Synopsis

Beginning from different starting-points, discussing different works, asking different questions and focusing on different issues, the articles of this chapter illuminate Plutarch’s methods and compositional techniques from various angles and perspectives. The chapter is divided into two sections: the articles of section 2a focus on how Plutarch deals with other literary genres, while those of section 2b discuss his authorial techniques at large.
2a: How Plutarch deals with other genres
José Antonio Fernández Delgado explores the problematic classification of some rhetorical elements in Plutarch. Among the frequent references to fables, he notes, and particularly but not only in the *Moralia*, some of them, at present classified as such, actually seem to correspond to other literary forms which, like these, became in time rhetorical *progymnasmata*: these can be *gnômae* or much more often *chreiai*. The aim of this paper is, first of all, to try to single out and define such forms individually, and to discount them from the list of Plutarchean fables; and then to explain the confusion, using the double basis of (a) the existing affinity among these elementary literary forms, and (b) their handling by the writer.

On the other hand, Francisca Pordomingo Pardo studies the intratextual dialogue in Plutarch’s corpus, examining in particular his reuse of quotations from epigrams. She observes that from Plutarch’s quotations from epigrams only a small number corresponds to epigrams that are also transmitted by the *Anthologia Palatina* and the *Anthologia Planudea*, while the largest number corresponds to epigrams transmitted by Plutarch, either alone or together with different ancient sources (rarely epigraphical). In her article the author will particularly deal with quotations from epigrams that are repeated more than once in Plutarch’s *corpus*, in order to discover aspects of their contextual function in the different contexts they occur. At the same time, she examines the reception of the epigrammatic genre as well as the intertextual dialogue between the text containing the quote and the one quoted; and there is also discussion of the integrated and hidden quotations (paraphrases and allusions). This study could help not only in recuperating the form of the quoted epigram itself, but also in clarifying relationships (including the chronological ones) between works of *Moralia* and *Vitae* (by examining moreover the repetition of quotations which belong to other genres).

Philip Stadter discusses the function of anecdotes in three different works of Plutarch: *Lives*, *Political Precepts*, *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*. Anecdotes, he notes, are a fundamental feature of Plutarch’s writing, and recently they have received a great deal of attention, since we have come to realize that they can furnish insight into Plutarch’s methods, audience, and purposes. The article attempts to refine some of the recent findings by an examination of a select group of anecdotes which recur in the works mentioned above. This circumstance offers an opportunity to probe the way the same anecdotes are used across several works, written in different genres, for different audiences, and for different purposes. Besides giving more understanding of the relation of the anecdotes to earlier notes or compilations, this examination reveals the different techniques employed by Plutarch.
It appears that no single version of an anecdote need give all the information Plutarch had available to him: we must piece together what he knew by considering all his versions. A proper analysis of Plutarch’s technique requires close examination of all versions, not to establish priority, but to clarify the focus and import of each. The three works studied each have different audiences and goals, reflected in the manner in which the anecdotes are presented, or by omissions of certain items. For Plutarch anecdotes were discreet items which could be shifted from one category to another, permitting the formation of lists of anecdotes for different topics, or complex clusters which could be used in different contexts. The items of *Apophthegmata regum* are free of context, but are selected for their positive value as *exempla*. Those of the *Precepts* are set in a rich rhetorical, argumentative context, with interpretive comments, and may be either positive or negative. Finally, the anecdotes of the *Lives* develop the interpretive possibilities of context much further, introducing nuance and ambivalences closely related to major themes and outcomes of a given *Life*. They employ foreshadowing, authorial comment, historical background, and the contemporary context to create a multilayered tapestry of meaning.

