

Plutarch's Compositional Technique: The Anecdote Collections and the *Parallel Lives*

Philip A. Stadter

OUR NOTION of Plutarch's preparations for his *Parallel Lives*, as for many works of the *Moralia*, must recognize a certain flexibility and experimentation on his part. After he had decided to write on certain figures as biographical subjects, and reviewed his general historical knowledge, he no doubt began specific readings in the histories of the periods concerned and in the contemporary documents he had been able to discover. He would also have considered different possible interpretations of the heroes' characters, and tried to identify specific anecdotes or incidents that he might be able to use. This applies particularly to his note-taking, whether in the form of anecdote collections or summary historical narratives, and to the manner in which he reworked these materials in preparing the *Lives*.¹

¹ This paper began as the second half of a paper delivered at the Leuven Symposium "Interpreting Composition in Plutarch," 5–7 July 2001, at the same time as Christopher Pelling's paper on a closely related topic, subsequently published as C. Pelling, "The *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum* and Plutarch's Roman Lives," in C. Pelling, *Plutarch and History. Eighteen Studies* (London 2002) 65–90. Pelling's paper makes a major contribution to our understanding of Plutarch's methods and the evidence offered by the *Apophthegmata regum*, but on occasion misinterprets important points of my oral treatment. The present paper, a revision of my oral text with relevant recent bibliography, clarifies these issues in the notes. L. Van der Stockt, "Compositional Methods in the *Lives*," in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Oxford 2014) 321–332, offers an overview of compositional problems in the *Lives*. See also, with particular reference to *Caesar*, C. Pelling, *Plutarch Caesar: translated with an introduction and commentary* (Oxford 2011) 36–42. The first half of the original paper is now P. A. Stadter, "Before Pen

1. The *Apophthegmata Laconica*

The collections of sayings found in Plutarch's *Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata* (*Ap.reg.*) and *Apophthegmata Laconica* (*Ap.Lac.*) give us a valuable, though not unproblematic, entry into Plutarch's method of composition.² Their exact status has been controversial: their style is much more pedestrian than Plutarch's usual elegance and in *Ap.Lac.* sayings are sometimes repeated and ascribed to different persons. Some scholars have thought that these were pre-existing collections that Plutarch might have used occasionally and that were found among his papers after his death. Others argue that they preserve Plutarch's own notes, perhaps supplementing already existing collections, or are compilations made later than Plutarch and falsely preserved with his works.³

W. Nachstädt, however, made an extremely important observation in 1935: those anecdotes concerning Lycurgus and the notices of Spartan practices that occur in both *Lycurgus* and *Ap.Lac.* appear in the same order in both works.⁴ Ziegler noted further that the same was true of the relation of *Ap.Lac.* to

Touched Paper: Plutarch's Preparations for the *Parallel Lives*," in P. A. Stadter, *Plutarch and his Roman Readers* (Oxford 2014) 119–129.

² Although some texts, following Stephanus' edition, break these collections down into smaller units, the manuscripts indicate only these two collections, with internal groupings of material.

³ For a review of the issues see F. Fuhrman, *Plutarque, Oeuvres Morales III* (Paris 1988) 3–15; E. Pettine, *Plutarco: Detti di re e condottieri* (Salerno 1988) 9–20; C. Santaniello, *Plutarco, Detti dei Lacedemoni* (Naples 1995) 8–19; and M. Beck, "Plato, Plutarch, and the Use and Manipulation of Anecdotes in the Lives of Lycurgus and Agesilaus. History of the Laconic Apophthegm," in A. Pérez-Jiménez et al. (eds.), *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles. Actas del V Congreso Internacional de la I. P. S.* (Madrid 1999) 173–187.

⁴ W. Nachstädt, "Das Verhältnis der Lykurgvita Plutarchs zu den Apophthegmata Lycurgi und den Instituta Laconica," *Bericht über die Sitzungen des Philologischen Vereins* (Berlin 1935) 3–5, cf. also his *Plutarchi Moralia II* (Leipzig 1935) 165–167. The Spartan practices are found in the section often called *Instituta Laconica*.

