in literature refer to the underlying meaning ("stick," "club") or to a kind of snake. See also Hornblower (1991) 1.131.

with respect to the Greek and Roman cultures that he inhabits, as a priest at Delphi, as a citizen of Rome, as a reader of Latin literature and, foremost from my perspective, as an author within the long tradition of Greek literature.[19] None of these capacities are entirely independent, however, and the common thread is his retrospective role as literary antiquarian, a theme that I will repeatedly explore in each of the four chapters to come. Indeed, it is within this context of defamiliarization due to a great temporal distance, wherein the *skytalē* is no longer an operative technology, that a cryptographic discourse like this one can function as an image of authorial hermeneutics, of reading and interpretation.[20]

At the risk of making a facile interpretive motive, we might suppose that the relationship of a reader toward one of Plutarch's texts (or of Plutarch toward one of Pindar or Plato's) is like that of the recipient of a *skytalē*. Whether the recipient is intended, unintended or even unimagined by the author, the notion of hermeneutic moves required to "decode" a text is an attractive one. As Anglophone readers in the first quarter of the twenty-first century, we may often lack the metaphorical *skytalē* with which to decode a text from antiquity. What we do have is Plutarch's account of the literal practice, which we can read with an eye to its metaphorical extensibility. In other words, the process of encrypting and decrypting is a useful way of generating analogies with problems of reading and interpretation; in returning to Plutarch's own description of the process, we can observe a few turns of phrase that touch on an interest in continuity and discontinuity, on the parallelism of the *Parallel Lives* project and, lastly, on the nature of literary representation and the representation of lived lives with written *Lives*.

Let us begin with the way Plutarch contrasts the experience of the encoded message, with and without the *skytalē* to decode it. In the former case, the letters are scrambled and "lacking connection" (*συναφὴν οὐκ ἐχόντων*), while in the later case the reader can "apply sight in a circle to find what is continuous" (*κύκλῳ τὴν ὄψιν ἐπάγειν τὸ συνεχὲς ἀνευρίσκουσαν*). Note the implications of this contrast: connection, continuity and sight are all correlated with one another, and together they allow for the reader to understand that which has been transmitted. On the analogous level of hermeneutics, we could see an integrated understanding of the text as continuous entity as one (if not the only) aim of integral interpretation. To literally "read around" would have been a literal condition as one encountered an actual *skytalē*-message, but a figurative model of circular reading can also serve as an image of the ways in which a presupposition of continuity allows for greater insight and interpretive depth.[21]

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19. See Cacciatore (2007), Bowie (2002), Preston (2001) and Pelling (1989) for the ways in which Plutarch negotiates these contexts. See also Boyle (2003), Forte (1972), and Phillips (1957) for broader surveys of the literature of the period.

20. See Plutarch's *De malignitate Herodoti,* especially 874b-c, for his scrutiny of a major precessor. On literary belatedness in Plutarch's era, see Dillon (1997) and Whitmarsh (2001) p. 1f.

21. One might think, for instance, of the familiar notion of the "hermeneutic circle," allowing one to understand part in terms of the whole and, alternately, the whole in terms of its parts.

Moving from texts as a general class to the structure of Plutarch's paired biographies, one can see in the creation of the matching *skytalai* another fruitful analogy. Just as the Spartans make sure the two pieces of wood are alike "so their cross-sections fit one another" (*ὥστε ταῖς τομαῖς ἐφαρμόζειν πρὸς ἄλληλα*), Plutarch picks biographical subjects with an eye to various kinds of correspondence. Although they cannot be seen as corresponding "exactly in length and width" (*μῆκος καὶ πάχος ἀκριβῶς ἀπισώσαντες*), the resulting biographies do furnish a kind of cross-sectional matching, to be narrated by the author both in the introductions to a pair of *Lives* and, more explicitly, in the formal comparisons (*synkriseis*) that follow.

Moving beyond the nature of Plutarch's biographical schemes, there is, lastly, a hint at the nature of written biography as a representation of the actual life lived. Noting that both the message and the encryption technology are called *skytalai* (*καλεῖται δὲ ὁμωνύμως τῷ ξύλῳ σκυτάλη τὸ βιβλίον*), Plutarch explains the metonymic shift on the grounds that "the thing measured [is called] by the name of the measurement" (*τῷ μετροῦντι τὸ μετρούμενον*). In this description, it would be difficult not to see a hint at the genre in which Plutarch is working in the composition of *Parallel Lives* like the *Lysander-Sulla* pair. As Arnaldo Momigliano notes, the written account of a life was called simply a *bios* (or *vita*) until at least three hundred years after Plutarch, when *biographia* emerged as the typical means of describing even an individual written work.[22] As a consequence, life and biography are co-referent in Plutarch's vocabulary, both described as *bioi*. As with the writers and readers of *skytalai*, we can see that there is a conflation of medium and message here, of what is conveyed with the means by which it is conveyed.

Of course, each of these hints of Plutarch's project does not line up elegantly. Rather, each of the analogies that I am offering to the reader puts Plutarch's literary "system" (author, text, and readers, both intended and unintended) into a differing set of relationships with the *skytalē*-system that Plutarch describes. There is consequently no unified and tidy conceit from which I can derive a master trope in the chapters to follow. These analogies do set the stage, however, for the core questions with which I wrangle in each of the four chapters to follow. Issues of parallelism and binary mirroring will be at the core of my first (as well as third chapters), those of vision and communication in my second; the third chapter also shows how the theme of mirroring allows a move from one-to-one matching toward larger recursive threads that verge on *mise-en-abîme*. Finally, in my fourth chapter, I will approach forgetting and remembering, and will thereby touch, from within the cultural plane, on the disruption and restoration of continuity that the *skytalē* technology enacts on a smaller scale.

We can thus see the way in which Plutarch's era furnishes new opportunities. After all, it is only once a practice such as the *skytalē* has become unfamiliar to his imagined audience (partly, we might suppose, because they are from a larger sphere than Pindar's or Thucydides' imagined

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22. Momigliano (1971/1993) p. 12. The change is likely related to a shift in meaning of the word *biographia* from a mass noun (referring to the act of writing and the genre) to a count noun (referring to an instance of the genre).

readership, and partly because the practice has grown obscure even near to its place of origin), that Plutarch may revive the concept and put it to new, literary ends. Cultural change, even when it takes the form of the obscuring of collective memory, thus furnishes a locus within which a writer of prose, indeed of what one might today call non-fiction, may do the fully creative work that one might suppose is denied to a mere cataloguer or curator of antiquities and miscellanies. Of course, there was nothing to stop Pindar from incorporating the *skytalē* as a metaphorical image for poetry, but the necessity for Plutarch of describing it in factual detail makes for a unique opportunity to set up thematic systems that may resurface elsewhere in a text or in his corpus.

Such possibilities are not alien to Plutarch's scholarship, but they are, as I have suggested above, often drowned out by the desire to move Plutarch firmly out of "creative non-fiction" and onto the trustworthy but largely ancillary reference shelf. Even the recent *Companion to Plutarch,*[23] which approaches the author's works along helpfully thematic lines, nonetheless devotes a large proportion of its space to the sources for his works. On some level, this speaks to Plutarch's position of posteriority in the timeline of classical literature; for an earlier author or text, such source study might be done more rarely and with a lower degree of precision and certainty. But Plutarch's surviving corpus is, regardless, too large and, I hope to demonstrate, too reflective of imaginative potential to be left primarily or reflexively to the practice of *Quellenforschung*.

To this end, I have found a useful attitude in the words of Philip Stadter, whose description of what we might call the "uses and abuses" of Plutarch sets forth his editorial perspective for *Plutarch and the Historical Tradition,* a collection that is now nearly a quarter-century old. Starting from a point that intertwines readership and authorial purpose, Stadter suggests that the reading of Plutarch as a source of literary interest and enjoyment is not a new development so much as a necessary revival of an earlier approach. "Plutarch," he notes, "composed pair after pair of parallel lives of Greek and Roman statesmen, not following a fixed plan, but moving from one to another as his spirit led him." After quoting, briefly, the beginning of the *Aemilius-Timoleon*, he reiterates that he "Plutarch wrote for his own improvement and pleasure, and that of his close friends."[24]

And yet, for those of us who are not Plutarch's intended audience, those "Roman senators and Greek landowners" who had made his acquaintance some eighteen-hundred years ago, there are bound to be questions about the value and meaning to be found in the careful reading of his works, whatever the categories of prose (biography, philosophy, literary criticism, history and historiography) to which they are assigned. Stadter, for his part, bemoans an earlier movement in philology toward *Quellenforschung*, which he saw as depriving Plutarch's writing of "independent value" in favor of an obsessive urge to trace "individual anecdotes, even individual sentences" to earlier texts, whether they have survived into modernity or are no longer extant. Of course,

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23. See Beck (2014)
24. Stadter (1992) p. 1.

Stadter's notion of "independent value" might pose more problems of interpretation than it resolves even in the case of the most canonical works of literature, but the central thrust of that introduction—that Plutarch's *Lives* deserve to be read in much the way they had been, as the efforts of an author rather than of a "mere" collector intent mostly on paraphrasing his great body of knowledge—at the very least makes room for literary reading of Plutarch's corpus:

> No longer seen as an annoyingly opaque but fundamentally simple screen hiding reliable bits of information, the Lives instead emerge as original works by a master of style, rhetoric, and biographical technique. The source-hunters' harsh solvents, which so often destroyed the work in the effort to probe beneath its surface, are gradually being replaced by more subtle non-destructive methods, which promise to reveal the delicate workmanship and intricate play of themes that Plutarch brings to his best work, and traces of which are apparent in even his most careless compositions. Simultaneously, they are increasing our understanding of the often complex historical tradition that Plutarch reinterpreted.[25]

What Stadter is pointing to when he writes of the "intricate play of themes" is, I argue, where the interest of literature so often lies: rather than thematic or expository, then, a work such as the *Theseus-Romulus* represents an opportunity to work through a variety of writerly ambitions, often reflecting compromises between the goal of factual explanation and the desire to explore the perplexities of human experience. If there were no tradeoffs involved, then the thematic relevance of these *Lives* might be easier to grasp, but in such a case their literary "play" might, by the same token, be not so delicate.

Indeed, if we indulge Stadter's metaphor of the restoration of artwork, in which "harsh solvents" that aim to clarify the picture actually distort it, we are led to ask ourselves a vital question: what are the appropriate means for bringing out the literary (that is to say, the artistic and imaginative) luster of Plutarch's corpus? Rather than stripping away, we might look for a focal point in the text around which a reader can frame subsequent interpretive moves. Stadter, for his part, finds a suitable point of entry in the preface to the *Aemilius-Timoleon*, and I have done the same in my reading of the *Theseus-Romulus*. Throughout the next four chapters, accordingly, I will place great weight on the preface to these *Lives,* albeit in a more extensive way and in response to a more oblique set of imagery offered up by Plutarch.

Indeed, this is my first "move" in aiming to interpret these particular *Lives* as integral works with significant literary merit. In assuming great importance for the preface of the *Theseus-Romulus* for the integral reading of that pair of *Lives*, I hope to present it as a concentration of images where the biographer engages with the concerns of the text as a painter would with a cameo miniature. Alternatively, to speak in spatial and kinetic terms (just as I will argue in my

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25. *ibid.* p. 2.

first chapter that Plutarch does), I will regard the preface for the *Theseus-Romulus* as a place of juncture for various lines of imagistic thinking that run, in various combinations, through the entirety of the pair of *Lives.*[26] Note, again, that I am treating the pairs as a meaningful unit for meaning, with the consequence that elements of interpretive problems and salient elements in one life should draw our attention to possible echoes or complements in the other.

As a consequence of this tendency toward integral readings, I have not begun by segmenting the text by subject (first *Theseus,* then the *Romulus*, for instance, as in a standard commentary) or even by life stages (first the childhood of both subjects, then their rise to power, as in Plutarch's own *synkriseis*). Instead, I have "filtered" each text through the lens of a series of themes, proceeding linearly where possible but hoping, at the same time, to reinforce the sense that there are lines of thought in the text whose workings are not easily traced by the logic of the overt structure of paired biography. Admittedly, Plutarch's imagined reader did not even have a codex (today's traditional "book") to facilitate easy cross-referencing, to say nothing of the hypertext environments of the twenty-first century in which an increasing proportion of literary engagement occurs. However, the kind of interwoven themes that I will trace are implicit in both the textile metaphor that underlies the notion of "text" and, in what makes for an especially felicitous conjunction, in the labyrinth elements of the Theseus story itself. As a consequence, I have structured each of the following chapters along the lines of certain thematic strands, which are often bound up with figural language and, most frequently, metaphor: spatiotemporal imagery in the first chapter, visual in the second, recursive threads in the third, and narratives of memory and forgetting in the fourth. I will introduce each of these themes in greater detail at the end of this introduction.

I do not seek only to untangle a few threads of imagery to show that it can be done. Instead, I hope to show that the intersections and tangles of the *Theseus-Romulus* help demonstrate the breadth and sophistication of Plutarch's authorship and authority. By the broader and older term, I mean something fairly close to the etymological root of the Latin *auctoritās*, the ability to "augment" preexisting material, to "wax" poetic and "eke out" a literary identity that is more than the sum of its parts. All of the words that I have chosen, derived as they are from the same Proto-Indo-European root,[27] point to a role of *author* not as a firsthand generator (cf. the Greek *authentēs,* "self-sending," on false analogy with which the English word "author" acquired its spurious "h"), but as someone who increases, enlarges or, in some meaningful way, causes preexisting material to expand and congeal into a new entity.[28]

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26. See Larmour (1988) for Plutarch's compositional approaches in these *Lives*.
27. For the source of these cognates to Latin *auctor/augeō,* see Pokorny (2005) p. 84f.
28. For uses and etymology of *auctoritās*, see Agamben (2003) and Winkler (1985) *passim*, as well as Benveniste (1973) pp. 205-214. For a post-classical perspective on the word "author," see Minnis (1984), which incorporates "false" etymologies as, nonetheless, elements in the medieval understanding of the word.

Without supposing that Latin-language concept such as *auctoritās* would have played any meaningful part of the intellectual framework of a Greek-speaking author like Plutarch,[29] we might nonetheless glean an important insight from this brief bit of etymological play: namely, that authorial identity is always generated in relation to prior texts and "atop" some preexisting field of material, whether the resulting work is as simple as the selection, arranging, and elabroation of preexisting material, or as complex as introducing some innovation in plot and figural language, authorial creation is always contingent on and subsequent to prior material. This relational principle means that a writer does not and cannot become an author simply by the features and attributes of his own work but instead depends for this identity, at the most basic level, on the broader literary contexts in which the work appears. Authorship is thus fundamentally intertextual. As seen from this perspective, literary authorship would be less of a demarcated zone within the use of language and more of a quality that authors and their texts acquire in relationship to the material on which they draw.

Accordingly, I will bring in relevant intertexts as a means to reinforce the integrity of the *Theseus-Romulus* as a single, albeit bipartite, literary work. This includes not only tracing a chosen theme throughout the body of this pair of *Lives* but also, where it can be instructive and clarifying, bringing in Plutarch's use of a similar figure in other texts, his use of different figures in similar ways and, when especially relevant, the appearance of similar figures in other texts from antiquity. Indeed, by exploring the possibilities that present themselves along each of these axes, it becomes possible to see the particularity, the interest, and the literary variegation of the primary text on which I have focused. Just as one might turn each of the knobs and toggles on a new piece of machinery, the reader equipped with such an approach brings in comparable texts, not so much to situate them within a canonical framework as to gain some sense of the matrix of possibilities at the author's disposal in the writing of a given text.

Lives and their Messages

Having up to this point used the *skytalē* as a point of entry for Plutarch's corpus (and in particular for the *Parallel Lives*), I will set it aside in order to focus on the pair of *Lives* on which I will focus in the chapters to come: the *Theseus-Romulus*. In choosing this particular pairing, I have aimed not for one that is typical for the project of the *Parallel Lives*, as the *Lysander-Sulla* is in many ways, but instead for one that brings the phenomenon of antiquarianism—distance from one's material and the resulting defamiliarization—to an extreme point among the surviving *Lives*.[30] Indeed, Plutarch's own rhetoric, particularly in his preface to these *Lives*, frames this as

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29. See, however, the notion of "amplification" (*αὔξησις*) in Greek rhetoric. Aristotle's treatment of the term appears in *Rhetoric* 1368a10-29. Its essence, as he sees it, "is in pre-eminence, and its pre-eminence is of good things" (*ἐν ὑπεροχῇ γάρ ἐστιν, ἡ δ' ὑπεροχὴ τῶν καλῶν*).
30. There was, as well, a *Life of Heracles*, mentioned by Gellius at the start of his *Attic Nights* (1.1).

an exceptional "expedition" into a qualitatively different territory for biography.

This raises the question, in turn, of what use a set of readings of these atypical lives could have. After all, if mythological content makes the *Theseus-Romulus* in certain respects *sui generis*, we might be tempted, especially as modern readers, to see them as less use in understanding the larger, and partly overlapping, categories to which it belongs: prose, biography, Plutarch's corpus, and the *Parallel Lives*.[31] At the same time, there is no doubt that the pair belongs to each of these sets, which means that it can also help to understand the boundaries of some or all of them. In distinguishing myth from history, the frequently misused idea of "the exception that proves the rule" will come in handy: Theseus and Romulus are not quite fully historical, even by Plutarch's standards of history, and their inclusion within the project of the *Parallel Lives* requires the modern reader to adjust his understanding of the criteria and principles by which the belated biographer selects and conveys a written life.

As I have noted above, my general approach to Plutarch is fundamentally tropological, with a consistent eye on the through lines of figurative language that link his curation and adaptation of the material with which he works. He is, as much recent scholarship makes clear, wearing a great number of hats even in his capacity as prose author: historian, biographer (with an interest in character and ethics), antiquarian, Middle Platonist, and so on.[32] Indeed, the number of roles that Plutarch plays both in his writing (for instance, biographer vs. ethnographer) and, we might say, "around" his writing (Roman citizen vs. priest at Delphi) should spur us, as among the newest of his readers, toward closer attention to the texture, contour and detail of his prose.

In reading him, those accustomed to Greek of five centuries prior will not be confronted with an entirely unfamiliar language,[33] but they will certainly notice, foremost, that abstract language appears more frequently than in the earlier orators and historians, producing a denser verbal canvas from which they can find interpretive strands. To borrow a metaphor from R. Rawdon Wilson, I am aiming to work with systems in which "certain concepts constellate others into cognitive networks based on affinity and kinship,"[34] demanding that the interpreter shift focus between the governing concept and the subsidiary images that help explain it:

> The paradox of the hermeneutic circle is evident: the whole cannot be understood without first understanding the parts; the parts, without first understanding the

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31. For editions and commentary, see Ampolo and Manfredini (1988) (henceforth = *A&M*), Ziegler (1969) and Flacelière and Chambry (1957).
32. See e.g. Beck (2014). Mark Beck expresses, in the introduction, "the hope of doing justice to Plutarch's immense literary and intellectual legacy" (p. 6). In the first section of this *Companion*, (pp. 11-57), accordingly, are essays that summarize Plutarch's political, literary and philosophical roles within his milieu.
33. See Yaginuma (1992) on Plutarch's language.
34. Wilson (1990) p. 27.

> whole. Conceptual networks are instable and (as families) come together and drift apart. The process of constellation and reconstellation takes place over and over again. A ribbon may itself become, within a discourse that has undergone a paradigm shift, a Maypole. Families of concepts often extend and contract, by marriage and remarriage as well as by birth and death, and in so doing they acquire (or lose) cognitive affinities. That cognitive families periodically require new maps, or call for fresh cartographical expression, should not appear unduly surprising.[35]

In the case of the *Theseus-Romulus*, it is in the resulting "constellations," which are by and large associative rather than analytically consistent, that the bulk of Plutarch's authorial work becomes evident to us. Where, for instance, the focus of recent work by Greta Hawes has been on the process and tactics of transforming myth into history or related genres, both in these *Lives* and in other texts that rationalize myth,[36] I am interested here in the webs and kaleidoscopic patterns that become possible. After all, to bring myth into the "domain" or "light" of history (the governing metaphors with which I will contend in the first and second chapters, respectively) is to generate a whole array of new spaces in which Plutarch cannot help but achieve some number of literary aims, whether reflections on his own experience, meditations on his culture, or simply opportunities to show his critical acumen at work in somewhat unfamiliar "territory."

Indeed, it is with this idea of *terra incognita* that Plutarch begins the *Theseus-Romulus* and I begin the first of the chapters to follow.[37] Extrapolating from the idea that genre and material can be "mapped" onto space (and, moreover, that literary writing is not unlike the drawing of maps), I will trace a set of correlations along various spatiotemporal axes. I will also correlate these axes with relationships of political authority and authorial power, relying on the classical rhetorical idea of metalepsis to sustain this set of extended correlations. With those themes in mind, I examine in the second chapter various scenes and images of sight in the *Theseus-Romulus,* with special attention to how models of vision line up with Plutarch's ideas of history: this includes both history as "sight" and instances of sight as historical evidence.

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35. *ibid.* p. 28. See also the conversation between David Bohm and the Danish artist Louwrien Wijers, collected in Bohm (2004). On analogy with the hologram, Bohm offers a model that is at least as fanciful as Wilson's, wherein the elements that comprise a larger structure will demonstrate "enfoldment" within its "implicate order" (p. 129). By this analogy, given parts of a text cannot help but be representative of a larger whole, a principle that I have taken to heart especially when examining the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*.

36. See Hawes (2014).

37. Here I should note that my chapter titles, each of them drawn from Shakespeare's *Sonnets* (68, 46, 130, 122), are intended mostly as playful suggestions of each chapter's material. They do not determine or reflect my argumentation there in any significant way.

From here, I move in the third chapter to a more wholesale reading of the *Theseus-Romulus,* or at least the beginnings of one. In that chapter, I will foreground Plutarch's own use of *mimēsis* and will trace its uses along only a few axes (personal exemplarity in contrast with object representation, text *qua* representation as opposed to texts about imitation). I am not interested in an exhaustive understanding of Plutarch's use of the word, but in the resulting mimetic "system," which demonstrates a remarkable degree of complexity. Indeed, I suggest, the reader's attention is drawn not so much to the general ideas about *mimēsis* to be found in the broad veins of Greek philosophy as to the complex arising out of Plutarch's mimetic terms, which serve as a "function" that allows for inputs and outputs and thereby allow him to generate large, recursive thematic threads within the framework of the biographical text. Where the Spartan encryption system relies on simple matches between objects, that is on two *skytalē* that are functionally interchangeable with one another, the textual systems of the *Theseus-Romulus* depend upon all manner of likenesses (similarities, comparisons, and dynamic imitations) to create any sense in the reader of the continuity—*to suneches*—toward which the reader's focus is drawn.

Indeed, this question of continuity in the face of rupture is the theme of my final chapter, where I explore forgetting as both a negative process, bound up in and ensuring disconnection and disjointedness, and a positive development that allows for cultural continuity in the face of change. Taking as my starting point Plutarch's treatment of the story of Theseus' forgetting to hoist a sail in *Theseus* 22, and finding where possible a set of thematic parallels in the *Romulus,* I argue that Plutarch positions the story so that it can speak for his own cultural milieu, in which Greek culture persists in spite of the changes bound up with Roman hegemony. Of course, such persistence is not the same as perfect preservation, and from this final point, I circle in my reading back to the same set of themes—loss, historical gaps, and imperfect boundaries and limits—that motivate Plutarch's project and which had appeared even in the preface of the *Theseus-Romulus*.

If each of these chapters seems thematically independent to some degree, this is no accident. While I treat this prefatory material as an entry point for my readings of the *Theseus-Romulus*, I also contend that this pair of *Lives* has no master trope to "govern" or uniformly rationalize its quirks and peculiarities. In its fundamental organization around multiple figures as well as its emergence from an environment of cultural and generic hybridity, the *Theseus-Romulus* is a message without a single cipher. In seeking to "decode" it without losing the purposes and cross-purposes to which Plutarch is applying myth, we must accordingly recognize the text as a domain where meanings compete and interrupt one another, and whose vitality rests upon a rich field of literary and linguistic figuration.

Chapter 1
"A map of days outworn": Spatiotemporality in the Theseus-Romulus

I begin this first chapter where Plutarch begins his *Theseus-Romulus*: with the cartographic simile that figures his choice of Romulus and Theseus as a journey to the edges of a map. Rather than continue with the narrative flow provided by Plutarch's biographical framework, however, I will pause. In as much as I am not attempting a straightforward commentary on these *Lives*, I will first explore the theoretical implications of Plutarch's simile, establishing the ways in which it both counters and reinforces traditional models of the explorable world. I will thus argue that the cartographic simile is not simply a programmatic statement that addresses Plutarch's attitude toward the writing of *Lives* about mythological figures but also a statement of worldview that exists in dialogue with the world narrated in the body of the *Lives*. Accordingly, I will conclude the chapter with readings of the early segments of both the *Theseus* and the *Romulus*, in order to demonstrate the ways in which the spatiotemporal world of Plutarch's generic "journey" informs his narration of the mythological journeys of both biographical subjects. In order to support this argument by means of close reading of Plutarch's text, I will pay particularly close attention to the metaphors embedded in his Greek vocabulary, which often figures concepts and relationships along various spatial axes.

By its very nature, a founding myth combines both centering and displacement: it demands the former, in as much as it narrates the founding of a city that has developed concentrically around some single point, and yet it also effects the latter for its audience, since the narrative will begin at a point greatly displaced in time from the period of narration. That is to say, a founding myth combines both geographic centering and temporal displacement. The former is in evidence as the myth identifies the origins of an institution or political entity within a finite and compact space: in *Theseus* 24.1, the newly consolidated Athens, which is "one town" (ἓν ἄστυ) and "one populace of a single city" (μιᾶς πόλεως ἕνα δῆμον) and in *Romulus* 9-11 the founding hero's *Roma Quadrata* that prevails over his brother's planned city. Temporal displacement is also a necessary feature of such stories, as there is a gap between the narrating present and the narrated past that constitutes the entire time that the institution or city has existed.

In the case of the *Theseus-Romulus* text,[38] from the perspectives of author (Plutarch), the initial addressee (his friend, the Roman politician Quintus Sosius Senecio), and the broader audience, be it ancient or modern, these two properties of a founding myth engender a certain tension. The narratives point inward toward two major cultural and political centers of Plutarch's day, but they also point outward (that is, away) from the present day to a distant past, in which histor-

38. I have followed Duff (2011) in regarding Plutarch's introductions as belonging to the pair of *Lives* and not to the first of the pair, to which it is typically attached in descriptions and citations. This is especially evident in the *Theseus-Romulus*, where Romulus is introduced before his Greek counterpart. See also Stadter (1988).

ical and mythological material are commingled but not (Plutarch has it) inextricably intertwined. The retelling of a founding myth is thus both a spatially centripetal and a temporally centrifugal enterprise, an attempt to turn back toward cultural origins that simultaneously takes its audience on a narrative "journey" away from their own present.[39]

Indeed, Plutarch himself makes the most of this tension between the centripetal and the centrifugal in the beginning of the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus* (1.1-3), in which he offers up our cartographic simile:

> *Ὥσπερ ἐν ταῖς γεωγραφίαις, ὦ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων, οἱ ἱστορικοὶ τὰ διαφεύγοντα τὴν γνῶσιν αὐτῶν τοῖς ἐσχάτοις μέρεσι τῶν πινάκων πιεζοῦντες,*[40] *αἰτίας παραγράφουσιν ὅτι 'τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα θῖνες ἄνυδροι καὶ θηριώδεις', ἢ 'πηλὸς ἀιδνής',*[41] *ἢ 'Σκυθικὸν κρύος', ἢ 'πέλαγος πεπηγός', οὕτως ἐμοὶ περὶ τὴν τῶν βίων τῶν παραλλήλων γραφὴν τὸν ἐφικτὸν εἰκότι λόγῳ καὶ βάσιμον ἱστορίᾳ πραγμάτων ἐχομένῃ χρόνον διελθόντι, περὶ τῶν ἀνωτέρω καλῶς εἶχεν εἰπεῖν 'τὰ δ' ἐπέκεινα τερατώδη καὶ τραγικά, ποιηταὶ καὶ μυθογράφοι νέμονται, καὶ οὐκέτ' ἔχει πίστιν οὐδὲ σαφήνειαν.' ἐπεὶ δὲ τὸν περὶ Λυκούργου τοῦ νομοθέτου καὶ Νομᾶ τοῦ βασιλέως λόγον ἐκδόντες, ἐδοκοῦμεν οὐκ ἂν ἀλόγως τῷ Ῥωμύλῳ προσαναβῆναι, πλησίον τῶν χρόνων αὐτοῦ τῇ ἱστορίᾳ γεγονότες ...* (1.1)
>
> As in geographical works,[42] Sosius Senecio, where historians crowd what eludes their knowledge on the outer edges of the tablets, and they write on the side such

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39. Cf. *Republic* 6, 499c-d: "If, indeed, some necessity compels those who are paramount at philosophy to take care of the city, this either happened in the boundless stretch of the past, or is happening now in some barbaric place, outside of our own supervision, or it will take place in the future." (*εἰ τοίνυν ἄκροις εἰς φιλοσοφίαν πόλεώς τις ἀνάγκη ἐπιμεληθῆναι ἢ γέγονεν ἐν τῷ ἀπείρῳ τῷ παρεληλυθότι χρόνῳ ἢ καὶ νῦν ἔστιν ἔν τινι βαρβαρικῷ τόπῳ, πόρρω που ἐκτὸς ὄντι τῆς ἡμετέρας ἐπόψεως, ἢ καὶ ἔπειτα γενήσεται.*)

40. Contrast Strabo 2.5.34: *τοῖς δὲ γεωγραφοῦσιν οὔτε τῶν ἔξω τῆς καθ' ἡμᾶς οἰκουμένης φροντιστέον ...*

41. The image is clearly associated with the periphery, as in Hesychius' gloss on *πηλὸς ἀιδνός*: *περὶ τὴν Λιβύην ἐστὶ τόπος. καὶ τὸν ὁρίζοντα ὠκεανόν* (2192). For the connection between mud and Ocean, see Plutarch's explanation in *De Facie* 941b: *βραδύπορον γὰρ εἶναι καὶ πηλῶδες ὑπὸ πλήθους ῥευμάτων τὸ πέλαγος*, cit. Romm (1992) p. 21f, n. 38. Compare Tacitus *Agricola* 10 on the "mare pigrum et grave" in the area of Thule.

42. Or "maps." See Strabo 1.1.11 on Anaximander's first *geōgraphikon pinaka* and the distinction with the *gramma* of Hecataeus. Cf. Aristagoras' *chalkeon pinaka* in Herodotus 5.49 and Branscome (2010) on Herodotus setting himself in opposition to Aristagoras as a metanarrative intervention. See also *A&M ad loc.* on "l'inserimento di descrizioni geografiche in opere storiche" in Polybius 3.57-9 and 12.25.

> explanations as "the parts beyond are feral, waterless sandbanks" or "unknown mire," or "Scythian tundra" or "solidified sea"; similarly, in my writing of *Parallel Lives*, having traversed that span of time accessible to probability and fit for factual history to go through, I would be right in saying about what comes prior, that "the parts beyond are marvels and matters fit for tragedy; poets and writers of myth graze them,[43] and they no longer have assurance or clarity." And when, after publishing my account of Lycurgus the lawgiver and Numa the king, I thought it would not be unreasonable to move on to Romulus, having gotten close to his times in my inquiry/history ...

Plutarch's simile constitutes a bold rhetorical move: he is comparing his own authorial undertaking to two activities that are undeniably distinct from his actual project of composing the *Parallel Lives*: first, the practice of geographic mapmaking, which copes with the existence of unverified, "elusive" domains by means of certain conventional marginal explanations (*aitiās paragraphousin*) and second, to the geographical investigations by which the *oikoumenē* is explored and, as a corollary, the edges of knowability are established. The former is particularly explicit (*hōsper ... hoi historikoi ... houtōs emoi*), but the latter is evidenced primarily by a correlation among Plutarch's lexical choices: he presents the material about which he writes as a terrain (*ephikton ... kai ... basimon*) and describes himself as traversing it (*dielthonti*). Of these two geographic metaphors,[44] the former is foregrounded by the structure of simile, while the latter is "hidden in plain sight" as part of a familiar conceptual metaphor whereby an activity is figured as a journey.[45]

In this case, of course, the journey is *biographiā,* the writing of lives in textual form. Indeed, we can read this second simile as an assertion of authorial agency greater than that exercised by mapmaker-historians: facts about peripheral/liminal regions of the world "elude" these historians, who are forced as a consequence to compress (*piezountes*) the edges of their representations and append their explanations (*aitias*) for the lack of any greater detail. While the mapmakers within the simile are themselves carrying out an activity, they seem to have exhausted their own space for making marks, much less their knowledge of the terrains to be mapped.

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43. Alternately, we could see a geopolitical image: the poets do not simply graze, but indeed "inhabit" or "administer" these regions.

44. Along the lines of Roman Jakobson's model of metaphoric and metonymic poles in "Two Aspects of Language and Two Types of Aphasic Disturbances in Fundamentals of Language," (1956), I am considering simile to be a kind of metaphor, not to be removed from that category by any overt language of comparison ("as in"). By extension we might say that the analogy is the use of metaphoric language for an argumentative purpose.

45. See Lakoff (1987) p. 435. The explicit use of "conceptual metaphor" where they often simply speak of metaphor is made necessary by the need, in analyzing literature, to distinguish conceptual metaphors—which are both "fossilized" and "essential" to a language—from the rhetorical, authorially foregrounded figures in a literary text.

Moreover, although Plutarch joins himself by means of simile with these mapmaking historians, by a closer examination of a set of interrelated conceptual metaphors I will demonstrate that he is framing his own task as not only distinct from, but even more positive than mapmaking.[46]

By positive, I do not mean precisely that the task is more culturally prestigious than geograpy and mapmaking, but rather that the task registers as "high" on a set of interrelated axes generated by Plutarch's own rhetoric and the conceptual metaphors that operate systematically in the Greek language. First, one need only consider the primary meanings of the comparative form *anōterō*: what is left for the mapmaker is marginal, whereas the material left for the literary author to work with is both temporally "earlier"[47] and, in the basic spatial sense of the word, vertically "higher."[48] The tension between Plutarch's task and that of cartographer grows still more pronounced if we consider a third sense of *anōterō*, familiar to anyone acquainted with Xenophon's *Anabasis*: the word can mean "upward" and, because of the basic nature of topography, "more inland."[49] Whereas the edges of the map represent a downward motion away from familiar *terra firma* toward degraded landforms and coagulated bodies of water, these conceptual metaphors cooperate to suggest that the generic "edges" of Plutarch's biographical project bend upward toward an elevated past, with all the non-spatiotemporal associations that elevation conveys, including control, superiority, and even divinity.[50]

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46. For this joining of oppositions, see Fineman (1986) p. 37 on the figure he calls "cross-coupling": "Rhetoric gives many names to this troping of trope—*synoeciosis*, *antimetabole*, *metathesis*, *contrapositum*, *conjunctio*, *commistio*, *chiasmus*—all of which refer to some way that language manages noticeably to redouble with a difference the complementary similarities of a figurality based on likeness." See also Quint. *Inst.* 9.3.64 on *sunoikeiōsis*, which he defines as a "coniunctionem ... quae duas res diversas colligat."

47. For the temporal meaning of this comparative, cf. Plato *Cratylus* 396c and, in Plutarch's corpus, *De sera numinis vindicta* 559a: *τὸ δὲ πολλὰς πόλεις διαιροῦντα τῷ χρόνῳ ποιεῖν μᾶλλον δ' ἀπείρους ὅμοιόν ἐστι τῷ πολλοὺς τὸν ἕνα ποιεῖν ἄνθρωπον, ὅτι νῦν πρεσβύτερός ἐστι, πρότερον δὲ νεώτερος, ἀνωτέρω δὲ μειράκιον ἦν*. Like *Theseus* 23, this is a mention of the so-called *auxomenos logos*. Cf. also Latin *maiores* (sc. *natu/annis*).

48. Contrast with *meta/meteōros*, an apparent contradiction of our correlation of verticality with priority: in fact, the latter is not a simple comparative, but rather a compound of the preposition with the root of *airō* ("raise.") See also Romm *op. cit.* p. 178f.

49. See, for instance, Strabo 6.1.1 (*Συβαρῖται μὲν οὖν ἐπὶ θαλάττῃ τεῖχος ἔθεντο, οἱ δ' οἰκισθέντες ἀνωτέρω μετέστησαν*) and 7.3.15 (*εἰσὶ δὲ καὶ ἄλλαι νῆσοι πολὺ ἐλάττους, αἱ μὲν ἀνωτέρω ταύτης, αἱ δὲ πρὸς τῇ θαλάττῃ*). The sense in such passages seems to waver between "inland" and "uphill."

50. Lakoff and Johnson *op. cit.* pp. 435-7 on the conceptual metaphor wherein "control is up; lack of control is down." For one example, note Whitmarsh (2001) p. 1: "Greek literature was not, in my view, 'in' or 'under' (i.e. contained by, subsumed by) Rome; nor, for that matter, was it 'above'

We can thus conceive of two opposed systems: each element of the one system in polar opposition to the other, while each set is richly interconnected by the links among various semantic domains (spatial, temporal, etc.).[51] In order to assign a name to these extended alignments of metaphors, I will borrow a term cited by Plutarch's rough contemporary, the Latin rhetorician Quintilian, in his *Institutiones* (8.6.37-9). The term is *metalēpsis* (translated into Latin as *transumptio*), by which Quintilian signifies a trope that works by combining two, more familiar tropes together. Quintilian's own example is illustrative: referring to Cheiron (the Centaur Chiron) with the word *hēssōn* because both *cheirōn* and *hēsson* mean "worse" in Greek. In a transformative model of figuration, metalepsis is a two-stage process, taking the output of one trope as the input of another, with the result that the utterance and its intended meaning are at twice the distance.[52]

But while Quintilian characterizes the rhetorical figure of metalepsis as neither frequent, nor appropriately subtle, nor characteristically Roman ("et rarissimus et improbissimus, Graecis tamen frequentior"), the underlying concept of interconnected or aligned figuration remains quite useful when one is wrangling with systems that bridge multiple semantic domains. Although I am suggesting a multidirectional set of associations, rather than a unidirectional one, I will employ the concept of the "metaleptic chain" to convey that each domain is referenced, by the rest, whether directly or indirectly, and in a fairly consistent way.

It is worth mentioning that these two chains (prior time, central position, higher eleva-

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or 'beyond.'" In the case of the Greek language, consider the sense of certain compounds in *ana-*: in Plutarch, e.g., *εἰς τὴν ἄκραν τιμὴν καὶ δύναμιν ἀναβιβαζομένων* (*Cato Maior* 16.4); *εἰς θεῶν τιμὰς ἀνάγοντες* (*Numa* 2.3); *τῶν πολιτῶν τοὺς μὲν εἰς τιμὰς καὶ πίστεις ἀνῆγε* (*Numa* 16.4).

51. For a lucid treatment of the ways in which polarity operates across structures of variable conspicuousness in the works of Pindar, see Hubbard (1985). For spatial extremity, see Romm *op. cit.*, pp. 172-214 and *passim*, as well as Rehm (2002) pp. 156-167 on the peripheral and eremetic setting of *Prometheus Bound*, whose imagery Plutarch's cartographic simile seems to echo: *χθονὸς μὲν ἐς τηλουρὸν ἥκομεν πέδον, / Σκύθην ἐς οἶμον, ἄβροτον εἰς ἐρημίαν* (1f). Although Purves (2010) treats an earlier phase of Greek literature than Plutarch's, one connection she draws (pp. 66-96) between the end of Odysseus' life in inland travel (as Tiresias prophesies in *Odyssey* 10.247-299) and the beginning of prose-writing is in contrast to Plutarch's image (inland and posterior, rather than outward and prior) but, at the same time, evocative of the transition from poetry to prose with which Plutarch is working. See also Romm. *op. cit*. p. 74.

52. See also Cousin (1967) p. 102f on the origins and courtroom semantics of the Greek term: "État de cause ainsi appelé, parce qu'il y a translation d'une affaire d'un juge à un autre juge, d'un lieu à un autre lieu, d'un temps à un autre temps, d'une peine à une autre peine, d'un supplice à un autre supplice, d'une forme de jugement à un autre jugement."

tion, and greater status on the one hand, and on the other, what is later, peripheral, vertically lower and subject to power)[53] is operative in contemporary English as much as in Plutarch's Greek. Anglophone modern students of Ancient Greek are likely to be puzzled momentarily by the notion that the noun *archē* can mean both "beginning" and "rule," but they are equally likely to be dulled to the conceptual metaphors of space and time that operate when one describes someone's status in contemporary English. In the Catholic Church, for instance, one may speak of the Pope ("father"), cardinals ("pivotal men") or a mother superior. By the same token, we may speak of vital figures in government or in society as a whole as "central," "high priority," or "condescending."

Before we imagine our two metaleptic chains as purely distinct, it is important to note that Plutarch twists them around one another by means of his simile, in which he compares his task to that of a mapmaker working on the periphery of the map.[54] There is, in other words, a tension underlying this passage, albeit one that is implicit whereas the most familiar examples of paradox and antithesis are explicit.[55] Still, the conjunction of opposing elements is easily legible, if we are willing to lay them out in the form of a chart, placing both of our metaleptic chains in a row (the first for the vehicle, and the second for the tenor) and placing each of the polarities in a column:

	horizontal space	vertical space	temporality	power
Vehicle: spatial, the edges of map	outer, distant (*τοῖς ἐσχάτοις ... παραγράφουσιν*)	lower (*πέλαγος πεπηγός*, etc.)	later (*τοῖς ἐσχάτοις*)	*less powerful than ... ?*
Tenor: temporal, earlier material	inner, proximate (*προσαναβῆναι, πλησίον*)	higher (*ἀνωτέρω*)	earlier (*ἀνωτέρω*)	*more powerful than ... ?*

The tenor and vehicle of Plutarch's simile thus bring together binary oppositions within three spatial and temporal domains, to which I have appended a fourth (power over/subjugation under)

53. For mapmaking and power, see Nicolet (1988) and Wood (2010), pp. 67-85.
54. See Hubbard *op. cit.,* p. 9: "Polarity in Pindar is seldom a matter of simple disjunction: it may include structures of doubleness, ambiguity, mutual supplementation, alternation, transition, or even dialectical mediation (= a third term uniting contraries)." As a corollary, one might also note that simile is seldom "a matter of simple conjunction," in as much as it can effect a union of opposites.
55. Take, for instance, Heraclitus' famous "the way up and the way down are one and the same (*ὁδὸς ἄνω κάτω μία καὶ ὠυτή*) (DK B60); cf. 8, 48, 62, 65, 67 etc.

as an extrapolation on the linguistic grounds I have described above.[56]

I am not, to be clear, arguing that Plutarch's harnessing of these metaphorical linkages necessitates a certain kind of "deconstructive reading," wherein the author's biographical project cannot help but be sabotaged or derailed by the joining of these oppositions. Similes may compare two things on the grammatical level (*geōgraphiai* and the writing of biography), such that the reader can imagine a number of related "equations" or comparisons (Plutarch as mapmaker, the *Theseus-Romulus* as the edge of the map, and so on),[57] but their function is not merely to transfer attributes from a more understood domain to a less understood one. As a consequence, to say that the metaphor deconstructs itself would not so much be a claim as an assertion of a "deconstructive perspective," in which all metaphors deconstruct themselves simply by virtue of combining unlike objects and domains on the basis of only partial similarity.

One might speculate on whether Plutarch's choice of simile hints, at least in part, at the addressee Senecio's experiences during the Second Dacian War,[58] but it is hard to imagine any ancient audience (whether individual or communal) for these *Lives* that would be conversant in history and mapmaking but somehow unversed in even such central figures of Greek and Roman myth as Theseus and Romulus. Of course, anyone who has read a philosophical poet like Lucretius should know that metaphoric language may be harnessed in a genuinely didactic, though potentially sophisticated, way: "as in X, with which you are familiar, also in Y, with which you are unfamiliar." To assume, however, that this is the basis, source, or proper aim of a simile is to shortchange the power of metaphor within a text, especially when a simile or metaphor of considerable length and detail is placed in so prominent a position as a preface, or prologue, or beginning of any sort.[59]

As do all beginnings, an introductory metaphor has pride of position;[60] as a consequence, it has the power to introduce not only its tenor (here, the biography of individuals from myth) but also those polarities and tensions that may appear and reappear throughout the rest of the text. To make this idea especially clear, I should make two points about genre. The first is that the opening of the *Theseus-Romulus* is typical for Plutarch's *Lives*, which may open with a narrative

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56. See the comparable polarities in Hubbard *op. cit.*: near vs. far (11ff) and early vs. late (60-70), as well as Whitmarsh's treatment of Dionysius of Halicarnassus *De comp. verb* 4.14 in *op. cit.* pp. 26-29.

57. Cf. West (1969), where he speaks of certain pairings within Vergilian similes as "irrational." While he largely avoids referring to them as paradoxical or contradictory, this terminology does imply that there is "rational" metaphoric language capable of avoiding such moments entirely.

58. Plutarch refers to the experience of Trajan's forces by the frozen Danube in the *De Frigido* 949e (1992). For Sosius Senecio's career and involvement in the expedition, see Puech (1992) p. 4883.

59. See Duff (2011) pp. 216-224.

60. In Plutarch, see Rosenmeyer (1992).

beginning (a "bare opening")[61] but which are frequently introduced to the reader by a prologue. The second thing to remember is that such non-narrative introductions to a life or pair of lives is not an option for the mythographer or historian: when Theseus and Romulus appear in, say, the *Bibliotheca* of pseudo-Apollodorus or Livy's *Ab Urbe Condita*, they are part of a continuing and extended plot, already in progress when one they enter upon the narrative "stage." Plutarch, on the other hand, by virtue of writing the history of individuals (biography), has the opportunity to set a fuller, dedicated stage for the individuals about whom he writes. As a consequence, we should regard such passages as constituting their own textual arena within a larger work, packaging together the issues that inform and shape one's reading of the work by means of both explicit and implicit figuration: that is, by rhetorical simile and conceptual metaphor.

In the case of the *Theseus-Romulus*, this introductory material is not (or at least not only) an apology, akin to the mapmaker's *aitiā*, for any problems that will arise as Plutarch undertakes to bring mythological figures into the historical-biographical fold of the *Parallel Lives*. Rather, it is also a means by which the author can introduce those polarities that predominate and interrelate in the *Theseus* and *Romulus* narratives as well as, more generally, in his biographical project: center and periphery, power and powerlessness, past and present, visual and linguistic representation,[62] tragedy and prose, and myth and verifiable history. Within less than one hundred words, Plutarch has laid a groundwork for each of these polarities, in light of which the *Theseus-Romulus* can be read and understood less as a recapitulation of highly familiar stories, and more as a frequently novel engagement with the tensions of Plutarch's complex cultural world, which not only retold but also re-appropriated the narrative myths that it had inherited from both the Greek and Roman traditions.

In introducing these polarities, there is one that I have left off my matrix, although it is strongly suggested within the map simile: this is the distinction between truth and falsehood.[63] This is, after all, a polarity we might regard as orthogonal to the other polarities, and which does not therefore align with either of these metaleptic chains. After all, Plutarch is not suggesting that there is anything false about the map in contrast to the truth of his biographical project, or that there is anything inherently true in the past to correspond to the falseness of the present. Instead, he is suggesting that the sheer distance of the past from the present makes possible a correspondingly large gap between the scale of accumulated mythological lore and the capacity of the historian (biographer, mapmaker, etc.) to separate truth from falsehood. This, indeed, is the crucial point of correspondence that allows the metaphoric connection between biographer and *his-*

61. *ibid.* 237ff.
62. Consider the differences in spatiotemporal terminology in an image as opposed to a continuous text: the former has planar directionality but no explicit temporality, while the latter (especially in the form of a scroll) correlates "back" with "up," "forward" with "down."
63. See Detienne (1967) among many others; cf. Hubbard *op. cit.* p. 100ff on the binary of *alātheia* and *pseudos* in the works of Pindar.

torikos, both of whom are prevented by distance from performing to perfection the task of separating truth (*alētheia*) from falsehood (*to pseudēs*). This is not the entirety of Plutarch's approach to truth, and indeed I will suggest in my reading of the *Theseus* that he aligns truth with the "positive" ends of these binaries, but this is less a consistent trend than a felicitous correlation.