Craig Cooper also notes the relationship between the *Lives* and the *Political Precepts* as well as the largely anecdotal nature of the common material, but he mainly focuses on the moral interplay between the *Praecepta* and the *Life of Demosthenes*. In some cases, he observes, the anecdotes, which are scattered across several *Lives*, are collected together in *Statecraft* (799d-800a) to illustrate a single theme, e.g. the easy-going nature of the Athenian assembly, as is gathered from its reaction to Cleon’s request for an adjournment. In this particular section of the essay Plutarch seems to have collected together from several different sources a variety of anecdotes that he would later use for different ends in the *Lives*. Cleon’s request in the *Life of Nicias* (9.5), for instance, says less about the character of the Athenian assembly than about Cleon’s own buffoonery. In another section of *Statecraft*, (802e–804c), dealing with the statesman’s oratory, Plutarch seems instead to have excerpted a single Peripatetic source on rhetoric, a large part of which he would later reproduce in his *Life of Demosthenes* (9–10). But again there are some differences in details and points of emphasis between the two accounts which suggest different, though perhaps related, uses being made of the same material by Plutarch. In the *Life* Plutarch supplements the Peripatetic source with material from a second Peripatetic source (Demetrius of Phalerum), which in part helps to shape the particular emphasis that is taken in the *Life* by Plutarch, who is constrained by the accepted biographical tradition to represent Demosthenes as practised rather than naturally gifted orator. The material from *Statecraft* helps to put a more positive spin on that tradition. Moreover, a reference in *Statecraft*
(815d) to recent troubles under Domitian may suggest that the essay was written soon after Domitian’s death (A.D 96) and thus before Plutarch came to compose *Demosthenes-Cicero*, which is fifth in the series of *Parallel Lives*. If that is the case, we have an opportunity to see how Plutarch reuses material put together for a moral essay in a *Life*, or at the very least how the same material is adapted in different contexts.

**Christophe Brechet** observes that the frequency of references to Homer differs markedly between the two parts of Plutarch’s corpus, with several hundred references in the *Moralia* as against a few dozen in the *Lives*. Yet, despite this difference in distribution, we may ascertain that the Homeric references follow a consistent, more or less, pattern: Plutarch associates, on the one hand, the Greeks and Alexander with the Achaeans and, on the other, the Romans with the Trojans, thus continuing the mythical genealogies. This use of Homer betrays no polemical intent, despite Plutarch’s identification of the Trojans with the Barbarians. Yet his conception of a common culture shared by Greeks and Romans does not efface his sense of Hellenic identity. It appears that the use of Homer, the very source of Greek *paideia*, is a discreet reminder of the divide between Greeks and Romans: the Romans may not constitute the “Other”, the barbarian, but they are, nevertheless, other.

**Diotima Papadi**, after observing that in Plutarch’s *Moralia* tragic poetry plays an important role, not only for educational purposes (e.g. in *De audiendis poetis*), but also for literary, philosophical and rhetorical purposes, will try to show how tragedy and theatrical atmosphere are equally significant in the *Lives*, as the *Life of Pompey*, rich in tragic imagery and theatricality, distinctly manifests. Plutarch here creates theatrical tension and tragic patterns out of his non-theatrical material; thus theatricality and tragic texture, in all their forms and versions, are used to make a point of reference for life, not only for the life of Pompey but also for anyone’s life, pointing to general characteristics of human attitude and passions.

Finally, **Peter Liddel** discusses Plutarch’s use of inscriptions and proposes that our author’s originality as an epigraphist lay in his employment of epigraphical evidence in the investigation of morality, politics, philosophy and sociology; and his deployment of inscriptions in scholarly polemic. It is observed that in both the *Lives* and *Moralia*, Plutarch alludes to, discusses and quotes a range of Greek and Latin epigraphical categories: honorary decrees, choregic tripod-bases and other dedications, *katalogoi*, grave monuments public and private, laws and decrees, magical inscriptions, graffiti, boundary stones, and even inscribed *thaumata*. Inscriptions in the *Lives* and *Moralia* play a variety of roles: they contribute to the reconstruction of or dramatization of history; they
reveal the level of fame, *philotimia*, and wealth of an individual; they create impressions of individual and community virtues to be emulated and vices to be avoided; they act as proofs in arguments or as evidence to substantiate an assertion; they provide insight into those characters who read them and react to them; they are instruments of magic, *hubris, nemesis* or other species of divine intervention; they provide a starting point for philosophical inquiry; a point of opening or closure for individual lives.

Although chiefly an ‘armchair epigraphist’, Plutarch declares that knowledge of epigraphical evidence is central to meticulous and even-handed biographical and historical research. And it is his belief that the epigraphist occupies a privileged position in the world of scholarship that validates his use of epigraphy as a weapon in scholarly controversies and in the reconstruction of Greek history and biography. This is because the evidence of epigraphy is, for Plutarch, a good measure of certain aspects of public morality. Dedications commemorating victories of Greeks over non-Greeks fulfil the moral potential of the epigraphic habit, whereas commemorations of victories of Greek states over other Greek states represent an abuse of the habit. With reference to the agonistic and competitive tendency of the epigraphic language of the ancient Greek world, this paper argues that Plutarch is a good ‘reader’ of ancient Greek inscriptions, and attempts to use them with insight in the reconstruction in particular of the workings of *philotimia* in the ancient Greek city.