Lysander and *Agesilaus*.⁵ This piece of evidence was not particularly interesting as long as it was thought that Plutarch was a rather careless compiler of earlier information. It could be argued that Plutarch simply repeated a traditional collection of anecdotes in the order that he received them.⁶ But now, after the work of the past decades, we know how carefully Plutarch constructed his lives and this explanation is no longer valid. We can assert confidently that if the anecdotes of the persons in *Ap.Lac.* follow the order of those in the respective *Lives*, it must mean that this order derives from Plutarch himself. It is worth examining this work more closely.

One could imagine that the anecdotes of *Ap.Lac.* were excerpted from the *Lives*, but several factors rule out this possibility. Nachstädt noted that in *Lycurgus* the anecdotes and Spartan practices are combined in one sequence, but appear as two separate sequences in *Ap.Lac.* In addition, the sets of anecdotes concerning Lycurgus, Lysander, and Agesilaus in *Ap.Lac.* are lacking some anecdotes found in the *Lives*, but also include others missing from them. This result is not easy to explain if the anecdotes were taken from the *Lives*. The conclusion follows that *Ap.Lac.* is independent from the *Lives* and the collection is in a real sense the work of Plutarch.⁷ I suggest that this

⁵ K. Ziegler, *Plutarchos von Chaironeia* (Stuttgart 1949) 229.

⁶ This seems the understanding of Nachstädt, *Bericht* 4–5: Plutarch made excerpts in preparation for his *Lycurgus*, first from a florilegium of Spartan sayings, then from a writer on the Spartan constitution, then used this, with changes and omissions, “aber doch im wesentlichen in der Reihenfolge seiner Exzerpte.” The earlier theory that these apophthegmata were copied from Plutarch’s *Lives* is clearly false: see Ziegler, *Plutarchos* 229.

⁷ Thus Fuhrmann, *Plutarque* 3–15, and Beck, in *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* 173–187, building on Nachstädt and Ziegler. Santaniello, *Detti*, agrees that *Ap.Lac.* cannot be derived from the *Lives*, but argues, without sufficient reason, I believe, that the work does not represent Plutarch’s own excerpts, but an accumulation of anecdotes built up over time, “una sorte di centone da lui trovato, almeno in parte costituito” and occasionally used by him (18–19). He does not appreciate the importance of Nachstädt’s discovery. The argument holds *a fortiori* for *Ap.reg.*, which seems to me clearly independent

collection represents one of the several types of preliminary research materials that he used while composing the *Lives*.

Ap.Lac. is divided by content into three parts: sayings of Spartan men (arranged alphabetically, 68 men, 344 items, followed by 72 anonymous items, totaling 416), Spartan practices and institutions (42 items, with a concluding statement 239F–240B), and sayings of Spartan women (4 women arranged alphabetically, 10 items, and 30 anonymous items, totaling 40).⁸ The alphabetical system is non-hierarchical and very convenient for reference, as is the distinction of genders and institutions. However, some persons are favored more than others: of the 68 men, many have only one item, but five have fifteen or more: Agesilaus (79), Agis I (18), Cleomenes I (18), Leonidas (15), Lysurgus (31), and Lysander (15). Of these six, Agesilaus, Lysurgus, and Lysander have *Lives* devoted to them.

A fourth, Leonidas, the Spartan king who died at Thermopylae, was also projected to be the subject of a life. Plutarch comments in *De Her. mal.* 866B, after discussing at some length Herodotus' treatment of Thermopylae:

I shall describe in my Life of Leonidas all the other brave deeds and sayings of the Spartiates that Herodotus has omitted; but it will not be amiss to mention a few of them now.⁹

He then goes on to give four anecdotes, three of which are found in *Ap.Lac.* among the fifteen attributed to Leonidas.¹⁰

of the *Parallel Lives*. *Ap.reg.* also includes commanders not represented in the *Parallel Lives*, most notably Augustus. The first emperor is known to have appeared in Plutarch's *Lives of the Caesars*, of which only *Galba* and *Otho* are now extant.

⁸ The division into three separate works was made by Stephanus in his edition, and is not supported by the manuscripts. N. M. Kennell, *The Gymnasium of Virtue. Education and Culture in Ancient Sparta* (Chapel Hill 1995) 20–23, suggests a prehistory for the Spartan practices section (*Instituta Laconica*).