A Convex World

If each of these binaries is beyond the scope of a single book, it would be foolish to consider the sum of them as an appropriate focus for this chapter. With that problem in mind, I frame the interpretation of the *Theseus-Romulus* that I undertake in this chapter through the lens of the above chart. First, I will argue that Plutarch's introductory metaphor does not (and in many respects cannot) fully counter a general propensity, in evidence throughout this pair of *Lives,* to view the past as central and more elevated than the present; this is apparent whether one regards the past as properly historical or mythological. It does, however, at least partly situate this pair of *Lives* within a tradition in the literature of antiquity that figures the past as geographically peripheral space. To support this notion of tradition, and in keeping with Tim Whitmarsh's assertion that Greek-ness and Roman-ness (and "Latinitās") are malleable and dynamic categories,[64] I will survey a handful of examples from both Greek and Latin literature that figure the past as either peripheral *or* central from the perspective of the author's present.

Of course, throughout the narratives of the *Theseus-Romulus*, as I have noted, spatiotemporal elements are hardly a passing concern: as founding myths, they concern themselves with individuals whose founding acts are both preceded by and followed by movements across a broader domain than that of the locus of foundation. Indeed, as Claude Calame has demonstrated in the case of *Theseus,* it is possible to schematize such narratives as a series of such movements over the course of narrated time.[65] In the reading of this pair of *Lives,* then, itinerary and topography reveal themselves as inevitable and ubiquitous elements of founding myth, and not simply a metaphoric register that moves to the background as one moves from the introduction into properly biographical material. At the same time, Plutarch's text projects an additional journey onto the paired lives narrated therein: this is the journey of the author, whose metaphorical movement toward the past (as described in the introduction) both precedes and determines the selection of Theseus and Romulus as subjects of biography. Indeed, in light of this recognition of this metaphorical itinerary alongside those narrated about Theseus and Romulus, the paired founding heroes become not merely ethical exemplars or objects of antiquarian study, but also indices of the inherent reflexivity of the biographical act.

Before moving onto these more abstract associations, I should address the cosmological implications of the metaphors I have described above, and in particular an alternate model. In her

64. Whitmarsh (2001) 1-38 and *passim.*
65. Calame (1990) pp. 289-396

anthropological study *Craft and the Kingly Ideal,* Mary Helms proposes a system of spatiotemporal alignments partly contrary to those I have proposed above: rather than correlating centrality with verticality, Helms argues that the cosmographies of traditional societies correlate horizontal, vertical and temporal remoteness because of their "qualitative interchangeability."[66] As a consequence, while temporal priority and vertical distance ("height") remain correlated (with many of the associations I have sketched out above), they are are tied not to a central point, but rather to points on the periphery of a cultural center. As she frames it, "geographical distance can provide cosmologically comparable points of contact or association with origins in some form or another," and, as a consequence, there are "associations between skilled crafting and artisans and concepts of ancestors and origins" that are "expressed through contacts between skilled artisans and geographically distant peoples and places."[67]

Indeed, if we were to accept the model that Helms proposes as the operative one in Plutarch's milieu and genre, then the map simile at the start of the *Theseus-Romulus* would be not so much an antithetical "cross-coupling" or syneciosis as a natural outgrowth of the metaphorical associations that link past with periphery. In this case, we would be reckoning with what we might call a "concave cosmology," in which a culture hero may attain fame or even divine status by traveling to and from geographical extremes that Helms frames as a bit like the edges of a bowl: they are "the ultimate point of geographical distance where sky and earth, the vertical and the horizontal meet."[68] Rather than ebbing into murk and waste, these peripheral regions rise up like vertical asymptotes. And while these sorts of *eschata* convey a kind of unboundedness in the form of ringing mountains and the vault of sky, they nonetheless pose insurmountable obstacles for the typical (that is, primarily "horizontal") traveler, who is not a culture hero, much less divine.

Let us suppose, for a moment, that this concave cosmology is the central one in the Plutarchan imagination, or even in the passage we have been exploring. We would, as I have suggested, assume a general metaphoric linkage between past, periphery, and verticality, with the consequence that the cartographic simile would not be a syneciosis—foregrounded both by the explicitness of simile and by its coupling of contraries—but rather a much simpler instantiation of a general set of associations that we would suppose to be part of the habitual mental framework of Plutarch's day. Helms' system of "qualitative interchangeability" would thus make the

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66. Helms (1993) p. 177.

67. *ibid.* p. 48. See also Helms (1988) for the foundations of this model of "qualitative interchangeability," in which distance along various axes can be understood as analogous or even indistinguishable.

68. *ibid.* p. 111. Anyone who thinks that modern societies have fully outgrown such misapprehensions would be surprised by attitudes in San Francisco, where the journey across the San Francisco Bay from the city to Berkeley (10-15 miles) is viewed in many circles as a comparable "trek" to the overland trip down to Silicon Valley (30-40 miles).

cartographic simile much less of a curiosity, in as much as it associates periphery with origins.[69]

There are two reasons, however, to reject the concave model as the underlying one in Plutarch's worldview. The first is linguistic: as I have shown above, the spatiotemporal prefixes in the passage (*ana-*, *pros-*, *para-*) as well as other vocabulary (*ta eschata*) suggest an alignment of past with centrality. Of course, one can only take linguistic argumentation so far, for fear of falling victim to some version of the etymological fallacy, by which linguistic patterns, even of varying degrees of salience to the speaker (audience, author), are treated as a necessary part of the "true" meaning of a lexeme or expression. Linguistic phenomena within any synchronic system (say, the Greek of an educated person in the first and second centuries CE) will have undergone various degrees of fossilization, and etymological kinship cannot alone argue for semantic relatedness remarkable to even a literate person. Take, for instance, the Latinate prefix *re-* in English, which to a native Anglophone could be hidden or even fossilized ("war reparations" "reference book") or productive and apparent ("We re-carpeted the living room"). Before making an argument about the meaning of a lexical element like this in any given set of utterances, one should look for additional information to support the connection.

Thankfully, Plutarch's text provides a second kind of evidence to corroborate my linguistic speculation: namely, imagery that runs counter to Helms' model of a primitive cosmology. For Helms, to begin with, the periphery is a place vital to the cultural center's desire to acquire outside objects. Certainly, she acknowledges the possibility of regarding the outside as *either* "a mystically powerful place of sacred superiority" *or* "a dangerous, chaotic, immoral or amoral, pre-civilized natural world,"[70] but her model of long-distance acquisition—in which objects are brought into the cultural center from the periphery—demands not only that the periphery be conceptually "higher" and closer to origins, but also that it serve as a sort of matrix for the importation of goods that benefit the center. This holds both for objects already distinct or valuable because of their association with origins as well as for raw materials amenable to skilled crafting. Whether the periphery is sacral and sublime, wild and dangerous, or simply bountiful and useful, its association with origins grant its products some kind of positive charge.

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69. "Within the perspective of skilled craft/trading/traveling and the transformative creation or acquisition of good things from afar, the most important cosomological characteristics of geographically distant space/time, whether chaotic and primordial or paradisiacal and beneficially creative, are those involving concepts of cultural origins, essentially because concepts of origins ultimately relate to issues of political authenticity and legitimacy. In addition, concepts of origins provide a common conceptual and symbolic link related realms of geographically distant space/time with realms of vertically distant space/time; concepts of origins conjoin the two axes into a single all-encompassing three-dimensional cosmological outside realm with common sets of supernatural or mystical qualities and powers, though not with common physical properties." *ibid* 46f.

70. *ibid* 46.

In Plutarch's cartographic simile, however, the images are for the most part not commensurate with any of these characterizations. Recall that he cites four images: heaps/sandbanks (*thīnes*), mud/clay (*pēlos*), frost (*kruos*), and the frozen sea (*pelagos pepēgos*).[71] There may in fact be a loose logic in evidence in this arrangement of images: the first is characterized by the absence of water, the middle pair by a mixing of earth and water that is nonetheless infertile (in the former case due to an excess of water, as in Xen. *Oec.* 16.11, and in the latter case because of low temperature), and the fourth by a whole body of water, albeit frozen solid.[72] The sandbanks might be populated by wild beasts (a literal translation of *theriōdeis*) and the frosty steppe, moreover, by Scythians,[73] but this hardly takes away from an overriding sense of barrenness. Indeed, it would be easier to say that the beasts are *especially* feral for living in the sandbanks and the Scythians, by the same token, are especially uncivilized for inhabiting the steppes, rather than to imagine either terrain as civilized or bountiful. It is not simply that Plutarch fails to describe these peripheral regions as having some bearing on or use for the center; rather, each of these regions is exceptionally lifeless or at least no boon to (or from the prospective of) the center.

Of course, if we do not wish to reject Helms' model wholesale, then we can argue that Plutarch's main cosmology represents a change from some prior "primitive" model. In practice, Romm's prior model contains the seeds of the later model to follow. On the one hand, there is a set of looming *peirata* that are more or less untraversable, as exemplified by the Pillars of Heracles.[74] On the other hand, such boundaries give way to Ocean that is unbounded (*apeiratos*), and which comes, over time, to be framed as potentially explorable, even as it devolves into fog and mud in a way consistent with Plutarch's language.[75] Such imagery joins images of land, sea and sky, but these elemental combinations do not so much constitute impassable "walls" for the traveler as they persist in the form of flat and uniform surfaces. As Romm points out, such images of the periphery of the world are indeed primordial, but this carries little suggestion that they are infused with energizing forces. Rather, their indistinct and indistinguishable essences seem almost to have eluded the shaping and separating energies of creation, persisting in a sluggish and entropic state.

Consequently, when Romm suggests that the archaic worldview, in which the *oikoumenē*

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71. See *A&M ad loc.* for parallels in Strabo (*πεπηγυῖα θάλασσα*, 1.4.2) and to describe the Scythians in Herodotus (4.28).

72. If one wished to impute any temporal sequence to these four images (in addition to simply being commonplace images for the edges of the earth), they would form a reversal of the seasons: from the depths of winter to the dry heat of summer. This would be an apt way of priming the reader for the temporal regression from Numa to Romulus that Plutarch will soon introduce.

73. See Hartog (1980) pp. 31f, 225-242 and Purves *op. cit.* pp. 131f.

74. Consider especially the mentions of the Pillars of Heracles in Pindar *Ol.* 3.43-5, *Nem.* 3.20-23, *Isthm.* 4.11-14, cit. Romm *op. cit.* pp. 17-20.

75. *ibid.* 20-31. See also Hardie (1986) pp. 293-335.

is surrounded in succession by *peirata gaiēs* and by a torpid, boundless Ocean, was supplanted in the time of Herodotus because of a pair of correlated shifts—from poetry to prose, and from abstract cosmology to firsthand *autopsia*—he is in fact suggesting a third model, successor both to the archaic image (which, being convex and for practical purposes land-bounded, is roughly equivalent to Helms') and to the intermediate (concave, Ocean-ringed) model. As in the intermediate model, the periphery is marked here by vertical and qualitative degradation, but rather than a uniform, abstract chaos, we are offered a varied sort. The climatic diversity of the barren *eschata* that Plutarch proposes in his simile would thus be a fairly predictable index of interrelated developments: increased travel outside the neighborhood of the Mediterranean, the post-Aristotelean prioritizing of observation over abstract models, and a shift from epic to prose as the dominant medium for what we might place under the broad header of narrative literature.[76]

If this is true, however, then Plutarch's simile is not simply an index of the worldview with the most credence in his age, but also an acknowledgement of the intellectual changes that have occurred between the prior treatments of such figures as Theseus and Romulus and his own day. After all, poetry and mythology are not merely implicit contrasts with the prose-historiographic tradition suggested by Plutarch's cosmology. Rather, they are also the explicit matter with which the simile deals: as Plutarch puts it, poets and mythographers "inhabit," "possess" and "reap the fruit of" (*νέμονται*) the generic terrain that he is now approaching in his motion toward the distant past. If, however, we trust Romm, then it is the very set of overlapping genres that Plutarch cites—poetry, myth and tragedy, all of them predating the prose-historiographic tradition—that served to generate the "primitive" (and concave) conceptual worldview that is, in turn, rejected by the vehicle of the simile here.

On one level, this placing of the poets in the periphery might appear to be a rhetoric gesture in keeping with the *Republic* and *Laws* on the part of an avowed Platonist, a rhetorical casting out of the poets to the periphery as a way of reinforcing the "purification" of myth that Plutarch will promise. In the same way, the parallelism between the beasts and Scythians of the vehicle and the literary material of the tenor imputes a certain amount of wildness and barbarism to those non-historical genres. But Plutarch's own fondness for myth and antiquarian material—in evidence not only here but also in many of the *Moralia*, such as the *De Pythiae Oraculis*—should give one pause before reading this movement as an expression of a rigidly anti-poetic strain of Platonism.[77]

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76. See *ibid* on Herodotus, 32-44, and on the subsequent tradition of fiction in dialogue with poetry, 172-214.

77. This is, of course, a separate question from the extent of Plato's own *agōn* with the poets, a problem made less pressing by the nearly four centuries that separate their lives. For Plutarch's relationship to Platonic ethics, physics and logic, see Dillon (1977), pp. 184-230. It offers, however, virtually no treatment of Plutarch's expressed views on poetic material of various sorts, for which see Hunter and Russell (2011) and Hillyard (1981), both of which are commentaries

It would be more helpful, then, to view this aspect of the introduction less as a wholesale rebuke of myth than as a way of reminding the reader of an earlier worldview alongside the one being proposed: if it is archaic poetic tradition that sees the periphery as positively charged and fruitful, then it is fitting that one would find the poets there, not only "reaping the fruit" of those not-so-barren terrains but even "administering" them on their own terms, as would a local ruler. Indeed, a bit like the case of an empire that behaves in a laissez-faire manner toward one of its colonies, the cosmology at which Plutarch's simile hints provides a place for even a conflicting tradition: while allowing the poets to inhabit those peripheral regions they regard as so rich, a prose writer such as Plutarch may perform those literary-historical practices that he has already named in the introduction to the *Theseus-Romulus*: inquiry, composition, publication (*historein*, *graphein*, *ekdidonai*). In finding a place for the poets on even this metaphoric map, he makes space for his own treatment of the founding myths without positioning this treatment in wholesale opposition to poetry, tragedy, and myth.

Convex and Concave Worlds in Other Literature

Of course, my own goal is not merely to demonstrate that Plutarch's simile can be read within cosmological, political, and poetic frameworks, but also to argue that it frames the biographies to come in a way that brings to light their engagement with issues other than the difference between myth and historical fact. What remains, then, is to see what kind of fruit these processes bear in the mythological field. Before doing so, I will examine a triad of passages drawn from Thucydides, Livy, and Juvenal that contextualize Plutarch's own "spatial turn" in his conception of his task and reinforce the sense that his assumptions are not *simply* post-Herodotean, Hellenic, or even, in Plutarch's own day, limited to prose. Despite their varied roles in larger literary structures, each of the passages thus demonstrate a shared interest in the question of how spatial and temporal distance interact with one another.

Let us begin with Thucydides. The passage with which I will start is found in the beginning (the so-called "archaeology") of his *History*, where the historian moves from admitting the limitations of his historical methodology in the face of a great span of time to explaining how it is possible that the least fertile areas can in fact be those that are most reflective of the past (1.1-2):[78]

> *τὰ γὰρ πρὸ αὐτῶν καὶ τὰ ἔτι παλαίτερα σαφῶς μὲν εὑρεῖν διὰ χρόνου πλῆθος ἀδύνατα ἦν, ἐκ δὲ τεκμηρίων ὧν ἐπὶ μακρότατον σκοποῦντί μοι πιστεῦσαι ξυμβαίνει οὐ μεγάλα νομίζω γενέσθαι οὔτε κατὰ τοὺς πολέμους οὔτε ἐς τὰ ἄλλα. φαίνεται γὰρ ἡ νῦν Ἑλλὰς καλουμένη οὐ πάλαι βεβαίως οἰκουμένη, ἀλλὰ μεταναστάσεις τε οὖσαι τὰ πρότερα καὶ*

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on the *De audiendo*.

78. Contrast Plato in *Critias* 110e on the supposed fertility of Attica in very ancient times.

> *ῥᾳδίως ἕκαστοι τὴν ἑαυτῶν ἀπολείποντες βιαζόμενοι ὑπό τινων αἰεὶ πλειόνων. ... μάλιστα δὲ τῆς γῆς ἡ ἀρίστη αἰεὶ τὰς μεταβολὰς τῶν οἰκητόρων εἶχεν ... διὰ γὰρ ἀρετὴν γῆς αἵ τε δυνάμεις τισὶ μείζους ἐγγιγνόμεναι στάσεις ἐνεποίουν ἐξ ὧν ἐφθείροντο, καὶ ἅμα ὑπὸ ἀλλοφύλων μᾶλλον ἐπεβουλεύοντο.*
>
> After all, in the case of events prior to these (the Peloponnesian War) and even earlier ones, it was impossible to discover them clearly because of the amount of time, but from the evidence it befalls me to trust in examining as far back as possible, I do not believe that great ones happened either in warfare or other affairs. It is clear that today's Greece was not in antiquity consistently inhabited, and there were migrations in earlier times and each of the peoples easily left their own land, always being compelled by greater numbers ... but the best land always had the most changes of inhabitants ... For because of the quality of land, greater power accruing to some people produced strife from which they perished, and at the same time they were plotted against more by foreigners.

Certainly, there are a few commonalities of vocabulary (the phrase *skopounti moi*, the use of *chronos* to refer to elapsed time) that might point to this passage as a partial source for Plutarch. But leaving these small elements of word choice aside, I should point out two major points of conceptual consistency with the introduction to the *Theseus-Romulus*. The first is the connection between restrictions on the knowability of the past and the nature of physical terrains. Of course, the latter are metaphoric in Plutarch, and literal here, but in both passages we see the author engage with the same underlying problem: that is, how does one write profitably about the distant past when the intervening millennia have been marked by change and upheaval?[79] Second, and perhaps more striking, is the syneciosis linking infertile terrain with the preservation of the past. Put another way, in both passages, terrains that are unsuitable for one purpose (biography there, agriculture here) will be fertile for another (myth there, history here). Strikingly, the example that Thucydides furnishes is Attica, whose autochthony, continuity with the past, and historical "legibility" are all a consequence of its being "thin-soiled" (*leptogeios*).[80] This is not to say that it does not have a mythological past, moreover, but rather the contrary: the same comparative lack of

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79. See also Aristotle *Problemata* 910a33 on the effect of one of the primordial floods on the character of various peoples. I will revisit this anxiety about continuity amid change in the final chapter. Compare also Freud's famous analogy with Rome in Freud (1930) p. 426ff.

80. See Ellis (1991) pp. 351-2 on "this seeming paradox." For mentions of Thucydides in Plutarch's corpus other than as merely source, see *De gloria Atheniensum* 345d, 347a-d and *Nic.* 1.1-5. See Pelling (2002) pp. 117-141 on the latter. Contrast also the territorial "recentness" of Egyptian terrain in Hdt. 2.5 and 2.9 and in *Numa* 18.4: *διὸ καὶ νεωτάτην χώραν οἰκοῦντες ἀρχαιότατοι δοκοῦσιν εἶναι καὶ πλῆθος ἀμήχανον ἐτῶν ἐπὶ ταῖς γενεαλογίαις καταφέρουσιν, ἅτε δὴ τοὺς μῆνας εἰς ἐτῶν ἀριθμὸν τιθέμενοι.*

change over time might also mean that. We might speculate, at the very least, that this mindset at least partially informs Plutarch's choice of an Attic hero as a Greek counterpart to Romulus.

Turning from Attica to Rome, I would point to Livy's *praefatio* as another prose passage that serves the same rhetorical function (introducing and explaining the problems in a historical undertaking) and engages with many of the same concepts and metaphorical systems: Livy, like Plutarch and Thucydides, is setting out to write a history "a primordio urbis" (pr. 1) and, like those other writers, has framed this as a process of sorting out historical truth in a mode not dissimilar from Thucydides' or Plutarch's: the pre-history of Rome in particular ("quae ante conditam condendamve urbem") is better suited to "poeticis ... fabulis" than the "incorruptis ... monumentis" of history (pr. 6). Like the other historians, Livy conceives of history as yielding to other genres as one moves back from the present to the past.[81]

There is a difference here, though: while the abstraction *chronos* in the Greek authors has an attenuating effect, wearing away historical evidence (though least of all, paradoxically, in infertile regions), for Livy the passing of time accumulates at least one thing: attempts at writing Roman history. Consequently, he describes the field of history-writing as "crowded" ("cum veterem tum volgatam," "in tanta scriptorum turba") and, in a way not unlike the fruitful and therefore changeable lands Thucydides contrasts with Attica, consistently assailed by "novi ... scriptores" hoping to overcome ("superaturos") their predecessors. Rather than peripheral, barren, and thinly populated, historiographic space for Livy is as dense and tottering as the city at the center of his historical narrative and of the world he knows, a claustrophobic place that threatens to leave a single writer "in obscuro." It remains to be answered whether this image of history-writing is a product of setting (Rome in the early first century) or of Livy's own disposition, but he shares at least one tendency with Thucydides at the outset of his own work: both passages imagine metaphorical *loci* as if they are literal, and both regard the dense, the burgeoning and the seemingly fruitful as more of an impediment than a help to the writer of prose.[82] Of course, Plutarch and Livy are moving in opposite directions in their broader works: the biographer narrates the trajectory of his *Parallel Lives* as running from the conventionally historical to the legendary past, while the latter has an authorial trajectory that runs downstream along with the passing of time. In these passage, however, there is a shared sense of the negativity of "crowding," either to be obviated by moving away or, in the case of Livy, to be endured as one initiates a larger project.

As a final comparandum to Plutarch, I offer a pair of passages from Juvenal's Thirteenth Satire. I do so partly because the satirist, who shared neither the language nor the genre of

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81. For comparanda in the historians, see Ogilvie (1965) ad loc. See also the later description of distant history as "res cum vetustate nimia obscuras velut quae magno ex intervallo loci vix cernuntur" (6.1).

82. But contrast the beholding of healthy exempla as "salubre ac frugiferum" (pr. 10). See Feldherr (1998) pp. 1-50 for recurrence of the "visual language of the preface" throughout Livy.

Plutarch, was nonetheless his contemporary, and partly because it shows how identifying the operation of a particular spatiotemporal metaphor can resolve a question of interpretation. Early in the satire (38-59), the speaker mentions pre-agricultural, Golden Age natives ("indigenae") whose upright behavior would seem laughable to his Roman contemporaries. This is a clear variation on the general message of this satire, which is one of *consolatio* and moral enforcement. Wrongdoing is now widespread, Juvenal admits, but ethical behavior remains the best option nonetheless. Later in the poem, however, he introduces what would be appear to be a rather different commonplace: the variability of norms and customs across geographic regions (162-5, 167-173):[83]

> quis tumidum guttur miratur in Alpibus aut quis
> in Meroe crasso maiorem infante mamillam?
> caerula quis stupuit Germani lumina, flavam
> caesariem et madido torquentem cornua cirro?
> ...
> ad subitas Thracum uolucres nubemque sonoram
> Pygmaeus parvis currit bellator in armis,
> mox inpar hosti raptusque per aera curvis
> unguibus a saeva fertur grue. si videas hoc
> gentibus in nostris, risu quatiare; sed illic,
> quamquam eadem adsidue spectentur proelia, ridet
> nemo, ubi tota cohors pede non est altior uno.
>
> Who marvels at a swollen throat in the Alps, or in Meroë at a breast larger than a chubby infant? Who is astonished at a German's blue eyes and blond hair twisted into horns with a greasy lock? ... To sudden birds of Thrace and a noisy cloud,[84] a Pygmy warrior runs, and then, unequal to the enemy and held by bent talons, is carried through the air by a savage crane. If you saw this among our folk, you'd be overcome by laughter; but there, where the whole army is no taller than a foot, no one laughs, even though the same battles are watched constantly.

Beyond the obvious theme—that different ethnic groups have differing appearances as well as expectations that derive from those differences—the connection to the overriding issue of moral degradation would remain unclear. With no explicit link, after all, the speaker has shifted from giving moral advice (telling the addressee that immorality has come to be disappointingly ubiqui-

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83. See Courtney (1980) ad loc. Line 166 is likely an interpolation. See also Keane (2007) pp. 32-35.
84. Hendiadys, for "a flock of storks."

tous) to a more general rumination on the variability of physical appearances across geographic space. As Edward Courtney has pointed out, however, this latter passage completes part of an analogy: "What is outlandish *gentibus in nostris* (171) is normal among the Pygmies, where everyone (173) is the same; likewise the whole *humanum genus* (159) is corrupt: i.e. we have this series, *gentes nostrae: Pygmaei* etc.: deformity = ? : *humanum genus*: criminality. What corresponds to the first item of the series? It must be the uncorrupted *indigenae* of 38, though Juvenal has not made this plain."[85] To extend this line of thought, we can see the spatial turn in 162ff as a metaphoric offshoot of the overriding argument of the poem, with the consequence that the degraded present and the "odd" outsiders are aligned in opposition to the morally elevated past and normative center.

Ultimately, the reader's ability to follow the thread of Juvenal's argument hinges on the ability to conceive of the past, as a now familiar line puts it, as "another country" whose metaphorical inhabitants "do things differently."[86] The question, as I have explored above, is whether the past is conceived of as a peripheral region or a central one with respect to the present, and Courtney's assertion of the latter alignment—that contemporary people are like a peripheral *gens*—is in keeping with the metaleptic systems I have suggested. But Juvenal's implicit analogy is no less unsettling than Plutarch's explicit syneciosis: a metaphor that equates Romans, in the era of Juvenal and Plutarch at the center of a vast empire, with far-off Germans, Egyptians and Pygmies is one, in the end, that challenges the centralizing worldview on which empire depends.[87]

A Geographic Reading of the Theseus-Romulus

At this point, I will undertake in the body of Plutarch's *Theseus* and *Romulus* what Courtney's observation in Juvenal 13 performs on a small scale: namely, to foreground the spatiotemporal elements of a text, and to show the way in which they provide forms of coherence that both reinforce and complicate the explicit discursive patterns and trajectories in evidence in that text. Just as Juvenal's commonplace observation about moral decline over time (38-59) resurfaces, implicitly, as an analogy to be filled out by the mention of various peripheral *gentes* in 162ff, a number of passages in the *Theseus-Romulus* literalize or otherwise supplement the cartographic simile with which this pair of *Lives* begins.

On the narrative level, we might expect both the *Theseus* (beginning in earnest, after the

85. *ibid* p. 535f. For geographic "turns" in Juvenal, see 2.1-3 (with a "glacialem ... Oceanum") and 159ff, 10.1-2, and 14.277-83. See also 7.98-105 for an indictment of history-writing following a long, and parallel, criticism of poetry.
86. Hartley (1953) p. 17.
87. Contrast, for instance, Hardie *op. cit.* pp. 66-83 and 346-375 on the Rome-centered worldview in the *Aeneid*.

prefatory material, at 3.1) and the *Romulus* to have roughly parallel structures: after all, in offering up Theseus as a suitable match for Romulus, Plutarch notes that both figures are a kind of founder (*πόλεων δὲ τῶν ἐπιφανεστάτων ὁ μὲν ἔκτισε τὴν Ῥώμην, ὁ δὲ συνῴκισε τὰς Ἀθήνας*) and that both emerged from circumstances that are illegitimate and "shady" (*anenguō kai skotiō*) (*Theseus* 2.1). This kind of narrative similarity creates, in turn, the expectation of a common "trajectory" in both *Lives*: from illegitimate conception, to recognition, to the act of political reorganization (whether founding or re-founding) to the consequences and repercussions of that organization, to death.[88]

As it turns out, however, the early segments of both lives (that is, before the reorganization of Attica and the founding of Rome) follow markedly different narratological arcs in Plutarch's treatment, a divergence for which there are two primary reasons. The first is the consequence of a vital, if obvious, distinction between the role of *oikistēs* and a participant in *synoikesis*: there is already an Athens at which Theseus may arrive (and which he may subsequently reorganize as part of a unified Attic state), while there is no Rome until Romulus builds his Roma Quadrata (and his brother founds his own city of Remonium) (*Romulus* 9.1-4). In this spatiotemporal perspective, then, the two narratives are less parallel than Plutarch's initial framing would imply: Romulus is a founder, a figure whose arrival must by definition precede the creation of his city, while Theseus, whatever his subsequent influence on the development of Athens, has a pre-existing destination in mind to which he may journey.

It is therefore particularly striking that Plutarch fails to maintain a firm distinction between founding (*oikismos*) and *synoikismos* on the level of terminology. Although the *synkrisis* makes it clear that one should not regard Theseus as an *oikistēs*, but rather as belonging to the category of immigrants (*metoikistai*) (4.2), we do see Theseus described with *oikistēs* (*Theseus* 1.2) in the introduction and as the grammatical subject of the verb *synoikein* elsewhere (2.2, 24.1). Conversely, while Romulus is described as the one who "founded" (*ἔκτισε*) Rome in 2.2, *synoikismos* is also used in reference to the actions that Romulus and Remus propose to undertake (9.4). Certainly much of this could be explained by a degree of slippage in Plutarch's vocabulary, in which a term of origination like *oikistēs* can be applied loosely and broadly (to refer to anyone with a good deal of sway over the fortunes of a *polis*) as well as strictly (as the founder of a city in contrast to a large-scale reformer). Indeed, such categorical slippage should not be entirely unexpected: unless no preexisting settlements factor into the resulting polis (which is the case for neither Theseus nor Romulus), founding and "reorganizing" may be difficult to distinguish in practice.

Indeed, as I will note in my final chapter, the problem of the so-called *auxomenos logos*, illustrated in the *Theseus* by the anecdote about the survival of his ship into Hellenistic times (23.1), allegorizes the difficulty of distinguishing political continuity from discontinuity.[89] It

88. See *A&M* pp. xviii-xxiii.

89. See Hansen and Nielsen (2004) on the distinction between *chōra* and *polis* settlement patterns (74-79) and on the nature of *synoikismos* (115-119); the latter section also notes the absence of

seems, consequently, that Plutarch's term *metoikistai* (an apparent *hapax legomenon*) blends the notion of *oikistēs* with *metoikos*: one could parse it either as a variation of the latter term, employed to highlight the parallelism of the two figures, or as something like "post-founder," comparable to loose expressions in English like "founder of modern Germany."[90] Either way, Plutarch is taking pains to accommodate the difference in the narrative arcs in the lives of the two figures while also attempting to paper over this same difference where parallelism is preferable to contrast. This is hardly surprising, in as much as Plutarchan parallelism, like metaphor or indeed any such claim staked on similarity, is as much about accounting for difference as it is pointing to similarity or identity.[91]

What is more, Plutarch's framing of the subjects at their beginning of their respective Lives makes for a difference that is worth noting. The *Theseus,* which begins in earnest by describing Theseus' paternal and maternal ancestry (*Θησέως τὸ μὲν πατρῷον γένος εἰς Ἐρεχθέα καὶ τοὺς πρώτους αὐτόχθονας ἀνήκει, τῷ δὲ μητρῴῳ Πελοπίδης ἦν*) (3.1-2), takes both the hero's existence and his family as indisputable facts, requiring none of the citation of multiple sources and choosing of the correct (or at least most plausible) explanation that recurs in the life. Plutarch does cite a few literary sources in 3.3-4 (as eclectic a trio as Hesiod, Aristotle, and Euripides!) but they are not set in opposition to one another, as one would do to suggest that the origins of Theseus are in any kind of serious doubt. Elsewhere, sources are brought in to illustrate debates about the facts about Theseus and Romulus, debates that the reader, having been warned of the temporal distance of the heroes, will be ready for. Here, however, they simply show the depth of the wisdom of Pittheus (Theseus' grandfather) as well as the breadth of Plutarch's reading.[92] There are no debates and, by extension, there is nothing to destabilize the reader's confidence in the "authenticity" of the figure conveyed. Plutarch had called the two figures *anenguō* at 2.1 (literally, "not vouched for"); the term hints at their births, which are not vouched for by any father, and in the case of Theseus any broader sense of the word ("not vouched for by reliable sources") seems impossible.[93]

This could not be more different from the *Romulus*, which begins not with the existence

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the abstract noun in earlier Greek.

90. Compare the use of *hoi metagenesteroi* in Diodorus Siculus 11.14 and 12.11, as well as Livy's characterization of Camillus as "Romulus ac parens patriae conditorque alter urbis" in 5.49.7, for which see Miles (1995) *passim*.

91. See Tatum (2010) pp. 217-235, Darbo-Peschanski (2000), Desideri (1992), Walsh (1992) and Frazier (1987).

92. Indeed, if Pittheus is a predecessor of Hesiod (3.3-4), then judging from Plutarch's own miscellanies and "wisdom literature," Pittheus would be not only Theseus' literal grandfather, but also Plutarch's literary one.

93. See Anacreon 113 for a use of the word used to mean "uncertain." The specific sense of "unwedded" or "born out of wedlock" is by far more frequent.

of the founding figure, but with the various debates about the origins of Rome: Plutarch starts the *Life* by saying that the question of who founded Rome and why "has not been agreed upon by writers of prose" (*οὐχ ὡμολόγηται παρὰ τοῖς συγγραφεῦσιν*) (1.1). On a metanarrative level, we might say that Romulus is indeed not *enguos*, in as much as Plutarch has not (or at least not yet) offered up any "surety" (*enguē*) of his existence. That is to say, it is Rome, not Romulus, that is the given here. Admittedly, the eponymous founder had been named in the prefatory material to the pair of *Lives* as the original target, to which Theseus was appended as an appropriate match (1.4-5), but in this passage it is as if Plutarch has taken several steps back in his perspective, beginning not with questions of Romulus' birth, but with the primacy of the "great name" (*mega onoma*) of Rome.[94]

Even more strikingly, this "great name" is framed as on a journey, "traveling among all men" (*διὰ πάντων ἀνθρώπων κεχωρηκός*).[95] One might see in this phrasing an echo of the description of Odysseus, who in his travels "saw the towns of many people" (*πολλῶν δ' ἀνθρώπων ἴδεν ἄστεα*) (*Odyssey* 1.3), a correspondence that reveals that Plutarch's aims are fundamentally unlike that of paradigmatic epic, where a hero (Achilles, Odysseus, Aeneas) is taken as a starting point. Whatever its sources, then, this *Life of Romulus* should not by any means be mistaken for Plutarch's attempt at a "Romulad." Rather, it is a prose text motivated, at least in part, by the reality of Roman predominance in the early centuries of the common era. Rather than simply recount the journeys of Romulus' day, Plutarch undertakes to account for the scale of empire in his own.

Second, we might regard the imagery here as an echo of the prefatory metaphor: if Plutarch and the mapmaker-historians to whom he compares his project are moving to spatiotemporal edges, the word and repute of Rome have also been journeying outward, as if the vanguard of the expansion of empire. Even before the parallelism between Theseus and Romulus can be activated by the reappearance of the latter figure, a more implicit parallelism—between the author's figurative journey and the march of *imperium*—has been established. Nor is this an idle correlation: as I have suggested above, Plutarch's project in the *Theseus-Romulus*, which brings "peripheral" poetic and mythological material into the fold of biographical prose, operates on much the same principle as the expansion of empire, which incorporates outside peoples and subjects them, to varying degrees, to its own identity and practices (linguistic, military, economic, etc.). It should come as no surprise that Rome, like the author, is on an outward journey.[96]

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94. Contrast the "givens" ("iam primum omnium satis constat") in Livy 1.1: the sack of Troy, the survival of Aeneas and Antenor, and so on. For Plutarch's attitudes toward the founder of Rome, see Hale (1985).

95. Cf. in Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* 1.4.7, where Alexander's "great name has come even to the Celts, and even farther" (*μέγα ὄνομα τὸ αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐς Κελτοὺς καὶ ἔτι προσωτέρω ἥκει*).

96. See also Livy's mention of Romulus in his preface (7), where "belli gloria" and the founder's descent from Mars are correlated for Rome.

Bearing in mind this pair of centrifugal trajectories, the strongly centripetal pattern of the early part of the *Romulus* is all the more striking. By centripetal pattern, I mean that Plutarch as narrator is moving inward from his initial, broad question—the origins of Rome—to a series of smaller circles, an infundibular structure that ends with Roma Quadrata and the death of Remus. First, as mentioned, there is a series of questions about those origins: whether Rome was founded by Pelasgians, who named it to signal their power (the Greek word is *rhōmē*) (1.1), or whether the city was given the name after various figures, who were called Roma (1.1-2.1), Romanus, Romus, Romis (2.1), or Romulus. In a way closely related to *figura etymologica*, this echoing metanarrative field calls to mind the mythological and tragic terrains that appear in the preface, which constitute a domain unverified by any historical criterion that allow for a good deal of variation but also factual confusion and narrative diffusion. Like the wandering Trojans in one of these accounts, Plutarch is willing to wander but ultimately intends to remain "when he finds the land to be good" (*ἀγαθῆς τε πειρώμενοι χώρας*) (1.3).

We only move inward from this broadest level to a second one by the agreement of who apply the "most legitimate story" or "most just reasoning" to determine that the city was in fact named for Romulus (*οἱ Ῥωμύλον τῷ δικαιοτάτῳ τῶν λόγων ἀποφαίνοντες ἐπώνυμον τῆς πόλεως*). Such a *logos* is powerful enough, in Plutarch's eyes, to preclude the other possibilities for Rome's naming, but it does not mean that those who concur are in agreement about it (*οὐ μὴν οὐδ' ... ὁμολογοῦσι περὶ τοῦ γένους*). The second level thus admits a large amount of variation about Romulus' descent: from Aeneas and Dexithea (2.2), from Roma mentioned earlier and Latinus, from Aemelia (daughter of Aeneas and Lavinia) and Mars (2.3), or from a "phantom phallus" that impregnates a daughter of Tarchetius (2.4-6). Even at this stage, then, the inquiry into Roman origins has not progressed as far as the opening passages of the *Theseus*-proper, which explain Theseus' paternity as facts that merit little debate (3.1).

This metanarrative narrowing is largely concluded when Plutarch arrives at the "account containing the most trustworthiness" (*τοῦ δὲ πίστιν ἔχοντος λόγου μάλιστα*), whose "most authoritative elements" (*τὰ κυριώτατα*) were transmitted to the Greeks by Diocles of Peparethus but which was repeated by Fabius Pictor; Plutarch admits that there are differences (*diaphorai*) between the two, but asserts that that they, unlike all the prior accounts, do agree in outline (*tupōi*) (3.1-2). At this point, then, the metanarrative shifts of the first part of the *Life* have at least settled into a coherent narrative neighborhood: whatever *diaphorai* appear from this point onward, none of them are as dizzying as a preponderance of founders or as strange as a *phasma daimonion*. Such contrasting structures (e.g. *οἱ μὲν ... οἱ δὲ*) and other ways of acknowledging disagreements among sources will recur through the very end of the text; take, for instance, 29.11 on the Poplifuga. At this point, however, such open-endedness does little to shake the reader's sense of a single sequence of events in the early history of Rome.

On the level of narrative, however, the *Life* is not yet fully a *Life of Romulus*, and it is indeed the consequence of two more *diaphorai*. The first occurs between Aemilius and Numitor (*γενομένης ... διαφορᾶς*) (7.1), and the second occurs between Romulus and Remus when, "setting out toward building a settlement they immediately had a quarrel about the space/location"

(ὁρμήσασι δὲ πρὸς τὸν συνοικισμὸν αὐτοῖς εὐθὺς ἦν διαφορὰ περὶ τοῦ τόπου) (9.4). Nor does the term have an entirely antithetical valence in the narrative as it did in Plutarch's metanarrative. Of course, any minor quarrels (*diaphorai*) among historians are resolved by a similarity in impression, while these disputes are resolved by physical violence, but all such processes contribute to this inquiry into Rome becoming a proper *Life of Romulus*. Before the conflict with Aemilius, the brothers are barely distinguished from one another (they are *duo paidas*, *ta brephē*, etc.), whereas this first narrative *diaphorā* puts them in asymmetrical positions that differentiate them on the level of plot (7-8): Remus is captured, and Romulus is to go to his aid. The effect of this *diaphorā peri tou topou* is, of course, more obvious: in committing fratricide in support of his "Roma Quadrata," Romulus emerges as the survivor of a narrowing process in operation since the beginning of the *Romulus*, one that eliminates both other narratives and other figures within the surviving narrative.

Again, we may see this beginning sequence (*Romulus* 1-9) as proceeding inward in a way complementary to the centrifugal imagery of the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*. Where the latter moves from historical answers to geographic "edges" of historical knowability, this sequence starts with simply a question—the origins of Rome—and proceeds to tighten its field until we are left with a founder and the *topos* of his founding. And where Plutarch suggests in the preface that myth is a wild and infertile domain, he even pauses his narrative here to treat the mythological as a prerequisite for imperial greatness in his own day: whatever the "dramatic and fictitious" (δραματικὸν καὶ πλασματῶδες) elements in the founding story Plutarch deems most plausible, the Romans "would not have advanced from here into such a point of power" (οὐκ ἂν ἐνταῦθα προὔβη δυνάμεως) without a divine (*theiān*) and even amazing (*paradoxon*) origin (8.7).[97] If the seemingly fictitious is projected outward at the beginning of the *Theseus-Romulus*, Plutarch has redeemed and re-centered it here on behalf of Roman preeminence.[98]

Romulus is thus a survivor of both metanarrative and narrative competition, and his own centrality comes at the expense of other founders (Roma and the like) and of his own twin. Within the broader framework of the *Parallel Lives*, however, there is one *oikistēs* with whom he remains in some kind of rhetorical competition: ... ἐφαίνετο τὸν τῶν καλῶν καὶ ἀοιδίμων οἰκιστὴν Ἀθηνῶν ἀντιστῆσαι καὶ παραβαλεῖν τῷ πατρὶ τῆς ἀνικήτου καὶ μεγαλοδόξου Ῥώμης. ("... it seemed right to counterpose and compare the founder of beautiful and much-sung Athens to the father of unconquerable and glorious Rome.") (1.5). This is a contest that Plutarch does not set out to decide: the two are not set side by side again until the *synkrisis*, and even there the reader finds no determination, as elsewhere, of a rhetorical "victor."[99] Here in the preface,

97. Cf. Livy praef. 7.

98. Cf. Livy 1.4-7; the narrative moments at which the *gemini* are distinguished into individual agents are identical, but the troping on *diaphorai* (as disagreement and physical struggle) is, of course, absent from this Latin account.

99. See Duff (2002) p. 257f on the structure of the *synkrisis*: there is a transition from the

moreover, the two heroes are strongly linked to their respective cities, which are differentiated in the description of their characters: Theseus' city is "beautiful and much-sung," but placed alongside epithets that hint at Roman martial and political supremacy, such praise of Athens might also hint at the ways in which its own glory has been limited by the passing of time. The Attic city is a beautiful place and is renowned not only *in song* but *for song* (in particular, its most distinctive genre of drama), but its political history is already half a millennium past its Periclean apogee.[100]

Theseus and the Recognition of Authority

This reopens the question of how Plutarch is able to make room for his "own" culture and for one of its heroes, Theseus. He is, after all, writing to a Roman politician and in a format that yokes Greece to Rome through the possibility of biographical similarities. The answer is not a simple one, but we can take as our starting point the first clause of the *Theseus,* which begins in earnest only after the prefatory material of 1-2 ends: Θησέως τὸ μὲν πατρῷον γένος εἰς Ἐρεχθέα καὶ τοὺς πρώτους αὐτόχθονας ἀνήκει ("As for Theseus, his father's side goes back/up to Erechtheus and the first autochthons...") (3.1). I have noted above that the biography takes Theseus, unlike Romulus, as a historical given from the beginning of his account, and the fact that this certainty is joined here with autochthony places Theseus on especially firm footing: neither his existence nor his Attic blood us under threat by the *diaphorai* of historians. In turn, the autochthony of "genuine" Athenians is verifiable both through mythological reference (the story of Erechtheus) and by such historical-ethnographic explanations as Thucydides' in his archaeology (1.1-2).[101]

Of course, Theseus is no more Athenian-born than Romulus could be Roman-born, but Plutarch models the trajectory that emerges from this fact—his birth in Troezen and his subsequent journey to Athens—as not only a journey inward, but also travel backward and upward. Whereas the "inward journey" in the *Romulus* is both metanarrative (from less to more plausible

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Romulus, arguments in favor of Theseus, and then arguments in favor of Romulus. "There is no general summing-up: the reader is left to make the final valuation."

100. Cf. *Il.* 6.348 and *H. H. to Apollo* 299, where the word is used to refer to fame that will follow the events of the narrative. Contrast Aeschines' *Epistulae* 4.2 (=Pindar fr. dith. 76.1), on Athens as "well-sung" (ἀοίδιμοι) and as the "anchor" (ἔρεισμα) of Greece; the latter characterization could not have had the same importance in Plutarch's day, even by the time of the city's Hadrianic revival. For Plutarch's relationship to the city, see Podelcki (1988). On Athenian singing, cf. Plutarch's *Nic.* 29 on the liberation and survival of Athenian soldiers after the Sicilian expedition through their singing of Euripides.

101. For Plutarch's treatment of Theseus, see Frost (1984). See also Brommer (1982) and Den Boer (1969) for broader approaches to the Theseus story.

narratives) and forward in narrative time, Theseus' path to Athens is upward (from seaside to inland city, bastard child to king) and, in a sense, back to a place of geographic and genealogical origins. Theseus, who has never been to Athens, is retracing in reverse his father's trip to Troezen (*εἰς Τροιζῆνα παρελθὼν*) (3.5).[102] Indeed, these elements of temporal reversion and vertical ascent, which are less emphasized in the early parts of the Romulus, are strongly suggested by the use of *anēkei* in 3.1: the preverb *ana-*, as I have illustrated above, can suggest both vertical height (and elevation in status) as well as temporal and spatial reversion. On his father's side, then, Theseus not only goes "back" to Erechtheus and the autochthonous Athenians, he also goes "up" to them: they represent not only a starting point for Athenian identity (and one impossible for a founder to attain with respect to the city he is founding), but also a pinnacle of status. Again, Plutarch's choice of terminology here conveys a fundamentally convex worldview, in which elevation, centrality and priority are all correlated as the positive ends of their respective axes.[103]

Two further aspects of the early segments of the Theseus narrative lend support to bolster this association: first, the naming of Theseus and his discovery of his own identity, and second, the path that Theseus chooses in his pseudo-homecoming. As with the emergence of Romulus out of his metanarrative and narrative rivals, these elements are not entirely unique to these particular *Lives*, but it is nonetheless possible to trace Plutarch's own rhetorical and metanarrative contributions. In this stretch of the Theseus narrative, he manages to generate multiple correspondences between his own position as biographer (at work here, again, distinguishing fact and mere *logos*) and the multiple journeys of Theseus (from obscurity in Troezen, to self-recognition, to recognition by the Athenians). Even without citing any major *diaphora* among the accounts of Theseus, Plutarch is able to project his bibliographical-historical goals onto the heroic narrative, "colonizing" just that space he had described in his preface as inhabited by poets and mythographers.

This process, I argue, is premised on Plutarch's explanation of Theseus' name. The name is a *nomen agentis* derived from the same root as *tithēmi*, and Plutarch treats it as referring to one of two actions, both performed by Aegeus, that bookend this segment of the narrative (4.1):

> *τεκούσης δὲ τῆς Αἴθρας υἱὸν οἱ μὲν εὐθὺς ὀνομασθῆναι Θησέα λέγουσι διὰ τὴν τῶν γνωρισμάτων θέσιν, οἱ δ' ὕστερον Ἀθήνησι παῖδα θεμένου τοῦ Αἰγέως αὐτόν.*
>
> Aethra bore a son, and some say he was immediately named Theseus because of the placing of tokens, others that he was so named later in Athens once Aegeus recognized im (as his son).

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102. See Walker (1995a) pp. 6-8.

103. See Calame op. cit. pp. 69-77. For models of homecoming in earlier Greek literature, see Rehm op. cit. pp. 76f and Kurke (1991) p. 15-34.

Rather than posing some danger to the general narrative, this point of variation constitutes a "double jeu étymologisant,"[104] a doublet that turns Theseus into a representation of two actions on his father's part that allow Theseus to attain his "proper" station in Athens: first, the placing of *gnōrismata* (a sword and a pair of sandals) under a hollow rock (3.6), and, secondly, his recognition of Theseus in front of the citizenry of Athens (12.5). Certainly, Plutarch presents these two explanations as mutually exclusive—Theseus *either* receives his name in Troezen or in Athens, as a newborn or as a young adult, from his mother's family or, presumably, his father himself—but there is in fact no disagreement about the identity of the original *thēs-eus*: it is Aegeus.[105]

That is to say, just as Astyanax in *Iliad* 6.403 is named for Hector's role as defender of Troy, Theseus is named (or re-named) not for any actions or purported properties of his own, but rather in commemoration of some attribute or action of the father's. Indeed, this is commonly understood to be the typical naming practice among the Ancient Greeks. Within the structure of language, however, where a name is also an attribute of an individual, such a principle can generate what we might call onomastic irony: given the outcome of the Trojan War, Astyanax quite obviously does not and cannot grow up to defend his city as his father had done. Such concerns are not entirely inconceivable in English naming,[106] but the potential for paradox is heightened proportionately to the specificity of the name or to the father's status.

In the case of Theseus, where the name he carries is purportedly a reference, not only to the father, but also to the father's actions *on behalf* of the son, we might say that we have a spatial syneciosis on par with that of the cartographic metaphor of the preface: because of the principle of naming sons for attributes of the father, Theseus is nominally "the one who puts down," but Plutarch makes repeated efforts to demonstrate that Theseus is, at least in his earliest exploits,[107] the one who lifts and ascends. Of course, neither name nor narrative is original to Plutarch's treatment, but the prose text intensifies a sense of syneciosis through the use of spatial vocabulary: again, this is largely in the form of verbal prefixes. Such prefixes are hardly unique to prose, or to Plutarch's style, or to the style of his era, but the resulting rhetorical structures clearly demonstrate a desire for certain kinds of symmetry.

At 3.7, for instance, Aegeus shows the *sumbola* "to Aethra alone" (*πρὸς μόνην ἐκείνην*) and commands her, "if a son is born to him and, upon reaching manhood, is able to stand the rock upright and take from under the objects he had left underneath, to send him (=Theseus) to him bearing them unbeknownst to anyone..." (*ἂν υἱὸς ἐξ αὐτοῦ γένηται καὶ λαβὼν ἀνδρὸς ἡλικίαν δυνατὸς ᾖ τὴν πέτραν ἀναστῆσαι καὶ ὑφελεῖν τὰ καταλειφθέντα, πέμπειν πρὸς αὐτὸν*

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104. Calame *op. cit.* p. 71.

105. See *A&M* p. xxiii.

106. Consider the reinforcements and paradoxes exploited by Dickens in naming a Macawber or a David Copperfield.

107. As I explore in each of the subsequent chapters of this dissertation, this fact will change upon Theseus' return from Crete and his transformation into *νομοθέτης* ("law-placer").

ἔχοντα ταῦτα μηδενὸς εἰδότος). To begin with the last six words, it is worth noting that the third person pronoun in Greek is nearly as ambiguous as its equivalents in English. In this case, rather than use any kind of reflexive or oblique pronoun to clearly distinguish father and son, Plutarch simply uses a pronoun in the accusative to represent Aegeus, and a participial phrase accusative to represent this unborn and hypothetically gendered *huios*, represented simply as *echonta tauta*. Just as the patronymic tendency in Greek naming collapses the boundaries between father and son, Plutarch's stylistic choices here serve to compress all the relevant personas in this narrative (mother, father, unborn child, and everyone else outside the family) into just a handful of words.

Several chapters later, when Aethra tells the newly adult Theseus to retrieve these *sumbola* and sail to Athens (6.3), Plutarch turns the prior passage into the second half of a chiasmus. Just as Aegeus asks Aethra to have their son *anastēsai* the rock, *huphelein* the objects, Theseus slips in *under* (*hupedu*) the rock and pushes it *up* (*aneōse*). After narrating roughly a generation's worth of events, during which time Aethra gives birth to a son and the son reaches young adulthood, Plutarch employs a clearly chiastic structure in order to suggest that Theseus is picking up where his father left off and, indeed, picking up what he left for him:

ἀναστῆσαι ... ὑφελεῖν / ὑπέδυ ... ἀνέωσε

Of course, there is not a perfect correspondence in these verbs. We might see *anastēsai* and *aneōse* are roughly parallel, but the act of taking the *sumbola* (*huphelein*) is not expressed on the level of narration in the latter passage, which instead furnishes an additional physical detail about Theseus getting under the object (*hupedu*).[108] This slight mismatch only heightens the sense of a deliberate stylistic effect: rather than a straightforward repetition of the sort one might see in epic,[109] Plutarch varies his focuses between the passages while nonetheless achieving a symmetrical effect reminiscent of ring composition. There is, however, one meaningful divergence between familial commands and filial action: Theseus has been told by his mother and grandfather that he should conduct his journey to Athens by sea, but after retrieving the *sumbola* he refuses to sail.

In a text with relatively few of the metanarrative or narrative *diaphorai* that mark the early segments of the *Romulus*, this refusal is worth examining in greater detail. As Plutarch notes, Aethra and her father, Pittheus, beg Theseus to travel by sea and, indeed, the sea is the safe route to Athens (καίπερ οὔσης ἀσφαλείας καὶ δεομένων τοῦ τε πάππου καὶ τῆς μητρός). The land route is comparatively difficult, since the road to Athens has "no part clear of or unthreatened by brigands and evildoers" (οὐδὲν μέρος καθαρὸν οὐδ' ἀκίνδυνον ὑπὸ λῃστῶν καὶ κακούργων).[110] It is therefore a narrative problem, especially within a biographical framework, to explain such a decision. Here, Plutarch's solution is not only to elucidate the motivations of Theseus in traveling by

108. Instead, it is Aethra who gives the command here.
109. Consider, for instance, the repeated speeches of Iris and others in the *Iliad*.
110. I address the nature of these brigands in the following chapter, pp. 94-96.

land, but also to tie this question to the two thematic strands raised within the introduction: first, the potential for uncertainty when dealing with myth and, second, a convex worldview that associates upward motion with motion toward temporal origins.

Just as with the Romulus traditions I have mentioned above, there was a *diaphorā* about whether the father of Theseus was divine (Poseidon) or human (Aegeus).[111] Here, however, rather than resolve it on a metanarrative level, Plutarch makes an unstated assumption in favor of human paternity and incorporates the alternate version into the narrative as a ruse to conceal the hero's actual upbringing: "the rest of the time Aethra hid the true birth of Theseus, and there was a story, circulated by Pittheus, that he was born from Poseidon" (*τὸν μὲν οὖν ἄλλον χρόνον ἔκρυπτεν Αἴθρα τὴν ἀληθινὴν τοῦ Θησέως γένεσιν· ἦν δὲ λόγος ὑπὸ τοῦ Πιτθέως διαδοθεὶς ὡς ἐκ Ποσειδῶνος τεκνωθείη*) (6.1). Certainly, this move is in keeping with Plutarch's overt historicizing aims,[112] but it also aligns neatly with the polarities of the convex worldview. Aegeus and Poseidon are not merely differentiated by divinity and the corresponding judgment of divine birth within Plutarch's historicizing scheme, but also on a level we might call elemental. After all, Aegeus is descended from *autochthones* (those from the "same land") while Poseidon is associated, at least on a primary level of signification, with the sea.[113] If we map this elemental distinction onto other polarities, then we find a correlation here between historical fact and the "positive" end of the axes I sketched out above: Aegeus is the actual father of Theseus (historical and temporal), he is from an inland city (vertical) rather than either Troezen or the sea, and his city is the center to which Theseus must journey (horizontal).

To return to the question of Theseus' decision to travel by land, the decision to make of the "Poseidon version" a false account *within* the historicizing narrative allows Plutarch to project the polarities of Theseus' name (*nominally* associated with an act of depositing, he achieves his status by lifting and ascending) onto this discrepancy in the mythological material. After all, as Plutarch has it, Theseus decides to travel by land and refuses to avoid the concomitant dangers, not only out of fear that a cowardly journey to Athens would shame Poseidon, his "father in word and general opinion" (*τὸν μὲν λόγῳ καὶ δόξῃ πατέρα*), but also because he might embarrass Aegeus in bringing unbloodied *sumbola* "to the real one" (*τῷ δ' ὄντι*) (7.2).

By this incorporation of myth into his historicized biography, Plutarch aligns the divide between *logōi* and *onti*, a familiar binary in the literature of antiquity and one hinted at within the

111. See *A&M* xiv-xiv and *ad loc.*

112. On the desire to avoid mixing divine and human origins, see *Romulus* 27-8, but contrast the historical belief in divine origins for Rome at 8.9.

113. Of course, epithets of Poseidon can have chthonic elements: see *Theseus* 36.6, where he is described as *Asphalion kai Gaiēchon*. The former ("unstumbling") might be hinted at by the description of a sea-journey as offering more *asphaleia* to Theseus (6.3), while the latter ("land-holder") suggests a convex worldview, with sea underlying land.

prefatory material, with the pair of metaleptic chains that I sketched out at the start of the chapter:

	positive axis	negative axis
terrain	land, *anabasis*	sea (*kataplous?*)
truth value	historical reality (*onti, tēn alēthinēn tou Thēseōs genesin*)	mythological belief (*logōi, doxa*)
attributes of Theseus	the one who lifts	the name Theseus
paternity	by Aegeus	by Poseidon
trajectory	journey "back" to Athens	journey "away" to Athens

Note in particular the logical interconnection of the final two rows, in which the paternity of Theseus correlates to the nature of his journey to Athens: if Poseidon is his father, he is traveling away from his maternal origins, but not toward his paternal origins. That is to say, the axis of an individual journey, unlike the *axis mundi*, is contingent on a set of factors that could in this case predate an individual's birth. Theseus' universe is convex, but it is not identical to the broader cosmology with which the chapter begins.

Metanarrative Travel

Here again, I would point to syneciosis as a master trope for Plutarch in his approach to the *Theseus-Romulus.* As with the map metaphor and the fact of Theseus' naming, we have a set of potential polarities that are reconciled. Indeed, this instance brings out something of the literal sense of the rhetorical term. That is to say, we have a narrative reconciliation of divergent accounts, which results in a "bringing-together of households" (the households of Pittheus, of Aegeus, and even of the purported divine father, Poseidon) that is effected in the journey from Troezen to Athens. Note, after all, that Plutarch makes even the journey by land an affirmation of respect for divinity, arguing that Poseidon would be no less ashamed of a cowardly journey than would his actual father. Consider the *Life of Romulus,* which functions by a kind of branching and pruning structure, exploring and then dismissing various narratives and narrative outcomes on its way to the moment of founding, accomplished only by fratricide. The *Theseus*, in contrast, aims for a "house united," turning variation into tradition into a way of enriching the narrative and giving the mythological hero a quasi-historical motivation for his journey. Where the earliest segments of the *Romulus* are dominated by a process of repeated *diaphorai* accompanied by subtraction that climaxes with fratricide, the comparable parts of the *Theseus* work by the addition and reconciliation made possible by the logic of syneciosis, granting its subject at least a vestige of "double paternity."

Before leaving this particularly rich narrative segment of the *Theseus* behind, I would like to explore one last detail about Theseus' journey to Athens. This is the passage in which Pittheus, when telling his grandson to travel by sea, takes on the role of narrator (6.7):

> *καὶ τῶν λῃστῶν καὶ κακούργων ἕκαστον ἐξηγούμενος* ὁ Πιτθεύς, *ὁποῖος εἴη καὶ ὁποῖα δρῴη περὶ τοὺς ξένους, ἔπειθε τὸν* Θησέα *κομίζεσθαι διὰ θαλάττης*.
>
> Pittheus, in narrating each of the brigands and evildoers, what he was like and what he did to strangers, was trying to persuade Theseus to travel by sea.

If we are willing to see some play on the double meaning of a rhetorical term, we might say that this passage is proleptic in two ways: Plutarch performs not only syntactic prolepsis (making *hekaston* the object of the verb rather than the subordinate clause), but also a kind of narrative prolepsis, as Plutarch sketches out Pittheus' admonitory narration in such a way as to preview the various opponents that Plutarch himself will narrate in greater detail. By employing a term like the participle *exēgoumenos* ("dictating," "expounding on," "relating at length"), and thereby making Pittheus a kind of substitute narrator, Plutarch asserts indirectly but unmistakably at his own role as creator of a biographic narrative concerned both with character ("what he was like") and action ("what he did").

This, in turn, raises the issue with which I have been concerning myself throughout this chapter: the way in which a narrative account cannot escape the spatiotemporal, whether on the level of narration itself or on the level of the narrated story. In the case of the *Theseus-Romulus*, which begins with a map metaphor and recapitulates many of the same polarities in the narration of both *Lives*, there is an embarrassment of riches. I will offer up two examples. First, in his discussion of the Amazons, it is not just the nomads that wander, but also the narrative (*καὶ θαυμαστὸν οὐκ ἔστιν ἐπὶ πράγμασιν οὕτω παλαιοῖς πλανᾶσθαι τὴν ἱστορίαν*) (*Theseus* 27.6). Similarly, at *Romulus* 4.3-4, as the twins arrive on land after their journey down the river, Plutarch applies another metaphor to the variety of accounts: according to some, they were not suckled by a wolf, but by a woman of loose morals whose figurative nickname ("she-wolf") is said "to furnish a bypath into the mythological" (*οἱ δὲ τοὔνομα τῆς τροφοῦ δι' ἀμφιβολίαν ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκτροπὴν τῇ φήμῃ παρασχεῖν*). In both cases, metanarrative movement is described in the midst of the characters' own journey.[114]

Such moves are not unique to these *Lives*, of course. In the preface to another pair of *Lives*, the *Timoleon-Aemilius*, Plutarch speaks of an antiquarian's desire to "haunt" a particular figural space: Ἐμοὶ *τῆς τῶν βίων ἅψασθαι μὲν γραφῆς συνέβη δι' ἑτέρους, ἐπιμένειν δὲ καὶ φιλοχωρεῖν ἤδη καὶ δι' ἐμαυτόν*" (1.1) ("It happened that taking hold of the writing of *Lives* came about for the sake of others, but I remain and linger there for my own sake"). By way of

114. I revisit this pattern in my treatment of the labyrinth in the *Theseus* throughout chapter 3.

contrast, he professes in the preface to the *Demosthenes-Cicero* he is "living in a small city, and lingering there so that it will not grow any smaller" (*ἡμεῖς δὲ μικρὰν μὲν οἰκοῦντες πόλιν, καὶ ἵνα μὴ μικροτέρα γένηται φιλοχωροῦντες*) (2.2). Both sentences feature the same verb, *philochōrein*, which denotes "spatial affinity" (*φιλία*, *χῶρα*) and, by extension, the habit of "lingering" or "being at home" in it. The variation between literal and figurative uses is worth noting: Plutarch's literal home town is Chaeronea, but his "literary home" is biography.[115] Unlike Chaeronea, moreover, the generic space of biography is a cosmopolitan place, allowing even a self-identified "homebody" like Plutarch access to the important figures of his world.

With this in mind, the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*, which I have treated as both key and prelude to the narratives within the pair of *Lives*, stands out even more in its spatial orientation. Rather than staying in, Plutarch imagines himself as a mapmaker going out into liminal spaces. Instead of well-charted terrain, this is *terra incognita*, a spatiotemporal domain that places unique demands upon the biographer. Indeed, we might say that where the Timoleons or Ciceros of his more typical biographies are "visitors" from history, Plutarch is forced in the *Theseus-Romulus* to meet the mythological founders in a dialectical way, venturing out into *to muthōdes* but also endeavoring to domesticate myth and bring it into his literary "home."

115. See Russell (1973) p. 101ff.

Chapter 2
"The conquest of thy sight": Vision and the Messenger

The map, as we have seen, is a fertile metaphor, and one by which it is possible to learn something about the sense of space within a text. In the case of the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*, accordingly, the map metaphor serves not only as a key element of Plutarch's programmatic statement in this pair of lives, but also as an icon of a world in which a handful of spatiotemporal axes are in continuous interaction with one another. A map, however, is not merely an icon of a world. It is also a created and inanimate object, like a scroll or a wall painting, whose use entails a special sort of viewing: the readers of a map are able to inform themselves about a space (directions, place names, the features of a landscape) without subjecting themselves to any of the hazards and dangers that the space itself might pose. Indeed, as the metaphor of a "bird's eye view" suggests, the use of a map simulates the position of a vertically removed viewer, whether flying or positioned on a tower or cliff, able to look down on a swath of space without being directly affected by its happenings.[116] Any given map will have certain defects (incompleteness, bias, sheer cartographic ignorance),[117] but as a legible object it is nonetheless designed so as to present information to its readers without touching, much less injuring them. And while maps in any era are certainly indices of agency, they are not themselves animate agents who can see their viewers, much less react to them.

The *Theseus-Romulus* is, of course, not a study of cartography. As elements of an elaborate prefatory metaphor, the *geōgraphiai* and *pinakes* that appear in *Theseus* 1.1 are an attempt to analogize what Plutarch professes his project to be in this pair of *Lives*: to produce as rationalized and plausible a representation of a historical Theseus and historical Romulus as possible. Naturally, both of them are portrayed no less as human agents in their respective milieus than are Plutarch's chronologically later subjects (ranging from Romulus' successor Numa to Plutarch's own contemporary Galba), and the existences of these subjects and those who surround them are envisioned not as abstract or ceremonial sequences of events but rather as encounters between psychologically envisioned figures and the sensed, real world that appears elsewhere in Plutarch's prose writing. A natural consequence of this tendency is that the various figures in the *Theseus* (among them Aegeus and Ariadne) and the *Romulus* (in particular, the early Roman Julius Proculus) have a relationship with the seen and sensed world that contrasts quite strongly with the detachment of the cartographic metaphor and, to some degree, even with the less grounded,

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116. See Purves (2010) pp. 1-23 and *passim*. Consider also the famous description of the view of New York City from the top of the original World Trade Center, in De Certeau (1984) p. 91ff.
117. Some kind of incompleteness is, of course, an inevitable attribute of a map of a usable scale. The brief story "On Exactitude in Science" in Borges (1999) p. 325 describes a map on a one-to-one scale with its territory. Abandoned, this particularly complete map decays until there are only "Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars."

contingent, and mortal existences of Theseus and Romulus.

Accordingly, there are in the *Theseus-Romulus* a number of passages in which we may make out what I would call "marked" or conspicuous vision. By this, I mean to characterize narrated instances in which a viewer, a viewed individual, or both are strongly affected by the moment of sight, such that the author emphasizes the pivotal and consequential elements of that moment, narrates the affective intensity that it produces (a viewer may be "struck" by what he or she sees, for instance), or simply dwells on the experience of seeing something remarkable. In such moments, Plutarch employs the phenomenon of vision to accomplish two contrasting ends: on the one hand, to endow the *Lives* with a psychological vividness that may be lacking in earlier versions of these stories and, on the other hand, to remind the reader of his own historical and biographical "supervision" as it ranges over this mythological material.[118] As a motif, sight thus serves double duty for Plutarch's project, imparting psychological depth and vulnerability upon the mythological figures but also strengthening the sense that the biographer's discourse often has the unique capacity, where aligned with reason, to see through the haze of history.

Vision is, after all, a sensory process that manages to cross the boundaries between state and action, agentive act and accident: it is possible to watch for something intently, on the one hand, and to catch sight of something else quite accidentally. For an individual to be seen, moreover, is for that person to become implicated in the agency of another individual, in a way that may but not need not always work in in the interests of the viewer. In as much as seeing is rarely "on the level," verticality and imbalances of power are frequently correlated in these *Lives*,[119] but in a way quite different from the making and use of maps, the power differential in such moments is more unstable than one might think. The viewers of Plutarch's subjects in these *Lives*, as I will explore in the cases of Ariadne, Aegeus, and Proculus Julius, are themselves liable to being "sight-struck," to suffering a moment of intense sight with a variety of narrative and affective consequences.

Joined closely with the phenomenon of sight are several other motifs with which Plutarch concerns himself in the *Theseus-Romulus*. Among these are the figure of the messenger, whose ability to see and report back often provides a link between the act of seeing and the broader narrative context; the role of listeners, whose inability to see places makes them dependent on the messenger; and, lastly, the way that Plutarch conceives of himself, in the role of biographer, as a kind of metaphorical herald. Each of these elements, moreover, is prominently presented in the preface, where the language of viewer and messenger is employed in the service of Plutarch's biographical program as fully as those cartographic elements I explored in the prior chapter.

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118. For Plutarch's theatrical terminology, see Di Gregorio (1976) pp. 168-173. For the representation of non-theatrical "staging" in Plutarch, see Chaniotis (1997) *passim*. See also Davidson (1991) for a model of gaze as mediated through individuals in the *Histories* of Polybius.
119. The most prominent exploration of sight, power, and spatial arrangement is still the discussion of Bentham's Panopticon in Foucault (1975).

Before turning to the *Theseus-Romulus*, however, I will examine a passage in Plato's *Critias* in which many of these elements are likewise present, suggesting that certain features may line up typologically with the imagery of sight. In beginning here, I do not aim to diminish the uniqueness of the *Theseus-Romulus* or, for that matter, to argue for the *Critias* as conscious or unconscious source material for Plutarch the Middle Platonist. Rather, I hope to demonstrate the variety of contexts in which viewer and messenger, whether treated literally or metaphorically, may play a pivotal role. At the start of the dialogue, the eponymous speaker is encouraged to deliver a long speech from Timaeus, who after dominating the dialogue named for him is now seeking to listen "as if resting after a long journey" (*οἷον ἐκ μακρᾶς ἀναπεπαυμένος ὁδοῦ*) (106a). At this point, Critias begins to tell the story of the island of Atlantis, which fought a war with the Athenian-led Mediterranean peoples, and later sank into the Ocean.

At the start of this account, we find a number of intriguing correspondences with the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*: Atlantis is a peripheral zone (Critias says that it was a large zone that lay outside the Pillars of Heracles), and it is part of a mythological past made difficult to reconstruct by the island's subsiding into "untraversable mire" (*ἄπορον πηλὸν*), an image echoed in the *pēlos aïdnēs* of Plutach's preface; where Timaeus is able to rest upon the completion of his verbal journey, Critias' path seems no less impeded than Plutarch's by the mire of antiquity. With such similarities in mind, it would be quite possible to read the dialogue with much of the same theoretical framework that I applied to the *Theseus-Romulus* in the prior chapter, sketching out the dialogue's spatiotemporal axes and trajectories with an eye to points of alignment, paradox, and syneciosis.[120]

The passage on which I would like to focus, however, appears prior to the detailed description of Atlantis for which the dialogue is well-known. Before describing Atlantis in detail, Plato offers up a description of Attica and of the Athenians in the distant past. As he describes it, this early generation of inhabitants is "mountain-dwelling and unlettered" (*ὄρειον καὶ ἀγράμματον*) (109d) and has little interest in or capacity for preserving their history. Critias, at 110a-c, elaborates on this state of affairs and credits Egyptian priests with what is known of the earliest stories of Attica:

> *μυθολογία γὰρ ἀναζήτησίς τε τῶν παλαιῶν μετὰ σχολῆς ἅμ' ἐπὶ τὰς πόλεις ἔρχεσθον, ὅταν ἱδητόν τισιν ἤδη τοῦ βίου τἀναγκαῖα κατεσκευασμένα, πρὶν δὲ οὔ. ταύτῃ δὴ τὰ τῶν παλαιῶν ὀνόματα ἄνευ τῶν ἔργων διασέσωται. λέγω δὲ αὐτὰ τεκμαιρόμενος ὅτι Κέκροπός τε καὶ Ἐρεχθέως καὶ Ἐριχθονίου καὶ Ἐρυσίχθονος τῶν τε ἄλλων τὰ πλεῖστα ὅσαπερ καὶ Θησέως τῶν ἄνω περὶ τῶν ὀνομάτων ἑκάστων ἀπομνημονεύεται, τούτων ἐκείνους τὰ πολλὰ ἐπονομάζοντας τοὺς ἱερέας Σόλων ἔφη τὸν τότε διηγεῖσθαι πόλεμον...*
>
> For mythology and inquiry into antiquities venture into cities only in the company of

120. See Vidal-Naquet (2007) pp. 17-22. For Atlantis in Plutarch, see *Solon* 26 and 31-32.

> leisure, when they see that some people have already come into possession of the necessities of life, and no earlier. This is precisely how it happens that the names of the ancients have been preserved but not their deeds. In saying this, I take as evidence that the names of Cecrops, Erechtheus, Erichthonius and most of the others recorded before Theseus, are, as Solon said, the very names given by the priests in recounting the war that happened back then...

As I have suggested, much of the language here would lend itself to the approach by which I explored the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus* in the previous chapter. One might, for instance, note the use of the noun *anazētēsis* to denote intellectual inquiry. The term appears only once in the combined corpora of both Plato and Plutarch. In Plutarch's *Parallela Minora*, however, it is used in reference to a physical search rather than antiquarian research: Telegonus, son of Odysseus and Circe, is sent like Theseus "in search of his father" (*ἐπ' ἀναζήτησιν τοῦ πατρὸς*) (316a). In the case of Critias' speech, however, the *ana*-element of the term is reiterated by the reference to "those above/prior to Theseus" (*Θησέως τῶν ἄνω*). We can thus understand *anazētēsis* as signifying both re-search and re-turn, a journey back and up to the "highland" origins of Athens. Bearing this in mind, we might align the inquiries and narration (*diēgeisthai*) on the part of these very ancient Mediterraneans to those of Critias and of Plato himself, tracing out correspondences among the journey of the narrated and the narrating. As in the *Theseus-Romulus*, moreover, Theseus represents a kind of transition between the more and less knowable, although Plato has Critias approach Theseus from the other side, moving forward from the deepest past into a transition period (albeit mythological) for which Theseus is a representative. As Plato puts it, the *genos* before Theseus is knowable only by name (*onomata*) and not by deeds (*erga*), a distinction that is closely related to the familiar distinction between word (*logos*) and fact so key to the *Theseus*.

My intent here is to point to the existence of a cluster or complex of recurring elements that we can identify in this passage and that reappears, in various forms, throughout the *Theseus-Romulus*. As I have said, this is not to argue that Plato's treatment of myth in the *Critias* was necessarily a conscious or predominant influence on Plutarch's writing of the *Theseus-Romulus*, but rather to offer up the former as a different point of entry to this text, a different way through the pair of *Lives* than that suggested by the prefatory map metaphor. Just as motifs and patterns recur in various guises throughout a piece of symphonic music, imparting onto the composition a sense of coherence across movements of greatly divergent sorts, this cluster makes it possible for us—as readers of a pair of *Lives* organized along lines that are ostensibly chronological—to trace a set of alternate "routes" and "stops" through which we readers may interpret a great deal of narrative material in these *Lives* in terms of vision and concerns closely related to vision.

Before turning to those *Lives*, however, it will be helpful for me to name explicitly the elements of this cluster as they appear in the passage from the *Critias*. Indeed, it is helpful here that these elements appear on a generally (although not entirely) overt level in the dialogue, in the form of the narrated events as a reader might parse them. First, we are introduced to *figures who arrive at the city* (1). Here, it takes the form of personified abstractions, mythology and "research

into antiquities" that, along with leisure, travel to (that is, begin to develop in) a hypothetical city once it has seen to its more basic material needs. Then those figures are presented as *perceiving something visually* (2): in this case Mythology and Research "both see" (ἴδητόν) that those material needs have been met. This is followed by the discussion of a *mixture of fact and common belief*, or similarly of deed and name or the like (3), and, in turn, by the mention of a *conflict* (4). This last element takes the form in the *Critias* of the war that will be waged between Atlantis and the alliance headed by Athens.

Prefatory Messengers

Now it will be possible to identify this small but thematically rich cluster of elements, none of which are rare in isolation, but the combination of which will, in fact, occur and recur in the *Theseus-Romulus.* Indeed, this cluster is already apparent in the preface to the *Lives* (*Theseus* 1-2), where it (alongside the cartographic and spatial imagery I discussed in the previous chapter) helps to introduce the two mythological figures and sketch out how he will approach them within the framework of biography. None of these elements is as overt as in the *Critias*, but nonetheless Plutarch's quotation of two other texts, the *Seven Against Thebes* of Aeschylus and the *Iliad*, does more than provide an opportunity for the author to demonstrate the breadth of his learning. Rather, these passages, re-contextualized, represent important intertexts whose presence helps round out the "vision cluster" in the preface.

First, Plutarch quotes in the preface two lines from the *Seven Against Thebes*, figuring his own "envisioning" of his biographical subjects as if he were a scout reporting back from a battle in the conflict between the sons of Oedipus. Such elements are thus partly supplied by the plot of the *Seven*, although others are either supplied or recapitulated explicitly here. The two short passages that Plutarch quotes and adapts at 1.4 are both from two parallel exchanges in the *Seven*: in both exchanges, Eteocles, his messenger/scout, and the chorus are discussing what has happened at one of the gates of Thebes, and the scout is asking him who he should send against a given attacker who has been sent by his brother, Polynices. The first passage, adapted from line 435 of the *Seven*, is in reference to the second attacker, Capaneus:[121]

> As for this man (to quote Aeschylus), who will go against him?
>
> τοιῷδε φωτὶ (κατ' Αἴσχυλον) τίς ξυμβήσεται;

121. Modern editions have something on the order of τοιῷδε φωτὶ πέμπε· τίς ξυστήσεται; Plutarch's shortening does little to change the meaning, although it does shift the verb from a less dynamic (συνίστημι) to a more dynamic term (συμβαίνω). For a reading of the play that hinges on the interaction between Eteocles and his messenger, see Roisman (1990). On messengers in tragedy, see Barrett (2002) and Mannsperger in Jens (1971) p. 143ff.

The second passage is from slightly earlier in the play (= 395-6), and in reference to the first attacker, Tydeus. It is adapted from words spoken by the messenger (*τίν' ἀντιτάξεις τῷδε; τίς ... φερέγγυος*), but Plutarch has changed the person to demonstrate his own ability to parallel the subjects of his biography and (at least metaphorically) pit these paired individuals against one another:

> Whom will I position against that one? Who is dependable?
>
> *τίν' ἀντιτάξω τῷδε; τίς φερέγγυος;*[122]

Note that Plutarch has appropriated the words that Aeschylus gave to the scout so as to make himself into Eteocles: in order to make the passage match his role as writer of parallel biographies, he merges the roles of commander and scout, messenger and listener.

Of course, one might still account for these quotations by imagining that Plutarch has been reading the *Seven* (perhaps as an outgrowth of the same mythological interests that motivated the *Theseus-Romulus*) or some collection in which these lines are quoted.[123] From this perspective, the lines might at first come across as simply a clever way of raising the topic, so that any associations with scouting and the messenger (whether literally or metaphorically) would be negligible. There is, however, another passage that follows closely after and should bolster our sense that Plutarch is conveying a special concern with the messenger's role. In listing some of the basic similarities between Theseus and Romulus (2.1), he quotes from the *Iliad* in order to note that both figures are noted in part for their exploits as warriors: "... and you both are spearmen, as we all know" (*ἄμφω δ' αἰχμητά, τό γε δὴ καὶ ἴδμεν ἅπαντες*) (7.281). Here, again, it is worth re-situating the quote in the context from which it came. Idaeus and Talthybius, heralds of the Greeks and the Trojans, respectively, are meeting to interrupt the struggle between Telamonian Ajax and Hector; this line comes from Idaeus' brief address to Ajax, and his declaration of both heroes' martial prowess forms part of a plea for peace: if "we" (both Greeks and Trojans) know that both men are successful, there is no longer the need for further proof at the cost of bloodshed.

This quotation is thus an elegant reversal of the two lines from the *Seven*: where those spoke of commensurable skill in the context of marshaling a warrior for a coming battle, this turns that notion on its head, making equivalency in fighting a reason to lay down one's arms. Plutarch has, accordingly, composed a miniature narrative out of these intertexts, invoking familiar literature as a means of reflecting on his own role of as "herald" of these two matched figures

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122. Note that this contrasts, on a lexical level, with Plutarch's later description of Theseus and Romulus as *anenguō* (*Theseus* 2.1), which I examined in the previous chapter.

123. See Morgan (2011) on Plutarch and miscellanies.

(and, more broadly, in the *Parallel Lives*), who must provoke conflict, defuse it, and (in the *synkrisis)* arbitrate upon the various qualities of these figures. If two comparable individuals can be at metaphorical war, these intertexts suggest, they can also peacefully "fit with respect to many similarities" (*κατὰ πολλὰς ἐναρμόττειν ὁμοιότητας*) (*Theseus* 2.1).[124]

Taking sight

To return to my broader thematic point, however, I should note the presence of the elements I catalogued above in my examination of the *Critias*. From the choice of two references from the *Seven* and one from the *Iliad*, we can supply elements 1, 2 and 4 quite easily. This leaves only element 3 (the mixture of fact and belief), which comes into play only once Plutarch has introduced Theseus as a foil intended to stand against and compare (*antistēsai kai parabalein*) to Romulus. It is at this point that Plutarch considers the additional burden that these mythological figures will place on his biographical project, and he performs what is the prose equivalent of a prayer that this project will succeed (1.5):[125]

> *εἴη μὲν οὖν ἡμῖν ἐκκαθαιρόμενον λόγῳ τὸ μυθῶδες ὑπακοῦσαι καὶ λαβεῖν ἱστορίας ὄψιν· ὅπου δ' ἂν αὐθαδῶς τοῦ πιθανοῦ περιφρονῇ καὶ μὴ δέχηται τὴν πρὸς τὸ εἰκὸς μεῖξιν, εὐγνωμόνων ἀκροατῶν δεησόμεθα καὶ πράῳως τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν προσδεχομένων.*
>
> May it turn out for us that myth, being purified by reason, submits[126] to it and takes on the look of history. But wherever it stubbornly defies what is plausible and does not accept mixture with what is likely, we will ask for a kindly audience who will sensitively admit in addition antiquarian lore.

What I will note first about this passage is that it completes the cluster of elements I traced out in the *Critias*: as in the map metaphor, Plutarch brings out the polarity between *to muthōdes* on the one hand and reason and history on the other. In this fairly elaborate combination of programmatic message and defense, however, Plutarch reiterates other of the above elements and introduces new metaphorical complications.

In this case, of course, we do not have a single city at which a figure is arriving, but Plutarch at the beginning of 1.5 has just named both Rome and Athens (1), in the case of Theseus before even naming the biographical subject. Rather than author, however, this passage presents reason and history as the arriving and indeed aggressing forces: *to muthōdes* is the pre-ex-

124. With *Iliad* in mind, consider (of course) the Shield of Achilles, and in particular its City at Peace and City at War (18.478-608).
125. Cf. the requests made by the speaker to the Muses in Homer and Hesiod.
126. Or "hearkens."

isting state of the material with he is dealing, and it is to be subjected to the crucible of *logos* and the corresponding "look" or "aspect" of history. No less than the mythological Thebes that Aeschylus creates in the *Seven*, mythological Rome and Athens are under a kind of siege by outside forces who intend to bring about a change of circumstances within.[127]

As for the element of sight (2), it appears here in the form of the *historias opsin*. On the face of it, the genitive of *historiā* seems here to be descriptive in its use. That is to say, Plutarch intends to bestow upon mythological material an appearance *characteristic of* history, to make it look like history. Of course, he is not simply hoping to give the Theseus and Romulus stories a historical veneer, as his chosen method will be to sort through multiple versions and give strong preference to the most plausible,[128] but we might say that he frames this as a phenomenological rather than ontological process: the goal is not to transmute these myths into history, but to analyze and reconstitute them so that they cohere as much as possible with historical understanding. If there is a balance of implausible and plausible here, then some sifting out of the former and expansion of the latter will suffice in making the reader view the sum of the material as more historical than not.[129]

At the same time, we need not entirely rule out the implications of reading this genitive as a subjective one. First, although almost any idiomatic translation in English would demand a definite article, whether subjective or objective, a definite article in Greek would have almost ruled out the possibility of a subjective genitive here. It is thus quite helpful that one is not present: we have simply *historias opsin*. We may thus imagine that history, personified or at least given some agency, is itself performing the act of sight and, as a logical consequence, that myth is "taking in"—that is, functioning as the object of—the gaze that history puts upon it. The basic notion of myth being rationalized so as to move into the historical remains the same, but the metaphorical implications of this alternative reading are strikingly different: rather than being clothed in the historical, myth falls under its supervision or even surveillance.[130] Additionally, we

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127. For a tropological reading of sight and power in ancient literature, see Porter (1999). He argues for a "movement of the philosophical signifier in Aristotle: from philosophy as a self-constituting act of denomination (of its own proper domain and focus) to philosophy as a theory of domination; from philosophy as a theoretical act of vision to philosophy as a theory of supervision" (96).

128. Cf. his criticism of Herodotus in *De Malignitate Herodoti* 855e for "siding with the least creditable version when there are two or more accounts of the same thing" (*τὸ δυεῖν ἢ πλειόνων περὶ ταὐτοῦ λόγων ὄντων τῷ χείρονι προστίθεσθαι*).

129. See Pelling (2002) p. 171ff on the "playfulness" he sees in this framing. Particularly helpful is n. 3 on pp. 189f, where he examines the meaning of and intertexts with Plutarch's use of *to muthōdes*.

130. On the rationalization of myth, see Hawes (2014), Mezzadri (2008), Cooper (2007), Stern (1996), Hardie (1992), Lucio and Franco (1987) and *A&M* xlii-lv.

can reinforce this construal of the phrase with subjective genitive by noting the semantic register of the verbs in this clause and considering how they align with the theoretical implications of sight. The verbs, after all, suggest a kind of passivity in the face of *historia*. The word *hypakousai* suggests that myth will not only "give ear" to Plutarch's historicizing project, but indeed also hear it out, respond to it, and yield to its demands. Without leaving the semantic field of the auditory, the term thus places this phrase in a broader range of meanings that correlate it with broader implications of passivity and submission.[131] This tone is reinforced by the verbs that are used later in the passage (*dechētai*, *prosdechomenōn*) that also unambiguously frame *to muthōdes* as a potential passive recipient of Plutarch's historicizing approach.[132]

It is more difficult to determine the agency of the second infinitive (*labein*). Like comparable English verbs ("get," "take," etc.) it can imply an active acquisition or a passive reception of something, either concrete or figurative: *dikēn labein*, for instance, means to inflict punishment rather than to suffer it. The collocation of the verb with the noun *opsis* as its direct object, however, is fairly rare. Indeed, I am able to find only a single other instance in Ancient Greek, also in a text of Plutarch's, the *De defectu oraculorum, where* Plutarch's brother Lamprias is describing how paints are created: "without pigments being ground up and melting into one another," he says, "nothing would be able to take on such a composition and appearance" (*ἄνευ δὲ φαρμάκων συντριβέντων καὶ συμφθαρέντων ἀλλήλοις οὐδὲν ἦν οἷόν τε τοιαύτην διάθεσιν λαβεῖν καὶ ὄψιν*) (436b). In this instance, Plutarch is unambiguously using the phrase to mean that a work of art is taking on a certain appearance, rather than taking in the look of a viewer. Additionally, there are in Plutarch two instances of a compound form of *lambanō* taking *opsis* as a direct object. At *De facie in orbe lunae* 932c, he explains that "there is an eclipse only for those whose sight (*ὧν ... τὴν ὄψιν*) the shadow of the moon intercepts (*καταλαβοῦσα*) and blocks before the sun" (923c). Here, the genitive with *opsis* must refer to the observer rather than the material: we are not speaking of the aspect of a planetary body, but the sight of individuals who perceive the astronomical phenomenon. In the *Aemilius Paulus*, however, Marcus Servilius, speaking to his fellow citizens, speaks of them praying that they will "receive the sight of this rumor" (*ἀπολαβεῖν τὴν ὄψιν ... τοῦ λόγου τούτου*) (31.6), with the genitive equally unambiguously referring to the observed phenomenon rather than the observers.

From this brief survey of comparable constructions, I would make only two firm conclusions: employing the noun *opsis* as a direct object of *lambanō* (or a compound form of that verb) is a flourish unique to Plutarch, and, secondly, it is only from context that we can discern the underlying deep structure to be derived from the syntax in these constructions. With this in mind, we can reexamine the passage in the *Theseus-Romulus* with the possibility of a deliberate ambigui-

131. See *LSJ s.v.* II on "special senses" of the word.

132. For the metaphoric connection between sight and analytical thought, see Levin (1999), where he discusses how "the discourse of philosophy is itself a historical construction and that it has often relied on a vision-generated vocabulary and way of thinking" (2).

ty in Plutarch's image: in "taking the sight of history," myth is both reshaped, like the pigments of paint in the *De defectu,* and viewed in a distinct way, like the eclipses described in the *De facie*. This would have the added benefit of allowing Plutarch to play upon the distinction between the auditory and visual. After all, if it is history that is performing the *opsis*, rather than being an intended guise for myth, than we have a particularly tidy set of binaries.[133] History is an agent of *opsis*, employing reason in pursuit of the truth; myth, on the other hand, is cast in the role of passive "listener" (*ὑπακοῦσαι*), forced to accept "mixture" or even "intercourse" with likelihood just as the "listeners" (*ἀκροατῶν*) to the pair of biographies to come will be forced to accept certain historically problematic antiquities that do not yield so readily to Plutarch's historicizing. History, sight and agency are thus correlated in distinction to myth, listening and passivity.[134]

Like those polarities I treated in the previous chapter, the sensory divide between the visual and auditory can also be worked into a paradox or syneciosis—in this case, it is one we might dub synesthetic. In Pindar's *Third Olympian*, for instance, Heracles is said after founding the Olympic Games to notice that the grove there is unshaded by trees and, after journeying to Thrace, returns to remedy this deficiency. The phrasing in the epinician personifies this *kāpos* as unclothed and having powers of perception and, moreover, describes its original state by merging semantic domains related to perception: "naked of them (the trees), the grove seemed to him to be subject to the sharp rays of the sun" (*τούτων ἔδοξεν γυμνὸς αὐτῷ κᾶπος ὀξείαις ὑπακούεμεν αὐγαῖς ἀελίου*) (3.24). Through the same verb that Plutarch would use in the preface (*ὑπακούεμεν/ὑπακοῦσαι*), Pindar turns this uncultivated and as yet undelineated space into a subject and "auditor" of the rays of the sun. As a consequence of this synesthetic merger, one might understand these *oxeiais ... augais* not only as optically dazzling, but also as tactilely sharp (with reference to the metaphorically "naked" grove) and even acoustically shrill.[135]

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133. For the Platonic idea of sight as active on the part of the looker, see *Theaetetus* (153d-e) and *Timaeus* (45). In the former, Socrates speaks of color as arising "from the impact of the eyes upon the object at hand" (*ἐκ τῆς προσβολῆς τῶν ὀμμάτων πρὸς τὴν προσήκουσαν φορὰν*), while the latter describes the eyes as possessing a kind of fire. For the role played by *eidōla* in Democritus' model of sight, see Theophrastus *De Sensu* 50-55 and, in Plutarch, *Quaestiones Conviviales* 682f-683a. See also Rudolph (2011), Warren (2007) and Burkert (1977).

134. Anyone familiar with Greek literature can imagine where the line of association between the first two elements of each alignment might lead: the association of myth with poetry and, by extension, orality is particularly well-explored; see e.g. Powell (2007) for just one exploration from the past decade. History and written prose would thus align in distinction to these. Given the frequency and weight of this topic in ancient literature, I will confine my focus in this chapter on the additional dimensions afforded by the divide between agency and passivity, from the perspective of individual and state, whether the latter takes the form of a small mythological grove or the extensive empire of Plutarch's own day.

135. See also *Nemean* 10.62, where Lynceus is described as having the "keenest eye" (*ὀξύτατον*

Admittedly, the simple collocation of *hypakousai* and *opsis* is prosaic and subtle in comparison to Pindar's almost hallucinatory phrasing, but the latter can still—if only as a foil—bring out the playfulness in Plutarch's preface. Myth, like the grove on the grounds of the Olympic games, is personified as a passive auditor of an outside force (sunlight, historical inquiry) and is, depending on how we read the phrase that I have examined above, either the recipient of a historicizing appearance or the object of history's gaze. And where the first reading implies at least a kind of exchange (myth is subjected to history and, in recompense, is partly remodeled in its image), by the second reading we would understand that Plutarch has doubled down on the sensory subjugation of myth, which is forced not only to "hearken" to the demands of history but also to be surveilled by history.[136]

In the absence of sufficient comparanda for Plutarch's turn of phrase *labein ... opsin*, and without interpretive problems posed by either reading, I will suggest this second reading as at least partially suggested within the context of the *Theseus-Romulus*. This is especially useful if we return to the same quartet of elements I sketched out above; I had turned to this passage (*Theseus* 1.5) in order to note the presence of element 3 (the mixture of fact and myth), but this reading also allows us to interpret *historia*, like mythology and inquiry in *Critias* 110, as a figure with metaphorical vision (element 3). The only element that does not get treated in 1.5, then, is the emergence of conflict (element 4). Indeed, Plutarch hopes that the potential discrepancies between myth and history will be smoothed over by something like an exchange of diplomats or the meeting of Idaeus and Talthybius in the seventh book of the *Iliad*: myth will "welcome" a mixture of truth where possible, and elsewhere Plutarch's audience will welcome something they might not expect from biography: "antiquarian lore" (*τὴν ἀρχαιολογίαν*).[137] Eteocles, a savvy

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ὄμμα). The adjective *oxus* is often used metaphorically in Pindar; it can refer to storms (*Olympian* 8.85), sickness (*Pythian* 1.20), suffering (3.87), sorrows (*Nemean* 1.53) and madness (*Nemean* 11.48). On the other hand, it is also used, quite literally, to describe missiles (*Pythian* 4.213) and claws (*Nemean* 4.63). See Slater (1969) *ad loc.*

136. See Smith (1999) on the shift from pre-Platonic "acoustical" to a post-Platonic "optical" framework in Aristotle's *Poetics*, which he describes as a "self-contradictory turn away" from the underpinnings of tragedy (70f) and which he correlates to a split between *katharsis* and *mathēsis* in the text.

137. Note the contrast between *archaiologia* and myth that has been "purified by reason" (*ἐκκαθαιρόμενον λόγῳ*). The term is familiar to readers of Thucydides (1.1-19), but this is one of only two uses of *archaiologia* in Plutarch's corpus; the other is in *De Herodoti malignitate* 855d, where he imagines history as having a topological structure of the sort I explored in the previous chapter: "The exclusions and deviations of history are allowed mostly for myths and antiquarian lore, and additionally for praise" (*αἱ γὰρ ἐκβολαὶ καὶ παρατροπαὶ τῆς ἱστορίας μάλιστα τοῖς μύθοις δίδονται καὶ ταῖς ἀρχαιολογίαις, ἔτι δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἐπαίνους*). Here, Plutarch seems to be suggesting a special dispensation for within the framework of history, a model different from

reader might remember upon reading this preface, is unwilling to yield his throne to Polynices, but Plutarch is suggesting an alternative model, one in which the demands of history are counterbalanced by the possibilities or necessities of myth. There is no promise of success in this endeavor, of course. Instead, this passage is bookended by a wish for success (*εἴη μὲν οὖν ἡμῖν* etc.) and a plea for the right audience for this text, namely one that consists of readers who are "kindly" or "well-wishing" (*εὐγνωμόνων*).[138]

Big Word, Big Time

With this conciliatory model in mind, I would like to examine a contrasting passage in the core of the *Theseus*. In Plutarch's treatment of the encounter between Theseus and the Megarian Sciron (*Theseus* 10), who is in the prevalent tradition (*ὡς μὲν ὁ πολὺς λόγος*) one of the brigands whom Theseus confronts and defeats on his land journey to Athens, our biographer notes a regional variation in which Sciron is, through his association with well-regarded and virtuous figures, a good rather than base figure. This is, as one might expect, the view held by the prose writers (*sungrapheis*) from Sciron's own home of Megara. What is worth remarking on here, however, is Plutarch's choice of terminology for this disagreement with the Athenocentric Big Word: he views these Megarian authors as "going to the same place as rumor" (*ὁμόσε τῇ φήμῃ βαδίζοντες*) and either quoting Simonides or, as above with Aeschylus, adapting his turn of phrase, he describes them as "fighting against Big Time" (*τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ ... πολεμοῦντες*).[139]

For fear that we fall into the trap of translating overly literally, it is important to examine these phrases, as strange as they appear to the Anglophone reader. First, there is the idiom combining *ὁμόσε*, a verb of motion, and a noun complement in the dative. On the face of it, the construction might seem to work parallel to a number of English idioms of reconciliation ("She's in the same place as me"), but in fact it usually signals two opposing forces coming into the same place in conflict with one another.[140] It works, in other words, more like the idiom of "coming to blows." Just as Theseus and Sciron cannot, whether in the majority or minority version of events, occupy the same space on the edge of Megara without one throwing the other off a cliff, there is a zero-sum game here with *phēmē* and "the Big Word" standing in opposition to the minority

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what he proposes in the *Theseus-Romulus* but certainly compatible with his desire to make "peace" between the genres.