⁹ Transl. L. Pearson (Loeb): ὅσα δ' ἄλλα πρὸς τούτῳ τολμήματα καὶ ῥήματα τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν παραλέλοιπεν, ἐν τῷ Λεωνίδου βίῳ γραφήσεται· μικρὰ δ' οὐ χειρόν ἐστι καὶ νῦν διελεθεῖν.

¹⁰ *Ap.Lac.* 225A and 225E, nos. 3, 2, and 15.

Plutarch's words and the presence of the anecdotes he intends for his *Life of Leonidas* in *Ap.Lac.* are a strong indication that he used this collection or something like it in the preparation of his *Lives*. This conclusion receives further confirmation from the overlap of anecdotes concerning Lycurgus, Lysander, and Agesilaus found in this collection and in the respective *Lives*.

This evidence, taken with the structure of *Ap.Lac.*, suggests the following hypothesis describing the stages in Plutarch's handling of anecdotes for the Spartan *Lives*. First he collected a large number of anecdotes about Spartans from his own reading, and arranged them in alphabetical order. He may have found some anecdotes in pre-existent collections. He made separate files of sayings of Spartan men and women and of Spartan practices. This activity resulted in something like the large collection (almost 500 items) of *Ap.Lac.*, though probably not in the same order. In a second stage he rearranged the items dealing with protagonists of intended *Lives* in the order in which he thought they would be most effective in the projected *Life*.¹¹ These sets of rearranged anecdotes were used in the composition of the *Lives*. The collection would then have been recopied, allowing it to be preserved in its present form as *Ap.Lac.*¹²

The overall picture of Plutarch's activity gathering anecdotes is similar to that presented by Tiziano Dorandi on the basis of accounts in ancient authors (especially Pliny *Ep.* 3.5 on the working methods of his uncle) and the working text of Philodemus' *History of the Academy* found at Herculaneum (*P.Herc.*

¹¹ He also arranged the Spartan practices for use in *Lycurgus*. Naturally, we cannot tell whether he rearranged the anecdotes of other persons, since our evidence is the comparison with an extant *Life*.

¹² The collection contains only one anecdote concerning Agis IV and Cleomenes IV (216C, cf. *Agis-Cleomenes*, for which the chief source is Phylarchus, is singularly lacking in short anecdotes, suggesting that Plutarch had found few or none in his reading, or that this collection was completed before Plutarch began to prepare their *Lives*.

1021).¹³ Like Philodemus, the two Plinys, and many other ancient writers, Plutarch would have excerpted items of interest in the course of his reading. Anecdotes were clearly a significant part of these excerpts. The excerpting process could have gone on for many years—we probably should imagine it beginning in his student days¹⁴—but no doubt was intensified when Plutarch chose to write on a particular figure.¹⁵ The anecdotes of *Ap.Lac.* show that, unlike Philodemus, Plutarch did not have these excerpts copied verbatim, but usually made free summaries, notes, or paraphrases rather than extracts.¹⁶ The anecdotes then were arranged in alphabetical order by protagonist for easy consultation. This process of excerpting and alphabetization explains the many doublets of the Spartan collection: at this stage Plutarch did not attempt to weed out sayings attributed to several different individuals. At a later moment, probably tied closely to the composition of a *Life*, Plutarch mar-

¹³ T. Dorandi, *Le stylet et la tablette: dans le secret des auteurs antiques* (Paris 2000), esp. 46–49, and *Filodemo, Storia dei filosofi. Platone e l'Academia (PHerc. 1021 e 164)* (Naples 1991) 105–107, 112–113. This papyrus reveals the scholar's activity in its appearance: negligent writing, irregular page setup, suppressions, additions between lines and in margins and between columns, some doublets, notes marking transpositions, or damages to the text, and text written on both recto and verso. Dorandi concludes that Philodemus had dictated or had copied a series of extracts from different authors on Plato and his school, including Hermippus, Antigonos of Carystus, and Apollodorus of Athens, and this papyrus is the result of a first systematization of excerpts in preparation for his book. Traces of a recopied 'second edition' text are preserved in *P.Herc.* 164.

¹⁴ Note the younger Pliny's diligence at age 17 in excerpting from Livy even while Vesuvius was erupting, *Ep.* 6.20.5.