138. Consider also Theseus' own role as listener to accounts of Heracles at *Theseus* 6.6: *προθυμότατος ἀκροατὴς ἐγίνετο τῶν διηγουμένων ἐκεῖνον οἷος εἴη*. As I note in the following chapter, the audience is part of a mimetic system, with Heracles as its head.

139. See *A&M ad loc.*

140. See *LSJ s.v.*. In Aristophanes, *Ec.* 863 and 876, *Lys.* 451; in Xenophon, see *Anabasis* 3.4.4 and *Cynegeticus* 10.21. For uses with abstract nouns in Plato, see Euthydemus 294d (*τοῖς ἐρωτήμασιν*) and *Republic* 610c (*τῷ λόγῳ*).

version: Sciron, we are told, is either a villain or a hero, a brigand or a local champion. Shared space, within the implicit structure of this idiom, is a cause for conflict rather than a resolution.[141]

As for the two appearances of the definite article with the adjective *polus* in this passage, first to modify *logos* and then alongside *chronos* in the dative, the resulting idioms can be made clear from context and comparanda.[142] As I mentioned, the first conveys majoritarian opinion in a way roughly equivalent to "the majority of opinions" (*οἱ πολλοί τῶν λόγων*); it is frequent in Plutarch.[143] The latter usage, however, is fairly uncommon. While *polus chronos* can frequently introduce subordinate ideas in a way similar to English usage ("a long time since" or "a long time during which"), its absolute usage with the definite article has relatively few parallels. The closest parallel is in the *Antiquitates Romanae* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where he describes *ho polus chronos* as a "witness" (*μάρτυς*) of the wisdom of a law concerning marriage that Romulus makes (2.25.7), but the phrasing here is still not fully absolute, since it refers to the "long time during which" the law was in effect.

Ultimately, this unusual alignment of *ho polus logos* and *ho polus chronos* in opposition to the local account of the Megarians is another moment in which Plutarch, whose introductory map metaphor had avoided the need for a canonical account by imagining generic difference as space, "militarizes" discourse and speaks of disagreeing accounts as at war. After all, if we imagine that bearing witness is the implicit function or role of *ho polus chronos,* even when it is not explicitly described as a witness, then we have something at least akin to the cluster of elements we have been tracing: the observation and judgment of the *longue durée*, like history in the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus* and mythology in the passage from the *Critias*, observes the events in a locale, and participates in a conflict with the Megarian prose writers. And rather than being opposed to one another, *phēme* and *ho polus logos* are aligned with one another in a way parallel to the mixture that Plutarch proposes to his readers in the preface to the *Theseus-Romlulus*. It is only the Megarians who do not "mix" well with these elements, whose account cannot coexist in the same discursive space as them without conflict. As imagined in the preface, *logos* and common belief are indeed able to coexist, albeit in distinction to and against one local account.

Before moving onto comparable questions in the body of the *Theseus* and *Romulus*, I will examine a parallel passage in a contemporary work of Latin prose,[144] the *Dialogus de Oratoribus* of Tacitus. Here we can find parallelism not only in imagery (a "war" against the ancients), but also

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141. Note, conversely, the separate spaces accorded to history and myth in the map metaphor, as I have explored in the previous chapter.

142. Note also the play on the name of the Megarians, wedged as it is between the two instances of *polus*: *ὁ πολὺς λόγος .... οἱ δὲ Μεγαρόθεν ... τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ*. Plutarch is not thinking small.

143. Cf. *Solon* 6.4, *Themistocles* 31.6, and elsewhere.

144. See Williams (1978) pp. 26-51 and Bartsch (1994) p. 98ff on the *Dialogus* in general and on its contested dating in particular.

in the underlying theme. Marcus Aper, one of the interlocutors, has been arguing against the veneration of the so-called *antiqui,* by which the other speakers mean the Greek and Latin orators of earlier eras, although the word suggests mythological figures (Ulysses and Nestor) to Aper (16). Aper intermingles various claims: that suggesting that speaking of orators as *antiqui* is something of an exaggeration and that their oratory was not objectively higher in quality but simply well-suited to their eras (15-23). Admittedly, the question here is one of aesthetics and rhetorical effectiveness rather than truth, but the debate about time as arbiter is a common concern with the treatment of the Megarian *logos* in the *Theseus*. If we wished to appropriate Plutarch's Simonidean vocabulary, we might say that Aper doubts the existence of *ho polus chronos* as an arbiter of the quality of oratory, or at least whether the gap between the present day and these purported *antiquii* is insufficiently large.

At this point, the poet Curiatius Maternus makes a response that help to reinforce the parallel imagery to be found in these passages:

> "... 'adgnoscitisne' inquit Maternus 'vim et ardorem Apri nostri? quo torrente, quo impetu saeculum nostrum defendit! quam copiose ac varie vexavit antiquos! quanto non solum ingenio ac spiritu, sed etiam eruditione et arte ab ipsis mutuatus est per quae mox ipsos incesseret!"[145]
>
> "Don't you notice," said Maternus, "the force and intensity of our friend Aper? He defends our age with such a torrent, such an assault! How richly and diversely he attacked the men of old! It was not only with so much genius and inspiration, but also learning and skill that he borrowed from those very people those things by which he was soon to assail them!" (24.1)

The first thing to explore is the notion of a conflict between present and past: as with the account of Sciron in Plutarch, there is conflict between the past (*antiquos, τῷ πολλῷ χρόνῳ*) and another minority line (the Megarian prose writers, Aper). Although this passage has a slightly different nuance—the *antiqui* are contrasted with *saeculum nostrum* rather than a local tradition—it is nonetheless striking to see past and present spoken of as rival camps.[146]

A last correspondence emerges if we examine the context of both passages. In the majority opinion recounted by Plutarch, Theseus kills Sciron, as he does with many of the other brigands, by doing to Sciron what Sciron had done to other passers-by, in this case throwing him off a cliff.[147] Similarly, in the majority (that is to say, pro-*antiqui)* viewpoint espoused by Maternus,

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145. See Van den Berg (2014) p. 222f.

146. Cf. Thucydides 1.21, where the historian speaks of certain claims as being "unable to be disproved and, largely, by their time unreliably won over to the side of the mythical" (*ἀνεξέλεγκτα καὶ τὰ πολλὰ ὑπὸ χρόνου αὐτῶν ἀπίστως ἐπὶ τὸ μυθῶδες ἐκνενικηκότα*).

Aper is hoisting the *antiqui* by their own petard, using their tricks against them but also showing his reliance on them. Of course we cannot press this comparison too far: in Maternus' account, Aper is certainly no Theseus, while the *antiqui* are laudable rather than villainous. Nor does Theseus' fighting fire with fire, at least in Plutarch's account, undermine his status or authority. In these respects, we might regard the claims of these two passages as structurally opposed to one another.

Still, the points of commonality in these passages drawn from two largely unconnected prose accounts—contemporary, of course, but written with different aims and in different languages—reveal something of a common thread in the thinking of the late first and early second century. Time, in this set of associations, is by turns an arbiter of truth and literary merit, and a combatant in conflict with unreliable or untrue representations of the past. In short, this model of time positions it as something like a hegemonic power, overseeing, judging the validity and permissibility of what it sees, and fighting for what it has determined. Indeed, if we return to the cluster of images that I set out to explore at the start of the chapter, we can see this hegemonic model of time as simply a subset of that pattern: time (metaphorically) arrives, sees, and tells, and in so doing it enters into conflict with some minority, whether it is a contrarian thinker like Aper or a locality like Megara. As a hegemonic force, moreover, time would align itself with history, with cartography, and in sum with the detached, perspective toward which Plutarch is hoping to pull the mythological material of these *Lives*.[148]

Vision as Power

Having proposed and elaborated on this dynamic of arrival and conflict, I will now trace other appearances of these elements within the body of the *Theseus-Romulus* and, as in the prior chapter, argue for the thematic cohesion between preface and biographical narrative as an indicator of Plutarch's intellectual stakes in these accounts. In particular, I will argue that these points of cohesion serve to underscore the roles of both Theseus and Romulus, not merely as "culture heroes" in a vague sense but also, in a strong sense, as metonymic for Athens and Rome and for the composite, layered, and multipolar culture in which Plutarch writes. The passages I have examined and interpreted above have explored the power of certain abstractions to metaphorically "see," "arrive" and "wage war," but it is worth noting their literal analogues within the *Theseus-Romulus*, if we are to gain a coherent understanding of the role this cluster of images plays throughout those *Lives*.

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147. I explore these passages further, through the lens of imitation/*μίμησις*, in the following chapter.

148. Cf. Gramsci's notion of hegemony in Bates (1975), dependent on the creation and defense of a *Weltanschauung*.

In particular, I would like to note the way in which motion, sight and power interact in the narratives of both *Lives* and conclude by linking this cluster to the great geopolitical reality of Plutarch's day: a thriving empire that was close to reaching its greatest geographic extent and, naturally, depended for its survival on both military force and administrative oversight. It is, however, not only in the *Romulus*, but also the *Theseus* that Plutarch's phrasing and emphases betray a special interest in these levers of power, albeit in a mythological context in which neither reorganized Athens nor newly-founded Rome has become, as they would in historical time, the kernel of a domain of any spatially significant extent. Nonetheless, by reading a number of episodes in the *Theseus-Romulus* as small-scale precursors to the large-scale realities of Plutarch's era, we may recognize far better the stakes of this particular biographical enterprise. Romulus, to be sure, is no Julius Caesar, even after the process of historicizing that Plutarch performs on his life, but his position at a starting point in Roman self-narration means that his exploits (as in the preface to *Ab Urbe Condita* of Livy) cannot help but point at the realities of the author's day.

I will explore some further consequences of this principle in the final chapter, but here let it suffice for me to unpack the passages in which sight is efficacious, bringing about one narrative state where another might have arisen. Sight, as I have noted above in my exploration of *opsin historiās*, is ambivalent as an abstract noun, connecting an individual, a communal, or personified agent to a viewed object, whether abstract, animate, or inanimate. In the bulk of modern thinking on the topic,[149] viewers and lookers are regarded as agentive in the broader sense of holding greater power of self-determination. Whether surprisingly or not, the *Theseus-Romulus* largely keeps to this bias. Let me begin, then, with such instances, before surveying a few instances in the text that reverse this pattern in favor of what we can call the "captivation" of the viewer.[150]

Let me begin, in the case of the Theseus myth, at roughly the point where I left off in the previous chapter. Upon arriving at Athens, Theseus no longer faces the set of brigands he had encountered on the road, but at the same time faces threats to his status that are posed by forces within the city.[151] First, and more famously, Medea has made herself a concubine of Aegeus and learned in advance that his son is coming, while Aegeus is ignorant (*ἀγνοοῦντος*) of his son's

149. See e.g. Jay (1994) and Blumenberg (1957). For the role of the spectator in Greek history, see Walker (1993).

150. For the origins of my use of this term, see Gell (1998) pp. 68-72, where he describes the experience of a viewer looking upon an artistic object (e.g. a painting by Vermeer) and being caught, dialectically, between the desire to interact with an object and the inability to have an effect upon what is represented in it. While I do not pretend to replicate Gell's broader theory of the "art nexus," captivation is at least suggestive of a number of the passages in the *Theseus-Romulus* in which the agent of *opsis* is deprived of agency in a way more commonly associated with being a listener (e.g. the siren's song in the *Odyssey)* than with catching sight. See however the description of the Athenians watching the battle in Syracuse harbor in book 7 of Thucydides.

151. See Calame *op. cit.* pp. 73-75.

identity. Her act of learning in advance (*προαισθομένη*) leaves much to the imagination of the reader, as if to make the reader wonder whether this "presentiment" is a matter of intuition, magic, or a scout placed somewhere between Troezen and Athens.[152] Even in his advanced years, however, Aegeus is able to recognize (*ἀνακρίνας*) Theseus by one of his tokens and avert catastrophe. Even in this brief treatment, the story reads like a Euripidean happy ending: Medea has advance knowledge of Theseus' arrival, but it does not go so far back as Aegeus' placement of tokens. By her own lack of knowledge, she fails to stop Aegeus from seeing the short sword or carving knife (*μάχαιρα*) and from preventing his son's drinking from the poisoned cup (*κύλικα*): in this battle of eating implements, at least, sword is mightier than subterfuge. Sight, then, can be a way of defusing a ploy, of preventing an outsider's gambit from derailing an intended state of affairs in which Theseus can be recognized as who he is and succeed to the kingship of Athens. In a moment of co-operative *opsis*, offered by son and taken by father, what is toxic to the state and to its future king is cut out and expelled (12.1-2):

> *κατελθὼν δὲ εἰς τὴν πόλιν εὗρε τά τε κοινὰ ταραχῆς μεστὰ καὶ διχοφροσύνης, καὶ τὰ περὶ τὸν Αἰγέα καὶ τὸν οἶκον ἰδίᾳ νοσοῦντα. Μήδεια γὰρ ἐκ Κορίνθου φυγοῦσα, φαρμάκοις ὑποσχομένη τῆς ἀτεκνίας ἀπαλλάξειν Αἰγέα, συνῆν αὐτῷ. προαισθομένη δὲ περὶ τοῦ Θησέως αὕτη, τοῦ δὲ Αἰγέως ἀγνοοῦντος, ὄντος δὲ πρεσβυτέρου καὶ φοβουμένου πάντα διὰ τὴν στάσιν, ἔπεισεν αὐτὸν ὡς ξένον ἑστιῶντα φαρμάκοις ἀνελεῖν. ἐλθὼν οὖν ὁ Θησεὺς ἐπὶ τὸ ἄριστον οὐκ ἐδοκίμαζε φράζειν αὐτόν, ὅστις εἴη, πρότερος, ἐκείνῳ δὲ βουλόμενος ἀρχὴν ἀνευρέσεως παρασχεῖν, κρεῶν παρακειμένων σπασάμενος τὴν μάχαιραν, ὡς ταύτῃ τέμνων, ἐδείκνυεν ἐκείνῳ.*
>
> But when he came to the city, he found public affairs full of turmoil and strife, and the affairs of Aegeus and his house to be ailing. For Medea had fled from Corinth and, having promised to relieve Aegeus of his childlessness with potions, was at his side. And since she herself had learned beforehand about Theseus, while Aegeus was ignorant as well as aging and generally afraid because of the discord, she persuaded him to entertain Theseus as a guest and take him out with potions. Accordingly, when Theseus had come to the banquet, he decided not to reveal his identity first but wanting to provide him a

152. See *A&M ad loc.* for the varying accounts of Medea in Athens, none of which help specify how it is she knows that Theseus is coming. There is in the *Epitome* of Pseudo-Apollodorus some discussion of her involvement with the Marathonian bull (*Αἰγεὺς δὲ τὸν ἴδιον ἀγνοῶν παῖδα, δείσας ἔπεμψεν ἐπὶ τὸν Μαραθώνιον ταῦρον*. e.1.5); Plutarch, however, treats that exploit in a subsequent passage (14). Nor, as we might hope, is there any mention of what happens to Medea once her plot has been revealed; rather than indulging a reader's potential interest in a related figure, he keeps to incidents closely related to his subject. The exigencies of biography have trumped interest in a satisfyingly explicit mythological narrative here.

starting point for the discovery, he drew his knife when the meat was ready, as if to cut it, and showed it to him.

From the perspective of others in the city, however, Theseus is himself an outsider. Although Aegeus is able to make his son recognized by the citizens and, as a consequence, be "shown forth" as a successor (*ἀπεδείχθη διάδοχος*), the Pallantidae—rivals to Aegeus and Theseus for the kingship of Athens—plot against the father who "is ruling" (*βασιλεύει*) and the son who "will rule" (*βασιλεύσει*) (13.1). In Plutarch's version, the plot appears to be a bit more complicated than Medea's (13.1-2):

> *... εἰς πόλεμον καθίσταντο, καὶ διελόντες ἑαυτούς, οἱ μὲν ἐμφανῶς Σφηττόθεν ἐχώρουν ἐπὶ τὸ ἄστυ μετὰ τοῦ πατρός, οἱ δὲ Γαργηττοῖ κρύψαντες ἑαυτοὺς ἐνήδρευον, ὡς διχόθεν ἐπιθησόμενοi τοῖς ὑπεναντίοις.*
>
> ... they went to war, and having divided themselves, some went openly from Sphettus to the city with their father (Pallas), while the others had hid themselves and lay in ambush at Gargettus, so as to assail their opponents from both sides.

It seems reasonable to speculate as to whether Plutarch is trying to reconcile multiple accounts that he finds plausible,[153] but the net effect of this description is to suggest not only a numerically greater threat than that posed by Medea, also one of more complexity: by hook or by crook, overt war or covert gambit, the Pallantidae are not relying on a single stratagem to seize the kingship of Athens from Aegeus and Theseus.

Nor does any preexisting arrangement between father and son prevent this outcome, but rather the betrayal of one of those trusted by the Pallantidae: their herald, Leos, a man from what would become the Attic deme of Hagnous, "reported" (*ἐξήγγειλε*) this plan to Theseus, who surprises and destroys the conspirators lurking in Gargettus, while the group in Sphettus disperses. On an etiological level, Plutarch claims that the story explains two likely unrelated practices on the part of the people of Attica. First, the deme of Pallene (associated with Pallas) does not allow intermarriage with those of the deme of Hagnous, and, secondly, their heralds do not, as is customary among the other demes of Attica make the cry of *akouete leōi* ("listen, people"), on the grounds that the vocative sounds like a reference to the traitor (13.2). On the level of trope and imagery, however, the role of Leos in defusing this two-pronged scheme is worth exploring: as a herald, his job of overseeing and communicating ought to have been of benefit to the Pallantidae, just as the brigands relied on their specific tricks for defeating travelers. Here as well, Theseus is

153. Ampolo notes (in *A&M ad loc.*) that the story of the Pallantids may be the rationalization of a gigantomachy narrative, so the (relative) complexity of the scheme may be a byproduct of that process alongside the reconciling of multiple original accounts.

able to turn this to his own advantage, although any underlying reasoning outside of Leos' betrayal is not explained by Plutarch.

What is more, Leos comes at this point in a long line of messengers in the *Theseus-Romulus*. But unlike Idaeus, Talthybius, and the unnamed messenger from the *Iliad*, whose words are quoted and adapted in the preface (*Theseus* 1-2), Leos is a literal participant in the narrative, and his ability to communicate what he knows of the covert and overt actions of the Pallantidae (*οἱ μὲν ἐμφανῶς ... οἱ δὲ .... κρύψαντες ἑαυτοὺς*) helps provide a narrative coherence to the stories that Plutarch is recounting about Theseus' arrival. As with Medea's plot against Theseus, their bipartite "war" (*πόλεμος*) is triggered by his quasi-homecoming and, in turn, foiled by an act of communication that the planners could not have anticipated. It is not sight, however, but overhearing that is the key sense upon which this reversal depends. When Plutarch explains the refusal in Pallene to say *akouete leōi* not as any anti-popular gesture but rather as a taboo derived from the Leos episode, we can imagine the inhabitants of that deme as aiming, like a neurotic reimagining a past that can no longer be changed, at an alternate turn of events in which Leos does not overhear their scheme and betray the Pallantidae. Leos, after all, turned his passive role as listener into an active one, simply by determining his own message and his own audience.[154]

Like the naysaying Megarians in *Theseus* 9, then, Plutarch describes this tradition as placing Pallene at odds with an Attic consensus. Unlike the Megarians, however, they constitute a part of Attica! From the perspective of a unified Attic state, moreover, their different custom is not even accorded the dignity of a properly epichoric tradition, but rather is framed as a the negation of a local tradition, since they do not "herald the local cry" (*κήρυττεσθαι τοὐπιχώριον*). Nor, lastly, is this a trivial negation: the implicit, if unattainable, wish is for a sequence in which the Pallantidae dethroned the line of Aegeus, which places the deme, at least in one small domain, in symbolic opposition to the centrality of Aegeus and Theseus in Attic imagination and self-representation.[155]

If we turn from this early part of the *Theseus* to the end of the *Romulus*, we find another moment of what we might call "successful" heraldry, in this case closely bound up with the connection between *opsis* and the rationalizing of myth. In his extended treatment of the disappearance of Romulus,[156] Plutarch brings up the death of Scipio Africanus as a kind of foil. He

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154. Contrast the (largely) faithful Iris in Homer and the loyal messengers in most of Greek tragedy.

155. For another instance of the importance of the role of the *kērux* in Plutarch's image of early Athens, see also *Solon* 8.2, where the lawmaker ascends to the "herald's stone" (*τὸν τοῦ κήρυκος λίθον*) to recite his poem, the Salamis; Plutarch cites the first two lines: "As a herald myself I came from lovely Salamis, having set forth my song as arrangement of words before the agora" (*αὐτὸς κῆρυξ ἦλθον ἀφ' ἱμερτῆς Σαλαμῖνος, / κόσμον ἐπέων ᾠδὴν ἀντ' ἀγορῆς θέμενος*). We thus have a corollary in archaic poetry of Plutarch's own imagining of himself as author-herald in the *Theseus-Romulus* preface.

notes, in particular, that the latter individual's corpse was visible, while Romulus's end[157] leaves, other than a date of his last appearance, "nothing certain to speak of or agreed upon to learn" (*οὐδὲν εἰπεῖν βέβαιον οὐδ' ὁμολογούμενον πυθέσθαι*) (27.4). This, as he points out, is because there is no body to visually inspect (27.5-6):

> *καίτοι Σκηπίων ἔκειτο νεκρὸς ἐμφανὴς ἰδεῖν πᾶσι, καὶ τὸ σῶμα παρεῖχε πᾶσιν ὁρώμενον ὑποψίαν τινὰ τοῦ πάθους καὶ κατανόησιν· Ῥωμύλου δ' ἄφνω μεταλλάξαντος οὔτε μέρος ὤφθη σώματος οὔτε λείψανον ἐσθῆτος.*
>
> But Scipio, dead, lay visible for all to see, and in being seen his body furnished a certain suspicion and conjecture of what happened to him, but in the case of Romulus, who disappeared suddenly, no part of his body or shred of his clothing was seen.

Note, in particular, the play on "suspicion" (*ὑποψίαν*) and *opsis*: that Scipio's body is manifest and visible does not prevent a variety of theories from arising that run the forensic gamut (natural causes, suicide, homicide).[158]

In the case of Romulus, however, the absence of even a shred of clothing allows for even wilder speculation. Set against the theory that he is murdered by conspiring senators (a kind of echo of the conspiracy of the Pallantidae),[159] Plutarch tells the apotheosis story familiar from Livy 1.16. In this version, the *aphanismos* of Romulus occurs near the marsh of Capra during "occurrences in the air that were wonderous and stronger than reason" (*θαυμαστὰ καὶ κρείττονα λόγου περὶ τὸν ἀέρα πάθη*).[160] But while Livy speaks merely of a storm and a thick cloud that hides the *conspectus* of Romulus from the assembled men ("tam denso regem operuit nimbo ut conspectum eius contioni abstulerit"), Plutarch's account models these mysterious *pathē* in more elaborate visual detail (27.7):

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156. For questions about the disappearance narrative, see Edmund (1984).

157. While the use of *teleutē* to mean "death" is hardly an uncommon one, it is worth noting that Plutarch has not yet weighed in on the issue of physical and spiritual immortality, as he will at 28.7-8.

158. For another link to Plutarch's own visual figures for truth evaluation, compare his phrasing at *Romulus* 8.9, where he speaks of "the dramatic and fictitious part" of Fabius Pictor and Diocles of Peparethus' accounts of Romulus as "suspicious to some" (*ὕποπτον μὲν ἐνίοις ἐστί τὸ δραματικὸν καὶ πλασματῶδες*).

159. Livy mentions the conspiracy narrative second, but at least minimizes this "perobscura fama" on the grounds that fear and admiration made the apotheosis narrative more prevalent ("admiratio viri et pavor praesens nobilitavit").

160. Contrast the less numinous description in Livy: "subito coorta tempestas cum magno fragore tonitribusque ..."

> τοῦ μὲν γὰρ ἡλίου τὸ φῶς ἐκλιπεῖν, νύκτα δὲ κατασχεῖν οὐ πρᾳεῖαν οὐδ' ἥσυχον, ἀλλὰ βροντάς τε δεινὰς καὶ πνοὰς ἀνέμων ζάλην ἐλαυνόντων πανταχόθεν ἔχουσαν· ἐν δὲ τούτῳ τὸν μὲν πολὺν ὄχλον σκεδασθέντα φυγεῖν, τοὺς δὲ δυνατοὺς συστραφῆναι μετ' ἀλλήλων.
>
> For the light of the sun went into eclipse, and night spread over them, neither gentle nor mild, but with terrible thunder and gusts of winds driving a squall from all sides. Amid this the mass of the common people dispersed and fled, while the powerful were clustered together with one another.

Certainly, we might regard this detail as emerging out of stylistic differences between the two authors, or perhaps as an exaggeration on the part of Plutarch, for whom a more fabulous and supernatural version of the tale will be easier to reject in favor of conspiracy and murder. But the accounts are also different in their narrative claims: rather than simply a storm, there is also an eclipse that produces "night." That element is not unique here,[161] but Plutarch's choice to include it underscores an emphasis on the optical: in this moment of undeniable division between rationalized account and myth, the sun is not simply obscured by clouds, but rather fully blocked by the motions of heavenly bodies. Supernatural *aphanismos* is not to be taken at face value, but it is given more cover (both literally and metaphorically) by the disappearence of the sun. If there were ever a challenge to Plutarch's hope to give to myth—and subject it to—the *opsis historiās*, this would seem to be it.

Nonetheless, he manages to steer his account away from the supernatural and toward an account that is more plausible, with which he began his treatment and which he revisits (as does Livy) in the context of those who suspect a senatorial conspiracy (27.9). Embedded in this account of the supernatural *pathē*, there are, I would argue, a few hints at the conspiratorial. First, the mass of common men are described as "scattering and fleeing" (σκεδασθέντα φυγεῖν), a potential echo of the Pallantidae at Sphettus who disperse upon learning of Theseus' foiling their plot (διεσπάρησαν) (*Theseus* 13.2). More overtly, those nobles who do stay are "clustered together with one another" (συστραφῆναι μετ' ἀλλήλων) (*Romulus* 27.7); the verb *sustrephō* in the passive can be used to describe conspirators.[162] So even before Plutarch deploys his principle of rationalizing in order to argue against the apotheosis narrative—and, implicitly, for the idea that Romulus was murdered by a senatorial conspiracy—he has managed to recount the former in a

161. See Cicero *Rep.* 2.10.17 and, in Plutarch, *De fortuna Romanorum* 320b-c.

162. This is evident especially in Thucydides 4.68.6 (καὶ οἳ ξυστραφέντες ἀθρόοι ἦλθον) and 8.54.4 (καὶ ὁ μὲν Πείσανδρος τάς τε ξυνωμοσίας ... παρακελευσάμενος ὅπως ξυστραφέντες καὶ κοινῇ βουλευσάμενοι καταλύσουσι τὸν δῆμον), cit. *LSJ s.v.*. In Plutarch, compare *Alcibiades* 5.4 and *Tiberius* 11.1.

way that is not only far removed from Livy's treatment, but is also lexically reminiscent of other accounts of conspiracy.

Oculi, Proculi

In the meantime, Plutarch continues the apotheosis narrative along much the same narrative lines as Livy, but with a more explicit interest in the dynamics of sight than in the Roman historian's account. After storm and eclipse are through (*ἐπεὶ δ' ἔληξεν ἡ ταραχὴ καὶ τὸ φῶς ἐξέλαμψε*) and the people search for Romulus (*ζήτησις ἦν τοῦ βασιλέως καὶ πόθος*) (27.7), the notion that Romulus was elevated to divinity is supported by Proculus Julius, a patrician who comes to the agora explaining that he has seen an apparition of the missing king, "beautiful to look at and larger than ever before, and adorned with shining and burning arms" (*καλὸς μὲν ὀφθῆναι καὶ μέγας ὡς οὔποτε πρόσθεν, ὅπλοις δὲ λαμπροῖς καὶ φλέγουσι κεκοσμημένος*).[163] Moreover, before speaking to this apparition and discussing his apotheosis and the divine sanction of Rome, he is not described (as in Livy) as merely shaking in fear and praying for sanction to look upon it ("cum perfusus horrore verabundusque adstititissem petens precibus ut contra intueri fas esset"), but indeed as "struck by the sight" (*αὐτὸς μὲν οὖν ἐκπλαγεὶς πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν*) (28.1).[164] Although Livy certainly relates this account in a similar way, this description of the visual witness being struck—what I have described above as the "captivation of the viewer"—is a distinctive element in Plutarch's *Romulus* and one to which I will return shortly.

First, we should note Plutarch's version of what Proculus claims to have been told by Romulus (28.2-3):

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163. Plutarch had dealt briefly with the Proculus story toward the start of the *Numa* (2.3); Romulus is simply as described "being carried to heaven with his weapons" (*εἰς οὐρανὸν σὺν τοῖς ὅπλοις ἀναφερόμενον*). See also the brief description in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates Romanae* 2.63 (*ἔχοντα τὰ ὅπλα*). The emphasis on light and vision is unique to the treatment in the *Romulus*, although we might account for some of this elaboration as a simple consequence of Romulus being the dedicated focus here.

164. For the abstract noun *ekplēxis*, see the description of the Oschophoria (*Theseus* 22.4), which I will examine below. In other *Lives*, see *Lycurgus* 5.4; *Fabius Maximus* 2.2, 3.7 and 5.8; *Aemilius Paullus* 19.2; *Marcellus* 15.1 and 20.8. In many of these cases, the reaction is explicitly connected with silence, upheaval (*ταραχή*/*θόρυβος*), and fear (*φόβος*). See also *Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat* in various places (17a, 20f 25d and 36e) where the *ekplēxis* of the listener is connected with *charis* and *hēdonē* (which I will revisit in chapter 4) and, moreover, with *tarachē*. Galen's later *Commentary on the Aphorisms of Hippocrates* (18a.114) describes the experience of *ekplēxis* as "... when they don't make a sound, or do anything, but rather with wide-open eyes wait in silence like those struck by fear" (... *ὅταν μὴ φθέγγωνταί τι, μήτε πράττωσιν, ἀλλ' ἀναπεπταμένοις τοῖς ὀφθαλμοῖς, ἐφ' ἡσυχίας μένωσιν ὁμοίως τοῖς ὑπὸ δέους ἐκπλαγεῖσιν*).

> *θεοῖς ἔδοξεν ὦ Πρόκλε τοσοῦτον ἡμᾶς γενέσθαι μετ' ἀνθρώπων χρόνον, καὶ πόλιν ἐπ' ἀρχῇ καὶ δόξῃ μεγίστῃ κτίσαντας, αὖθις οἰκεῖν οὐρανόν, ἐκεῖθεν ὄντας. ἀλλὰ χαῖρε καὶ φράζε Ῥωμαίοις, ὅτι σωφροσύνην μετ' ἀνδρείας ἀσκοῦντες ἐπὶ πλεῖστον ἀνθρωπίνης ἀφίξονται δυνάμεως. ἐγὼ δ' ὑμῖν εὐμενὴς ἔσομαι δαίμων Κυρῖνος.*
>
> The gods decided, Proculus, for me to pass so much time among men, and after I had founded a city poised for rule and for great glory, to live in heaven again, where I am from. So farewell, and tell the Romans that in practicing prudence with bravery they will arrive at the greatest point of human power. And I will be a kindly divinity for you all, Quirinus.

The exchange in Livy 1.16 is fairly similar, if more singlemindedly martial than the version in the *Romulus*: he tells Proculus to make Rome the "head of the world" ("caput orbis") and, by cultivating military power, to ensure that no human power can resist it. What stands out, however, upon comparing the account in the *Romulus* to the other versions, is the ways in which Plutarch takes special care to emphasize the visual elements of this disappearance and apotheosis: in his description of the initial disappearance of Romulus, of the way the apparition shines, and of Proculus' ecplexis in reaction to the *opsis*, Plutarch frames the whole episode, whatever its historical truth, as a string of optical incidents. Within the framework of the thematic cluster I have been exploring, this should come as no surprise: alongside sight, we have both military conflict (Rome and the world) and arrival (Proculus coming to the agora to report the incident). Joined together here, sight and power are correlated even more explicitly and literally than in the preface and, fittingly, this link comes at a moment of decision between history and *to muthōdes*.

So far, the only piece missing from the fourfold cluster of elements that I laid out above is that of mixture. Plutarch does in fact bring this element into the discourse when he rejects the validity of the supernatural incidents, although the mixture is not technically one between fact and non-factual material. Rather, he makes a set of characteristically cross-cultural moves in order to argue that divine and terrestrial elements do not combine in the way that the Romulus myth would demand. In particular, he notes similar stories that are told among the Greeks (Aristeas of Proconnesus, Cleomedes of Astypaleia, and Alcmene) before deciding on a compromise position: "to deny entirely the divinity of virtue is unholy and base, but it is stupid to mix earth with heaven" (*ἀπογνῶναι μὲν οὖν παντάπασι τὴν θειότητα τῆς ἀρετῆς ἀνόσιον καὶ ἀγεννές, οὐρανῷ δὲ μειγνύειν γῆν ἀβέλτερον*) (28.7). Plutarch, who is forced to reconcile his historicizing project with the claims of Roman exceptionalism, argues for a more abstract form of divinity for Romulus, by which he can reject the supernatural without being regarded by his "kindly audience" as undermining the foundations of Roman hegemony. The *opsis historiās* comes into conflict with other visions here, but Plutarch is capable of brokering a kind of peace between them, in the form of the mixture that he has promised the reader.

Indeed, we might speculate that the Proculus narrative was part of the spur for Plutarch to write the *Romulus* (and, by extension, the *Theseus*). If we recall that it is writing the *Numa* that Plutarch credits in the preface (*Theseus* 1.1) to his urge to write about Romulus, and if we note that Proculus appears in a briefer version in the *Numa* 2.3, the interest in heraldry that first becomes apparent in the quotations at the start of the *Theseus-Romulus* is more understandable. Proculus, after all, is an ideal herald in significant ways. He is of good birth and he is trusted by the Romans, and unlike the crowd that is struck during the disappearance of Romulus and flees,[165] he does not retreat even when struck by the apparition. Furthermore, even his *praenomen* is well-suited for his role in the narrative: related to the adverb *procul* ("from afar"), Proculus means something like "son born while his father is away,"[166] but it might also hint at the role of the messenger of relating an incident far from the time and place it happens.

Captivation

At the same time, we are presented in this account with a new variation on sight, and one which leads us to a pair of comparable incidents in the *Theseus*. While we have adopted the idea that the viewer is agent as paradigmatic in this text and in antiquity in general, what I have been calling Proculus' captivation closely mirrors two, less benign instances of captivation that occur after Theseus' arrival in Athens and more or less bookend his exploits on Crete.[167] In the first episode, which Plutarch has found in the Atthidographer Philochorus, Minos is holding funeral games for Androgeos when Ariadne catches sight of Theseus. Plutarch had referenced Philochorus' rationalized version of the story at 16.1, where he suggests that "the Labyrinth was a dungeon, without any danger except that those contained could not escape, and Minos instituted an athletic competition in honor of Androgeos ... and the first games were won by the most power-

165. This is in *Numa* 2.2: *τὸν μὲν ἄλλον ὅμιλον ἐκπλαγέντα συνέβη φυγεῖν καὶ σκεδασθῆναι, τὸν δὲ Ῥωμύλον ἀφανῆ γενέσθαι.*

166. See note in Ogilvie (1965) 1.16, where he connects the name to Alban birth.

167. See also Plutarch's *Solon* 27, where Plutarch finds the story of the lawgiver meeting Croesus both plausible and characteristic of his subject (*τοσούτους μάρτυρας ἔχοντα καὶ ... πρέποντα τῷ Σόλωνος ἤθει*). In a metaphor reminiscent of the oar/winnowing fan in *Odyssey* 11.90-149, Plutarch compares Solon, who is at first dazzled by Croesus' household and unsure which of the people in it is the king, to an inland man who has never seen the sea. In an elaboration on Herodotus 1.30, Solon experiences the sight, at first, as a "most solemn and variegated spectacle" (*θέαμα σεμνότατον ... καὶ ποικιλώτατον*). Unlike Ariadne and Aegeus, however, he is able to regain his agency in the face of Croesus' kingly splendor: "... he did not suffer anything or say at this sight anything that Croesus expected" (*οὔτ' ἔπαθεν οὐδὲν οὔτ' εἶπε πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ὧν ὁ Κροῖσος προσεδόκησεν*). See also Purves *op. cit.* pp. 139ff and Shapiro (1996).

ful man in his entourage at the time, which was his general, who was named Taurus" (*φρουρὰ μὲν ἦν ὁ Λαβύρινθος οὐθὲν ἔχων κακὸν ἀλλ' ἢ τὸ μὴ διαφυγεῖν τοὺς φυλαττομένους, ἀγῶνα δ' ὁ Μίνως ἐπ' Ἀνδρόγεῳ γυμνικὸν ἐποίει ... ἐνίκα δὲ τοὺς προτέρους ἀγῶνας ὁ μέγιστον παρ' αὐτῷ δυνάμενος τότε καὶ στρατηγῶν ὄνομα Ταῦρος*).[168]

Philochorus' version, in which both the Labyrinth and the Minotaur are demythologized and given rather prosaic interpretations, is also the one that Plutarch brings up again when he mentions how Ariadne catches sight of Theseus (19):

> *ὡς δὲ Φιλόχορος ἱστόρηκε, τὸν ἀγῶνα τοῦ Μίνω συντελοῦντος ἐπίδοξος ὢν ἅπαντας πάλιν νικήσειν ὁ Ταῦρος ἐφθονεῖτο. καὶ γὰρ ἡ δύναμις αὐτοῦ διὰ τὸν τρόπον ἦν ἐπαχθής, καὶ διαβολὴν εἶχεν ὡς τῇ Πασιφάῃ πλησιάζων. διὸ καὶ τοῦ Θησέως ἀξιοῦντος ἀγωνίσασθαι συνεχώρησεν ὁ Μίνως. ἔθους δ' ὄντος ἐν Κρήτῃ θεᾶσθαι καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας, Ἀριάδνη παροῦσα πρός τε τὴν ὄψιν ἐξεπλάγη τοῦ Θησέως, καὶ τὴν ἄθλησιν ἐθαύμασε πάντων κρατήσαντος. ἡσθεὶς δὲ καὶ ὁ Μίνως μάλιστα τοῦ Ταύρου καταπαλαισθέντος καὶ προπηλακισθέντος, ἀπέδωκε τῷ Θησεῖ τοὺς παῖδας καὶ ἀνῆκε τῇ πόλει τὸν δασμόν.*
>
> As Philochorus relates it, when Minos was carrying out the funeral games, Taurus, who was expected to again defeat everyone, was resented. For his power was hated because of his character, and he was accused of being intimate with Pasiphaë. This is why, when Theseus asked to compete, Minos let him. Since it was the custom in Crete for women to be spectators as well, Ariadne was present and was struck by the sight of Theseus, and marvelled at his athleticism as he defeated everyone. And Minos, too, very pleased that Taurus was out-wrestled and disgraced, gave the youths over to Theseus and remitted the tribute to the city.

On the face of it, this is a happy set of circumstances for everyone but the villainous general Taurus. Strange as this turn of events seems from the perspective of contemporary international politics, Theseus' athletic success eliminates this bully Taurus as a source of *phthonos* for the Cretans, protects the marriage between Minos and Pasiphaë, and mends the tension with the Athenians.[169] In the case of Ariadne, however, we can surmise that this moment of captivation presages

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168. For another rationalization, compare Palephatus *De Incredibilibus* 2 on Pasiphaë's being impregnated by Taurus; Minos sends the son to the mountains, where he digs a "deep tunnel" (*ὄρυγμα βαθὺ*), within which he feeds on wild animals and the enemies of Minos. See Stern (1996) *ad loc.*

169. A certain amount of *phthonos* would certainly be easy to imagine in the contemporary world of sports (the New York Yankees, Duke basketball, Manchester United), but in these cases the scorn and dislike is at least partly conditioned by regional rivalry. It is difficult to imagine a New York Yankees fan cheering on Alex Rodriguez being struck out by a pitcher playing for the

a series of further metaphorical blows, which are less benign.[170] While Plutarch does not give a version of Ariadne's ultimate fate that he credits to Philochorus, none of the fates that he describes at *Theseus* 20 can we classify as a "happily ever after" ending. Although the stories about Ariadne's life subsequent to meeting Theseus are "without agreement" (*οὐδὲν ὁμολογούμενον ἔχοντες*), and Plutarch indeed relishes relating a few bizarre versions, unhappiness is a constant across the narratives. Whether she hangs herself, dies in childbirth, or lives alone on Naxos, abandonment and sorrow are the ultimate end and a striking reversal of her position on Crete as daughter of Minos and privileged spectator.[171]

Of course, it is impossible to know how much of Plutarch's description of Ariadne's being struck by Theseus' appearance is derived from details or phrasing in Philochorus' version. On some level, then, it can be difficult to assess how much this emphasis on spectatorship and vision (while an unavoidable element of the narrative) is Plutarch's contribution to the original account. But as I noted above in discussing the disappearance of Romulus in both the *Numa* and the *Romulus*, he makes a habit of speaking of individuals as being sight-struck, and it is therefore at least conceivable that the contributions are his own. Indeed, the phrasing I have noted here—combining *opsis* with a form of the verb *ekplēttō*—is almost entirely unattested before Plutarch,[172] just like *opsin labein* above. It appears, for instance, in the *Aemilius Paullus*, where there is a claim that the Romans are "going to be struck by the very sight and movement" (*ἐκπλαγησομένων τὴν ὄψιν αὐτὴν καὶ τὴν κίνησιν*) of the Basternae, a "monstrous and hard to look at" (*ἔκφυλον οὖσαν καὶ δυσπρόσοπτον*) tribe of Germans whom Perseus has enlisted to fight alongside the Macedonians (12.5). Subsequently, there is a similar description of the Thracians as being very visually arresting on the battlefield (*πρῶτοι δ' οἱ Θρᾷκες ἐχώρουν, ὧν μάλιστά φησιν ἐκπλαγῆναι τὴν ὄψιν*) (18.5). In both cases, sight and motion become indices of cultural difference between

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Boston Red Sox.

170. Compare the teichoscopia in *Iliad* 3.121-244 for another female, "cross-cultural" spectator. Of course, Helen has already abandoned her "home culture" for Troy, which makes for a different set of circumstances and consequences. See also Scodel (1997), where she explores reasons why women are "good for looking with" (in particular, where it comes to focalizing military action) in three of Euripides' late plays. For Plutarch on women, see Buszard (2010) and Walcot (1999).

171. See also the reciprocal affection that develops between Theseus and Perithoüs in *Theseus* 30.1-2 upon their catching sight of one another: *ὡς δ' εἶδεν ἄτερος τὸν ἕτερον καὶ τὸ κάλλος ἐθαύμασε καὶ τὴν τόλμαν ἠγάσθη, μάχης μὲν ἔσχοντο ...*

172. The only other passage that likely predates Plutarch is from the slightly earlier *Jewish War* of Josephus, and is in many ways a foil for the description of Romulus' disappearance in the *Romulus*: here, *eikones* or *sēmeiai* of Tiberius are brought in to Jerusalem under the cover of night, and with daybreak the people of Jerusalem are struck by their sight (*πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν ἐξεπλάγησαν*) on account of the taboo against graven idols (2.170).

Romans and non-Romans, serving much the same role as they do in Philochorus' rationalized version of Ariadne and Theseus, albeit with a properly historical and martial element that is absent from the family drama of that story.[173]

If we return to the *Theseus*, however, it is worth noting one final narrative in which an instance of vision bears decisive and, as it does ultimately for Ariadne, destructive consequences for the spectator. This is the story of Aegeus' death upon seeing the sails of Theseus' ship, and should consequently also be read alongside the account of Aegeus' recognition of Theseus that I examined above. Here, however, the sight of a specific token is a misrecognition that brings destruction for the father rather than an accurate recognition that brings safety for the son, and that destruction occurs in a direct and immediate way unparalleled by any of the unhappy fates that Ariadne meets. The tale is a familiar one:[174] before they leave, Aegeus tells the pilot of Theseus' ship to fly a black sail if Theseus does not survive, and either a white or red sail if he does (*Theseus* 17). When they return to the coast of Attica, however, Theseus and his pilot forget to hoist the correct sail, and when Aegeus sees that the sail is not white, he jumps from a cliff in despair (22). Perhaps surprisingly, Plutarch makes little use of visual language here: he reiterates that, by the hoisting of the sail, the survival of Theseus and the other Athenians "was supposed to be intelligible to Aegeus" (*ἔδει γνώριμον τῷ Αἰγεῖ γενέσθαι*), and he elides the actual moment of vision and misrecognition in favor of a terse description of Aegeus' emotional state and physical reaction: "but he, despairing, threw himself down to the rocks and was destroyed" (*τὸν δ' ἀπογνόντα ῥῖψαι κατὰ τῆς πέτρας ἑαυτὸν καὶ διαφθαρῆναι*).[175]

Nonetheless, vision is inextricable from the basic elements of this narrative, just as it cannot be removed from the story about Ariadne's catching sight of Theseus, whatever the vocabulary of sight that Philochorus himself used or did not use. Like her, Aegeus is a royal spectator, situated in a vertically elevated position from which one might imagine him to be safe from whatever dangers directly beset Theseus. Unlike the Romans in the *Aemilius Paullus* or even Proculus in both the *Numa* and *Romulus* accounts, he is not interacting with Theseus and his ship on a horizontal domain, where differences of size and power make for a potential threat to the viewer. Rather, he is in a situation that is in one respect comparable to that of the imagined view-

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173. In *Caesar* 38.5, we see the master of a boat at Apollonia terrified at the sight of him: *καὶ τοῦ κυβερνήτου λαβόμενος τῆς χειρός, ἐκπεπληγμένου πρὸς τὴν ὄψιν*. See also 69.10 and *Dion* 55.3. Later in the second century, Aelian claims, in *De Natura Animalium* 2.16, that the elk "makes its hide multicolored so as to thwart one's sight" (*πολύχροιαν ἐργάζεται μυρίαν, ὡς ἐκπλήττειν τὴν ὄψιν*).

174. I reexamine this story within the context of forgetting and cultural continuity in the final chapter.

175. Contrast the watchman's catching sight of the beacon-light in *Agamemnon* 20ff: here, the good news (that the Greeks have sacked Troy and are returning home) is properly signaled, and Aeschylus dwells on both the visual phenomenon and the joyous reaction of the viewer.

er in the introduction to the second book of the *De Rerum Natura*, watching from an elevated position from which it is possible to "watch the great struggle of another" ("magnum alterius spectare laborem") whether in a storm, out at sea, or on the battlefield (1-6).[176] But unlike that proverbial spectator, who may find it "sweet" to watch even without *Schadenfreude*, Aegeus has placed himself at a particular risk of captivation. The use of tokens, which had saved Theseus from Medea's plot earlier in the *Life*, leads to Aegeus own "death by sight," as his overseeing and the *oversight* of Theseus and the pilot trigger this overhasty suicide. This description mostly elides Aegeus' own visual and psychological processes:[177] catching sight of the sail that is not white, assuming therefore that Theseus has failed in his mission to Crete, deciding that life is no longer worth living. All that is narrated is the external happenings, which Plutarch arranges in a particularly speedy sequence, its verbal actions expressed by a participle followed in turn by two coordinated infinitives: *ἀπογνόντα ῥῖψαι ... ἑαυτὸν καὶ διαφθαρῆναι*.

Given the absence of any of the relevant visual details or internal psychological experience in this description,[178] one might see Plutarch as avoiding, here, an emphasis on visuality that I have traced through the *Theseus-Romulus.* Against that interpretation, I would argue, first, that the overt treatment of sight in the preface and in the other episodes means that an attentive reader will be primed for this one, and, second, that the lack of detail here suggests a kind of automatic connection between sight and reaction that can underscore the capacity of *opsis* to overpower not only the viewed but also the viewer. The very fact that we do not have the opportunity to linger on Aegeus' experience suggests that readers possess a certain competency by which they can understanding the narrative: they can be trusted, like modern viewers watching a sequence of cinematic images unaccompanied by a narrator's voice, to connect the dots and understand that Aegeus, like Ariadne before him, is "sight-struck."[179] Of course, a modern reader might find the particular reaction impulsive (Aegeus might, for instance have waited to be sure that Theseus and the pilot had not made a mistake), but that reaction ultimately underscores the power of firsthand sight in the *Theseus-Romulus* and in the traditions that furnished its narratives.[180]

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176. See also Archippus (fr. 43, ed. Kock) *cit.* Leonard and Smith *ad loc*: *ὡς ἡδὺ τὴν θάλατταν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ὁρᾶν / ὦ μῆτέρ ἐστι μὴ πλέοντα μηδαμοῦ*.

177. For Theseus' "motivations" in forgetting to switch the sails, see the final chapter, where I connect *choros*, *chara* and *lēthē*.

178. To speak of an internal experience is no anachronism for Plutarch, even within mythological material of this sort. Consider Theseus' admiring dreams regarding Heracles, which Plutarch compares to Themistocles' dreams concerning Miltiades (6.8-9).

179. For the idea of closure in the medium of the comic strip, see McCloud (1993) p. 60ff.

180. The notion of *autopsia* in prose goes at least as far back as Herodotus (the pillars of Sesostris in Palestine at 2.106, Lake Moeris and the Egyptian Labyrinth at 2.148), but the term comes later (e.g. in Galen). See Armayor 1978a, 1978b, 1980, 1985. See also Purves *op. cit.* pp. 118-158 as well as Kirk (2014) on the historian's privileging of visual knowledge over schematic

This incident is followed by the appearance of another familiar figure: the herald. After reaching Phaleron and sacrificing to the gods, Theseus sends a herald to Athens as "a messenger of their survival" (*κήρυκα δ' ἀπέστειλε τῆς σωτηρίας ἄγγελον*). But where the herald Leos had managed to foil the plot of the Pallantidae and save both Theseus and Aegeus, this one arrives at the town (*εἰς ἄστυ*) too late to save the king. As we know, Aegeus has already jumped to his death, and many of the Athenians are mourning his death. Others, however, are happy at at the survival of Theseus and the other Athenian youths; the herald takes a garland from them and wraps it around his herald's staff (*τοὺς μὲν οὖν στεφάνους δεχόμενος τὸ κηρύκειον ἀνέστεφεν*), an action that becomes ritual at the Oschophoria (22.3-4):

> *οἱ δὲ σὺν κλαυθμῷ καὶ θορύβῳ σπεύδοντες ἀνέβαινον εἰς τὴν πόλιν. ὅθεν καὶ νῦν ἐν τοῖς Ὠσχοφορίοις στεφανοῦσθαι μὲν οὐ τὸν κήρυκα λέγουσιν, ἀλλὰ τὸ κηρύκειον, ἐπιφωνεῖν δ' ἐν ταῖς σπονδαῖς 'ἐλελεῦ ἰοὺ ἰού' τοὺς παρόντας, ὧν τὸ μὲν σπένδοντες ἀναφωνεῖν καὶ παιωνίζοντες εἰώθασι, τὸ δ' ἐκπλήξεως καὶ ταραχῆς ἐστι.*
>
> And with wailing and an uproar, they hurried up to the city. From this, even now on the Oschophoria they say that it is not the herald who is crowned, but rather the herald's staff, and during the libations the people at hand cry out "Eleleu, iou, iou," the first half of which they customarily utter while pouring libations and celebrating, while the second half is an expression of shock[181] and tumult.

As with the incident involving Leos, the decision of a herald enters into a local custom. Although the effect is nowhere near as dramatic as saving the lives of Aegeus or Theseus, it is undeniably another instance in which Plutarch reports the messenger as, in part, affecting the message. At the same time, the mix of joy (*ἐλελεῦ*) and sadness (*ἰοὺ ἰού*) in this ritual utterance shows the ways in which he imagines that herald and heraldry can be trumped by a moment of sight, even one as rash and impulsive as the one that Aegeus experiences. A bit like lightning and thunder in a storm, the sight of the ship and the word from its passengers move at somewhat different paces. The juxtaposition of opposite emotions upon the herald's arrival into town is thus not only a way of explaining a bizarre ritual cry, but also another opportunity for Plutarch to explore how *opsis* can alternately run ahead of and blend together with verbal narration.

As with the other two broadly comparable incidents involving Theseus (Aegeus recognizing him by his tokens, Ariadne becoming enamored of him), these episodes do not demand any

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and cartographic schemes.

181. See my note concerning *ekplēxis* on p. 69.

historical rationalizing on the part of Plutarch or of the earlier sources. Unlike Proculus, moreover, this herald's "good news" does not require one to subscribe to anything fabulous or redolent of myth. Even absent a familiar half-human monster and a nearly insoluble labyrinth, it is within the realm of possibility for a historical Theseus to return from exploits away from home and to fail to hoist his sails. Whatever readers, whether in Plutarch's day or in our own, might make of the act of forgetting and of his father's hasty suicide, this is another set of events in which myth "accepts mixture with what is likely" (δέχηται τὴν πρὸς τὸ εἰκὸς μεῖξιν) (*Theseus* 1.5), and a sufficiently kindly audience will see these narratives of vision as unfolding in a comprehensible and rational universe.

In managing to import such incidents into his historical project, unchanged or little altered as far as his audience knows by the "look of history," Plutarch is able to make these *Lives* more than simply an exploration of the difference between myth and history. Instead, we may also read them as an inquiry into vision, a *historia opseōs* in which sight (both literal and metaphorical) and report (whether narrated or narrating) interact in diverse and polyvalent ways. Whatever the agency or passivity of the viewer, viewed, and messenger within a given episode, their interactions constitute a common thread by which Plutarch endows this pair of *Lives* not only with elements of historical plausibility, but also with thematic coherence. After all, the broad range of antiquarian material upon which Plutarch is drawing here—a mixture of Greek and Roman sources, plausible and implausible claims, well-known places and unverifiable incidents—runs the risk of devolving into miscellany, a labyrinth of claims and counter-claims made on the grounds of tradition and historical propriety. As a consequence, *opsis* works for the biographer in a double role: it is, as becomes clear in the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*, one of the master tropes with which he figures his process of reconciling myth to the demands of history, but it is also a recurring motif around which he can organize the bodies of this pair of *Lives*.

Chapter 3
"Nothing like the sun": Mimēsis, Recursion, and the Labyrinth

Having reflected in earlier pages about the novelty and originality of Plutarch's *Theseus-Romulus*, I will turn in this chapter to the novelty of Theseus and Romulus themselves in Plutarch's representation of them. They are, I will argue, quite distinct from one another in this regard. While Romulus is chronologically and textually subsequent to Theseus, he is framed as a prototypical originator and, indeed, as almost Laconically unimitative. Theseus, on the other hand, who does not found a city but reforms it, is prodigiously imitative; accordingly, the discourse surrounding his actions is closely bound up in ideas of imtiation and representation, a property of the *Theseus* that reaches a crescendo with the description of the crane dance at 21. I would not argue that either of these tendencies is entirely unique to Plutarch's treatment, but Plutarch's juxtaposition of the two biographical figures and their behaviors allows us to see our biographer again in action, characterizing Greek (Attic, Athenian) and Roman identitities and also demonstrating the variety of ways in which his biographical project can engage with *mimēsis*. Ultimately, through the recursiveness possible in mimetic behaviors, we find in the *Theseus-Romulus* an exemplary Romulus (no imitator himself) and a Theseus who is, we might say, exemplary for the reader of the biography in his own imitative capacities.

After all, the term *mimēsis* is rather protean, containing a great variety of properties and behaviors linked only by posteriortiy and similarity.[182] As a consequence of this semantic breadth, the term will carry with it distinct associations and evaluative force to a reader of Plato, of Aristotle, or of Auerbach.[183] If we want to better understand Plutarch's use of the term, then, we must engage with a degree of semantic diversity that does not yield easily to systematizing and, indeed, makes it difficult to find a coherent agenda amid such variety. Plutarch is a Middle Platonist, but his engagements with *mimēsis* cannot entirely or even mostly be considered "philosophical," much less Platonic in any definite sense. At the very least, the notions of imitation proposed in landmark passages (say in *Republic* 2, 3 and 10) do not furnish any unifying intertext for Plutarch's uses of the term in his biographical project or in the *Theseus-Romulus* in particular.[184] *Mimēsis* is not, of course, a monochrome or uniform phenomenon across Plato's works, and it is

182. I will use the transliterated, italicized *mimēsis* rather broadly in this chapter: it can represent the whole family of terms built off the stem and, at other times, describe instances where semantically related phrasing appears in Plutarch (ζῆλος, *ταὐτὰ πράττειν*) and elsewhere (*imitatio*).

183. Auerbach barely touches on the theory of *mimēsis*, or the role of classical philosophy in later European literature; see Halliwell (2002) p. vii.

184. See also Dillon *op. cit.* for a survey of Plutarch's engagements with Plato, most of which have little to do with literature. For Plutarch on *mimēsis*, see Duff (2001) pp. 353-356 and Van der Stockt (1990).

so far from being so in Plutarch's *Lives* that to examine its role even in the *Theseus-Romulus* alone is, I will argue, an invitation to consider its complexities.

Let us begin with the term itself. While *mimēsis* can denote the creation of an artistic representation, it is an older and more familiar term in Greek than one might suppose if one encounters it only through Plato, Aristotle, and subsequent literary theory. *Mimēsis* is, fundamentally, an abstract nominalization of the verb *mimeisthai*, a process that one engages in whenever one takes something or someone as a model, either for oneself or for some external, derivative, object. Take for instance the Delian maidens in the *Hymn to Apollo* 163-165, who "know how to imitate the voices and rattling of all people, and each would say that he himself is uttering, so fair is the song that is composed by them" (*πάντων δ' ἀνθρώπων φωνὰς καὶ κρεμβαλιαστὺν / μιμεῖσθ' ἴσασιν, φαίη δέ κεν αὐτὸς ἕκαστος / φθέγγεσθ', οὕτω σφιν καλὴ συνάρηρεν ἀοιδή*).[185] Rather dissimilarly, the governor of Egypt in Herodotus 4.166 imitates Darius (*ἐμιμέετο τοῦτον*) by producing extremely pure gold and is put to death for this instance of "competitive" imitation.[186]

We may therefore begin to see that there is broad range of scenarios and behaviors that are encapsulated with the term. Nor, for that matter, is there a specialized discourse about *mimēsis* in Plutarch or in his biographical writings.[187] We should note, however, that the word often relates to questions of exemplarity, wherein one imitates individuals of good character and is accordingly rewarded.[188] Such instances of *mimēsis* are not merely permissible in Plutarch's eyes, but indeed they constitute vital opportunities for personal improvement, as one individual refashions himself in the ethical image of another. In *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry*, for instance, Plutarch strikes a chord that is reminiscent of Plato's *Laws*, where the Athenian speaks of furnishing the young with proper objects of imitation (654e-5a, 668d-669c), as well as of the second chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics,* in which genres are distinguished on the basis of objects of *mimēsis*: comedy is an imitation of worse men and their actions, tragedy of better. Rather than suggesting that the ideal objects of imitation are idealized and flawless, however, Plutarch suggests that the young, whose *ēthē* are still being formed and developed, should encounter the imitation of lives that are on the whole good without being blameless (26a-b):

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185. See Peponi (2009).

186. Both examples in *LSJ s.v.*

187. For *mimēsis* in the broader tradition of history and prose, see Marincola (1997) pp. 6-18 and Gray (1987).

188. See Halliwell *op. cit.* p. 15 n. 5 on the earliest use of the verb in this behavioral domain, in Theognis 370: "None of the unwise can imitate" (*μιμεῖσθαι δ' οὐδεὶς τῶν ἀσόφων δύναται*). See Pérez Jiménez (2002) for a survey of how exemplarity functions in the *Lives*. See also the preface to the *De Antiquis Oratoribus* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, where the Attic Orators are held up as exempla for (stylistic and rhetorical) imitation.

> *μηδὲν οὖν ἐπαινεῖν ἐθιζέσθω τοιοῦτον ὁ νέος, μηδὲ προφάσεις λέγων μηδὲ παραγωγάς τινας εὐπρεπεῖς ἐπὶ πράγμασι φαύλοις μηχανώμενος πιθανὸς ἔστω καὶ πανοῦργος, ἀλλ' ἐκεῖνο μᾶλλον οἰέσθω, μίμησιν εἶναι τὴν ποίησιν ἠθῶν καὶ βίων, καὶ ἀνθρώπων οὐ τελείων οὐδὲ καθαρῶν οὐδ' ἀνεπιλήπτων παντάπασιν, ἀλλὰ μεμιγμένων πάθεσι καὶ δόξαις ψευδέσι καὶ ἀγνοίαις, διὰ δ' εὐφυΐαν αὐτοὺς πολλάκις μετατιθέντων πρὸς τὸ κρεῖττον. ἡ γὰρ τοιαύτη παρασκευὴ τοῦ νέου καὶ διάνοια, τοῖς μὲν εὖ λεγομένοις καὶ πραττομένοις ἐπαιρομένου καὶ συνενθουσιῶντος, τὰ δὲ φαῦλα μὴ προσιεμένου καὶ δυσχεραίνοντος, ἀβλαβῆ παρέξει τὴν ἀκρόασιν. ὁ δὲ πάντα θαυμάζων καὶ πᾶσιν ἐξοικειούμενος καὶ καταδεδουλωμένος τῇ δόξῃ τὴν κρίσιν ὑπὸ τῶν ἡρωϊκῶν ὀνομάτων, ὥσπερ οἱ τὴν Πλάτωνος ἀπομιμούμενοι κυρτότητα καὶ τὴν Ἀριστοτέλους τραυλότητα, λήσεται πρὸς πολλὰ τῶν φαύλων εὐχερὴς γενόμενος.*
>
> Let a young man not get used to praising someone like that and let him not, offering excuses or devising some specious quibbles for slight matters, be gullible and knavish, but rather let him suppose this: that poetry is the imitation of character and lives, and of people who are not perfect, pure, or entirely blameless, but rather mixed in their misfortunes, false opinions, and ignorance, and yet through goodness of disposition changing for the better. For a preparation and disposition of the youth that is like this, where the youth is elated and inspired by those who speak well and do well, but doesn't attach himself to baseness and is annoyed at it, will render his listening harmless. But someone who marvels at everyone and adapts himself to everything and has his judgment enslaved to fame by the names of his heroes, like those who mimic Plato's humped shoulders and Aristotle's lisp, will become tolerant of baseness without noticing it.

Plutarch is thus suggesting that the young engage with indirect imitation. They should, on the one hand, be capable of listening to the *mimēsis* of a life that is a reasonably good one, but they should at the same time stop short of wholesale mimicry of even admirable individuals, in as much as that would entail imitating their flaws (or at least unsavory quirks) in addition to their virtues and strengths. Rather than the acceptance or refusal of a package good, Plutarchan *mimēsis* can be—and indeed *must* be—selective in both its chosen objects and its degree.[189]

Of course, the fact that the minor flaws that Plutarch mentions here belong, in fact, to Plato and Aristotle cannot be a coincidence. The fact that he chooses these two philosophers as his examples indicates an interest in reflexivity where *mimēsis* is concerned in his intellectual world: those who discuss the uses and misuses of *mimēsis* can, within the broad range of meanings that the term affords, also be proper or improper objects of imitation. Indeed, this raises the issue at the core of my argument in this chapter, which is as rhetorically reflexive as my

189. See Stadter (2004) for the idea that the reader may or should mirror the qualities of the biographical subject.

treatments of space and sight in prior chapters and which takes us from a narrow doctrinal question (that is, wondering how Plutarch feels about *mimēsis*) to a broader and structural one. Plutarch is, after all, an antiquarian and a literary critic, a compiler of myth and a biographer, a priest and a Middle Platonist, and no part of his corpus should be taken in such a way as to arrive at a unified opinion on *mimēsis*. On the contrary, we might say that *mimēsis* presents an opportunity for variety, complexity, and digression, all phenomena that one can more readily see as of intellectual interest to our writer. That *mimēsis* sums up a variety of actions is not so much a deficiency as an opportunity to generate larger systems generated by multiple links of likeness and similarity.

As an analogy, I would point to the recursiveness made possible by grammatical subordation, in which one phrase may contain or govern another (and that phrase may contain or govern another in turn), which allows in theory the construction of unbounded statements and in practice deeply recursive and nested utterances. In a similar way, I will argue here that Plutarch is not aiming fundamentally at a doctrinal or philosophical assessment of *mimēsis*, but rather using the protean set of concepts conveyed by ideas of *mimēsis* in order to create larger networks.[190] Frequently, the output of one instance of imitation may become the input of another.[191] Plutarch's agenda is thus not the affirmation or rejection of *mimēsis* as a unitary phenomenon but rather the demonstration of the complexity of the concept and, indeed, its inextricability from thinking about cultural practice. Accordingly, I will trace *mimēsis* through the "founding moments" assembled in the *Theseus-Romulus* and point, where relevant, to similar passages in the *Moralia*.

Earlier Notions

Of course, one should not assume either that Plato's own texts form a straightforward orthodoxy against which Plutarch is reacting, or that iterative and recursive structures are entirely absent from the philosopher's thinking on the topic. As far as iterativeness and recursiveness are concerned, the philosopher's own discussion in *Republic* 10 of the carpenter and the painter sets the stage for such a model (596e-596e): the gods make the essential "form" (εἶδος) of the bed, then the carpenter makes an instantiation of the form—"some bed" (*κλίνην τινά*)—and lastly the artist makes a painting of it, thereby assuming the role of "imitator" (*μιμητής*) of the bed. He

190. See Hofstadter (1979) pp. 127-160 on recursive processes in language, mathematics, and ther arts; fittingly, the chapter begins with the image of a labyrinth.

191. Cf. Melberg (1995) on the development of *mimēsis* into repetition over type, and the notion that the former "is inherently and always a *repetition*" (1ff). Halliwell (2002) regards the various (even pre-Platonic) uses of *mimēsis* as depending on a notion of "correspondence or equivalence ... between mimetic works, activities, or performances and their putative real-world equivalents" (15) but the iterative model that I am suggesting requires that the mimetic outputs be sufficiently "real-world" that they would, themselves, correspond to further outputs.

is accordingly "an imitator of that of which those others are craftsmen" (*μιμητὴς οὗ ἐκεῖνοι δημιουργοί*). At no point does Plato refer to the painting of a bed as the imitation of an imitation, but the notion of *mimēsis* as an iterative action is here at least embyronically: the imitator, as Plato has Socrates explain to Glaucon, is the maker of a product two degrees removed from nature (*τὸν τοῦ τρίτου ἄρα γεννήματος ἀπὸ τῆς φύσεως*) (597e).[192] Even if the carpenter's action is not an instance of *mimēsis*, the analogy between carpenter and painter and the fact that their respective actions count—and are countable—as deviations from the *eidos* of the bed at least suggest the possibility of an iterative model for imitation.

An analogous model can be found in the *Poetics*, where Aristotle treats *mimēsis* as an iterative process in the generation of narrative material. In a handful of passages,[193] he describes what appear to be varying relationships between *prāxis*, *mūthos*, and a dramatic work, but which can be easily resolved if we regard *mimēsis* as an iterative action that occurs at multiple stages in the development from the underdeveloped *praxis* to completed drama. On the one hand, we need not go so far as Arne Melberg in declaring that "the terms *mythos and praxis* ... even seem like 'imitations' of one another."[194] At the same time, conceiving of *mimēsis* as somehow iterative in the *Poetics* helps one avoid a hermeneutic impasse like that of Eric Downing, whose attempt at sorting out Aristotle's terminology in a thorough and systematic way leaves more problems of interpretation than it solves: in attempting to make these terms match the narratological framework from which he operates, Downing arrives at an impasse in which *mūthos* must mean no fewer than five different processes.[195] In fact, this problem can be avoided if we regard *mimēsis* as a process that occurs at multiple stages in the development of a work from narrative kernel to finished work.

In the Plutarchan text, this iterative tendency takes on a greater level of complexity. To begin with, the terminology of *mimēsis* has taken on shades of meaning that are either less prevalent in or absent from those earlier, philosophical texts. First, as I have noted above, Plutarch uses the terms frequently to refer to taking someone as some kind of personal exemplum: it is nothing so strong as trying to turn oneself into a close impersonation of another, but rather behaving in a way like another in a domain potentially unrelated to a specific *technē* (be it carpentry or tragedy). Although Plato's use of the terms in the *Laws* can approach this usage (for instance, a city that imitates its enemies in 705c), the sense of one individual taking the *life* of another as a general

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192. The translation of Greek *tritou* by a cardinal or ordinal form of "three" would be problematic in English, in as much as inclusive counting seems highly unidiomatic in counting degrees of difference or deviation ("degree zero," "six degrees of separation"). On the possibility of seeing Plato's critique of *mimēsis* as provisional, or even satirical, see Halliwell *op. cit.* p. 38f, pp. 57-59 and *passim.*

193. See *Poetics* 49b24-5, 50a9-12, 50a16-17, 51a31-2.

194. Melberg (1995) pp. 43-45.

195. Downing 1984. See p. 178 for Downing's chart of what he deems the various uses of the term: "muthos$_1$," "muthos$_2$," and so on. See also Belfiore (1984) and (2000).

exemplum is hardly the typical sense to be found in Plato's use of the word. A young man in one of Plato's hypothetical and ideal cities may have his character shaped by observing imitative works, but he is himself not described as the agent of an imitative act.[196]

At the other end of the terms' semantic range, *mimēsis* had also come by Plutarch's day to refer to an imitative relationship between authors (or, if we conceive of this only slightly differently, between their texts).[197] With the development of so-called Dionysian *imitatio,* named for the *On imitation* of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, the Greek term has come to refer to literary allusiveness, as it would in subsequent Greek and Roman critical works. But as Thomas Hidber and Richard Hunter have noted in their explorations of the uses of *mimēsis* in the *On imitation*, this was not a simple shift in the meaning of the term, wherein Platonic models were throughly discarded or effaced in favor of "a classicizing theory of literary imitation."[198] Instead, Dionysius' writings seem to have suggested what Hidber has called "eclectic mimesis," in which the objects of imitative behavior can be persons, narratives, or other texts.[199] If *mimēsis* would develop, under the influence of the Latin noun *imitatio*, into an intensely writerly concept, and one that would be suggestive foremost of one author's attempts to rival and match another, it had not yet done so around the beginning of the Common Era.[200]

Nor does Plutarch, more than a century later, even participate in the shift of *mimēsis* toward a more restrictive sense tightly bound up with literary allusion. Instead, as I will show in this chapter, he deploys the term in a way that is as eclectic as Hidber and Hunter have elucidated in the case of Dionysius of Halicarnassus. As Stephen Halliwell notes, his writings "exhibit a large range of usage of the mimesis word group." But where Halliwell notes that this is "a range broadly typical of Greek of the Hellenistic and imperial periods," and proceeds to explore its generally more restricted uses in *How the Young Man Should Study Poetry*,[201] I would regard even

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196. Contrast Herodotus 5.67, where Cleisthenes the Athenian imitates his maternal grandfather, Cleisthenes of Sicyon. At least on the level of syntax, the older Cleisthenes himself, and not his actions as tyrant, are the object of *mimeisthai*. I am, to be clear, not arguing that the imitation of persons is a unique development in Plutarch, only that it runs counter to the Platonic notion. See e.g. Roller (2004).

197. See Russell (1979) and Halliwell *op. cit.* pp. 292-296. For Dionysius' use of *alētheia* as object of *mimeisthai*, see *De Thucydide* 45, and for *ēthē* and *pathē* as objective genitives of μίμησις, see *Gn. Pomp.* 3.18.

198. See Hunter (2009) p. 111; although this development is "anything but straightforward," Hunter suggests that "a few landmarks remain visible," especially through the hindsight afforded by Horace and Longinus (107-127).

199. Hidber (1996) pp. 57-75.

200. Halliwell *op. cit.* p. 13f discusses the subsequent "impoverishment" of the Latin word *imitatio* and of its derivatives in European vernacular. The word has, as he sees it, taken on an almost pejorative tone.

this "typical" semantic range as a fertile matrix out of which Plutarch can generate the imitative chains that I have suggested above. To make this point, I would emphasize the difference between the breadth of meaning that may be generated by the term in this point of development of the Greek language and, on the other hand, his availing himself of a representatively broad set of uses within a single text. Even within the short passage that I have included from that text, which Halliwell has held up as presenting a relatively stable and coherently Platonic model of *mimēsis*, it permeates Plutarch's discourse from different directions and with a variety of objects: as the making of poetry from meaningful individual characteristics (*μίμησιν ... ἠθῶν καὶ βίων*, "the imitation of characters and lives"), as the aping of more trivial characteristics such as humped shoulders and a lisp, and, more implicitly, as a key term in the philosophical discourse of both the philosophers that he names.

Plutarch and his Digressions

Of course, the density of *mimēsis* here would not be possible with simply a semantically broad word group. Rather, it depends on a more general feature of Plutarch's corpus: his eclecticism with regard to topics, which is largely unprecedented in earlier Greek literature but whose beginnings we may make out earlier in the development of prose.[202] Certainly, digressions are hardly absent from earlier Greek literature, as anyone might attest who has read certain parts of Hesiod or indeed most any Pindaric epinician.[203] Plutarch distinguishes himself from such authors, however, with what one might regard as discursive Houdini tricks: in the *Moralia*, especially, he will often offer up a reasonably narrow question (what, for instance, is that epsilon-shaped object at Delphi?) only to interlace the answers, however they manifest themselves, with a great number of digressions. For so broadly focused a work as the *Works and Days* to contain elements that strike a reader as heterogeneous is to be expected, but a large subset of Plutarch's *Moralia* hinge explicitly on the answering of an antiquarian or ethical question and (at least in their Greek titles) are titled accordingly: "Why does the oracle no longer deliver its answers in verse?" "Should an old man involve himself in politics?"

Indeed, this principle could also be extended to the *Lives*: we might profitably regard the *Alexander-Caesar,* for instance, as "answering" questions about those men's actions, characters,

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201. *ibid.* 296-302. See especially p. 296 n. 29 for the variety of uses to which the term is put in Plutarch.

202. On miscellanies, see Morgan *op. cit.* In this use of digression in prose as a way of displaying erudition and of demonstrating the interconnectedness of topics, we might regard Herodotus as a predecessor; he speaks at 4.30.1 of the way in which his account "sought out digressions from the very start" (*προσθήκας ... ἐξ ἀρχῆς ἐδίζητο*).

203. On the injunctions in *Works and Days* (335-380, 695-764), see Hamilton (1989) pp. 73-77.

and their potential similarity to one another. Plutarch, however, seems not to have regarded these questions as the only criterion for including material. The *Life of Theseus*, for instance, ends with a numerological discussion about the importance of eight to Poseidon (36.6), which relates to the dating of the Athenian feast of Oschophoria, in honor of Theseus, but seems a rather attenuated note on which to end the description of a life:

> *καὶ γὰρ Ποσειδῶνα ταῖς ὀγδόαις τιμῶσιν. ἡ γὰρ ὀγδοὰς κύβος ἀπ' ἀρτίου πρῶτος οὖσα καὶ τοῦ πρώτου τετραγώνου διπλασία, τὸ μόνιμον καὶ δυσκίνητον οἰκεῖον ἔχει τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ δυνάμεως, ὃν Ἀσφάλιον καὶ Γαιήοχον προσονομάζομεν.*
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> This is because they also honor Poseidon on the eighth [of every month]. For the number eight is the first cube of an even number and twice the first square number, which is appropriate to the steadfast and immovable element in the power of the god, whom we call "Securer" and "Earth-Carrier."

While it is by no means a non sequitur, this short passage is certainly a digression from the central topic of the *Life*, connected only by Poseidon's purported relationship to Theseus. The potential strangeness of such a digression, however, can be mitigated if we recognize in Plutarch motivations that supplement—but need not by any means counter—the particular biographical, antiquarian, and ethical questions that motivate the entire text.

We might, to begin with, imagine such digressions as a way of demonstrating erudition, of using the ability to answer an anticipated, if not entirely apposite question ("Why is the Oschophoria in honor of Theseus on the eighth of the month of Pyanepsion?") to develop Plutarch's own authority. Much as he describes Theseus going out of his way at 9.1 to encounter the Crommyonian sow, hoping to show that he was taking on challenges of his own accord and not under any compulsion (*ὡς μὴ δοκοίη πάντα πρὸς ἀνάγκην ποιεῖν*),[204] the author himself employs topical digression to demonstrate not only a kind of literary freedom, but also technical mastery. Digression, after all, entails the risk of not returning to the topic at hand, but to digress and return to the underlying topic demonstrates both breadth of knowledge and a command of discursive ordering.

More broadly, then, we can suppose that digression has the capacity to justify itself, that shifting from topic to topic (the bones of Theseus, celebrations in his honor, Poseidon, the number eight) provides an enlivening sense of how the world hangs together. Two millennia before hypertext could automate shifts inside or outside of a text's linear structure, it was primarily by making room for digression that a reader could acquire a sense of how a given topic connects, through speculation, commonplace, and tradition, to any number of other topics. More than "test cases" to demonstrate knowledge, such digressions provide Plutarch's writing with a good deal of

204. See p. 95 below for more on the Crommyonian sow.

its literary interest and character. If we return to the topic of *mimēsis* in the *Lives*, then, it should be clear that the frequency of digressions presents to Plutarch a greater number of opportunities to weave it into the discourse of a given text, with the consequence that we may read the *Theseus-Romulus* as a text with more than incidental interest in *mimēsis*, which appears through this pair of lives with all the semantic range that I have discussed above.

Opportunities for Mimēsis *in the* Lives

Indeed, to a greater extent than is true of the tropes I have discussed in the two earlier chapters (spatio-temporality in the first and sight in the second), *mimēsis* is bound up in the underlying structure of the *Parallel Lives.* First, one ought to bear in mind that Plutarch sets two lives against one another not out of happenstance, but rather because of preexisting commonalities and because their parallel presentation offers the opportunity to strengthen this sense of likeness, whether in the reader's mind or in Plutarch's own treatment in the *synkrisis*.[205] As the architect of a double biography, he selects two individuals who are neither identical nor incommensurable, but rather comparable when laid alongside one another. Thus Caesar is matched not with a lesser Hellenistic general but with a similarly world-changing figure in Alexander the Great, while Romulus is paired, as I have explored above, with another figure on the dim margins of history. From this overarching perspective, in which some degree of likeness is presupposed for and generated by pairing, mimetic questions are often close at hand.[206]

Secondly, and more overtly, *mimēsis* may enter into the *Lives* through the lens of the reader's own motivations and self-comparisons to the biographical subjects. That is to say, the reader may encounter Plutarch's figures as not simply historically notable but as somehow exemplary in character and accomplishment and, consequently, as worthy of some form of imitation on the reader's part.[207] Of course, this must be followed up with a few caveats: not every action of every biographical subject is worthy of imitation by any standard,[208] and even what is exemplary about

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205. On schematizing and motivating such parallelism, see especially Russell (1995) and Geiger (1981) as well as Iwanek (1995) and Wardman (1971).

206. See Zadorojnyi (2010) for Plutarchan mirror imagery, focusing on the beginning of the *Aemilius* and an understanding of the *Parallel Lives* as a diptych. See also Taylor (2008) pp. 198-200 (cit. by Zadorojnyi, p. 171) on the "metamorphic" dynamism of the "moral mirror."

207. This is unsurprisingly a broad topic and question in Plutarch scholarship, and one interwoven with much general writing on the *Lives*. See especially Pelling (2002) pp. 237-251, as well as Tatum (2010), Duff (2002) and (2000), H. Beck (2002), Pérez Jiménez (2002), Frazier (1996) pp. 125-140, Swain (1992), Wardman (1974) pp. 1-48 and Russell (1973) pp. 100-110.

208. Consider for instance Plutarch's criticisms of Theseus in the *Theseus-Romulus synkrisis* for the "inexcusable" (ἐνδεᾶ προφάσεως) abductions of women that he performs (6.1-2) and his denunciations of Antony's character throughout that *Life*. See Pelling (1988) pp. 12-17 on praise

Plutarch's subjects will not translate easily to the settled political world of his readership: if Alexander is celebrated for being a world-conqueror and Romulus for fighting off his neighbors, it is unlikely that Plutarch is encouraging literally the same actions on the part of his audience. Nonetheless, his tendency toward praise where he deems it fitting, toward denying or legitimating where such is possible,[209] and a general awed interest in his biographical subjects means that readers are frequently—if rarely without reservation—invited to liken themselves to the exempla that he offers to them.

If we return to my earlier notion of systems built out of imitative links, we can thus imagine a kernel—a shared, baseline scheme—of the structures of imitation for the *Parallel Lives* that function something like a branching tree.[210] Beginning at the base, the network has its two biographical subjects, who are *prior to*, *joined by*, and *represented by* the authored text (literary *mimēsis*). Plutarch's text, in turn, is *prior to* and potentially *imitated by* the reader (personal *mimēsis*), who we may imagine at the top. Of course, the author does not overtly position himself as deserving of the reader's imitation, which means we cannot place him in the middle of the scheme, but it is nonetheless his decisions and his representations that mediate the encounter between reader and biographical subjects. Like large branches, the paired *Lives* by and large allow only of the two subjects "access" to the reader's attention at a given point, but they both remain intrinsically connected, pulling the audience toward "readerly" comparison even outside of bookending preface and *synkrisis*. As I will discuss below, for instance, the appearances of Heracles (and Roman Hercules) in both halves of the *Theseus-Romulus* furnish useful material for a reader's assessment of both subjects' characters, even though he makes no appearance in any of the comparative material with which Plutarch bookends the *Lives*.

Indeed, this kernel is only one part of a potentially larger system, and should not obscure the fact that the subjects of the *Lives* may themselves be agents of *mimēsis*, acting upon persons, objects, or other phenomena in the course of their own existences.[211] To revisit the tree metaphor for a final time, we might say that, further up the trunk than the biographical subjects, there may be other splits and entanglements among the branches. In the case of the *Alexander-Caesar*, for instance, Caesar is introduced as merely comparable to Alexander from Plutarch's perspective: both are figures of paramount appearance, renowned for their large-scale military exploits (*μάχαι*

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and blame in the latter work.

209. Consider the forgiveness of Theseus' anger toward Hippolytus in the *synkrisis* (3), where the father's anger is rendered more understandable in the evocation of his emotional state and the actions of another: "desire and jealousy and a wife's slanders" (*ἔρως καὶ ζηλοτυπία καὶ διαβολαὶ γυναικὸς*) (3.2). Cf. the discussion at *Theseus* 28.2 and see *A&M* 343.

210. Contrast the chart in Zadorojnyi op. cit. p. 184, where the relationship between reader and double subjects is made to resemble the description of double mirrors in *De facie* 930b.

211. For a broad and insightful survey of "intradiegetic mimesis" in Plutarch's *Lives*, see Zadorojnyi (2012).

μυριόνεκροι καὶ παρατάξεις αἱ μέγισται καὶ πολιορκίαι πόλεων) but worth treating, as would a portrait artist, for the smaller-scale traces of their characters (*τὰ τῆς ψυχῆς σημεῖα*) (*Alexander* 1.2-3).[212] Near the beginning of the *Caesar*, however, Plutarch recounts an anecdote from his time as governor of Hispania Ulterior (11.5-6):

> *λέγεται ... σχολῆς οὔσης ἀναγινώσκοντά τι τῶν περὶ Ἀλεξάνδρου γεγραμμένων σφόδρα γενέσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτῷ πολὺν χρόνον, εἶτα καὶ δακρῦσαι· τῶν δὲ φίλων θαυμασάντων τὴν αἰτίαν εἰπεῖν· οὐ δοκεῖ ὑμῖν ἄξιον εἶναι λύπης, εἰ τηλικοῦτος μὲν ὢν Ἀλέξανδρος ἤδη τοσούτων ἐβασίλευεν, ἐμοὶ δὲ λαμπρὸν οὐδὲν οὔπω πέπρακται;*
>
> [It is said that] ... reading one of the accounts about Alexander in his leisure time, he turned inward for a long time and then actually burst into tears. While his friends wondered, he explained, saying, "Doesn't it seem worth sorrow to you if, at the same age Alexander was already king of so many people, while I have yet to do anything illustrious?"

In choosing to relate this anecdote, Plutarch is not merely furnishing evidence of Caesar's competitiveness. He is also elaborating the structure of imitation, and nodding at his audience and the possibility of their reacting emotionally by comparing themselves to the subjects of their own "leisurely reading." The context helps explain the reaction: just prior, Plutarch has mentioned that Caesar, traveling in the Alps en route to Hispania, told local villagers that he would rather be "first among these people than second among the Romans" (*παρὰ τούτοις ... πρῶτος ... ἢ παρὰ Ῥωμαίοις δεύτερος*) (11.6). Where that is not possible, then, as with a historical figure, Caesar will turn inward "toward himself" (*πρὸς ἑαυτῷ*).[213] Simply to remain in second place, whether contemporaneously or diachronically, is intolerable to Caesar.[214] The account thus invites the actual reader to imagine this Caesar as a fellow reader, perhaps bristling similarly at being placed

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212. See also Pelling (2009) and (2002) p. 349, 377f; Larmour (2000) p. 271.

213. Compare *Themistocles* 3.3, where the trophy of Miltiades makes the young Athenian turn "toward himself" (*πρὸς ἑαυτῷ*) and prevents him from sleeping; the same anecdote is related in *Theseus* 6.9. One might also compare *Phocion* 5.3, where he turns "toward himself in his temperament" (*πρὸς ἑαυτῷ τὴν διάνοιαν*) before delivering a speech. In the first two cases, rivalry and emulation provokes the introjection, which is joined with intense affect, and in all three it is a reaction to pressure about status.

214. See also *Caesar* 58, where Plutarch describes him, later in life, as experiencing "competition with himself as if it were with someone else" (*ζῆλος αὑτοῦ καθάπερ ἄλλου*). In that life, imitation seems inextricably bound up in self-assessment. Compare Florus 2.13.14, for the asymmetrical rivalry between Caesar and Pompey: "Nec ille [=Caesar] ferebat parem, nec hic superiorem." On the nature of jealousy and grief in antiquity, see also Konstan (2006).

within the framework of paired biography, a structure that cannot help but render its two subjects comparable.

A more complicated, and indeed uniquely paradoxical, passage appears in the *synkrisis* of *Solon-Publicola*, which Plutarch begins with a description of the two figures as standing in a somehow reciprocal relationship toward one another (1.1):

> Ἆρ' οὖν ἴδιόν τι περὶ ταύτην τὴν σύγκρισιν ὑπάρχει καὶ μὴ πάνυ συμβεβηκὸς ἑτέρᾳ τῶν ἀναγεγραμμένων, τὸν ἕτερον μιμητὴν γεγονέναι τοῦ ἑτέρου, τὸν ἕτερον δὲ μάρτυν;
>
> Isn't something unique the case in this comparison, and which has not at all occurred in any other of my other writing, that the latter turned out to be an imitator of the former, and the former a witness to the latter?

The elaboration comes quickly after this provocative beginning: Publicola is in the strict sense an imitator of Solon's behavior and adopted many of his laws (2.1-2), while Solon is figuratively a "witness" to Publicola, in as much as Publicola's life seems a fulfillment of what Solon had said to Croesus about the happiness of Tellus of Athens.[215] Plutarch thus figures Solon as metaphorically familiar with Publicola without having ever heard of the Roman consul, "witnessing" someone he would never meet by means of similarity. Like the poet to Aristotle, who declares in the *Poetics* at 1451b that "poetry is more philosophical and more serious than history" (*φιλοσοφώτερον καὶ σπουδαιότερον ποίησις ἱστορίας*) because it deals with what might happen rather than "particular facts" (*τὰ καθ' ἕκαστον*), Plutarch's Solon is thus a kind of philosophical witness, observing a kind of man rather than his historical reality.[216] Yet, in looking at the passage, it should become clear that this reciprocal arrangement has also fractured the Aristotelian model of the philosophical, imitative poet: Solon is the one who imagines in types, but it is Publicola whom we are asked to see as the personal *mimētēs*, imitating Solon's historical record in the act of making his own political reforms.

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215. See the accounts in *Solon* 27 and, most famously, Hdt. 1.30-1. We might regard the *martus* as the exemplary spectator.

216. Compare the notions of prefiguration and typology in Christian theology, and see Momigliano (1993) p. 12f on the importance of "types" rather than personality in ancient biography. For extratemporality vis-a-vis forms in Plato, see *Timaeus* 37c-d. On the general features of this *synkrisis*, see Hershbell (2008) and Stadter (2008) pp. 127-129. For time and deeds as joint "witnesses" (*μάρτυρες*) of Romulus' good deeds, see *Theseus-Romulus* sync. 6.4-5.

Certainly, there is nothing so strikingly paradoxical in the *Theseus-Romulus*, whether in the *synkrisis* or anywhere else. Before exploring how *mimēsis* plays out in this pair of *Lives*, however, I should bring back to the foreground what Plutarch said was unusual about these two individuals: that they, even more than the subjects of the *Numa-Lycurgus* (or of the *Solon-Publicola*), existed far enough from his present day to pose a risk and challenge to his biographical project. This holds two major consequences for the role of *mimēsis*. First, if either of these biographical subjects is imitative of other individuals, these imitations must be of other figures who are more mythological than historical. Second, the antiquarian lens through which Plutarch deals with these figures means that accounts of *mimēsis* will frequently be aligned with the desire to elucidate some object or cultural practice. In combination, these two consequences allow for a particularly rich and intricate imitative chain in the *Theseus-Romulus*: in presenting his paired subjects, on the one hand, as no less psychologically motivated than the later individuals and, on the other hand, as bound up in etiological questions about Greek and Roman tradition, Plutarch finds a large number of opportunities for both personal and non-personal imitation to enter his biographical discourse.

We should be careful to distinguish opportunities from their fulfillment, however. As in the *synkrisis* of the *Numa-Publicola,* where one figure is the *mimētēs* to the exclusion of the other, *mimēsis* is also unevenly distributed here, albeit on a larger scale and without Plutarch's overt acknowledgment of these distinct and asymmetrical roles. But where the Roman is the imitator in both the *Alexander-Caesar* and the *Solon-Publicola*, which is something one might expect in general given the rise of Rome subsequent to that of the Greek city-states and Hellenistic kingdoms, it is the Greek who is the prodigious imitator here. Plutarch's Theseus, as I will explore below, is so bound up in larger systems of *mimēsis* that one might be forgiven for imagining him as more at home in a more recent world, laden with long traditions of exemplarity and cultural practices that surround them, than as an only marginally historical culture-hero whose life falls close to the very beginning of Plutarch's biographical range.[217]

Romulus, conversely, is placed second in the paired structure and stacks up quite favorably against Theseus in the final passages of the *synkrisis*. Plutarch castigates Theseus for his treatment of women, while Romulus is applauded for treating them with "honor and affection and fairness" (*τῇ .... τιμῇ καὶ ἀγαπήσει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ*) (6.1-6). Then, Romulus' preservation in his early life is framed as divinely ordained while Theseus' birth, in a contrast to the Poseidon-focused conclusion of that *Life*, is described as unfavorable to the gods (6.7):

217. He is subsequent only to Heracles whose *Life*, if we trust the Lamprias Catalogue, has been lost. See Irigoin (1986), *Suda s.v.* Lamprias.

> *ἐπεὶ καὶ τὰ περὶ τοῦ θείου μυθολογούμενα πολλὴν ποιεῖ διαφοράν. Ῥωμύλῳ μὲν γὰρ ἡ σωτηρία μετὰ πολλῆς ὑπῆρξε θεῶν εὐμενείας, ὁ δ' Αἰγεῖ δοθεὶς χρησμός, ἀπέχεσθαι γυναικὸς ἐπὶ ξένης, ἔοικεν ἀποφαίνειν παρὰ γνώμην θεῶν γεγονέναι τὴν Θησέως τέκνωσιν.*
>
> There is also a great contrast in what the myths relate about divinity: for the survival of Romulus occurred with great favor of the gods, but the oracle given to Aegeus to keep away from a woman in a foreign land, seems to reveal that the birth of Theseus occurred contrary to the judgment of the gods.

In the final comparison, then, Romulus would seem to be more imitable than Theseus,[218] to the degree that he seems a more exemplary subject for the reader's own ethical imitation. Certainly, it is unlikely that Plutarch's typical readers would feel invited to imagine their own lives as contrary to their own conceptions of the gods, or their own treatment of women as damaging to themselves and their families. But Romulus' own engagement in *mimēsis*, as I will note below, is nearly non-existent, a feature of his characterization that serves to bolster his image as originator more than to make him seem somehow "deficient."

Our two biographical subjects thus roughly balance one another out as far as *mimēsis* is concerned. Overall, the two figures remain generally exemplary, as evidenced by their comparability in the *synkrisis*, where Theseus does trump Romulus on certain counts. But where Theseus' mimetic potential extends further into the past, Romulus' extends more strongly forward, first as an object of *mimēsis* in the immediate aftermath of his disappearance and subsequently, as a literary-biographical exemplum, into the era of Plutarch and his readership. The metanarrative of Greek primacy and Roman belatedness, which Plutarch himself reinforces on the large scale by tending to find Roman lives that are subsequent to Greek, is thus upended: although they do not assume imitative roles with respect to one another, it is Theseus who is largely the *mimētēs* and Romulus who is for the most part the *mimoumenos*.

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218. Elsewhere in Plutarch, Romulus appears as an exemplary figure in the *Numa, Camillus*, and *Marcellus* and is mentioned intermittently in the *Aetia Romana et Graeca* (267c, 268b, 271a, 276b).

The Case of Heracles[219]

The figure of Heracles will serve as a useful starting point for our comparison.[220] As we might expect from the hero's origins within the sphere of Greek myth as well as the mythological era (prior to the Trojan War) to which his lifespan is assigned, his appearances are asymmetrical between the *Lives*: he appears or is named in ten passages in the *Theseus*, and only three in the *Romulus*. More striking, however, is the way in which he is framed as an exemplum for Theseus but only as a potential (but deprecated) ancestor for an eponymous founder of Rome (2.1),[221] as a god to whom a Roman priest offers a woman (5), and as someone who, in an account given by Herodorus of Heraclea, like Romulus once regarded vultures as a good augury (9.6).[222] Only in the last case is there a discernible line between Heracles and Romulus, and even there it is as if Plutarch has sought to obscure it: there is no account of Heracles' own role in clearing the Palatine Hill of Cacus,[223] and as Plutarch frames him, Heracles remains only a parallel to Romulus' augury (*καὶ τὸν Ἡρακλέα*) rather than a true model.

In the *Theseus*, in contrast, Theseus is narrated as moved to imitate Heracles in a way that is as explicit and as psychologically realized as Caesar's imitation of Alexander. The first mention in this *Life* is the most extensive: Plutarch has been describing the villainous men who hold sway in the time of Theseus' birth, and he introduces Heracles as one who was able to subdue them (6.5-9):[224]

> *τούτων Ἡρακλῆς τοὺς μὲν ἐξέκοπτε καὶ ἀνῄρει περιιών, οἱ δὲ λανθάνοντες ἐκείνου παριόντος ἔπτησσον καὶ ἀνεδύοντο καὶ παρημελοῦντο ταπεινὰ πράττοντες. ἐπεὶ δ' Ἡρακλῆς ἐχρήσατο συμφορᾷ, καὶ κτείνας Ἴφιτον εἰς Λυδίαν ἀπῆρε, καὶ συχνὸν ἐκεῖ χρόνον ἐδούλευε παρ' Ὀμφάλῃ, δίκην τοῦ φόνου ταύτην ἐπιθεὶς αὑτῷ, τότε τὰ μὲν Λυδῶν πράγματα πολλὴν ἔσχεν εἰρήνην καὶ ἄδειαν, ἐν δὲ τοῖς περὶ τὴν Ἑλλάδα τόποις αὖθις*

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219. Rather than refer to "Heracles" in case of Theseus and "Hercules" with Romulus, I will use the former to refer to both. The use of two different names for Plutarch's Ἡρακλῆς (especially in translations that separate *Lives* into Greek and Roman) seems another symptom of the tendency to strip the *Parallel Lives* of their parallelism.