¹⁵ On the materials used by ancient writers in making and organizing such excerpts see Dorandi, *Le stylet* 5–25; for the process see 27–50. Cf. also Pelling, *Plutarch Caesar* 38–40. The Roman *Lives* naturally would have required reading and excerpting works that were not a part of Plutarch's standard Greek education.

¹⁶ Comparison between Xenophon and the anecdotes concerning Agesilaus drawn from him make this quite apparent. Plutarch may have dictated them to a scribe while he was reading or being read to.

shaped the anecdotes in the order in which he intended to use them in the *Life*. It is this stage of the sayings of Spartan men, combined with the notebooks on Spartan practices and sayings of Spartan women, that is preserved for us.¹⁷

This organized collection was quite different in shape from the *hypomnemata* recognized by Luc van der Stockt and his collaborators.¹⁸ I am not sure whether Plutarch would call them *hypomnemata*: I will continue to speak of anecdotes or notes.

What can we learn about how Plutarch excerpted anecdotes from his sources for his Spartan collection, and how were these then used in the *Lives*? Fortunately several of the anecdotes dealing with Agesilaus, both in *Ap.Lac.* and the *Life*, are derived from extant works, Xenophon's *Agesilaus* and *Hellenica*. This fact permits an exact comparison of the anecdotes in Xenophon, *Ap.Lac.*, and *Agesilaus*, a study undertaken by Mark Beck with impressive results.¹⁹

¹⁷ Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 68, misstates this point: the initial Spartan collection was made by Plutarch for his general use, not for the *Lives* in particular, but the items related to figures whose biographies he was preparing were subsequently rearranged for insertion in the *Lives*. This modified collection, with the newly arranged sections, was then at some time copied to form *Ap.Lac.* Pelling (69) blends *Ap.Lac.* and *Ap.reg.* in his discussion (but makes the distinction clear at 84–85), whereas I keep these works and their history distinct.

¹⁸ As seen, e.g., in L. Van der Stockt, "A Plutarchan Hypomnema on Self-Love," *AJP* 120 (1999) 575–599; "Three Aristotles equal but one Plato: On a Cluster of Quotations in Plutarch," in *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* 127–140; "Καρπὸς ἐκ φιλίας ἡγεμονικῆς (*Mor.* 814C): Plutarch's Observations on the 'Old-Boy' Network," in P. A. Stadter and L. Van der Stockt (eds.), *Sage and Emperor. Plutarch, Greek Intellectuals, and Roman Power in the Time of Trajan* (Leuven 2002) 115–140; and "Plutarch in Plutarch: The Problem of the Hypomnemata," in I. Gallo (ed.), *La biblioteca di Plutarco. Atti del IX Convegno plutarco* (Naples 2004) 331–340; B. Van Meirvenne, "Puzzling over Plutarch: Traces of a Plutarchean Plato-study concerning *Lg.* 729 a-c," in J. G. Montes Cala et al. (eds.), *Plutarco, Dioniso y el vino. Actas del VI Simposio español sobre Plutarco* (Madrid 1999) 527–540.

¹⁹ M. Beck, *Plutarch's Use of Anecdotes in the Lives* (diss. Univ. of North Carolina 1998), and in *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* 173–187. These examples

The story of Megabates and the kiss gives an opportunity to study Plutarch's practice as it is relevant to our inquiry.²⁰ The anecdote appears in Xenophon's *Agesilaus* (5.4–7) as evidence for the king's extraordinary self-control. A précis of the story appears in *Ap.Lac.* 209D–E, and a retelling at *Agesilaus* 11.6–10. Xenophon introduces his account, as befits an encomium, by calling the king's self-control in sexual matters amazing (*thaumastos*). He then sketches Agesilaus' refusal to allow a beautiful young Persian, Megabates, to kiss him, even though he was strongly drawn to him (*erasthenta*), and his pride at his success in this difficult enterprise. Along the way, Xenophon indicates that a serious nature (*sphodrotate physis*) would love beauty, and that the kiss of greeting was a Persian custom, thus indicating that such love was honorable in itself, and would cause no scandal to the Persians. He concludes the anecdote by stressing at length the truth of this perhaps incredible incident. The précis in *Ap.Lac.* strips away Xenophon's comments and reports the bare facts. However, mid-way through the anecdote, it develops a point not found in Xenophon: his friends reproach Agesilaus with showing himself a coward (*tresas*) and warn that he must not run (*apodeiliasei*) if the boy tries again, so that Agesilaus must think for some time before replying. Agesilaus then defends himself appropriately with a new comparison, not found in Xenophon, by saying that preserving his own freedom is better than taking an enemy city. It appears that Plutarch in summarizing Xenophon's anecdote has decided to introduce rhetorical points particularly appropriate to a Spartan context to substitute those of the original.²¹