220. For Heracles elsewhere in the *Lives*, see *Lycurgus* 30.2, *Themistocles* 1.3, *Fabius Maximus* 1.2, *Pelopidas* 18.5, *Pompeius* 1.1.

221. Contrast the statement of kinship between Heracles and Theseus at *Theseus* 7.1.

222. See Detienne (1994) pp. 83-84 for the full argument about the vulture, which Herodorus regarded as living on the moon. See also *A&M* pp. xlix-l.

223. Cf. Livy 1.7, where the Palatine is described as the site of Romulus' upbringing and Hercules' killing of Cacus is detailed. Plutarch names the Palatine at 18.7, 20.6 and 22.2, but not within his account of Romulus' upbringing.

224. See also p. 46 above.

ἐξήνθησαν αἱ κακίαι καὶ ἀνερράγησαν, οὐδενὸς πιεζοῦντος οὐδὲ κατείργοντος. ἦν οὖν ὀλέθριος ἡ πορεία τοῖς Ἀθήναζε πεζῇ βαδίζουσιν ἐκ Πελοποννήσου, καὶ τῶν λῃστῶν καὶ κακούργων ἕκαστον ἐξηγούμενος ὁ Πιτθεύς, ὁποῖος εἴη καὶ ὁποῖα δρῴη περὶ τοὺς ξένους, ἔπειθε τὸν Θησέα κομίζεσθαι διὰ θαλάττης. τὸν δὲ πάλαι μὲν ὡς ἔοικε λεληθότως διέκαιεν ἡ δόξα τῆς Ἡρακλέους ἀρετῆς, καὶ πλεῖστον ἐκείνου λόγον εἶχε, καὶ προθυμότατος ἀκροατὴς ἐγίνετο τῶν διηγουμένων ἐκεῖνον οἷος εἴη, μάλιστα δὲ τῶν αὐτὸν ἑωρακότων καὶ πράττοντι καὶ λέγοντι προστετυχηκότων· τότε δὲ παντάπασιν ἦν φανερὸς πεπονθὼς ὅπερ ὕστερον χρόνοις πολλοῖς Θεμιστοκλῆς ἔπαθε καὶ εἶπεν, ὡς καθεύδειν αὐτὸν οὐκ ἐῴη τὸ Μιλτιάδου τρόπαιον· οὕτως ἐκείνῳ τοῦ Ἡρακλέους θαυμάζοντι τὴν ἀρετὴν καὶ νύκτωρ ὄνειρος ἦσαν αἱ πράξεις, καὶ μεθ' ἡμέραν ἐξῆγεν αὐτὸν ὁ ζῆλος καὶ ἀνηρέθιζε, ταὐτὰ πράττειν διανοούμενον.

Some of them Heracles struck and killed on his way, but others, escaping his notice when he was near, crouched and hid and went unseen by lying low. When Heracles experienced misfortune, went to Lydia after killing Iphitus, and for a long time served as a slave in Omphale's house, since had brought on himself this penalty for the murder, affairs in Lydia were quite peaceful and safe, but in spots around Greece wickedness once again flourished and burst forth without anyone to check and hem them in.[225] So the journey was perilous for those traveling from the Peloponnese to Athens on foot, and Pittheus, in narrating each of the brigands and evildoers, what he was like and what he did to strangers, was trying to persuade Theseus to travel by sea. But he, as it seems, had long been secretly inflamed by the rumor of Heracles' excellence, and held the highest reckoning of him, and became a very eager listener to those who told him what he was like, especially those who had seen him and encountered him doing or saying something. Then it is entirely clear that he had suffered what Themistocles experienced in much later times when he said that the trophy of Miltiades would not let him sleep. In the same way, for Theseus, marveling at Heracles' excellence, his deeds were a dream at night[226] and at daybreak imitative zeal excited him and provoked him, disposed as he was to accomplish the same things.

Clearly, the most obvious *mimēsis* that is introduced here is that of Heracles by Theseus, as the latter is moved by an imitative impulse to take up the spaces—both literal *topoi* and figurative opportunities—abandoned by the prior hero who has put himself into exile. It bears mentioning,

225. Compare Heracles in the palace of Omphale, used by Plutarch as an analogy, in *An seni respublica gerenda sit* 785e-f.

226. Cf. the dream of Heracles at *Alexander* 24.5, as well the mention of Heracles as an exemplum for Alexander's exploration at *De fortuna Romanorum* 326a-c, *De Alexandri magni fortuna aut virtute* 332a.

then, that the *zēlos* that motivates Theseus' behavior is not zero-sum jealousy or envy, wherein Heracles' preeminence must be effaced and replaced by that of Theseus, but rather a drive to imitate that, even in its unyielding intensity, responds to circumstance. If Theseus is to "accomplish the same things" as Heracles, then, it will be in a way parallel to the exemplarity that Plutarch must be suggesting his readers observe in their reading of these *Lives*: to imitate someone's great accomplishments where appropriate and without any of the negative affect—the *phthonos*—that is bound up in a sense that any resulting acclaim will come at the expense of the imitated individual.[227]

Indeed, in introducing Theseus' personal *mimēsis* of Heracles, this passage in a number of ways manages to reinforce the sense that Theseus, as represented and motivated in Plutarch's psychological imagination, is not unlike the imagined readers of these *Parallel Lives*. First is the description of Theseus as a "very eager audience" (*προθυμότατος ἀκροατὴς*) for stories about Heracles, an echo of the hope that Plutarch expresses in the preface for a "kindly audience" (*εὐγνωμόνων ἀκροατῶν*) that will tolerate an admixture of myth with fact in these *Lives*. Closely bound up with this, Plutarch describes those with whom Theseus interacts by means of the vocabulary of narrative description: we read of Pittheus "narrating about" (*ἐξηγούμενος*) the brigands that cover Greece, while Theseus is an eager audience for "those who related ... what kind of man he was" (*τῶν διηγουμένων ἐκεῖνον οἷος εἴη*).[228] Though unnamed in this brief account, the latter individuals are Plutarch's representations of his predecessors in biography, providing accounts of Heracles' character from their own experience where possible. Finally, in a dramatic jump into properly historical time, Plutarch enlarges the frame of reference with another equation, stating that Theseus' *zēlos* toward Heracles is directly identified and equated (*ὅπερ ... ἔπαθε*) with what Themistocles felt toward Miltiades. So within this single passage, we are not simply introduced to Heracles as a motivating factor in Theseus' development as a culture-hero. Rather, we are left with a rich, if not entirely tidy, system of identification, description, and narration involving eight individuals or classes: the reader, Plutarch, Theseus, Heracles, Pittheus, those who offer accounts of Heracles to Theseus, Themistocles, and Miltiades.

Among the individuals described in the passage, it would seem that only the evil-doing brigands are left out of this system. At the same time, there is something of an oblique connection which we can draw through attention to Plutarch's phrasing, and which lays the groundwork for their more explicit inclusion: namely, the echo of the brigands' evading Heracles (*λανθάνοντες*) in Theseus' being motivated secretly (*λελῃθότως*), presumably without the knowledge of Aethra and Pittheus, to mimic the deeds of Heracles.[229] On the face of it, this lexical rep-

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227. Cf. the *phthonos* toward Taurus in *Theseus* 19, and see also Patrocles' statement in book 5, question 7 of the *Table Talk* (681e) on the representation of envy: more than other emotions, he says, it "fills the body with wretchedness, which painters try hard to mimic (*ἀπομιμεῖσθαι*) when they depict the face of envy (*τὸ τοῦ φθόνου πρόσωπον ὑπογράφοντες*)."

228. See p. 46 in chapter 1 as well as note 224 in chapter 2.

etition might seem to be coincidental, as there would seem to be little to gain from drawing a comparison between the benevolent imitator Theseus and the brigands. But as subsequent passages make clear, they too are joined to this system through the logic of *mimēsis*, albeit in a zero-sum mode that runs contrary to the more benevolent variety that I have described above.

This becomes more apparent in the account of Theseus' journey from Troezen to Athens (8-11), where his defeat of each of the brigands shows his movement along the intervening *topoi*. In the first case, that of Periphetes (8.1), we see a limited kind of mimetic chain, as Theseus subsequently obtains the "brigand's club" (*κορύνη*) and continues to wield it (*διετέλει χρώμενος*), in imitation of Heracles' wearing the skin of the Nemean Lion (*ὥσπερ τῷ δέρματι τοῦ λέοντος*). The action is thus an imitation of Periphetes' behavior (indeed, it would now be Theseus who is *Korunētēs*) but it is also, by extension, an imitation of Heracles' own behavior. After all, both heroes acquire these symbols from initial encounters: where the Nemean Lion was Heracles' first labor, Periphetes is Theseus' first exploit. This imitative behavior is heightened further at the Isthmus of Corinth with Sinis the "Pine-bender" (*Πιτυοκάμπτης*), from whom he does not merely appropriate a symbol *post mortem*, but whom he kills "in the way that that one had used to kill many others" (*ᾧ τρόπῳ πολλοὺς ἀνῄρει, τούτῳ διέφθειρεν*) (8.3).[230] Although they are unlikely to stand apart from one another as the modern reader encounters them, each of these episodes serves in Plutarch's epideictic discourse to reinforce the sense that Theseus fully demonstrated the qualities of heroism that his model Heracles had.

Subsequently, however, the sequence of what we might call "mimetic labors" on Theseus' part is interrupted by his encounter with the Crommyonian sow (9.1), which as an animal inherently lies outside the framework of personal imitation.[231] It would seem that appropriating certain behaviors of evil-doers is acceptable for our culture-hero, but imitating an animal is not. Within the description of this encounter, moreover, Plutarch reminds the reader of a difference between Heracles' twelve labors and Theseus' exploits recounted here: where the labors are performed under compulsion to another individual (Eurystheus of Tiryns), Plutarch presents Theseus' encounter with the sow as a "side-trip" (*πάρεργον ὁδοῦ*)[232] and suggests that this deviation

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229. Although not in this passage, compare also Aethra's urging Theseus at 3.7 to go back to Athens without the knowledge of the Pallantids (*λανθάνοντα πάντας*). The verb *lanthanō* and the noun *lēthē* are at the core of my argument in the final chapter, where I will explore them more fully.

230. For how Sinis used the bent pines to kill his victims (and how Theseus killed him), see *A&M ad loc.*

231. Contrast the actor Parmenon's imitation of a pig in *Table Talk* 674b-c (book 5, question 1). There, Parmenon's *mimēsis* is more popular than the real thing, as his audience responds with a retort that became proverbial: "What is it compared to Parmenon's sow?" (*τί οὖν αὕτη πρὸς τὴν Παρμένοντος ὗν*;).

232. The old man in Euripides' *Electra* describes his veering from his journey to see

of his journey is evidence that the younger hero's exploits are elective rather than forced. By extension, then, the biographer presents the other, properly mimetic exploits as behavioral evidence that imitation need not be servile or timid, performing exploits that have been done before and unbeknownst to others (λελη*θότως*), but that it can be evidence of cleverness combined with boldness of character.

With the exploits that follow, the mimetic chain develops to a point where it would gain the attention of nearly any reader. In the description of the canonical version of the encounter with Sciron (10.1),[233] as well as the encounters with Cercyon and Procrustes (11.1), all of whom Theseus defeats just as one would expect—hoisting each of them, as the expression goes, by his own petard—Plutarch anticipates that the reader has become aware of the overarching pattern. At this point, he lays out explicitly the way in which Theseus, Heracles, and the brigands are interconnected in a number of acts of imitation (11.1-3):

> *ἔπραττε δὲ ταῦτα μιμούμενος τὸν Ἡρακλέα. καὶ γὰρ ἐκεῖνος οἷς ἐπεβουλεύετο τρόποις ἀμυνόμενος τοὺς προεπιχειροῦντας, ἔθυσε τὸν Βούσιριν καὶ κατεπάλαισε τὸν Ἀνταῖον καὶ τὸν Κύκνον κατεμονομάχησε καὶ τὸν Τέρμερον συρρήξας τὴν κεφαλὴν ἀπέκτεινεν. ... οὕτω δὴ καὶ Θησεὺς κολάζων τοὺς πονηροὺς ἐπεξῆλθεν, οἷς μὲν ἐβιάζοντο τοὺς ἄλλους ὑπ' ἐκείνου καταβιαζομένους, ἐν δὲ τοῖς τρόποις τῆς ἑαυτῶν ἀδικίας τὰ δίκαια πάσχοντας.*
>
> And he did these things in imitation of Heracles. For Heracles defended himself against those who attacked prior in the manner by which he was being attacked: he sacrificed Busiris, wrestled Antaeus, defeated Cycnus in single combat and killed Termerus by breaking his skull. .... In the very same way, Theseus went on his way, punishing the wicked, who were assailed by him in the way that they assailed others, so that they suffered payback in the same way that they had performed their own injustice.

Note the quickening of pace, as the imitative pattern hinted at in the earlier passages hardens to a kind of verbal formula, in which each of Heracles' adversaries are done away with in a single verbal action. Following this and only a brief digression on the term "Termerian evil" (*τὸ Τερμέρειον κακόν*) (11.3), Plutarch concludes with a paradox, in which an act of *adikia* performed by an evildoer is transformed into "just things" (*τὰ δίκαια*) when performed by Theseus. Indeed, when Theseus performs on Procrustes that man's treatment, "having forced him to match himself to his

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Agamemnon's grave with the same adverbial phrase: *ἦλθον γὰρ αὐτοῦ πρὸς τάφον πάρεργ' ὁδοῦ* (509).

233. See my discussion of the deprecated Megarian version of the encounter on p. 59ff of the previous chapter. Compare also the Tarpeian rock (*Romulus* 18.1) "from which they used to hurl evil-doers" (*ἀφ' ἧς ἐρρίπτουν τοὺς κακούργους*).

couches in size" (*ἀναγκάσας αὐτὸν ἀπισοῦν τοῖς κλιντῆρσιν*), we can find a great deal of paradox in this particular game of turnabout: in this act of compulsion he is demonstrating that, as with the Crommyonian sow at 9.1, he is not himself acting "out of compulsion" (*πρὸς ἀνάγκην*), and in violently mutilating Procrustes' body so as, euphemistically-speaking, "to make it the same" (*ἀπισοῦν*) as Procrustes' couch, he is also shaping his own behavior so that it is, at least for the duration of this action, identical to the brigand's. Thus, an act of the most obvious mimicry need not always retain the same ethical dimensions as the original, imitated act. Indeed, in these cases, imitation radically enhances rather than degrades the ethical character of an action—a surprising conceptual turn for our Platonist, who in describing Procrustes' couch seems to have diverged greatly from Plato's imitative beds in *Republic* 10.

At any rate, the brigands are as implicated in the mimetic chain as the other players I have described. But where the rest stand in constructive mimetic relationships to one another, the brigands do not: as I have mentioned, they demonstrate the possibility of a kind of zero-sum *mimēsis*, a *lex talionis* that is of great conceptual interest to Plutarch in these passages. We should be careful to distinguish this relatively playful interest from any Hollywood-style fascination with the psychological intrigues of becoming or impersonating the enemy, but at the very least the principle of fighting fire with fire is so salient in these passages that it is hard to perceive these acts of appropriation on the heroes' parts as unrelated to Plutarch's intellectual preoccupations in these *Lives*.

Before exploring this notion further, it will be helpful to at least briefly detail the other appearances of Heracles in the *Life of Theseus*, all of which take place after Theseus' return from Crete. Theseus has at this point shifted into a political role that focuses on the interests of the Athenian people (*ἀπέκλινε πρὸς τὸν ὄχλον*). Accordingly, he now "cuts" currency (*ἔκοψε δὲ καὶ νόμισμα*) rather than limbs, although the logic of *mimēsis* and appropriation survives: the coins have a bull on them, perhaps because of the general named Taurus[234] or the Marathonian Bull, both enemies he has done away with (25.3).[235] Either way, this does not entail Theseus' behaving like either Taurus or the bull, but rather his creating an emblem of them, so that the resemblance persists externally to his own actions.

Just after the currency description, however, the account turns back toward the cooperative imitation of his exemplar: he institutes the Isthmian games "in emulation of Heracles" (*κατὰ ζῆλον Ἡρακλέους*), who had instituted those held at Olympia (25.5).[236] Thus, the *zēlos* that once so motivated him in youth (6.9) has continued up this time, although its results now are not isolated encounters with brigands but rather the creation of new civic institutions. There is, more-

234. See p. 72ff in chapter 2.

235. This is baseless, as Ampolo notes in *A&M ad loc.,* "poiché la monetazione ateniense inizia solo nel sesto secolo a.C."

236. See also *Pyrrhus* 22.8, where the Molossian king vows to institute games in honor of Heracles.

over, the hint of another set of identifications at play here: Plutarch makes a point of reminding the reader that, just as the Olympic Games are in honor of Zeus, these Isthmian Games are in honor of Poseidon. By extension, the reader is invited to see the two brother-gods as in a parallel relationship to that between Heracles and Theseus.

Subsequent passages bring Heracles more directly into the narrative fold. First, Plutarch presents the possibility (related by Philochorus and others) that Theseus attacked the Amazons alongside Heracles. He deprecates the account, however, on the grounds that Pherecydes, Hellanicus, and Herodorus say "more persuasively" (*πιθανώτερα*) that he travelled afterwards and in his own ship (*ὕστερόν φασιν Ἡρακλέους ἰδιόστολον πλεῦσαι τὸν Θησέα*) (26.1). Even Herodorus' own version of the encounter between the two, which occurs during the Centauromachy and after Heracles has stopped wandering and performing his labors, is insufficient for Plutarch. Instead, he suggests with a somewhat evasive potential optative, "it would better to heed those who record that they encountered one another many times" (*μᾶλλον ἄν τις πρόσσχοι τοῖς πολλάκις ἐντυχεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀλλήλοις ἱστοροῦσι*) and that Heracles' purification prior to his initiation into the Eleusinian Mysteries occurred at Theseus' urging (30.5). He does not, however, name any sources for such a version, nor does he suggest the criterion by which he judges that those versions are preferable. We might accordingly say that Plutarch is simply showing his biases to the reader: first, for a version in which the two heroes meet not once but rather frequently and, second, for one in which the younger hero's *zēlos* works for the benefit of the eclipsed Heracles.

Indeed, as Plutarch has noted just prior, Theseus' later exploits—tales of involvement with Jason, with Meleager, and with Adrastus at Thebes—lead him to be given a kind of equivalence to Heracles in the eyes of others: various, unnamed historians thus claim "that the saying 'That one is another Heracles' in reference to him was prevalent" (*καὶ τὸν ‘ἄλλος οὗτος Ἡρακλῆς’ λόγον ἐπ' ἐκείνου κρατῆσαι*) (29.3-4). The phrasing is particularly important here: Theseus is not "the new Heracles," but another one, and his own excellence is thus regarded as not in competition with that of the older hero. We might thus conclude that Plutarch is painting Theseus as reaching a kind of high point in his imitative development: his impulse toward *zēlos* with respect to Heracles, an intense drive but not zero-sum, has led him to a point in which he can be of help toward the object of his emulation and can, moreover, be recognized without hesitation as his peer. Alongside the crane dance at 21, which I will treat at the end of this chapter, this constitutes one of two climactic points of *mimēsis* in the *Life of Theseus*. If, after all, Plutarch's overarching aim to demonstrate what kind of individual his subject is, then this dramatic shift in the power relationship between the subject and his primary exemplum is a moment in which the subject, even as an imitator, becomes quite definitely himself. In coming to this new stage of development, Theseus thus serves as a model for the reader of the possibilities inherent in exemplarity with respect to one's *ēthē*.

There is a final mention of Heracles after this peak, but it is one in which it is clear that the narrative focus has shifted away from him. While staying with Aedoneus, King of the Molossians, Heracles hears about the exploits of Theseus and Perithoüs (at 31) and is thus placed in the narrative in the role in which Theseus found himself toward the beginning of the dialogue (6):

that of reactive listener. In this part of the text (35), he himself hears about "what they had come [to Aedoneus] to do and what they experienced when they were discovered" (*ἅ τε πράξοντες ἦλθον καὶ ἃ φωραθέντες ἔπαθον*) only because the king happens (*κατὰ τύχην*) to mention it.[237] By extension, we can imagine Heracles as in a position like that of the reader, dependent on Adoneus as narrator to know about Theseus' life, just as the reader is on Plutarch. In this case, if in a very limited way, we might say that our mimetic chain has come full circle, as the line between beginning point (Heracles) and endpoint (the reader) has blurred. When Plutarch writes that Heracles "bore it heavily, how the one had died ingloriously, and the other was going to die" (*βαρέως ἤνεγκεν ὁ Ἡρακλῆς, τοῦ μὲν ἀπολωλότος ἀδόξως, τοῦ δ' ἀπολλυμένου*) (35.1) there is not a generalizable example for the reader in how to grieve, but there is very specific focalization of the trajectory of this *Life*: here the reader, and not just Heracles, learns that the end is near for Theseus.[238] What remains in the *Theseus* is by no means irrelevant to the biographer's mission: we quickly read of the release of Theseus through Heracles' actions, Theseus' attempts at ruling again in Athens, and his frustrations and death (35). But the speed with which Plutarch moves through this material reinforces the sense that the primary "objectives" or features of Theseus' life have already been related to the reader.

Romulus: Disappearing Mimēsis *and the* Mimēsis *of Disappearance*

Now that I have sketched out how this system plays out in the *Theseus*, and while our our focus is on personal *mimēsis*, it will be helpful to revisit the comparative paucity of *mimēsis* in the *Romulus*.[239] As I have argued above, what does appear in this *Life* is not Romulus' *mimēsis*, but rather Romulus' actions as starting points for subsequent *mimēsis*. Where, for instance, *zēlos* appears here, it is not an emotional reaction that Romulus experiences toward another, but rather something his behavior generates in later individuals: upon defeating Acron, king of the Caeninenses, he carves a trophy out of an enormous oak tree and marches among the Romans bearing it, a procession that, as Plutarch puts it, "provided a beginning and emulation" (*ἀρχὴν καὶ ζῆλον παρέσχε*) for Roman triumphs to come (16.5). At least temporally, *zēlos* has in this case been turned on its head.

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237. For Theseus and Perithoüs, see also *Theseus* 20.2 (=*Od.* 11.631) and 30. Plutarch also discusses Perithoüs at *De amicorum multitudine* 93e-96c.

238. Compare the Aesopic story of Grief (*Penthos*) in the *Consolatio ad Uxorem* (609f); see Pomeroy 75-78, 80 (1999). For Aristotle's account of Heracles' melancholic disposition (taken from the *Problemata* 953a-954a), see *Lysander* 2.3.

239. One may contrast Livy 1.7.9–15, where Romulus adopts the rite for the Ara Maxima as initiated by Evander and Heracles. It is, as Livy asserts, the only foreign rite that founder adopts: "sacra ... una ex omnibus peregrina suscepit."

Farther on in the text, Plutarch describes the festival of the Lupercalia as imitative of the exploits of Romulus and Remus after defeating Amulius at Alba (21.8-9):

> Βούτας δέ τις, αἰτίας μυθώδεις ἐν ἐλεγείοις περὶ τῶν Ῥωμαϊκῶν ἀναγράφων, φησὶ τοῦ Ἀμουλίου τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ῥωμύλον κρατήσαντας ἐλθεῖν δρόμῳ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον, ἐν ᾧ νηπίοις οὖσιν αὐτοῖς ἡ λύκαινα θηλὴν ὑπέσχε, καὶ μίμημα τοῦ τότε δρόμου τὴν ἑορτὴν ἄγεσθαι, καὶ τρέχειν τοὺς ἀπὸ γένους τοὺς
>
> > Ἐμποδίους τύπτοντας, ὅπως τότε φάσγαν' ἔχοντες
> > ἐξ Ἄλβης ἔθεον Ῥωμύλος ἠδὲ Ῥέμος.
>
> καὶ τὸ μὲν ξίφος ἡμαγμένον προσφέρεσθαι τῷ μετώπῳ τοῦ τότε φόνου καὶ κινδύνου σύμβολον, τὴν δὲ διὰ τοῦ γάλακτος ἀποκάθαρσιν ὑπόμνημα τῆς τροφῆς αὐτῶν εἶναι.
>
> And a certain Butas, who wrote in elegies legendary explanations about the Romans, says that after defeating Amulius, Romulus' entourage ran with joy to the spot where the she-wolf had offered her teat to them as infants, and that the festival is conducted as an imitation of that run, and that those of noble birth run "striking those in the way, just as, wielding swords, / Romulus and Remus ran from Alba," and that the bloodstained sword is applied to the brow as a token of that slaughter and danger, while purification with milk is a reminder of their nourishment.

Note the three temporal levels that are described in this antiquarian explanation: the feeding of Romulus and Remus (described at 4.2-4), the battle with Amulius (narrated 7-9) that constitutes the "at that time" of the passage, and the span of time (continuing into Plutarch's own day) in which the Lupercalia is conducted as a yearly festival.[240] Through its constitutive parts, accordingly (running with swords that is a *sumbolon* of the battle at Alba, the purification by milk as a *hupomnēma* of the nurturing of Romulus and Remus) this interpretation of the festival as a *mimēma* of the twins' lives suggests a reversal of the temporal order of those biographical episodes. On its surface, the sequence of sword and milk follows a straightforward logic of miasma and purification, but interpreted in this way it also entails a regression from young adulthood to infancy.

There are two consequences of this observation for our understanding of how *mimēsis* works in these *Lives*. The first is that Plutarch does not demand that a *mimēma* stand in a one-to-one correspondence, as a single thing imitative of another single thing. Instead, it is entirely possible for the Lupercalia to be a *mimēma* of the joyful run of Romulus' men, and at the same time

240. On the Lupercalia, see Marchetti (2002), Martorana (1976), as well as *A&M ad loc.*, who see Plutarch as following the tradition of Varro in *De Lingua Latina* 6.13. Plutarch also discusses the festival at *Numa* 19.8 and *Quaestiones Romanae* 280b-c.

for this *mimēma* to contain traces of another imitated action: the "rearing" (*τροφή*) of Romulus and Remus. A *mimēma* may be composite, then, a fact that will inform my reading of the crane dance, the most complex imitative act in the *Theseus*. Secondly, as I have been suggesting throughout, Romulus is not the *mimētēs* in this system, either alone or with Remus. It is later Romans who imitate the run, whether we see it as performed by Romulus' party or "entourage" (*τοὺς περὶ τὸν Ῥωμύλον*) or by the twins, as in Butas' elegiac couplet. The same goes for the purification of the swords, where the application of milk to swords seems loosely to parallel the giving of milk from the she-wolf to Romulus and Remus. If pressed, we might regard these swords as similarly representative of the infant twins, but they are far from serving as agents of imitation here.

This tendency is clearest in Plutarch's exploration of the etiology of another Roman festival, the Poplifugia, which constitutes the last antiquarian discussion in the *Romulus*. There are once again, three temporal levels—the disappearance of Romulus, a battle between Latins and Rome led by Camillus four centuries later, and the continuing festival of the Poplifugia—but the first two are more or less mutually exclusive as explanations for the festival.[241] Indeed, Plutarch uses the pair of explanations to pivot between the full discussion of the disappearance (27-28)[242] and a lengthy digression on the fourth-century battle (29.4-11). Both passages, however, present the festival as mimetic of actions by groups excluding Romulus (29.3-4):

> *ἐξιόντες δὲ πρὸς τὴν θυσίαν πολλὰ τῶν ἐπιχωρίων ὀνομάτων φθέγγονται μετὰ βοῆς, οἷον* Μάρκου, Λουκίου, Γαΐου, *μιμούμενοι τὴν τότε τροπὴν καὶ ἀνάκλησιν ἀλλήλων μετὰ δέους καὶ ταραχῆς. ἔνιοι μέντοι τὸ μίμημα τοῦτό φασι μὴ φυγῆς, ἀλλ' ἐπείξεως εἶναι καὶ σπουδῆς, εἰς αἰτίαν τοιαύτην ἀναφέροντες τὸν λόγον* ...
>
> As they go out toward the sacrifice, they utter many of the local names with a cry, like Marcus, Lucius, Gaius, imitating the rout that occurred then and the calling on one another with fear and tumult. Some say, however, that the imitation is not of flight, but of haste and eagerness, referring their account to the following occasion...

After detailing a strategem involving sending serving-maids to the Latins on the pretext that they would be brides (29.4-10), Plutarch ultimately favors the explanation of the Poplifugia involving Romulus, deprecating the serving-maid story as he does in his *Life of Camillus* and noting that various elements of the festival "seem to side with the prior account" (*ἔοικε τῷ προτέρῳ*

241. Plutarch does leave open the possibility at 29.11 that "both chanced to occur on the same day in different eras" (*τῆς αὐτῆς ἡμέρας ἐν χρόνοις ἑτέροις ἀμφότερα τὰ πάθη συνέτυχε γενέσθαι*), but he treats this reconciliation of the two explanations as far more tentative than in the case of the Lupercalia.

242. See also p. 66ff in chapter 2.

λόγῳ προστίθεσθαι μᾶλλον) (29.11).[243]

Disregarding the later version, we can thus note in a general sense the role that *mimēsis* plays in the *Life of Romulus*: its biographical subject has just vanished from the earth, and it is at just this point in the narrative that *mimēsis* resurfaces as a question. The most curious thing is not that it has been absent outside of the description of another festival, since in the case of both Lupercalia and Poplifugia the mimetic rituals naturally take place subsequent to the (mortal) life of Romulus. Rather, it is the fact that the latter festival is a *mimēsis* of all the Romans reacting to the disappearance of Romulus, which is to say a *mimēsis* performed by any Roman other than Romulus himself. The text thus maintains, even enshrines, a surprisingly strict separation between its subject and the performance of *mimēsis*, stretching from a chronological point of view from cradle to grave (or, rather, disappearance). To leave *mimēsis* out of this half of the *Theseus-Romulus* would be one option, but Plutarch has managed something more sophisticated, reminding the reader of the concept without ever ascribing it to Romulus.

Before returning to the *Life of Theseus* for the other central mimetic moment there, I would propose another point of comparison for Romulus in Plutarch's writings: the Spartans. They are described, among other places, in the *Lycurgus* that Plutarch identifies in the *Theseus-Romulus* preface (1.1) as inducing him, along with the *Numa*, to write those historically earlier *Lives*. They are described as a whole group, however, as fundamentally uninterested in *mimēsis*. In the *Life of Lycurgus*, for instance, after describing the lawgiver as "himself a man of few words ... and sententious" (αὐτὸς βραχυλόγος ... καὶ ἀποφθεγματικός) (19.3), Plutarch includes in a list of characteristically Laconic jests (τοῖς μετὰ παιδιᾶς εἰρημένοις) a retort by an unnamed Spartan (20.5):

> ὁ μὲν γὰρ ἀκοῦσαι τοῦ μιμουμένου τὴν ἀηδόνα παρακαλούμενος, Αὐτᾶς, ἔφη, Ἄκουκα τήνας.
>
> For when invited to hear the man imitating the nightingale, he said, "I have heard the thing itself."

This is not an anecdote that Plutarch saves for this *Life* alone. Rather, it appears in nearly the same form in the *Life of Agesilaus* (21.5), as well as in two likely spurious collections of sayings (*Regum et Imperatorum Apophthegmata* 191b and *Apophthegmata Laconica* 212f), where the Spar-

243. *Camillus* 33.2-34, where two versions of the battle with the Latins are presented (δίττοι λόγοι), one more mythological and the other more historical, separated by the account referring to Romulus (33.9-10); the rituals are said to be performed "upon the experience of Romulus" (ἐπὶ τῷ τοῦ Ῥωμύλου πάθει). That explanation would seem more compatible with the second version of the battle with the Latins, in turn preferred by "most prose writers" (οἱ πλεῖστοι τῶν συγγραφέων), e.g. Livy at 6.2.

tan's rejoinder is slightly modified: "I have heard it itself many times" (*αὐτᾶς ἄκουκα πολλάκις*). Whether or not it is Plutarch who compiled those lists, it is rare for such a story to reappear with such frequency in the Plutarchan corpus; the adverb *pollakis* that crops up in these versions could refer as much to the anecdote as it does to the song of the nightingale.

On the face of it, we might argue for a simple set of identifications: Romulus is like Lycurgus, or perhaps the Romans are like the Spartans.[244] Such an identification would be an oversimplification, however. The Romans are represented in Plutarch's antiquarian understanding as highly imitative, performing rituals that may be *mimēmata* of their founder's actions. Nor does Romulus himself inveigh in any way against imitation in his *Life*, and if he did much concerning the Roman festivals described would be deprecated. Rather, his status as founder seems simply to offer a cleaner slate than that presented to Theseus. A broader survey of Plutarch and his source material might allow us to speculate: we could regard this as bound up with unique features of Roman beginnings, as related to distinct elements of Romulus' personality, or simply as a chance combination of circumstances. Regardless, they must be far from an indictment of *mimēsis*, a value neutral concept that Plutarch describes in the Romans of his day and a practice that he imagines in his readers.[245]

Ariadne, the Crane Dance and the Labyrinth of Mimēsis

In describing *mimēsis* in the *Life of Romulus* as a chain continuing forward from its subject, I am not proposing the converse in the case of the *Theseus*, by which one would conceive of him as some kind of end-point in his own chain of imitation. On the contrary, his status as culture-hero and political "re-founder"[246] puts him in an intermediate position. The imitative dynamic with regard to Heracles points for the most part backwards, with a few exceptions that I have described, but there is one key moment in which he initiates *mimēsis* without terminating it: the "crane dance" (*γέρανος*) he institutes at *Theseus* 21, just after he leaves Crete, abandons Ariadne, and arrives at Delos. There is, however, a kind of thematic buildup in the material just prior, where Plutarch once again emphasizes mimetic themes, creating a small pocket of such material in the stretch between the emulation of Heracles (ending at 11) and later mentions and narrative appearances of the elder hero (starting at 25). Untethered from that patterning motif, Plutarch's antiquarian learning furnishes a pair of accounts about Ariadne that prefigure the mimetic high point of the crane dance.

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244. For the view of Plutarch as Platonist-cum-Laconophile, see Tigerstedt (1974) pp. 226-64. See also Polybius 6.10 and 6.50 for notions of cultural kinship between Sparta and Rome.

245. Cf. Polybius on the importance of exemplarity (*mimēsis*) in Roman society (in 6.6.9 and 18.18.18) despite his ambiguous relationship to literary *mimēsis*, for which see Sacks (1981) pp. 145-161.

246. See p. 35ff in chapter 1.

He has, to begin with, grouped Ariadne and the labyrinth together as a complex of topics about which there are "many accounts ... which have no agreement with one another" (*πολλοὶ δὲ λόγοι ... οὐδὲν ὁμολογούμενον ἔχοντες*) (20.1), an evocatively labyrinthine way of describing the discursive variety in these familiar elements of the Theseus story.[247] Out of this multiplicity, he selects two accounts concerning the ultimate fate of Ariadne,[248] both of which deal with the confusion generated by imitation, duplications, and multiple versions. The first of these is based on a "unique account" (*ἴδιον δὲ περὶ τούτων λόγον*) by the Cypriot historian Paeon of Amathus (20.3-7):[249]

> *τὸν γὰρ Θησέα φησὶν ὑπὸ χειμῶνος εἰς Κύπρον ἐξενεχθέντα, καὶ τὴν Ἀριάδνην ἔγκυον ἔχοντα, φαύλως δὲ διακειμένην ὑπὸ τοῦ σάλου καὶ δυσφοροῦσαν, ἐκβιβάσαι μόνην, αὐτὸν δὲ τῷ πλοίῳ βοηθοῦντα πάλιν εἰς τὸ πέλαγος ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς φέρεσθαι. τὰς οὖν ἐγχωρίους γυναῖκας τὴν Ἀριάδνην ἀναλαβεῖν καὶ περιέπειν ἀθυμοῦσαν ἐπὶ τῇ μονώσει, καὶ γράμματα πλαστὰ προσφέρειν ὡς τοῦ Θησέως γράφοντος αὐτῇ, καὶ περὶ τὴν ὠδῖνα συμπονεῖν καὶ βοηθεῖν, ἀποθανοῦσαν δὲ θάψαι μὴ τεκοῦσαν. ἐπελθόντα δὲ τὸν Θησέα καὶ περίλυπον γενόμενον, τοῖς μὲν ἐγχωρίοις ἀπολιπεῖν χρήματα, συντάξαντα θύειν τῇ Ἀριάδνῃ, δύο δὲ μικροὺς ἀνδριαντίσκους ἱδρύσασθαι, τὸν μὲν ἀργυροῦν, τὸν δὲ χαλκοῦν. ἐν δὲ τῇ θυσίᾳ τοῦ Γορπιαίου μηνὸς ἱσταμένου δευτέρᾳ κατακλινόμενόν τινα τῶν νεανίσκων φθέγγεσθαι καὶ ποιεῖν ἅπερ ὠδίνουσαι γυναῖκες· καλεῖν δὲ τὸ ἄλσος Ἀμαθουσίους, ἐν ᾧ τὸν τάφον δεικνύουσιν, Ἀριάδνης Ἀφροδίτης.*
>
> For he says that Theseus was driven by a storm to Cyprus with Ariadne, who was pregnant and made ill and sea-sick by the tossing of the waves, and that he had her disembark alone, while he himself, helping with the ship, was carried from land back out to sea. The local women thus took in and tended to Ariadne, who was despondent in loneliness, and brought her forged letters as if Theseus were writing to her, and helped and labored alongside her while she gave birth. And after she died without giving birth, they buried her. When Theseus arrived, he was deeply saddened and left the locals money, ordering them to sacrifice to Ariadne and put up two small statuettes, one of silver and another of bronze. During this sacrifice, on the second day of the month of Gorpiaeus, a local youth reclines, shouts, and acts like women giving birth. As for the place where the Amathusians say her tomb is, they call it the grove of Ariadne-Aphrodite.

Plutarch's characterization of this account as "unique" is certainly a fair one, and there is much that one could say about each of the elements in this short passage. Suffice it, for our purposes, to

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247. For the general theme about the hero in the labyrinth, see Duchemin (1970).
248. For my discussion of Ariadne and Theseus in the previous chapter, see p. 71ff.
249. See *A&M* p. xlviii and *ad loc.*, Hesychius s.v. *Ἀφρόδιτος*.

note the amount of imitative behavior that occurs here, all of it qualitatively different from the sort of imitations in which Theseus engages elsewhere in the *Life*. First, there is the writing of "forged letters" (*γράμματα πλαστὰ*) by the women of Cyprus, who represent themselves as Theseus.[250] Then, upon Theseus' arrival, there is his order that statues be created, with some ambiguity as to whom they represent: Aphrodite, Ariadne, or some syncretic merger of the two (as in the end of the account).[251] Finally comes the instance of so-called *couvade* (Modern Greek *ἀρρενολοχεία*), in which the men behave as if they were pregnant women.[252]

In this passage, the crossing of gender boundaries—made possible by the simple presence of women who are absent from the imitations I have described above—is one of the ways in which Paeon's version stands apart.[253] Indeed, if we assume that the two statues are sculpted by male artists, then we may regard all three imitations as crossing gender boundaries in some way. Just as unique in the context of the *Theseus-Romulus*, however, is the structure of this network o1f imitation: like Heracles at the beginning of the *Theseus* and Romulus at the end of the *Romulus*, both Theseus and Ariadne are represented *in absentia*, but there are multiple figures represented within this network, a definite moment in which the focus has shifted from the biographical to the antiquarian. Amid a larger "labyrinth" of discordant accounts about Ariadne's fate after Crete, Plutarch presents a version that seems to intensify, rather than eliminate, the reader's sense of disorientation.

The other account, which Plutarch attributes to the inhabitants of Naxos, is certainly no match for Paeon's version, but it does play upon many of the same elements. In this version, which the Naxians "relate uniquely" (*ἰδίως ἱστοροῦσι*), there are not merely two statues of Ariadne but in fact two distinct Ariadnes (in addition to two Minoses, about whom Plutarch relates nothing). While the first predates Theseus, marrying Dionysus and bearing him children, the latter is abandoned in Naxos, with the result that there are two distinct festivals related to these two Ariadnes (20.9):

> *τῇ μὲν γὰρ ἡδομένους καὶ παίζοντας ἑορτάζειν, τὰς δὲ ταύτῃ δρωμένας θυσίας εἶναι πένθει τινὶ καὶ στυγνότητι μεμειγμένας.*
>
> In happiness and playfulness they celebrate the one, but the rituals performed for the other are joined with a certain grief and gloom.

250. For contrasts with adverbial *plastōs* in Plato, where it is opposed to *ontōs, alēthōs, phusei* see *LSJ s.v.* II.
251. See *A&M ad loc.* for an examination of Ἀριάδνης Ἀφροδίτης.
252. See Kouretas (1978) p. 128ff on boys pretending to be girls in the Oschophoria (23.3-4).
253. Cf. *Theseus* 18.3, where Aphrodite turns a she-goat into a he-goat.

In the form of two rituals, we thus see a splitting or bifurcation of the network of *mimēsis*. Where Paeon's version plays on impersonation and confusion on the narrative level, this one eliminates it from that level by generating multiples. There is no need for an authentic Theseus and a forged one, a bronze statue and a silver one, or for youths making the sounds of women. There are simply two stories, one of which relates to Theseus and the other of which does not. And yet, this too constitutes another version, and so even as the Naxian account resolves one narrative problem it adds to the overall proliferation of *logoi*.

Just as this proliferation reaches a peak, Plutarch refocuses on Theseus' journey from Crete back to Athens, with none of the presentation and evaluation of variant versions that dominate the two sections just prior (19-20). There is attribution to a generalized "they" and to Dicaearchus of Messana, from whom Plutarch may have taken all of his account, but the lack of conflicting versions remains a marked contrast to the discordant passages above. Suddenly and unmistakably, the labyrinth of λόγοι has given way to a single, apparently uncontroversial account (21):

> Ἐκ δὲ τῆς Κρήτης ἀποπλέων εἰς Δῆλον κατέσχε, καὶ τῷ θεῷ θύσας καὶ ἀναθεὶς τὸ Ἀφροδίσιον ὃ παρὰ τῆς Ἀριάδνης ἔλαβεν, ἐχόρευσε μετὰ τῶν ἠιθέων χορείαν ἣν ἔτι νῦν ἐπιτελεῖν Δηλίους λέγουσι, μίμημα τῶν ἐν τῷ Λαβυρίνθῳ περιόδων καὶ διεξόδων ἔν τινι ῥυθμῷ παραλλάξεις καὶ ἀνελίξεις ἔχοντι γιγνομένην. καλεῖται δὲ τὸ γένος τοῦτο τῆς χορείας ὑπὸ Δηλίων γέρανος, ὡς ἱστορεῖ Δικαίαρχος. ἐχόρευσε δὲ περὶ τὸν Κερατῶνα βωμόν, ἐκ κεράτων συνηρμοσμένον εὐωνύμων ἁπάντων. ποιῆσαι δὲ καὶ ἀγῶνά φασιν αὐτὸν ἐν Δήλῳ, καὶ τοῖς νικῶσι τότε πρῶτον ὑπ' ἐκείνου φοίνικα δοθῆναι.
>
> Sailing from Crete, he put in at Delos and, after sacrificing to the god and dedicating the image of Aphrodite he had received from Ariadne, he danced with the youths a dance that they say the Delians perform even now, one that occurs as an imitation of the circuits and passages in the labyrinth, in some rhythmic pattern with alternations and unfoldings. This type of dance is called the crane by the Delians, as Dicaearchus records. He danced around the Ceraton altar, which was constructed entirely out of horns from the left side. They say that he also instituted a competition in Delos and that it is by him that a palm was first given to the victors.

As with the Amathusian account, there is a remarkable concentration of content here, which I will address as sequentially as possible. The first issue is the image of Aphrodite (the *Aphrodision*), which Plutarch describes with a definite article even though he has made no mention of any such gift from Ariadne prior to this passage. We might therefore guess that Plutarch supposes his audience to have been familiar enough with the shrine at Delos not to need any introduction to

it.[254] But on a thematic level, we can also see a broader relationship to the proliferation of duplicates above, as this image is yet another representation with which Theseus and Ariadne engage. In leaving it on Delos as a dedication to its final recipient, Apollo, Plutarch has his Theseus close off that network of *mimēsis*. Ariadne will only be mentioned twice more in the *Life*, and Aphrodite not at all.[255]

There is, however, a kind of compensation at work here: within the same sentence, Plutarch makes room for another complex imitation, albeit one that Theseus himself orchestrates. The crane dance is presented here, like the Lupercalia and the Poplifugia I have examined above, as a kinetic *mimēma*. It is also, as I have argued above in the case of the Lupercalia,[256] a complex locus of imitation rather than a one-to-one representation. To begin with, Plutarch unambiguously describes Theseus as instituting the dance at Delos, but he slightly distances the relationship between dance and its status as imitation by employing a participial phrase in apposition: this is as a "dance that occurs as an imitation" (*χορείαν ... μίμημα γιγνομένην*). Such a use of the participle from *gignesthai* is tempting to ignore, as it does not readily lend itself to a single word translation in English, but we can at least note a few consequences of this odd participle. First, it makes it clear that the Delians, rather than simply Theseus, are required to turn the dance into an instance of *mimēsis*.[257] Second, it lends to the description of the dance a degree of dynamism is absent in the case of other *mimēmata*. Unlike the image of Aphrodite or other static representations, its status as an imitation is contingent on a span of time in which it can unfold.[258] That is to say, no moment in the process of the dance would suffice as an imitation of the labyrinth, since the transitions from arrangement to arrangement are themselves vital pieces of the mimetic complex.[259]

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254. See *A&M ad loc.* on the image of Aphrodite, described in Pausanias 9.40.3-4. Purportedly taken by Ariadne from Daedalus, it was small and wooden, had a rectangular base instead of legs, and was erased on one side. Pausanias also describes Ariadne's *choros*, connecting it to the *choros* that Homer mentions as taking place at Knossos (*Iliad* 18.590-2).

255. Note Pausanias' story at 9.40 that Theseus did not want to take it home to Athens, because the image would remind him of Ariadne (*ἵνα μὴ οἴκαδε ἐπαγόμενος ἐς ἀνάμνησίν τε Ἀριάδνης ἐφέλκηται*).

256. See p. 100ff.

257. For another instance where Theseus' agency must be understand from a communal perspective, see p. 119 in the following chapter.

258. Syntactically, compare *Romulus* 21.8, where *mimēma* governing an object genitive stands in apposition with the subject of the infinitive: "that the festival is conducted as an imitation of the race then" (*μίμημα τοῦ τότε δρόμου τὴν ἑορτὴν ἄγεσθαι*). In both cases, the mimetic term is epexegetic, so that we see we have a dance occuring as a *mimēsis* and a festival led as a *mimēma*.

259. On the formalized moves of Greek dance (*schēmata*), see Peponi (2009). On the crane dance and *choreia* in general, see Peponi, Kowalzig and Kurke, all in Peponi (2013); Steiner

Nor, by the same token, is the imitation itself presented as a singular entity in Plutarch's phrasing. The object of imitation is composite (both the *periodoi* and *diexodoi* in the labyrinth), and the means of imitation is as well: it is a "rhythmic pattern"[260] that is comprised of *parallaxeis* and *anelixeis*. Indeed we can logically group together the terms related to circle and spiral patterns (*anelixeis* as imitative of the *periodoi*) as well as the more linear/alternating terms (*parallaxeis* as imitative of the *diexodoi*),[261] so that both elements of the *mimēma* correspond to features of the labyrinth. These terms thus reinforce the sense of the labyrinth as a combination of linear and circular elements, which can in turn be imagined as component elements of the dance.[262]

What remains more difficult to explain is the name of the dance, for which Plutarch cites Dicaearchus: rather than anything evocative of the labyrinth, the Delians name it after the *geranos*, the crane. As Detienne and Calame have noted, it is not difficult to explain this connection on grounds of similarity between the motions of the dance and those of the crane.[263] Rather than focusing on the exact explanation for the name, however, we might content ourselves with remarking how Plutarch mentions the naming (by the Delians and in turn by Dicaearchus) and in so doing boh extends and complicates the network of imitation: the dance is expressly the *mimēma* of one thing, but its name also makes it representative of something else. Even if we do regard crane and labyrinth as visually and kinetically comparable when expressed in the medium of dance, this multiplicity of associations will necessarily complicate the chain.[264] As when Theseus

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(2011), Kowalzig (2004), Greene (2001), Calame (1977), Lonsdale (1993) and Armstrong (1943).

260. Translating *rhuthmos* as modern "rhythm" would be misleadingly weak. As Aristotle notes in Poetics 1447a, *rhuthmos* is the sole means of imitation employed in "the craft of dancers" (*ἡ τῶν ὀρχηστῶν*), and must therefore include the movements and gestures available when one is not contributing to harmony and melody. This is corroborated by the Athenian's definition of the term in Plato's *Laws* 665a as the "arrangement of motion" (*τῇ δὴ τῆς κινήσεως τάξει ῥυθμὸς ὄνομα εἴη*). On *rhuthmos*/rhythm among the Greeks, see Mathiesen (1985), Warry (1962) p. 100ff, and Georgiades (1958).

261. See Detienne (1983) p. 547ff and Calame (1977) pp. 108-115 on the meaning of these terms. Compare *De Pythiae Oraculis* 404f, where Plutarch compares the combination of spiral motion (*ἑλιγμός*) and linear downward motion in forming a whirlpool to the combination of human and divine forces in inspiration, and see Schröder (1990) *ad loc.*

262. Cf. *De Malignitate Herodoti* 863e, where Plutarch quotes Euripides' *Andromache* 448 as well as Herodotus himself to disparage the historian's "twisty" (*ἑλικτὰ*) approach to the past.

263. See Detienne *op. cit.* and Calame *op. cit,* as well as Armstrong (1943), Johansen (1945) and Greene (2001) pp. 1410-1415.

264. Compare the song in chapter 8 of Lewis Caroll's *Through the Looking-Glass*. As the White Knight explains it, the song's "name is called ... 'Haddocks' Eyes,'" its "name is 'The Aged Aged Man,'" the song "is called 'Ways and Means'" and, lastly, "the song is 'A-sitting on a Gate.'" As

imitates Heracles, who is himself mimicking the brigands, the Delians who perform the *geranos* even into Plutarch's own day are not merely following in Theseus' footsteps but are also involving themselves in an imitative chain that one may follow many links back. And just as with the rituals of the Lupercalia, where the *mimēma* contains both the *sumbolon* of one event and the *hupomnēma* of another, the dance is a polysemous one.

In this case, however, we have a polysemy that pushes the possibilities of *mimēsis* to an extreme: expressly one thing and titularly another, the dance becomes not just another antiquarian topic whose multiple possibilities of interpretation allow an opening for Plutarch's imagination. It is in fact an implicit meditation on the openendedness of representation: Theseus is the *mimētēs*, but it is the Delians who will carry this imitation forward into what is, from Plutarch's perspective, posterity. Of course, their name for this dance need not be an ironclad determination of what the dance *must* represent, but it is also difficult to imagine that someone who would view this dance could mentally identify it as "the crane" without projecting a mental image of the motions of that bird onto the motions of the dancers.

On some level, this additional association need not "replace" or "correct" the labyrinth image. Rather, there is a way in which one can regard the crane and the labyrinth as complementary symbols. After all, the labyrinth is a symbol of enclosure and imprisonment, while the crane, as Detienne has noted, is strongly associated in the thinking of antiquity with the broad geographic range that it can inhabit.[265] From this perspective, labyrinth and crane work as a pair of opposing, static images, representing captivity and escape. More productively, however, we could see the crane image as a temporal successor to the labyrinth, so that its escape imagery indirectly "narrates" Theseus' own return to the world outside of the labyrinth. The dance that represents the labyrinth is named for a symbol of escape. Alternatively, we might say that the imitation is not of the original structure of the labyrinth, but of escape from the labyrinth, so that its dynamism and its incidentally crane-like motions are both logical consequences of its mimetic nature. In this respect, we might offer for comparison the "rout" and "flight" (*τροπὴν*, *φυγῆς*) that some see imitated in the ritual motions described in *Romulus* 29.3.

This last interpretation would depend, furthermore, on a fundamental ambiguity in the mimetic capacity of the dance. It is, after all, mimetic of what appear to be features of the labyrinth (*periodoi* and *diexodoi*), but the essential nature of dance—which features people in motion—seems to merge labyrinth as environment and object with the person navigating it. These need not be topological features in the labyrinth, but also movements that the labyrinth demands of anyone who is navigating it. This is further reinforced by Plutarch's choice of phrasing at 19.1,

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with the the name of the crane dance, the dance itself, and the object of imitation, Caroll is playing on the recursive problems created by familiar structures of representation (in this case, the way that a title represents or stands in for the work to which it is attached).

265. See Detienne *op. cit.* p. 548 and compare to the map metaphor of *Theseus* 1. Plutarch's source, Dicaearchus, wrote a famous geography: see Cicero, *Ad Atticum* 6.2.3.

which seems to merge labyrinth as environment and object with Theseus as the person who navigates it. In that passage, Plutarch gives the most common account of how Theseus manages to navigate the space: he is given a thread by Ariadne, with which he can "traverse the twists of the labyrinth" (τοῦ λαβυρίνθου τοὺς ἑλιγμοὺς διεξελθεῖν). In root (*helig-*) and prefix (*di-ek-*), this pair of words clearly echoes the *diexodoi* and *an(h)elixeis* of the dance in 21.[266]

In creating an imitation of the features of the labyrinth from a subjective perspective (a series of twists and turns for the human body to navigate), Plutarch frames Theseus as merging himself with the labyrinth from which he has only recently escaped. As with the coins he mints at 25.3 and the brigands he encounters on his journey to Athens, Theseus is defining himself in terms of what he has surmounted or conquered, in this case generating a representation that blurs the line between self and the environment encountered, between subject and object. As in those other instances, imitation is not simply derivative of an original, but in fact signals a kind of mastery. And while this pattern of defeat and replication is not always the case with *mimēsis* in the *Lives* (e.g. Caesar and Alexander), it is nonetheless one that repeatedly reveals itself in the exploits of Theseus, and one rooted in a value system that seems largely distinct from the Platonic one suggested in *Republic* 10. *Mimēsis*, as I suggested at the outset, need not always be a dilution of the original. It can in fact stand, as does Heracles' club, as the representation of an obstacle or adversary overcome, and one that lends to its possessor a distinctive identity.[267]

An Exemplary Imitator?

In elaborating to this degree about the mimetic elements of the crane dance, I hope to reinforce the basic point about *mimēsis* with which I began this chapter: that it reappears within a staggering range of contexts and one through which it is possible to generate particularly com-

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266. We can also see *hodos* and the various roots for going as semantically closely connected, although they are not cognates on a morphological level: a path is what one goes along.

267. Indeed, there is one more element of this constellation of *mimēsis* that operates in much the same way: Ariadne. As I mentioned above, she has essentially vanished from Plutarch's narrative by the time that he narrates Theseus' arrival on Delos. But in a certain way, she, too, is present in the moment of imitation. It is by her, after all, that Theseus had been instructed (διδαχθείς) in how to escape the labyrinth (19.1), so that we might regard his moment of instruction on Delos (that is, his instituting the crane dance) as its own form of imitation. Theseus has abandoned Ariadne, but she survives within this network as the "original" instructor, one whose role Theseus imitates when he imitates, *more explicitly*, the dance in the labyrinth. Rather than disappearing from this network upon her physical departure from the narrative, Ariadne persists as an exemplar for Theseus' own instructive act. Indeed, we might see Ariadne's "solution" of the labyrinth as a kind of competitive imitation of Daedalus's original structure.

plex networks of meaning. The diversity of *mimēsis*, with respect to both its objects and its outcomes, means that these networks can not only span a great deal of the material in a text, but also speak to the relationships of author and reader to this material. In the case of the *Lives*, as I have noted, the latter relationship is more pronounced than it might otherwise be, as the biographical subjects are presented to the reader as exemplary: that is, as worthy of *mimēsis*.

In the case of the *Theseus-Romulus*, however, there is also a fundamental asymmetry between the two biographical subjects. Romulus is fundamentally non-imitative while, as the crane dance should make particularly clear, Theseus is at his core an imitator. There is a certain historical paradox in this relationship, in as much as Theseus (as I have noted) stands earlier in mythological-historical time than Romulus. Since all imitation demands that its object be chronologically prior to its output, one might suppose that Romulus is the prior and more "original" figure: he is after all a founder, someone who may operate on a blank slate.

But in paralleling these two figures, Plutarch reminds the reader that being habitually imitative, in the way that Theseus is, is not the same as being temporally recent or indeed uncreative. The chains of imitation are long enough, and the nature of imitation is diverse enough, that a position "farther down" an imitative chain need not mean that opportunities for agency are precluded by the inability to act and create *ex nihilo*. It is thus Theseus and not Romulus who can function as an icon for the reader and, if it is not too precious of an idea, an exemplar for the reader *with regard to imitation*: he may be more remote in time than Romulus, but his ability to fashion his own identity through (and not despite) mimetic actions brings him "forward" in time, collapsing the distance between the mythological past and Plutarch's readers.

Chapter 4
""To import forgetfulness": Cultural Transformation in the Theseus-Romulus

In his book *La mémoire, l'histoire*, *l'oubli*, Paul Ricoeur focuses on the role of memory and forgetting in the creation of a historical record. Motivated to write by "l'inquiétant spectacle" of historical imbalance, in which too much memory is applied to some events and too much forgetting to others, he intends to steer the reader towards what he calls "a politics of just memory" ("une politique de la juste mémoire") by which recollection and forgetting are applied based on the appropriateness and usefulness of remembering rather than circumstance and the power of any interested parties.[268] Within this model, remembering and forgetting are complementary processes, both of them playing a necessary role in the generation of a historical account.[269]

Nor is the latter process a simple one from Ricoeur's perspective. Taking that question of just memory as his starting point, he ascribes to forgetting a complex nature that entails more than just the failure, absence, or dispersal of memory. Certainly, forgetting can be an "effacement des traces" along the lines of clinical amnesia, a dysfunction in which the structure of memory is altered in such a way that a memory or set of memories is fully and definitively lost.[270] But Ricoeur also suggests that a model of forgetting need not depend on a model of total erasure. Instead, as he re-examines the process of forgetting from the perspective of the "persistance des traces,"[271] with special attention to Plato's treatment of forgetting in the *Theaetetus* and *Philebus*,[272] he suggests that forgetting can result in a certain form of retention of the past: "In sum," he writes,[273] "forgetting assumes a positive significance to the degree that having-been prevails over not-being-any-longer in the significance attached to the idea of the past. Having-been makes forgetting the age-old resource offered to the work of remembering."[274] In other words, forgetting can in fact serve as a kind of preservation of what is forgotten, making what is into what "has been" instead of simply removing it from the perspective of the present. Rather than

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268. Ricoeur (2000) p. 7.

269. One may contrast this striving for balance with the entropic world described in Most (2001), where "forgetting is increasing constantly, whereas remembering diminishes from day to day" (148). See also Vernant (1959) and Detienne (1967) *passim* for relevant treatments of memory and forgetting.

270. Ricoeur *op. cit.* pp. 543-553.

271. On what Ricoeur calls the "grande bifurcation" between these two models of forgetting, see also *ibid.* p. 539.

272. See *Theaetetus* 144b and 191c-e, *Philebus* 33e, 52a-b, 63e. For an extensive treatment of forgetting in Plato, see Dixsaut (2006) pp. 20-26.

273. Translation is my own.

274. *ibid.* p. 574: "En résumé, l'oubli revêt une signification positive dans la mesure où l'ayant-été prévaut sur le n'être plus dans la signification attachée à l'idée du passé. L'ayant-été fait de l'oubli la ressource immémoriale offerte au travail du souvenir."

the terminal point for a process, we might say that forgetting can be a kind of process, perhaps even a "re-encoding" for a different form of posterity. If we regard it in this way, Ricoeur's "oubli" is not so much oblivion as the transition into a new state of affairs, in which a forgotten memory is placed into a new context, one from which it is even possible for a "forgotten" memory to be recovered in some capacity or for a new set of purposes.[275]

It is upon these questions about the nature and uses of forgetting that I will focus in this final chapter. Having examined three thematic domains over which Plutarch's intellectual interests play out within the text of the *Theseus-Romulus*—space, sight, and imitation—I will explore how he does not, in his role as author, seek simply to overcome or counterbalance forgetting, as if it were fundamentally a force running counter to the historical and antiquarian impulses that motivate much of his writing. Rather, he also engages with it as a theme that is critically significant for this pair of *Lives*. As in Ricoeur's model, forgetting need not here simply be a lacuna in the structure of individual or communal memory. One can, instead, regard it as a vital and potentially positive element, and as the starting point of a process that allows for change without overarching disruption, indeed for cultural transformation without the wholesale loss of a cultural identity.[276]

My point of entry to these questions stands, on the level of narrative, where the previous chapter ended: Theseus' institution of the crane dance on Delos. But whereas, in the previous chapter, I focused on the crane dance as a kind of "end of the line"—that is, as the climactic point in a network of imitation that had been developing earlier in the *Theseus*—I will interpret it here as the starting point for a largely separate set of associations in the *Theseus-Romulus*. This set of associations here takes the form of a chain of thematic linkages, beginning in the *Theseus*, between dance, forgetting, and political reorganization, but it is also one through which I will conceptualize, more broadly, the dynamics of cultural change and cultural practice (as embodied first by the motion and transformation of the dance) as mediated by the process of forgetting. Indeed, by beginning to trace the interrelated motifs of forgetting and transformation more broadly throughout the *Theseus-Romulus,* we can gain insight into a model of cultural change through which Plutarch views not only the mythological past but also, indirectly, his own age. By extension, I will argue that Plutarch's discourse about the innovations that occur in Athens and Attica—and which in fact change the relationship between the two entities—is figured largely through the image of the ship of Theseus, associated at different points in the narrative with both forgetting and cultural transformation.

Additionally, although the narrative basis for these links is found in the *Life of Theseus*, I will contend that a concern with forgetting and its consequences is evident in the *Romulus* as well, and indeed is imbued there with a higher degree of urgency, one that comes from the need to reconcile the humble, folkloric origins of Rome with the undeniable fact of its political dom-

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275. Cf. Plato's model of *anamnēsis* in *Phaedo* 66b-d.

276. Ricoeur *op. cit.* pp. 536-543.

inance in Plutarch's own day. All of this suggests that dynamics of forgetting and transformation play a significant role. In both halves of the *Theseus-Romulus*, then, the past is by no means a distinct or static tableau for the author to reconstruct, but rather a set of transformations whose outcomes and end states are necessarily relevant to the cultural questions and practices of the author's own day.

After all, Plutarch is not merely interested in describing the past in order to demonstrate the breadth of his learning to his audience. In all his investigations of cultural practices, whether Greek, Roman, or neither (consider for instance the Egyptians in his *Isis and Osiris*),[277] he does not merely relate events and interesting details, but rather attempts as well to find a working (or at least workable) model of how cultural change can occur without rupturing continuity with the past. Let us take as an example a passage from the final speech of *De Pythiae Oraculis*, where Plutarch's Theon[278] is arguing that the delivery of oracles in verse holds no advantage over their delivery in prose, as had occurred in earlier days. In the eyes of some, Theon argues, this fundamental change in the nature of the Delphic oracles is a threat to the cultural esteem in which the Pythia had been held for millennia, demanding explanations that will accommodate these changes: "But now," he says, "as if agonizing and afraid that the place will lose the glory of three thousand years and that some will abandon it out of disdain, like a sophist's school, we speak in its defense and make up arguments and speeches about what we do not and which it is not suitable for us to know" (*νῦν δ' ὥσπερ ἀγωνιῶντες καὶ δεδιότες, μὴ τρισχιλίων ἐτῶν ἀποβάλῃ δόξαν ὁ τόπος καὶ τοῦ χρηστηρίου καθάπερ σοφιστοῦ διατριβῆς ἀποφοιτήσωσιν ἔνιοι καταφρονήσαντες, ἀπολογούμεθα καὶ πλάσσομεν αἰτίας καὶ λόγους ὑπὲρ ὧν οὔτ' ἴσμεν οὔτ' εἰδέναι προσῆκον ἡμῖν ἐστι*) (408d).

The situation here is not a complicated one to understand: something that some might view as essential to the identity of the institution—the delivery of oracles in verse—has been lost, and as a consequence one cannot take for granted the institution's persistence as a permanently significant entity, rather than an ephemeral one like a sophist's school. One option, he is arguing, is to address the resulting doubts directly, to assuage and convince the critic rather than simply dismiss him (*παραμυθούμενοι τὸν ἐγκαλοῦντα καὶ πείθοντες, οὐ χαίρειν ἐῶντες*). One might say that such an approach is not so much strategic as tactical, requiring those who seek to preserve an institution to counter and address individual threats to cultural prestige as they arise rather than having some generalized plan for or assurance of its survival. From this perspective, the struggle against loss requires consistent vigilance.

But there is, as Theon suggests in the case of Delphi, a better way to maintain the "glory of the place" and the cultural significance of its institutions: by pointing to a broader sense of continuity that transcends those changes that have occurred. In particular, then, he points to the

277. See also Schmidt (1999) on Plutarch's rhetorical use of non-Greeks, including Romans.
278. On the extratextual identity of this Theon, who is also named in several of the other *Moralia*, see Swain (1991) p. 326f.

overriding logic and clarity of the "Pythia's dialect" and takes the flourishing of Delphi in the Roman imperial period as evidence that the observable usefulness of the institution has not diminished with the change from verse to prose oracles (408f-409a):[279]

> *ἡ δὲ τῆς Πυθίας διάλεκτος, ὥσπερ οἱ μαθηματικοὶ γραμμὴν εὐθεῖαν καλοῦσι τὴν ἐλαχίστην τῶν τὰ αὐτὰ πέρατ' ἐχουσῶν, οὕτως οὐ ποιοῦσα καμπὴν οὐδὲ κύκλον οὐδὲ διπλόην οὐδ' ἀμφιβολίαν ἀλλ' εὐθεῖα πρὸς τὴν ἀλήθειαν οὖσα πρὸς δὲ πίστιν ἐπισφαλὴς καὶ ὑπεύθυνος οὐδένα καθ' αὑτῆς ἔλεγχον ἄχρι νῦν παραδέδωκεν, ἀναθημάτων δὲ καὶ δώρων ἐμπέπληκε βαρβαρικῶν καὶ Ἑλληνικῶν τὸ χρηστήριον, οἰκοδομημάτων δὲ κατακεκόσμηκε κάλλεσι καὶ κατασκευαῖς Ἀμφικτυονικαῖς. ὁρᾶτε δήπουθεν αὐτοὶ πολλὰ μὲν ἐπεκτισμένα τῶν πρότερον οὐκ ὄντων, πολλὰ δ' ἀνειλημμένα τῶν συγκεχυμένων καὶ διεφθαρμένων. ὡς δὲ τοῖς εὐθαλέσι τῶν δένδρων ἕτερα παραβλαστάνει, καὶ τοῖς Δελφοῖς ἡ Πυλαία συνηβᾷ καὶ συναναβόσκεται διὰ τὰς ἐντεῦθεν εὐπορίας σχῆμα λαμβάνουσα καὶ μορφὴν καὶ κόσμον ἱερῶν καὶ συνεδρίων καὶ ὑδάτων οἷον ἐν χιλίοις ἔτεσι τοῖς πρότερον οὐκ ἔλαβεν.*
>
> But the dialect of the Pythia, just as mathematicians call a straight line the shortest one between two given endpoints, in the same way making neither bending, nor curved, nor duplicity, nor ambiguity, but rather lying straight toward the truth and being precarious and responsible with respect to confidence, has furnished up to now no refutation of itself, but has filled the seat of the oracle with votives and gifts of barbarians and Greeks and has adorned it with the beauty of buildings and Amphictyonic furnishings. Surely you see for yourselves how many buildings have been built that were not there before, how many have been restored that had been confounded and destroyed. As when trees are flourishing, others spring up beside them, so, too, does the Pylaea bloom youthfully and graze alongside Delphi, taking form through the plenty of those from there, and shape, and the adornment of temples and council chambers and fountains, such as it never did in the thousand years before.

The general arc of the argument is clear enough, but the hyperbolic richness of the language that Plutarch has Theon deliver merits close analysis. Note, to begin with, how he counters the concern of others at 408d with "the glory of three thousand years" (*τρισχιλίων ἐτῶν ... δόξαν*) with an assertion about the ongoing revival of Delphi, which he asserts is in a more prosperous condition than "in the thousand years before" (*ἐν χιλίοις ἔτεσι τοῖς πρότερον*). In order to build to this claim, he employs the language of renewal: the oracle "has filled" (*ἐμπέπληκε*) Delphi with build-

279. On this passage, see Stadter (2015) p. 75ff. For Delphi under Rome and in Plutarch's day in particular, see Weir (2004) p. 77ff, McInerney (2004), Swain *op. cit.*, Pétridis (1997), Flacelière (1971), and Barrow (1967) p. 30ff.

ings until, as "flourishing trees" (*τοῖς εὐθαλέσι τῶν δένδρων*) do for those near to them, it brings about prosperity, by extension, for the sister site at Thermopylae. This broad state of renewal thus constitutes evidence not only that Delphi has survived various changes, both in the outside world and in the nature of the oracles themselves, but also that the institution of the Pythia has gained from the loss of verse in its oracles. On the rhetorical level, then, Theon does not so much go on the defensive, as if there were a need to mitigate these losses, as he argues the logic of unambiguous language and points to the material environment of Delphi as evidence of the oracle's continued utility. In this way, the change from verse to prose is far enough removed from the fundamental identity of the Pythia (grounded ultimately in its utility in daily life) that it constitutes no significant loss at all.

In this bit of argumentation on Theon's part, I argue that it is possible to make out a characteristically Plutarchan position on loss, and one that should help us reframe *lēthē*, in particular, in the *Theseus-Romulus* as genuinely as much a part of a process of transformation as the loss of verse oracles in the *De Pythiae Oraculis*. Forgetting need not, consequently, be a "defect" or "failure" in cultural continuity, because of which a culture could lose what is essential in itself, but instead it can also be a vital conduit through which cultural identity preserves itself in the face of passing time. If we bear this principle in mind, it becomes possible to interpret Plutarch's treatment of myths of cultural change as part of an effort to work through more universal questions about cultural identity and its survival. For Plutarch, whose authorial identity is a composite of Greek elements and Roman ones, these questions are anything but idle quibbling. As odd or paradoxical as it might seem for someone so concerned with the preservation of the past, forgetting plays a vital role in his model of the development and preservation of cultural life.

Lēthē *and Dance*

Before addressing *lēthē* directly, however, I will examine in greater detail the narrative route by which it enters into the text of the *Theseus*. In order to properly frame my interpretation of the *Theseus*, however, I will begin my argument with Plato's etymology of *choros*, which appears toward the beginning of the second book of his *Laws*. It is a folk etymology, offered up by the Athenian as he contrasts the movements of animals and humans and describes the pleasure that one can derive from participating in choral performance (653e-4a):

> *ἡμῖν δὲ οὓς εἴπομεν τοὺς θεοὺς συγχορευτὰς δεδόσθαι, τούτους εἶναι καὶ τοὺς δεδωκότας τὴν ἔνρυθμόν τε καὶ ἐναρμόνιον αἴσθησιν μεθ' ἡδονῆς, ᾗ δὴ κινεῖν τε ἡμᾶς καὶ χορηγεῖν ἡμῶν τούτους, ᾠδαῖς τε καὶ ὀρχήσεσιν ἀλλήλοις συνείροντας, χορούς τε ὠνομακέναι παρὰ τὸ τῆς χαρᾶς ἔμφυτον ὄνομα.*[280]

280. In a similar vein, Plato also folk-etymologizes *nomos* from forms of *nous* ("mind") in the *Laws* (714a, 957c). See Peponi (2013), on the passage and on the difference between *chara* and

> But to us, those gods, whom we mentioned as having been given as fellow dancers, have given rhythmical and harmonic perception with pleasure, with which they move us and lead our choruses, stringing us to one another with songs and dances, and they have called them choruses from the name of *chara* (joy) that is innate.

The Athenian's etymology thus suggests that the word for chorus is derived from the emotional effect that it produces in those involved, certainly for the dancers if not also for the audience: it is a *choros* not because of any feature of dancing as an action in itself, but because it typically elicits in them an experience of *chara*. A bit like certain generic terms in English ("thriller" "tear-jerker" "page-turner"), albeit placing a greater emphasis on the performer's own reaction to the performance, the word *choros* is defined through this folk etymology by the emotional reaction that it is expected to engender.

Returning to Plutarch's account of the crane dance (*Theseus* 21)[281] with this etymology in mind, we might at first glance not seem to gain much additional insight into the passage. As I have pointed out in my previous chapter, the primary focus of the passage is on linking the dance to the object of the labyrinth and the experience of navigating it, rather than on the reaction on the part of those who observe the dance. One might for instance observe that the appellation of "crane" comes not from Theseus but rather from the Delians (*καλεῖται δὲ τὸ γένος τοῦτο τῆς χορείας ὑπὸ Δηλίων γέρανος*), but the avian image would at most hint only indirectly at their affective responses: we might speculate, for instance, that the crane dance is somehow expressive of "taking flight," and that it thus points to an experience of emotional elevation or elation.[282]

I would take this analysis in a somewhat different direction, however, by placing greater emphasis on Theseus himself, who participates in this dance along with the youths (*ἐχόρευσε μετὰ τῶν ἠιθέων χορείαν*). He therefore plays a double role, in as much as he is both creator of the dance and also one of its inaugural dancers. If we join this observation with the link between *choros* and *chara* to be found in the Athenian's folk etymology in the *Laws*, we might thus expect that this initial performance of the dance is also affecting him (at least in his capacity as lead dancer) and that his own reaction therefore would be one of *chara*. In re-enacting his navigation of the labyrinth, he would also be experiencing the more general joy that *choreia*, with its constitutive "songs and dances," provides to those who participate in it.[283]

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hēdonē (pleasure). See also Kurke (2013) for a reading of the image of humans as puppets of the gods that is conveyed here.

281. See p. 103ff and *passim* in the previous chapter.

282. See Lakoff *op. cit.* pp. 271ff on "kinesthetic image schemas" and p. 19ff in chapter 1.

283. Cf. Peponi *op. cit.* p. 225 on Plato's focus on *"choreia* as a pleasurable act for the choral performers *themselves*, a pleasure almost incompatible with the presence of a watching audience."

Indeed, if we jump forward a little in the *Life of Theseus* to the moment of Theseus' homecoming at 22, it is possible to make out a hint of this development in Plutarch's choice of language about the moment of arrival in Attica:[284]

> *τῇ δ᾽Ἀττικῇ προσφερομένων, ἐκλαθέσθαι μὲν αὐτόν, ἐκλαθέσθαι δὲ τὸν κυβερνήτην ὑπὸ χαρᾶς ἐπάρασθαι τὸ ἱστίον, ᾧ τὴν σωτηρίαν αὐτῶν ἔδει γνώριμον τῷ Αἰγεῖ γενέσθαι, τὸν δ᾽ἀπογνόντα ῥῖψαι κατὰ τῆς πέτρας ἑαυτὸν καὶ διαφθαρῆναι.*
>
> And as they put in at Attica, it escaped his notice and escaped the notice of the pilot because of joy to raise the sail, by which their survival was supposed to have been made intelligible to Aegeus, and he in despair threw himself from the rock and died.

Admittedly, there is no explicit causal link on the level of narrative between the description of the dance and this episode. This statement is, however, the continuation of the indirect statement set up by the verb *φασι* in 21.3: "They say that he also created a contest on Delos...." (*ποιῆσαι δὲ καὶ ἀγῶνά φασιν αὐτὸν ἐν Δήλῳ*). Something odd is in evidence in the phrasing here: although prior passages are in direct speech, even where attributed to Dicaearchus, this transition to indirect speech continues into the beginning of *Theseus* 22. Plutarch pivots with respect to his setting and his topic, but he nonetheless maintains indirect statement.[285]

If we are willing to entertain the notion that this is more than simply an accident or stylistic quirk, we might consequently surmise that Plutarch intends to underscore the link between the Delian material and the incidents surrounding Theseus' homecoming. While the simple fact of succession within the narrative is of course insufficient to establish that there is a causal link between them (Theseus dances on Delos, institutes the Delia on the island, and then forgets to hoist the white sail), the maintenance of indirect statement across the transition between the second and third elements, both of them narrated with a common instance of "they say," further unifies Plutarch's discourse here and, indeed, reinforces the possibility that there is a casual, rather than merely a sequential, relationship between these events.

What Plutarch proposes as connecting the performance of the crane dance and the lapse of memory, I would suggest, is precisely the connection between dance and joy that Plato's Athenian suggested in etymologizing the former from the latter. On the surface level of the narrative, the "joy" (*chara*) that causes Theseus and his pilot[286] to forget to signal their own survival to

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284. See Calame (1990) p. 89f and p. 121f. For parallels in Latin poetry, see Theseus' acting with "mente immemori" in Catullus 64.248 and Aegeus' being deceived "by the deceptive sail" ("falso ... velo") in *Thebaid* 12.626.

285. On indirect statement in Plutarch's *Lives*, see Vergedem (2010) p. 86f, which draws largely on McHale (1978) p. 258ff.

286. For more on the identity of the pilot (either Phereclus or Nauisthoüs) and about the

Aegeus is the result of their homecoming. But the reader is at the same time also led to see, in Plutarch's phrasing, a link between the earlier *choros* and the *chara* experienced as they return home to Attica. Out of dancing comes joy, then, even if it is the kind of joy that produces catastrophe for Aegeus and the Athenians who will mourn him.[287] In serving its "innate" purpose for Theseus and for the Delians, the dance also produces an unintended consequence upon the return of the Athenians to Attica. Theseus, after originating a dance and a competition on Delos, has forgotten the agreement with his father, according to which he was to replace the black sail with a white or purple one (17.4-5).[288]

Since the mistake carries it with it intimations of parricide, at the very least, one might be tempted to interpret this error on Theseus' part as an instance of parapraxis (that is, as a so-called Freudian slip):[289] following this line of reasoning, the apparent accident that brings about the death of Aegeus is in fact the manifestation of the unconscious drive of the son to kill and replace his father.[290] Certainly, this interpretive move is coherent with the most literal facts of the narrative, but this Freudian point of view would also fail to account for one element of the narrative that Plutarch emphasizes: namely, that Theseus is not alone in this moment of oversight, since the pilot is also identified as someone who forgets the command to change the sail. We might therefore view the instance of forgetting as a communal lapse, if communal on a very small scale.[291] Rather than drawing the reader toward Theseus' psychological interiority and the unique family dynamics that one might imagine as operating, this small detail points the interpreter's attention toward the action itself and the set of consequences that result from it in Athens and Attica.

One could, after all, regard the agreement between Aegeus and Theseus as a kind of institution in miniature, understood and participated in only by Aegeus, Theseus and the pilot. Of course one would suppose that an institution, properly speaking, would have efficacy among a broader circle (the Areopagite Council among the Athenians, the Olympic Games among all Greeks, and so on) and would demonstrate a usefulness that endures beyond its initial appearance, whereas this compact is ad hoc and holds significance, at least *within* the narrative, only for

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festival of Cybernesia, see 17.6f.

287. Cf the connections between *choros*, *rhythmos*, and memory in Kowalzig (2013).

288. See Walker (1995a) p. 15f and (1995b) p. 36f on the symbolism of the *phoikeon histion*, as well as Jones (1999) p. 250 on the symbolism of white in this context.

289. Freud (1920) originates this strategy of interpreting what he calls *Fehlleistungen*, glossed imaginatively as "bungled actualizations" in Fontaine (2007).

290. See Kouretas *op. cit.* p. 156f for Theseus' mental lapse as parapraxis. Calame *op. cit.* p. 122 describes "la recherche d'une cause extérieure à l'oubli fatidique de Thésée," with other explanations related to the abandonment of Ariadne and the vengeance of Zeus.

291. Consider the link between *kubernētēs* and political leadership, either in the ship of state commonplace (see *LSJ s.v.*) and its etymological descendants (e.g. "government").

this limited set of individuals Still, these are differences in temporal and interpersonal scale, not in the underlying logic of interpersonal agreement and shared symbolic conventions. As the analogies that undergird such terminology as "social contract" remind one, the functioning of life among groups of people will invariably depend on agreements and conventions, even if these vary dramatically in the duration, scale, and scope of their validity.

It is important, in addition, to note the context in Plutarch's text within which the failure of this agreement is situated: it is sandwiched between the creation of the crane dance and the Delian games and, upon Theseus' assumption of the kingship of Athens, the creation of a number of rites and political reforms, which I will examine more closely below (22-25). The fact that Theseus neglects to change the sail (and brings about, as a consequence, the end of his father's life and kingship) thus stands in a thematic contrast to a whole series of creations and reforms for which he is responsible, first while on Delos and subsequently in Athens and in Attica. So while in prior chapters I explored the notion of Aegeus as an "institutor" (and thus his son's namesake) and of Theseus as a paradigmatic imitator,[292] I will focus here on the ways in which the son also operates as an originator and as a disruptor of preexisting structures. That is to say, he is someone whose actions within the narrative sequence between *Theseus* 21-25 are significant as developments and upheavals of preexisting states of affairs, not simply as the continuation or adaptation of preexisting ones. More broadly, and perhaps unsurprisingly, it is when seen through this forward-looking lens that underlying dynamics of forgetting and transformation become evident in the *Theseus-Romulus*.

Joy and Pleasure

Before exploring the episodes surrounding Theseus' homecoming in greater detail, however, I will propose that Plutarch is working from a model of cultural change in which *lēthē*—forgetting, oblivion—plays a vital role. More specifically, we might suppose that *lēthē* is the third element in a triad that begins with *choros* and is followed by *chara*. Where links between the first two elements are evident from the Athenian's etymology in the *Laws* and, more implicitly, in Plutarch's arrangement and narration of Theseus' journey, the link between the latter two elements is more explicit within the *Life*. It is, as I have noted, "because of joy" (ὑπὸ χαρᾶς) that the necessity of changing the sail slips the minds (ἐκλαθέσθαι) of Theseus and of the pilot of his ship.[293] Because of their *chara,* then, they are momentarily overtaken by *lēthē*.

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292. See p. 42 in chapter 1 and p. 92ff in chapter 3.

293. For a careful analysis of words related to the root, see Pratt (1993) pp. 19-22. Although Pratt cautions against reading all such words as related to forgetting, this use of ἐκλανθάνειν clearly conveys a mental lapse or instance of non-remembering. Compare the metaphysical exploration of *Unverborgenheit* in Heidegger (1962) p. 262ff. See also 5.2 in the *synkrisis* to the *Theseus-Romulus,* where Plutarch mentions "Theseus' forgetting and neglect of the command

Nor, if we survey the textual tradition surrounding the episode, is the *chara–lēthē* linkage a given that Plutarch could not have avoided. There are, rather, a great number of sources that attribute the forgetting of the sail to grief (*lupe)* over the loss of Ariadne, including Plutarch's predecessors Diodorus Siculus (*διὰ τὴν ἁρπαγὴν τῆς κόρης δυσφοροῦντας ἰσχυρῶς, καὶ διὰ τὴν λύπην ἐπιλαθομένους τῆς Αἰγέως παραγγελίας*, 4.61.6) and Hyginus (43.2), his possible contemporary pseudo-Apollodorus (*λυπούμενος δὲ Θησεὺς ἐπ᾽ Ἀριάδνῃ καταπλέων ἐπελάθετο πετάσαι τὴν ναῦν λευκοῖς ἱστίοις*, E.1.10), and his successor Pausanias (1.22.5).[294] On the level of narrative, then, Plutarch seems to innovate in explaining the forgetting as anticipatory (stemming from looking forward to coming home) rather than reactive (arising from the loss of Ariadne).

As it appears in the text, at any rate, the causal connection in the link makes a certain amount of intuitive sense. The experience of joy is so intense for Theseus and his pilot that it temporarily "displaces" their memory of the arrangement with Aegeus, according to which they are obliged to change the sails to signal their own survival. On a level that one might call naïve psychology, the narrative is certainly uncomplicated: joy is a welcome emotion, then, but in its intensity it distracts and overwhelms the hero.[295] But one should also bear in mind that Plutarch is a student of character and philosophy, who is acutely interested in emotions and who treats them, accordingly, as phenomena deserving of close attention. In the *De Virtute Morali*, for instance, he bases his argument on the Aristotelian model of the soul as containing both a rational part and irrational part. According to this model, the latter part provides emotional obstacles to the reasoned behavior that is proposed by the former part (448a-b):[296]

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concerning the sail" (*τὴν δὲ Θησέως λήθην καὶ ἀμέλειαν τῆς περὶ τὸ ἱστίον ἐντολῆς*) in criticizing his character and suggests that he would likely be convicted of parricide for this neglect.

294. In the case of Hyginus and of Pausanias, the emotion of grief is not named directly, but the loss of Ariadne is framed unambiguously as leading to the incident of forgetting.

295. The term *chara* is fairly common in Plutarch, but two passages in the *Life of Romulus* demonstrate something of the intensity that it conveys. The first is at 16.5, where Romulus leads the Romans in a triumphal march and they receive him "with joy and amazement" (*μετὰ χαρᾶς καὶ θαύματος*). The second comes at 21.8, where Romulus and Remus "run to the place with joy" (*ἐλθεῖν δρόμῳ μετὰ χαρᾶς ἐπὶ τὸν τόπον*). For both of these passages in the previous chapter, see p. 100. What is notable for my purposes here is that the first passages describe a the reactions of more than a single individual (a pair and a larger group) and are accompanied by a description of motion; in both of these respects they are like the communal, kinetic *chara* that Plato describes in the *Laws*.

296. Cf. *EN* 1102a31 on the rational and irrational elements of the soul, which Aristotle suggests are either separable like parts of the body or inseparable like the convex and concave parts of a curved surface (*καθάπερ ἐν τῇ περιφερείᾳ τὸ κυρτὸν καὶ τὸ κοῖλον*).

> *αἱ δὲ πραγματικαὶ βουλαὶ καὶ κρίσεις καὶ δίαιται τῶν πολλῶν ἐμπαθεῖς οὖσαι δυσοδίαν τῷ λόγῳ παρέχουσι καὶ δυσκολίαν, ἐνισχομένῳ καὶ ταραττομένῳ περὶ τὸ ἄλογον, ἀνταῖρον αὐτῷ μεθ' ἡδονῆς τινος ἢ δέους ἢ λύπης ἢ ἐπιθυμίας.*
>
> But the prudent deliberations, judgments, and decisions of most people, being highly emotional, furnish obstruction and difficulty to reason, since it is checked and disturbed by the irrational, which rises against it with some pleasure, fear, pain or desire.

Having adopted this point of view in *De Virtute Morali*, Plutarch necessarily argues against the Stoic model, in which the beneficial experience of emotion (*eupatheia)* can be distinguished categorically from the typical class of emotions (*pathē*), which are typically destructive. As he understands them, the Stoics attempt to fully distinguish beneficial emotions—joy (*chara*), watchfulness (*eulabeiā*) and wishing (*boulēsis*)—from the *pathē* that correspond to them: pleasure (*hēdonē*),[297] fear (*phobos*), and appetite (*epithumiā*).[298] So where the Stoic framework regards joy, for instance, as characteristically different from pleasure, it is Plutarch's perspective that all the above are emotions and, accordingly, that the Stoic distinctions are fundamentally no more than hair-splitting employed to avoid the demands of logical consistency (449a-b):

> *οἷς καὶ αὐτοὶ τρόπον τινὰ διὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν ὑπείκοντες αἰδεῖσθαι τὸ αἰσχύνεσθαι καλοῦσι καὶ τὸ ἥδεσθαι χαίρειν καὶ τοὺς φόβους εὐλαβείας, ταύτην μὲν οὐδενὸς ἂν αἰτιασαμένου τὴν εὐφημίαν, εἰ τὰ αὐτὰ πάθη προστιθέμενα μὲν τῷ λογισμῷ τούτοις καλοῦσι τοῖς ὀνόμασι, μαχόμενα δὲ καὶ βιαζόμενα τὸν λογισμὸν ἐκείνοις· ὅταν δὲ δακρύοις ἐλεγχόμενοι καὶ τρόμοις καὶ χρόας μεταβολαῖς ἀντὶ λύπης καὶ φόβου δηγμούς τινας καὶ συνθροήσεις λέγωσι καὶ προθυμίας τὰς ἐπιθυμίας ὑποκορίζωνται, σοφιστικὰς δοκοῦσιν οὐ φιλοσόφους διακρούσεις καὶ ἀποδράσεις ἐκ τῶν πραγμάτων μηχανᾶσθαι διὰ τῶν ὀνομάτων.*
>
> Even they, although yielding in some way to these points on account of self-evidence, call shame "modesty" and pleasure "joy" and fears "watchfulness"; no one would blame them for the euphemism, if the same emotions, when they attach themselves to reason they called them by the latter names, and when they fight and violate reason by the former names. But when, vexed by tears and tremblings and changes of color, they say "a kind of sting and perplexity" instead of "pain and fear," and wrongly refer to desires"

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297. See Peponi *op. cit.* p. 217ff on the relationship between joy and pleasure.

298. Diogenes Laertius 7.116, cited in Long and Sedley 65F. For more on these distinctions in the Stoics, see Sorabji (2000) pp. 47-50 and, for an especially full treatment of the Old Stoics, Wolfsdorf (2013) pp. 182-213.

> as "eagerness," they seem to be contriving evasions that are sophistic rather than philosophical and escapes from reality by means of their diction.

There are thus certain instances in which one might wish to call the same emotion by a different name, but to speak, as the Stoics do, of categorical distinctions between those with positive and negative outcomes is deprecated from Plutarch's perspective. Emotions checked by reason may play out in a way that is different from those that are unchecked by reason, but they are not, he argues, any different in themselves.

Indeed, I would argue that this philosophical perspective helps one better understand Plutarch's phrasing in the episode from the *Theseus*. Although describing the feeling as *chara* lends it a more positive connotation than would calling it *hēdonē*, the two terms do not, in Plutarch's usage, describe fundamentally different emotions. So when one reads of the *chara* that Theseus and the pilot experience, it may imply for the reader a positive outcome but ultimately does not suggest a different affective experience than if Plutarch had described the experience with a such terminology as *hēdonē* and *hēdesthai*. "Joy" may have a more positive set of connotations than does "pleasure," but the emotional experiences that the two labels describe are not in any fundamental way different from one another.

As seen from Plutarch's Aristotelian model of emotions, the *chara* of *Theseus* 22 would thus be ambivalent in a way appropriate to the need of the narrative to accommodate the quick changes of fortune that occur when Aegeus sees the sail. In an obvious way, its consequences are certainly negative, as Theseus' lapse of memory leads to Aegeus' death, but it is also, undeniably, the product of a set of positive and justifiable experiences experienced by Theseus and his crew on their journey homeward. Certainly, to echo the language that Plutarch employs in the *De Virtute Morali*, it is a moment in which "the irrational ... rises against" reason and obstructs what might have occurred: Theseus and the pilot would have remembered to change the sail, Aegeus would have learned that his son has in fact survived the trip to Crete, and of course in not committing suicide he would have remained king for some longer period of time.[299] But this irrationality is more a feature of the resulting oversight than of the emotion *per se*, which would seem an appropriate response to the prior set of happy occurrences.

Lēthē *as a Moment of Division*

By extension, I would argue that forgetting is not entirely irrational nor only a process that works toward irrational ends. Rather, this moment of forgetting, the continuation of a causal chain that leads to Theseus' kingship in Athens and the rituals and reforms that develop from it, is itself an event with mixed and not entirely negative consequences. That is to say, the temporary *lēthē* from which the rest of these phenomena arise is not simply a case of the irrational imping-

299. Calame *op. cit.* p. 257f.

ing on reasoned behavior, but rather an instance of a phenomenon whose consequences help to reshape the broader community to a systemic degree. On the level of narrative, after all, this lapse of memory is a requirement for nearly all of what follows in the *Theseus,* as Theseus' reforms depend on his ascent to the kingship of Athens. At the very least, Aegeus' survival would have postponed the events of Theseus' kingship, which Plutarch narrates keeping a particular interest in the developments in Athenian ritual and institution that occur.[300] More broadly, we may see in the concept of *lēthē* not a simple, terminal "endpoint" for memory, but rather a pivot or point of transition, in which the larger entity in which the memory is embedded (a city or an individual) is also brought into another state. Forgetting could thus be conceived of as a functional and transformational phenomenon, and not just an end at which memory is extinguished.

Returning, briefly, to Plato's *Laws,* I would offer as a first example not Athens, but Troy, whose founding the Athenian characterizes in book three as depending on a kind of forgetting. After all, he notes, if those who founded it had still remembered the flood of Dardanus then they would not have built the city where it could be so easily flooded. One might thus infer, as the Athenian does, "that a strange and terrible forgetting of the presently discussed destruction must have come over them then" (δεινὴ γοῦν ἔοικεν αὐτοῖς λήθη τότε παρεῖναι τῆς νῦν λεγομένης φθορᾶς) (682b-c). Beyond being a mere statement of a kind of folly (that whoever built the city must have been somehow defective) this statement by the Athenian actually posits the forgetting of the past as a probable requirement for the development of a new city, which no one who remembers the earlier flood is like to have founded.

Another instance of this dynamic, and one that could be seen as more positive, is apparent in Nicole Loraux's treatment of forgetting in *La cité divisée,* in which she explores dynamics of strife and reconciliation in the Greek city-state. In the opening chapter, Loraux describes the ways in which forgetting served at the end of the fifth century to reconstitute the identity of Athens and the Athenians. Beginning with an exploration of the Athenian amnesty of 403, which ended the period of *stasis* that had begun the year before,[301] she explores the importance of not remembering (both forgiving and forgetting, *amnēstia* and *amnēsia*) in the reestablishment and maintenance of civil order.[302] Loraux is thereby proposing that the Athenians imaginary fre-

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300. For a sweeping and at times impressionistic survey of forgetting in classical literature, see Weinrich (1997) pp. 21-36; the rest of the book traces the theme forward into contemporary literature. More recent theoretical approaches to memory and forgetting include Vivian (2010) and Fenster and Yacobi (2010).

301. See Andocides *On the Mysteries* 81-9, and Carawan (2002).

302. Loraux (1997) pp. 11-40. The chapter begins with Plutarch's mention of the altar dedicated to Lethe in the Erechtheion at *Table Talk* 741a-b, where the quarrel between Poseidon and Athena over Athens is ended; Poseidon is declared "more statesmanlike" (πολιτικώτερος) in his defeat. See also *De E apud Delphos* 394a, where the personified Lethe (along with the Muses, Memory, and Silence) is said to be attendant of Apollo.

quently imagined *lēthē* as "l'oubli fondateur,"[303] a sort of forgetting that allows for a new beginning even after strife has ended.[304] Unlike the instance of *lēthē* that brings about the death of Aegeus, however, this is an instance of forgetting that leads to the best outcome—civic reconciliation—of even such an undeniably negative event as a civil war.

Of course, *lēthē* is not always bound up in such overtly political concerns, and indeed in Plutarch's corpus it is frequently bound up in individual experience. But like Loraux's "oubli fondateur," it often reveals an intermediate or interstitial aspect, conveying something that is situated in the "in between" rather than a final point. This is particularly clear in two passages from the *Moralia*, the first of which deals with the mythological river of Lethe, while the latter contains a more abstract use of the word.[305] The former appears in the *De Latenter Vivendo*, in which Plutarch argues against the validity of the Epicurean command to "live unnoticed" (*λάθε βιώσας*). Toward the end of the work, he denies the notion that the morally blameworthy are punished after they die. At 1130e, he instead proposes that "there is in truth one punishment for those who live badly: ill-repute, obscurity, total extermination, hoisting them into the gloomy river of Lethe and plunging them into an abyss and a yawning sea and dragging along with them uselessness, inaction, and all obscurity and ill repute" (*ἀλλ' ἓν κολαστήριον ὡς ἀληθῶς τῶν κακῶς βιωσάντων, ἀδοξία καὶ ἄγνοια καὶ παντελῶς ἀφανισμός, αἴρων εἰς τὸν ἀμειδῆ ποταμὸν τῆς Λήθης καὶ καταποντίζων εἰς ἄβυσσον καὶ ἀχανὲς πέλαγος, ἀχρηστίαν καὶ ἀπραξίαν πᾶσάν τ' ἄγνοιαν καὶ ἀδοξίαν συνεφελκόμενον*).

On a broad level, this description lends the work as a whole a vague structure of ring composition, as it begins with an *ad hominem* attack on Epicurus for his own unwillingness to go unnoticed (*ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁ τοῦτ' εἰπὼν λαθεῖν ἠθέλησεν*) (1128a),[306] and it ends with a description of a hypothetical immoral figure being submerged in Lethe. If we examine it on a more detailed level, however, we can identify in the latter passage a certain logic to Plutarch's arrangement. In one way, one might regard it as one of a set of terms that convey finality for the soul, but it is, at the same time, only one boundary on the way to a final resting place rather than that resting place itself, and its placement in this description before the noun phrase *ἄβυσσον καὶ ἀχανὲς πέλαγον* frames capital-L Lethe as a midpoint in Plutarch's description of the transition from life to death.[307] The river is thus not a final stage but rather a transition on the way to that stage, a no-

303. *ibid* p. 39.

304. Building on Loraux's analysis, Ricoeur *op. cit.* pp. 587-9 describes Henry IV's Edict of Nantes as operating along similar lines, in as much as it mandates in a (permanent and fixed!) legal text that an event be forgotten.

305. See Vernière (1964), which also analyzes Plutarch's description of the underworld in *De Sera Numinis Vindicta* 564b-568a. Vernière notes that both accounts are inspired by Plato's description in *Republic* 621b-c (within the Myth of Er) of the Plain of Lethe and the River Ameles. See also Vernant (1960).

306. Roskam (2007) *ad loc.*

307. *ibid. ad loc.*

tion that is doubly conveyed in the passage, both by the spatial arrangement of the afterlife that is described and in Plutarch's ordering of words.

If, however, we look for an instance of a more abstract use of *lēthē,* apart from its role as a mythological place name, we could find a passage in which Plutarch figures it as interstitial in the *De Tranquillitate Animi*. Here, he has been describing the sources of the two opposite *pathe* of cheerfulness (*euthumia*) and discontent (*dusthumia*).[308] In particular, he links these emotional experiences to the relationship of one's mind with temporality: one can experience *euthumia* if one recalls the pleasures of the past and also manages to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of the present, while *dusthumia* arises when one is unable to set aside worries about the future in order to focus on the present. As a consequence, those who are unable to exercise their capacity for memory are led to feel discontent rather than cheerfulness. Plutarch conveys this notion by means of an analogy with a famous painting in which hesitation is personified (473c-d):

> *ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ὁ ζωγραφούμενος ἐν Ἅιδου σχοινοστρόφος ὄνῳ τινὶ παρίησιν ἐπιβοσκομένῳ καταναλίσκειν τὸ πλεκόμενον, οὕτω τῶν πολλῶν ἀναίσθητος καὶ ἀχάριστος ὑπολαμβάνουσα λήθη καὶ κατανεμομένη πρᾶξίν τε πᾶσαν ἀφανίζουσα καὶ κατόρθωμα καὶ σχολὴν ἐπίχαριν καὶ συμπεριφορὰν καὶ ἀπόλαυσιν οὐκ ἐᾷ τὸν βίον ἕνα γενέσθαι συμπλεκομένων τοῖς παροῦσι τῶν παρῳχημένων, ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἕτερον τὸν ἐχθὲς ὄντα τοῦ σήμερον καὶ τὸν αὔριον ὁμοίως οὐ τὸν αὐτὸν τῷ σήμερον διαιροῦσα πᾶν τὸ γιγνόμενον εὐθὺς εἰς τὸ ἀγένητον τῷ ἀμνημονεύτῳ καθίστησιν.*
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> But as, in the painting, the man twisting rope in Hades lets a donkey grazing nearby eat it as he weaves it, in just the same way insensible and graceless forgetting, coming in on the multitude and possessing them, causing to vanish every action, success, charming leisure, companionship and enjoyment, does not allow life to become a unity, past being interwoven with present, but separating yesterday as if different from today and tomorrow, likewise, as not the same as today, it immediately renders every event a non-event since it is not recalled.[309]

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308. For the Stoic treatment of *euthumia*, which is categorized as one of three kinds of *chara*, see Sorabji *op. cit.* pp. 47f.

309. For more on the painting of Ocnus ("Hesitation"), made by Polygnotus and housed in the Cnidian Lesche at Delphi, see Pausanias 10.29. More broadly, the story of Ocnus is explained as an allegory for useless activity. Pausanias describes Polygnotus' contributions to the Lesche in an extended account (25-31). On the role of the image in this dialogue, see Shields (1949) p. 230 and Fowler (1890) p. 147. For further speculation about the meaning of the Ocnus image, see Bachofen (1992) pp. 51-60.

Here, and even more explicitly than before, *lēthē* is presented to the reader as an intermediate element, and one which divides (*διαιροῦσα*) time periods from one another rather than constituting an endpoint. Rather than serving as a "last stop" for memory, forgetting is figured here as a divider, as a kind of blinder that can stand between past and present, or present and future, and which prevents one from leading the more rewarding life that is possible when all three are properly integrated with one another.[310]

There is, moreover, an intriguing echo of the episode at *Theseus* 22 in Plutarch's characterization of forgetting as "graceless" (*ἀχάριστος ... λήθη*). On the face of it, this description would seem to run counter to the link between *chara* and *lēthē* that is explicit in that passage, but it is also possible to see in it the notion that *lēthē* could, in another context, be bound up in experiences of *chara* and *charis*.[311] Rather than a predictable or automatic epithet for *lēthē*, then, *acharis* could be just one kind of forgetting, and one that can be contrasted with the joyous or graceful kind. Of course, as the events of *Theseus* 22 make clear, one should not to equate the latter variety with something entirely innocuous or salutary, but it is certainly not an episode lacking in *chara*. In this section of the *De Tranquillitate*, moreover, there is a phrase that is suggestive of this range of experiences that can be compared to that of *lēthē*. In his brief catalogue of experiences that can be destroyed by *lēthē*, Plutarch lists "charming leisure" (*σχολὴν ἐπίχαριν*): on the face of it, some sort of pause from labor that, like the crane dance, generates an experience of joy in those who participate in it.[312] Where "graceless forgetting" is simply a retreat from awareness, this experience of "charming leisure" is one of the elements of a richer existence that allows life to maintain its unity in the face of the passing of time. If we are to regard these two descriptions as opposites on a continuum, then the *lēthē* that overcomes Theseus upon his return to Athens could be placed somewhere in between them. Although it comes from *chara*, it is, at the same time, a moment whose consequences are more severe than in any way "leisurely."

At any rate, this treatment of forgetting helps set the stage for the following section of the *De Tranquillitate Animi,* where Plutarch moves his focus onto the somewhat broader question of how the identity of an individual persists even as time passes (473d-e):

> *οἱ μὲν γὰρ ἐν ταῖς σχολαῖς τὰς αὐξήσεις ἀναιροῦντες, ὡς τῆς οὐσίας ἐνδελεχῶς ῥεούσης, λόγῳ ποιοῦσιν ἡμῶν ἕκαστον ἄλλον ἑαυτοῦ καὶ ἄλλον, οἱ δὲ τῇ μνήμῃ τὰ πρότερον μὴ στέγοντες μηδ' ἀναλαμβάνοντες ἀλλ' ὑπεκρεῖν ἐῶντες ἔργῳ ποιοῦσιν ἑαυτοὺς καθ' ἡμέραν ἀποδεεῖς καὶ κενοὺς καὶ τῆς αὔριον ἐκκρεμαμένους, ὡς τῶν πέρυσι καὶ πρώην καὶ χθὲς οὐ πρὸς αὐτοὺς ὄντων οὐδ' ὅλως αὐτοῖς γενομένων.*

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310. Cf. Aristotle in *Poetics* 1451a on unity of plot and its disruption.

311. For an explanation of the relationship between *chara* and *charis*, see Chantraine (1968) *s.v. χάρις*.

312. On the varying meanings of *scholē* in Greek thought, see in particular Aristotle *E.N.* 1177b as well as Anastasiadis (2004) and Balme (1984).

> For those in the schools, doing away with growth, on the grounds that being is constantly fluctuating, in theory make each of us one person different from oneself and another, and those who do not protect or recall past events by memory but rather allow them to flow out, make themselves deficient and empty every day and clinging to tomorrow, as if the happenings of last year and the day before yesterday and yesterday were not related to them and did not happen at all to them.

Seen from this perspective, *lēthē* is thus not simply the extinguishing of a specific memory, but rather a kind of rupture or division that threatens more broadly the sense of identity that arises from integrating past, present, and future. Without memory, the distinctions between these periods dissolve the unity of an individual's experience. Plutarch thus shifts from a description of *lēthē* as a means of temporal division to the question of how identity (in this case the identity of individual consciousness) persists over the passing of time.

It is striking, if we return to the *Theseus*, that one can make out much the same philosophical puzzle about the persistence of identity in the question of the survival of Theseus' ship, to which Plutarch returns after detailing other elements of Theseus' homecoming (23.1):

> *τὸ δὲ πλοῖον ἐν ᾧ μετὰ τῶν ἠιθέων ἔπλευσε καὶ πάλιν ἐσώθη, τὴν τριακόντορον, ἄχρι τῶν Δημητρίου τοῦ Φαληρέως χρόνων διεφύλαττον οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι, τὰ μὲν παλαιὰ τῶν ξύλων ὑφαιροῦντες, ἄλλα δ' ἐμβάλλοντες ἰσχυρὰ καὶ συμπηγνύντες οὕτως, ὥστε καὶ τοῖς φιλοσόφοις εἰς τὸν αὐξόμενον λόγον ἀμφιδοξούμενον παράδειγμα τὸ πλοῖον εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὡς τὸ αὐτό, τῶν δ' ὡς οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ διαμένοι λεγόντων.*

> But as for the ship in which he sailed with the youth and returned home safe, the one with thirty oars, the Athenians preserved it up until the days of Demetrius of Phaleron,[313] taking out the old pieces of wood and inserting other strong ones and reinforcing others, so that the ship serves philosophers as an example of the debated Augmentation Argument, some saying it is the same ship, others that it is not.[314]

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313. For more on Demetrius, who governed Athens toward the end of the fourth century until the conquest of Demetrius Poliorcetes, see Plutarch's *Demetrius* 8-10 and *Quomodo Adulator* 69c-e. Diogenes Laertius (5.75-85) gives some biographical background and describes his contribution to Peripatetic philosophy.

314. For more on the Augmentation Argument, see Dillon *op. cit.* p. 411f. A twentieth-century debate about the Ship of Theseus problem seems to have raged in the pages of *Analysis*: see Garrett (1985), Noonan (1985), Scaltsas (1980), Smart (1973) and (1972). Plutarch also references the Augumentation Argument at *De Communibus Notitiis* 1083a and *De Sera Numinis Vindicta* 559b. On the ship, see *A&M ad loc.*; this is, of course, the same vessel, *mutatis*

On the broadest level, the issue with which Plutarch engages in the *De Tranquillitate Animi* is also presented here, but with the ship of Theseus serving as the object whose identity is preserved (or not preserved) amid change, rather than the mental identity of an individual.

It is obvious, then, that memory cannot play the same role here as it plays in that passage, since the ship is inanimate and naturally lacks consciousness of its transformations over time. Still, it does enter into this account in two ways. The first is in the way the text proceeds sequentially from element to element. Just as in the *De Tranquillitate Animi,* a discussion of forgetting—in this case, Theseus' lapse of memory—is followed by an example of the Augmentation Argument: human consciousness in the first case, the ship in the second case. As a consequence of this paralleism, it is possible to treat the ship of Theseus as a composite symbol both of forgetting (in the form of its unchanged sail) and of continuity (in the form of the vessel itself). But the latter element, continuity, is not divorced from memory simply because the ship itself is not a conscious entity. After all, the ship of Theseus would not have survived until the Hellenistic period if the Athenians had not remembered the identity of the ship and, as a consequence of this cultural tradition, remembered to replace its decaying pieces with new ones.[315]

The Ship and Communal Memory

So whereas the integrated consciousness that Plutarch describes in *De Tranquillitate Animi* relies on individual memory for its persistence, the ship of Theseus relies on collective memory to do so. Moreover, where the sail of the ship represents the possibility of forgetting—on the part of a very small group—to bring about cultural change, the survival of the ship as a whole suggests how group memory helps, in the form of tradition, to preserve a physical object. To put this more radically, one could regard the memory of the collective as not only contributing to the preservation of the ship of Theseus but indeed, on a certain level, as the essence of this preservation. It is, after all, the shared belief that the patchwork object is the same as that in which Theseus sailed that allows for its survival. If, on the other hand, the Athenians as a community had come to believe that it was "not the same" (*οὐ τὸ αὐτὸ*) as the original, the cultural practice would have had no meaning (or indeed would not have continued). As a consequence of this loss of belief, then, the object before them would have ceased to be the ship of Theseus, in as much as it would by

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mutandis, that the Athenians are sending to Delos at *Crito* 43c-44b and at the beginning of the *Phaedo*, and upon whose return the death of Socrates must wait.

315. See also Bassi (2005) on how "objects (and ruins) in narrative .... constitute a category for conceptualizing the meaningfulness of time" (p. 26); Bassi discusses the Stone of Zeus in *Theogony* 498-500, various "leftover objects" in the *Frogs* of Aristophanes, and the ruins of Mycenae, Sparta and Athens in Thucydides (1.10.1-3). We might see the relevant question here—of identity *over* time—as an extension of Bassi's model of "temporal deferral."

some point have contained no physical material that was part of the original ship. On a practical level, then, the question is not so much about the underlying truth of the ship's identity as it is about the ability of a community to agree on its identity for their own cultural purposes. Just as in the case of the Pythia, where an overarching perspective on its identity separate from its delivering oracles in verse is key to its importance in the Roman period, the Athenian "strategy" for the survival of the ship is one that demands the communal acceptance of the decay and loss of its original planks.

Indeed, the role that community plays here is not entirely surprising. Although memory might more typically be viewed (as in the *De Tranquillitate Animi*) as a mental faculty employed by an individual, it is nonetheless bound up, more often than not, with the needs of groups and with the answering of interpersonal questions. As the sociologist Maurice Halbwachs noted in describing the concept of collective memory, "... it is in society that people normally acquire their memories. It is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories. If we enumerate the number of recollections during one day that we have evoked upon the occasion of our direct and indirect relations with other people, we will see that, most frequently, we appeal to our memory only in order to answer questions which others have asked us, or that we suppose they could have asked us."[316] Both the sail (in mythological time) and the rest of the ship (if we move forward into historical time) function along just these lines. First, the moment in which Theseus and the pilot forget their obligation is one in which they failed to answer the question about their survival in a correct manner, creating a disconnect between them and the asker (Aegeus). Second, one could tie the preservation, or at least imagined preservation, of the ship to the need to answer etiological questions, not unlike Plutarch's own "questions" to be found in his *Moralia*, that someone might pose about the ship: "What is this old ship?" "What did it once do?" "Why does it have its planks replaced?" and so on. Without such questions and their answers, the object that existed in historical Athens would have no relationship to the narrative. If we treat it as more than an abstract debate, then, the Augumentation Argument can be seen to lie at the center of notions of cultural memory with which Plutarch is engaged.

After all, the very identity of the city-state is contingent on a resolution to the same set of philosophical problems. As Aristotle notes in the *Politics*, the natural replacement over time of the population of a city leads, on a larger scale, to the same set of questions about continuity in the face of change (1276a34-41):[317]

> *ἀλλὰ τῶν αὐτῶν κατοικούντων τὸν αὐτὸν τόπον, πότερον ἕως ἂν ᾖ τὸ γένος ταὐτὸ τῶν κατοικούντων, τὴν αὐτὴν εἶναι φατέον πόλιν, καίπερ αἰεὶ τῶν μὲν φθειρομένων τῶν δὲ*

316. Halbwachs (1992) p. 38.

317. See Simpson (1998) *ad loc.* and compare the famous statement by Heraclitus on the identity of rivers (DK 22B12 and 22B91, *Cratylus* 402A and *Metaphyics* 1010a12), cited in Saxonhouse (1992) p. 35f.

> *γινομένων, ὥσπερ καὶ ποταμοὺς εἰώθαμεν λέγειν τοὺς αὐτοὺς καὶ κρήνας τὰς αὐτάς, καίπερ αἰεὶ τοῦ μὲν ἐπιγινομένου νάματος τοῦ δ᾽ ὑπεξιόντος, ἢ τοὺς μὲν ἀνθρώπους φατέον εἶναι τοὺς αὐτοὺς διὰ τὴν τοιαύτην αἰτίαν, τὴν δὲ πόλιν ἑτέραν;*
>
> But when the same people inhabit the same same place, should one say that it is the same city as long as the race of inhabitants is the same, even though some are always dying and others are being born, just as we customarily say that rivers and springs are the same, even though one stream is always entering and another heading out? Or should one say that the people are the same for such a reason, but the city is different?

So like the ship of Theseus, the city is continually having its constituent elements replaced but remains, at least in conventional language, the same entity that it had been.[318] Aristotle proceeds, moreover, to suggest that the identity of the city is connected to its form of government, basing this assessment on no other analogy than that of a chorus (1276b1-11):

> *εἴπερ γάρ ἐστι κοινωνία τις ἡ πόλις, ἔστι δὲ κοινωνία πολιτῶν πολιτείας, γινομένης ἑτέρας τῷ εἴδει καὶ διαφερούσης τῆς πολιτείας ἀναγκαῖον εἶναι δόξειεν ἂν καὶ τὴν πόλιν εἶναι μὴ τὴν αὐτήν, ὥσπερ γε καὶ χορὸν ὁτὲ μὲν κωμικὸν ὁτὲ δὲ τραγικὸν ἕτερον εἶναί φαμεν, τῶν αὐτῶν πολλάκις ἀνθρώπων ὄντων ... εἰ δὴ τοῦτον ἔχει τὸν τρόπον, φανερὸν ὅτι μάλιστα λεκτέον τὴν αὐτὴν πόλιν εἰς τὴν πολιτείαν βλέποντας.*
>
> For in as much as the city is a kind of partnership, it is a partnership of citizens in a structure of government, so when the polity becomes other in form and is different, it would seem necessary to say that the city is not the same, just as with a chorus, when it is comic and when it is tragic we say that it is different, even though there are often the same people ... If indeed this is the case, it is clear that one must call a city the same mostly with regards to its structure of government.

In looking at this passage, a useful point of continuity emerges with the patterns of imagery that I have been tracing through the *Life of Theseus*: this is the way in which the identity of the chorus serves as an analogy for the identity of the city. In both cases, the identity of the larger group is not contingent on the identity of the members of the group; otherwise, a city would change every time one of its citizens is born or dies, while a comic and a tragic chorus made up of the same members would be identical. But the analogy also brings to mind the set of links with which I began this chapter: between *choros*, *chara*, and *lēthē*.[319] There, as I have argued, the dance

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318. Contrast Aristotle's problem with Theognis 1.53f: "Cyrnus, the city is still the city, but the people are different" (Κύρνε, *πόλις μὲν ἔθ' ἥδε πόλις, λαοὶ δὲ δὴ ἄλλοι*). In this case, the change is not (at least not necessarily) in the identity of the citizens, but rather in their character.

that Theseus institutes sets off a chain of events that leads to Theseus' kingship and his reorganization of Athens. *Choreia* and *politeia* are thus joined in both cases, albeit by a radically different kind of structure: in Plutarch's *Theseus*, the relationship is a causal one (the creation of a new dance and the re-creation of Attica), while in the *Politics* it is an analogical one. At any rate, the ease with which Aristotle shifts from city to chorus suggests a tight connection between the two communal entities,[320] and one that can only help to reinforce the sense that the *choreia* of the crane dance helps set the stage, in Plutarch's account, for the political changes that occur in Theseus' kingship.

The Ship and Making Sense of a Miscellany: Theseus 21-25

To follow a similar line of reasoning, the way in which the city provokes the same line of philosophical questions as the ship (in the *Theseus*) and individual consciousness (in *De Tranquillitate Animi*) suggests that the presence of one such image might hint at other entities for which the same questions about change over time are operable. Where Aristotle employs two analogies—rivers and chorus—in describing the continuity of the city, I am proposing that the presence of two such entities next to one another in the *Theseus* serves to reinforce the broader thematic question of how continuity is possible amid and despite change over time. Admittedly, the situation in the *Theseus* is not one that squares entirely with Aristotle's notion of the continuity of a city. As I will note, Theseus does in fact change the political structure of Athens during his kingship (in 24), and so Aristotle's model would suggest that Athens becomes a different city as a consequence of Theseus' actions as king. If one sets aside the philosophical specifics, however, it is possible to observe in Plutarch's account of the ship of Theseus a more general associative principle at work: the account of the ship comes before Plutarch's description of Theseus' most significant reforms in Athens, with both elements operating together to hint at the Augmentation Argument. Ship and city are thus readily identifiable with one another, although this association is fairly loose and without many of the rhetorical implications (ship at sea, city in danger, leader as pilot) that one would expect from a typical instance of the ship of state commonplace.[321]

Still, the placement of the treatment of the ship of Theseus close to the account of Theseus' reforms is thus more than a coincidence stemming from the facts of the narrative: it also helps suggest that the ship it itself an emblem of an ever-changing city, in as much as its continuity over time operates on the same principle as the continuity of the city. If, moreover, we recall

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319. For a metaphorical connection between dance and memory, compare Plutarch's rough contemporary Quintilian, who suggests that one imagine the *loci* at the basis of a memory system as linked like dancers "singula conexa quodam choro" (11.2).

320. See also Peponi *op. cit.* p. 232 on "the *choreia* of the polis, the whole city ... described as infinitely chanting to (and enchanting) the entire city" in Plato's *Laws,* 736e.

321. Cf. *Republic* 488e-489d and Alcaeus 6 and 326 *L.P.*

the effects of the sail atop the ship, the system of images is enriched still further. Taken as a whole, the ship of Theseus works as a paradoxical image of both memory and its failure: at one point in the narrative, an instance of *lēthē* sets off a sequential chain of changes to the polis of Athens, beginning with the suicide of its king, but this moment is also preserved for a period of time, at least metonymically, by the Athenian practice of replacing decaying parts of the ship. This is a ship that must thus represent both *lēthē* and memory, both rupture and continuity.

As I have argued above, *lēthē* need not be understand as simply the absence of memory. In this case, I would argue, it functions as a moment of transition to be captured within a broader framework in which an action is recalled. This is especially appropriate to the tradition about the ship: even when it ends, in the Hellenistic period, antiquarians like Plutarch at least allow for its memory to continue. Once itself a means of remembering myth, the tradition is in time only recounted rather than performed. With the loss of the "original" object, then, the textual account becomes a replacement object, describing in words what once was maintained as a physical object and perhaps, in some way, filling the void left by the destruction of the original object. Of course, no textual description could entirely replace "the real thing," but it nonetheless helps to perpetuate what would not simply have disappeared but would also have been forgotten.

In recounting the preservation of the ship, Plutarch in a sense positions himself as a replacement of or complement to the tradition that is no longer actively practiced, in some way "maintaining" the fully decayed ship by replacing it with his own account here. No less than in the case of Herodotus, who claims in his preface that he writes so that the past would not grow "faded" (ἐξίτηλα) or "without glory" (ἀκλέα), one would expect him in his authorial capacity as antiquarian to position himself as a supporter of memory and preservation. At the same time, he has invested his attention in a narrative that engages with themes of forgetting as well as upheaval: a tradition must, after all, find its start in the loss or rupture of a prior state of affairs. As he chronicles the period between Theseus' homecoming and his subsequent reforms, Plutarch in his role as antiquarian sets out to make a fixed account of a series of disruptions and changes in circumstance.

Admittedly, this is a "feature" to be found in a great deal of narrative writing, as any literary narrative will necessarily be an attempt at fixing in writing a set of changes in the narrated world of a text. But this set of oppositions is reinforced, I would argue, in the structure that one may discern in the surrounding passages of the *Life of Theseus*. Indeed, Plutarch's account here follows much the same logic as the piecewise replacement of the ship, with one part filling in for another that is left behind. The reforms that Theseus institutes in Athens follow an undeniable logic of recombination, with themes and imagery that pop up intermittently in the accounts. There is of course no single master trope that occurs in each of these episodes, but the reappearance of a fixed number of elements is easy to recognize as one reads through the individual episodes. Accordingly, I will proceed through the relevant passages and note where the relevant elements appear and then reappear.

Beginning, as above, with the account of Theseus on Delos (21), we can recognize the first of these recurring elements: the labyrinth (as represented in the crane dance), crafting (the altar

fashioned out of left horns), and games (the establishment of the Delian games). In the subsequent description of the mishap with the sails and the death of Aegeus (22.1-4) we can make out a few other recurring elements: homecoming, sailing, and memory. Just after that, in the rest of the description of Theseus' return from Crete, Plutarch brings in the motif of mixture,[322] as the survivors of the trip return to Athens from the coast on the seventh of Pyanopsion (22.4) and prepare a communal meal of pulse (22.5-6):

> *ἡ μὲν οὖν ἕψησις τῶν ὀσπρίων λέγεται γίνεσθαι διὰ τὸ σωθέντας αὐτοὺς εἰς ταὐτὸ συμμεῖξαι τὰ περιόντα τῶν σιτίων, καὶ μίαν χύτραν κοινὴν ἑψήσαντας συνεστιαθῆναι καὶ συγκαταφαγεῖν ἀλλήλοις.*
>
> The boiling of pulses is said to have happened because the survivors themselves mixed together the grains that were left over and, heating a single common pot, feasted and dined together with one another.[323]

After the account of the survival of the ship of Theseus (23.1), in which sailing, crafting, and memory all reappear, the motif of mixture appears again, but this time within Plutarch's description of the political reorganization of Attica (24.1):

> *μετὰ δὲ τὴν Αἰγέως τελευτὴν μέγα καὶ θαυμαστὸν ἔργον εἰς νοῦν βαλόμενος συνῴκισε τοὺς τὴν Ἀττικὴν κατοικοῦντας εἰς ἓν ἄστυ, καὶ μιᾶς πόλεως ἕνα δῆμον ἀπέφηνε, τέως σποράδας ὄντας καὶ δυσανακλήτους πρὸς τὸ κοινὸν πάντων συμφέρον, ἔστι δ' ὅτε καὶ διαφερομένους ἀλλήλοις καὶ πολεμοῦντας.*
>
> But after the death of Aegeus, having set his mind upon a great and wonderful task, he settled together the inhabitants of Attica into a single town, and he proclaimed them a single people of a single city-state, although until then they had been scattered and hard to summon to the common benefit of all, at times even disputing and making war with one another.

Note how the description of the *synoikismos*[324] picks up and intensifies the language of the pulse boiling episode: the verbal prefix *sun-*, the numeral *heis*, and the adjective *koinos* appear in both passages, so that the communal meal and Theseus' reorganization of Attica serve to mirror one another: the casting of various grain into a single pot thus prefigures the settling of the scattered

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322. On mixture in the preface to the *Theseus-Romulus*, see p. 54ff in chapter 2.
323. On the mixture of pulses (the *panspermia*), see *A&M ad loc* and Calame *op. cit.* pp. 292-310.
324. See my discussion in p. 35f in chapter 1.

inhabitants into a single *astu*.[325]

Just after, when Theseus considers whether he should set aside his royal power and rearrange the political structure of the city (*διεκόσμει τὴν πολιτείαν*), he receives a favorable response from the oracle at Delphi (24.5):[326]

> *Αἰγείδη Θησεῦ, Πιτθηίδος ἔκγονε κούρης,*
> *πολλαῖς τοι πολίεσσι πατὴρ ἐμὸς ἐγκατέθηκε*
> *τέρματα καὶ κλωστῆρας ἐν ὑμετέρῳ πτολιέθρῳ.*
> *ἀλλὰ σὺ μή τι λίην πεπονημένος ἔνδοθι θυμὸν*
> *βουλεύειν· ἀσκὸς γὰρ ἐν οἴδματι ποντοπορεύσεις.*
>
> Theseus, son of Aegeus, born of Pittheus' daughter,
> upon many cities my father set down
> limits and threads in your citadel.
> But don't you be too distressed, take counsel upon the heart
> within you: for as a wineskin you will travel on the swell of the sea.

Judging from the context of the oracle, we might expect the *klōsteres* here to have the sense of "fates,"[327] but the literal meaning of "spindles" recalls the thread (*λίνον*) that Theseus receives from Ariadne at 19.1, by which he is able to navigate the labyrinth.[328] By extension, we could conceive of the *termata* that are also mentioned as recalling its entrance, passing through which Theseus (and the thread he carries with him) begins and ends the exploits that occur inside it. These resulting hints of the labyrinth within the oracle, although they are certainly rather indirect ones, would also make Athens into a counterpart or contrasting setting to the labyrinth on Crete, with Theseus having recently brought an end to the figures who occupy the central role in both of these places: the Minotaur intentionally and his father by accident.[329]

A few lines down, and with a much less oblique resonance, the oracle's description of Theseus as a wineskin floating on the sea picks up the sailing motif. Indeed, it makes his rule a

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325. Contrast with 25.1, where Theseus hopes that Athenian democracy will not be *μεμιγμένη*. See Walker (1995b) pp. 143ff on the notion that Theseus originated Athenian democracy.

326. See Calame *op. cit.* p. 259f and *A&M ad loc.* The oracle that Plutarch cites is likely from the fifth century.

327. *LSJ s.v. κλωστήρ*.

328. See, for instance, the *κλωστῆρα ... λίνου* of *Choephori* 507.

329. For another moment of city-as-labyrinth, see *Aeneid* 5.580-603, where Ascanius' building of the walls of Alba Longa is compared, by an appropriately labyrinthine set of comparisons, to the Cretan labyrinth (5.590). For the well-attested metaphorical connections between city and labyrinth, see Doob (1990), especially 115-7.

kind of continuation of his nautical journey home, with the metaphorical wineskin picking up where the literal ship itself leaves off. And while the adverb *endothi* conveys, on the surface, the location of Theseus' *thumos*, if we instead read another basic meaning of the word ("at home"),[330] we would also be able to make out a paradoxical combination of journey and non-journey for Theseus, who would accordingly be described as at once at home (in Athens) and floating as a wineskin at sea.[331] Outside of this point of interpretation, however, and just as in the case of the above link between the communal meal and the *synoikismos*, the images pick up again elements of Theseus' journey and incorporate them, in the period after the death of Aegeus, into descriptions of the changing political and cultural state of affairs in Athens and in Attica.

The final instance of recapitulation with which I will engage is the passage at 25.7. At this point Theseus, after re-establishing the Isthmian Games, strikes a deal with the Corinthians concerning seating for the Athenians who travel to them:[332]

> ἔταξεν οὖν καὶ διωρίσατο πρὸς τοὺς Κορινθίους, Ἀθηναίων τοῖς ἀφικνουμένοις ἐπὶ τὰ Ἴσθμια παρέχειν προεδρίαν, ὅσον ἂν τόπον ἐπίσχῃ καταπετασθὲν τὸ τῆς θεωρίδος νεὼς ἱστίον, ὡς Ἑλλάνικος καὶ Ἄνδρων ὁ Ἁλικαρνασσεὺς ἱστορήκασιν.
>
> He ordained and *determined* with the Corinthians that they would provide Athenians visiting the Isthmian Games the front seats, as much space as the sail of the sacred ship extends when spread out, as Hellanicus and Andron of Halicarnassus have recorded.

Of course, these Games are, like the Delia and unlike the political reforms for which Theseus is responsible, not to be held in Attica. Indeed, Plutarch's phrasing here helps hint at how the games are connected, thematically, to Theseus' conceptual reorganization of Attica: before Theseus "demarcated" (διωρίσατο) this agreement with the Corinthians, he inscribes a "demarcating epigram" (τὸ διορίζον ἐπίγραμμα) on a stele set up on the Isthmus of Corinth, whose position establishes the boundary between Ionia (including Attica) and the Peloponnese (25.4).[333] Ac-

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330. For ἔνδοθι θυμὸν as "the heart inside," see Achilles' threat to Agamemnon in *Iliad* 1.243. Contrast the more general spatial meaning in Homer at 22.220.

331. It seems likely that Plutarch would have recognized the ambiguity in the phrasing, as he grapples with that very issue throughout the *De Pythiae Oraculis* as well as at *De E apud Delphos* 386e-f, where he suggests that Apollo offers χρησμοὺς ἀμφιβόλους as a spur to engage in logical reasoning. See also Flacelière (1943). Compare my argument here to p. 43ff in chapter 1, where I contrast land and (hypothetical) sea journeys on the part of Theseus.

332. See also p. 97 in chapter 3 about the imitative dimension of the Isthmian Games.

333. The inscriptions are also recorded by Strabo in *Geography* 9.1.6. For the more abstract use of διορίζειν, see *LSJ s.v.*. There is only one other comparable use in Plutarch, which appears in *Cato Minor* 65.4: Octavius demands that Cato "come to terms with him" (διορίσασθαι ... πρὸς

cordingly, Plutarch's use of the verb *diorizō* in both of these cases suggests that he conceives of both activities as interrelated in a way other than geography and their position within the Theseus narrative. After all, both the border stele and the agreement constitute instances of spatial reorganization between non-Athenian and Athenian space, albeit on different scales and with different kinds of bounds (inside/outside vs. northeast/southwest), both performed by Theseus partly or entirely outside of his domain of Attica. The journey to the Isthmus is, we discover, a journey of demarcation.

Returning to the question of interconnections with other episodes, we can easily see how the erection of the border stele is an instance of crafting, while the procedure for determining seating for the visiting Athenians obviously picks back up the motifs of games and sailing. To reinforce the link with respect to the latter motif, I would suggest that the role played here by the sail of the sacred ship is, in a certain way, parallel to the role of the sail in the ship of Theseus.[334] In both of those cases, the sail serves a function distinct from or in additional to its typical function of propelling a vessel at sea: where the earlier pair of sails was supposed to signal the death or survival of the youths sent to Crete, this one provides for the visiting Athenians a space from which to view the games.[335]

What, then, can we make of this collection of episodes if we hope to conceived of it as a unified entity? Certainly, there is no single motif that links each of them, nor is there any episode that one might credit Theseus with inventing. But the manner in which the motifs recur in recombination brings to mind, foremost, the shifting continuity of the ship of Theseus. Where, for instance, Theseus' interactions with the brigands follow a more or less predictable formula,[336] these incidents are heterogeneous and linked by a shifting set of motifs: the labyrinth, crafting, games, homecoming, sailing, memory, and mixture. Just as there is no piece of the original ship of Theseus that survives into its final days in the Hellenistic period, there is no single motif that appears in all of these accounts, but the more general principle of recombination provides a striking degree of continuity. The text itself thus mirrors the kind of change embodied both by the purported preservation of the ship of Theseus and by the reforms that the culture hero enacts upon his arrival in Attica.

What Plutarch assembles is not a collection of novel episodes, of course, but the collection itself operates in a way that mirrors what I have proposed as a central preoccupation for

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αὐτὸν) about the rule of the province of Africa.

334. On the question of whether the ship of Theseus served as a *theoris*, see Wallinga (1993) p. 18f.

335. See Calame *op. cit.* p. 260f on Theseus' "extensions territoriales." We might regard the establishment of the *prohedria* here as a special kind of "expansion" of the boundaries of Attica. Cf. *Romulus* 5.4-5, where Plutarch explains the name Velabrum as perhaps related to the use of sails to cover the street.

336. See p. 96ff in chapter 3.

Plutarch in the *Theseus-Romulus* and elsewhere: the way in which identity persists over time. Indeed, the underlying problem of understanding apparent digressions and miscellanies, which I have touched on at earlier points,[337] functions as the textual analogue of this issue. Certainly, we could regard the chronological order within the Theseus story as providing enough continuity to bring these episodes together, but the sense of repetition and variation in the episodes lends a further sense of coherency to what might otherwise seem to be a "laundry list" in Plutarch's discourse. In the *Life of Alcibiades*, for instance, a large portion of the early parts (2-12) is taken up by a sequence of stories about the subject's early exploits up to the time of his entry into public life (schooling, treatment of lovers, and so on), all intending to demonstrate his ambitious and impulsive character (*τὸ δ' ἦθος αὐτοῦ*) (2). In this segment of the *Theseus*, however, no such overriding motivation is in evidence. Certain of the incidents are perhaps somewhat reflective of an ambitious streak in Theseus' character: for instance, the "great and wondrous work" (*μέγα καὶ θαυμαστὸν ἔργον*) at 24.1. The majority are clearly etiological, however, reflecting the desire to explain not a single characteristic but rather a variety of political and cultural elements of Athens and Attica. In this regard, these passages resemble Plutarch's *Lycurgus*, which is even more than the *Theseus* a description of a city-state (Sparta) rather than of the subject who lends the *Life* its name.

Accordingly, considering Plutarch's tendency to interest himself in a range of antiquarian topics, the continuity or coherency of these stretches in the text are likely to arise largely from the cluster of motifs that I have laid out here, none of them predominant throughout but each of them working to link an episode with certain others in this part of the *Theseus*. Like the images of city, river, and chorus in Aristotle's *Politics*, as well as that of the conscious mind in the *De Tranquillitate Animi,* the text here finds coherence in the principle of continuity amid change. The discourse of Theseus' exploits and innovations upon his return from Crete thus "enacts," in a sense, this very principle. By the same token, the description of the ship's preservation is the closest that this passage of the text has to a governing image, describing a process of flux and replacement that mirrors Plutarch's own aims as an antiquarian: to preserve in writing the past of the culture (or cultures) in which he is embedded.

Lēthē in the Life of Romulus

Now I will turn, before concluding this chapter, to the *Life of Romulus*. As I noted in the introduction, while the kernel of my argument is situated in *Theseus* 22, the *Romulus* should (and I will argue, does) engage with the theme of forgetting as well. As I suggested there, the undeniable fact of Roman dominance in the early centuries CE makes for an especially notable gap in scale between the narrative material—the humble beginnings of Rome—and the context of Plutarch's own day. If we approach the related issues of forgetting and transformation with this

337. See p. 7 and p. 84f especially.

gap in mind, we can see, first, how *lēthē* enters the text in a way largely parallel to its appearances in the *Theseus* and, second, how these passages connect to the broader questions about cultural continuity in the biographer's own cultural milieu.

Since my exploration of *lēthē* in the *Life of Theseus* took the sail of the ship of Theseus as its starting point, it seems fitting that we can identify an instance where Plutarch uses a word built off the root—in this case, the aorist of the uncompounded verb, *elathe*—in reference to the arrival of the arrival of another vessel. This is the *skaphē* (the trough or cradle) in which the infant Romulus and Remus are placed by the servant Faustulus to keep them from drowning in the Tiber (3.5). When Remus is captured by Numitor many years later, he explains how he and Romulus survived and tells Numitor that this trough "exists and survives" (*ἔστι ... καὶ σῴζεται*) and that its inscriptions could serve as "useless tokens for our parents when we are gone" (*ἀνωφελῆ γνωρίσματα τοῖς τοκεῦσιν ἡμῶν ἀπολομένων*) (7.8). Plutarch's diction here produces a few notable verbal echoes of his account of Theseus' ship, whose sail was supposed to be a token *(gnorimon)* of Theseus' own survival (*sōteria*) for his father (22). As for the verb that parallels the *ἐκλαθέσθαι in this passage*, it appears shortly after, when Faustulus tries to brings the trough to Numitor and fails to elude his guards on his way in (8.2-3):[338]

> *ὑποψίαν οὖν τοῖς περὶ τὰς πύλας φρουροῖς τοῦ βασιλέως παρέχων, καὶ ὑφορώμενος ὑπ' αὐτῶν καὶ ταραττόμενος πρὸς τὰς ἀνακρίσεις, οὐκ ἔλαθε τὴν σκάφην τῷ χλαμυδίῳ περικαλύπτων. ἦν δέ τις ἐν αὐτοῖς ἀπὸ τύχης τῶν τὰ παιδάρια ῥῖψαι λαβόντων καὶ γεγονότων περὶ τὴν ἔκθεσιν. οὗτος ἰδὼν τὴν σκάφην τότε καὶ γνωρίσας τῇ κατασκευῇ καὶ τοῖς γράμμασιν, ἔτυχεν ὑπονοίᾳ τοῦ ὄντος καὶ οὐ παρημέλησεν, ἀλλὰ φράσας τὸ πρᾶγμα τῷ βασιλεῖ κατέστησεν εἰς ἔλεγχον.*
>
> So arousing suspicion on the part of the king's guards at the gates and being viewed as suspect by them and disturbed by their inquiries, he did not go unnoticed in covering the trough with his cloak. And among them there was, by chance, one of those who had taken the young children to cast them in the river and were involved in the exposure. That one, having seen the trough then and having recognized it by its construction and inscription, arrived at the truth by his hypothesis and did not sit idly by, but instead he explained the matter to the king and had Faustulus brought in for cross-examination.

Admittedly, *elathe* here conveys to a greater degree the sense of evasion rather than forgetting, as Faustulus and his trough are physical realities, unlike the command that "slips the minds" of Theseus and his pilot. Memory does, however, play a significant role here: the servant recognizes the trough out of a memory of having been present at the initial attempt to expose Romulus and Re-

338. See *A&M ad loc.* for the origins of this story in Sophocles' *Tyro* and a similar account in Dionysius, *Antiquitates Romanae* 1.82.3-5.

mus.[339] Note, moreover, that Numitor had commanded the servants to "throw" (*ῥῖψαι*) the infants into the river, which would have made their deaths in a small way parallel to that of Aegeus, who does indeed throw himself from the cliff.

If we try to elaborate upon the comparability of these stories, however, we find a frustrating mixture. There is, on the one hand, a striking number of narrative commonalities (the biographical subjects in a vessel, their parent or parents, a token, a king) and a few similarities in verbal actions (*ἐκλαθέσθαι*, *ῥῖψαι*). On the other hand, there is a string of mismatches in how these elements align within the respective narratives: Numitor is not the parent of Romulus and Remus, he does not kill himself, and he is not the one who recognizes the tokens or who acts according to the recognition, and so on. Like a pair of sentences in which the same lexemes have been placed in radically different syntactic positions, the stories of the ship and the trough contain many of the same narrative elements but arrange them into radically different structures. So where I described above the way in which a handful of recurring elements are woven in and out of the description of Theseus' kingship, the situation here is both clearer and more binary, with a larger number of shared elements between the two accounts and a remarkable lack of correspondence in the role that the elements play. Here, as well, Plutarch is not the originator of the narratives themselves, but his choices about diction in both accounts should make it abundantly clear that the two stories are meant to be read alongside one another.

The question that follows, of course, is what we gain from observing this odd parallelism between the stories, something we might call a discordant correspondence. What I would suggest is that Plutarch is positioning both of these moments as pivotal ones for the formation of Athenian/Attic and Roman identity. For all the differences in the stories, both vessels carry the biographical subjects along, both have the power to make their passengers known and knowable, and both are bound up in the workings of memory and forgetting. In their respective movements toward Aegeus and toward Numitor, moreover, they help bring about a change in regime that establishes new states of affairs in both places.[340]

The key difference, as I have suggested, is the scale of the rise of Rome. In the sense that the city remains still to be founded throughout the account of the trough, we might see it as the seedpod or the ark in which nascent Roman identity survives. It is particularly appropriate, then, that Plutarch moves from this topic to a defense of the fantastic dimensions of the Romulus and Remus story overall, which he sees as validated by the meteoric ascent of Rome between its founding and his own day (8.9):

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339. For the notion of recognition by tokens, see Aristotle *Poetics* 1454b25.

340. *Romulus* 8.3-6 spells out how Faustulus' visit to Numitor ultimately helps in the king's being overthrown.

> *οὐ δεῖ δ' ἀπιστεῖν τὴν τύχην ὁρῶντας οἵων ποιημάτων δημιουργός ἐστι, καὶ τὰ Ῥωμαίων πράγματα λογιζομένους, ὡς οὐκ ἂν ἐνταῦθα προὔβη δυνάμεως, μὴ θείαν τιν' ἀρχὴν λαβόντα καὶ μηδὲν μέγα μηδὲ παράδοξον ἔχουσαν.*
>
> But one must not distrust, seeing the sort of poems that chance fashions and considering the affairs of the Romans, how they would not have come from here to be superior in power unless it had some divine origin, one both great and extraordinary.

In this case, the trough becomes a kind of physical emblem of this ascendence: it is small, but one of its passengers will go on to found what would become a large empire. With this in mind, I would argue that the inability of the trough to "go unnoticed" while literally under wraps makes it a ready symbol of Roman glory. From this perspective, Faustulus' journey at 8.2-3 can be regarded as a success, in which not only he but also, by extension, the future of Roman power is put to "the test" (*εἰς ἔλεγχον*). In this way, the two senses related to the *lēthē*-root are joined, the failure to escape notice serving as a prefiguring of the unforgettability and permanence of Roman power. In the case of Athens/Attica, on the other hand, the account of Theseus' ship suggests a different pattern of development: from scattered communities during the kingship of Aegeus, to a unified polis under Theseus, to an erosion of political autonomy, as typified by the loss of the ship in the Hellenistic period, leaving its trace only in the *prohedria* at Delos. Where the smaller vessel cannot help but be noticed, the larger one is both a carrier of *lēthē* and, in time, a victim of decay and political change.

Lēthē *and the Mists of Myth*

The salient mismatch between the stories of Theseus' ship and the trough thus does the important work of drawing the reader's attention to both objects (and the accounts that contain them) within the framework of the pairing of Theseus and Romulus. Indeed, in their connections to *lēthē*, both objects suggest to the reader something about Plutarch's conception not only of Theseus and Romulus but of Athens and Rome as well. If his usual goal in writing biography is genuinely to gain an insight into the character of his subjects, that goal is augmented (though certainly not fully replaced) in the *Theseus-Romulus* by an interest in the two cities as they passed through inaugural or otherwise critical stages of their development.

Of course, as Plutarch underscores in his preface to these *Lives*, these stages are not properly historical in the way that, say, the *Alexander-Caesar* is. They are, as he puts it, inhabited by "poets and writers of myth," and they lack "certainty and clarity" (1.3). He is thus forced to confront *lēthē* from two directions. On the one hand, it is a kind of negative space, difficult for history to account for, against which his attempts at historicizing the myths of Theseus and Romulus unfold. On the other hand, it is also a recurring theme, which enters the discourse of the *Theseus-Romulus* in a number of interlocking ways. Starting with the link between dance, joy and forgetting in the *Theseus*, I have traced how forgetting intersects with cultural practice and political

change, with a special focus on the nautical: from a ship sailing home to one whose planks are replaced for centuries, from infants floating in a trough to a city at the center of a world empire. In all of this, Plutarch's treatment of *lēthē* brings to the reader's attention the contrary dimensions that are implicit in the concept. It is both a moment of loss, then, and a moment of new opportunity, with the potential for change and innovation afforded by rupture with the past.

If we shift our focus from the thematic to the programmatic, we might regard the whole project of the *Theseus-Romulus*, predicated as it is on the paradoxical desire to move "forward" into the mythological past,[341] as a kind of engagement with forgetting and indeed an attempt, in the light of Ricoeur's model, to make the mists of mythological time into a "ressource immémoriale offerte au travail du souvenir."[342] In contrast with the historical vividness at which Herodotus had aimed in his preface, after all, Plutarch conceives of his project as much more a reconstruction, and one that will demand acceptance on the readers' part of a "mixture" of rationalized myth and less plausible accounts. Retaining the memory of the recent past presents one sort of authorial demand, but to reconstruct what has been partly forgotten into a plausible semblance of history is to face *lēthē* as a line of division: not necessarily the end of anything, but rather a shift in state with which both the biographer and his subjects are obliged to contend.

341. See p. 41ff in chapter 1.
342. See p. 112 above.

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