seem clearly from Xenophon, though G. Schepens, "A la recherche d'Agésilas : le roi de Sparte dans le jugement des historiens du IV^e siècle av. J.-C.," *REG* 118 (2005) 31–78, at 62–63, notes Plutarch's use of Theopompus as a source as well.

²⁰ I base this discussion on the treatment of Beck, *Plutarch's Use* 165–173, and in *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* 173–187.

²¹ To me it seems unnecessary to postulate that this version comes from a different source, such as Theopompus. Agesilaus' attitude toward *tresantes* is important later in the life (*Ages.* 30).

When we turn to the version in *Agesilaus*, we find that the biographer preserves much of the wording of his summary, but adds more of his own commentary and evaluation.²² The vocabulary is more literary, the friends are given direct speech, and Agesilaus' reply is Doricized.²³ At the end, Plutarch adds a speculation of his own: "After he [Megabates] had gone, the fire of his passion was so strong (περικαῶς) that it is hard to say whether he would have been able to resist a kiss had Megabates suddenly reappeared."²⁴ The whole anecdote, in this version, modifies Xenophon's evaluation of Agesilaus' behavior, developing an idea already present in the version of *Ap.Lac.* The result is that Agesilaus' sexual feelings are more problematic. However, in the *Life* Plutarch also returns to Xenophon's version for one particular: Agesilaus' assertion that he would prefer to fight this battle of the kiss than to have all he sees turn to gold. From this we may surmise that Plutarch either remembered the original text or, more likely, was consulting Xenophon as well as his notes while preparing the *Life*.²⁵ The relation with Xenophon is significant: in *Ages.* 9–10 Plutarch has been using a sequence of anecdotes from *Hell.* 3.4 found also in Xenophon's *Ages.* 1.10, 24, and 28 (it is difficult to estab-

²² Megabates was already introduced at 11.2; the introduction to the anecdote at 11.6 stresses the effect on Agesilaus (ἔκνιζεν αὐτὸν οὐ μετρίως ὁ τοῦ παιδὸς ἔρωσ ἐνεσταγμένος), and suggests that his resistance was due to his competitive instinct and perhaps was not mature (the word νεανικῶς regularly means 'vigorously', but in this context seems to imply immaturity as well). Competition is a major theme in this *Life*: see P. A. Stadter, "Competition and its Costs: φιλονικία in Plutarch's Society and Heroes," in G. Roskam and L. Van der Stockt (eds.), *Virtues for the People: Aspects of Plutarchan Ethics* (Leuven 2011) 237–255, at 246–249.

²³ Beck, in *Plutarco, Platón y Aristóteles* 183. Xenophon's original had already used Doric, although the words are different.

²⁴ Transl. R. Waterfield, *Plutarch. Greek Lives* (Oxford 1998). The word περικαῶς appears only here in Plutarch.

²⁵ Plutarch recalls this anecdote twice, at *De prof. virt.* 81A, where he uses Xenophon's word *diamachomai*, which is not in the anecdotes of *Ap.Lac.* or in *Ages.* (though *apomachomai* appears in the latter), and at *De aud. poet.* 31C.

lish which he used principally). Here, however, he jumps ahead to Xenophon *Ages.* 5.4–5. Since Xenophon was so important for *Agesilaus*, I suggest that Plutarch used his extracts to work out how he was going to handle the anecdotes, but as he was writing the *Life* also kept one eye on Xenophon's account. In this case the anecdotes functioned rather as a *pro memoria* than as source.²⁶

The Agesilaus anecdotes of *Apophthegmata Laconica* allow us to recognize yet another step in composition: three of the forty anecdotes found also in the *Agesilaus* are not in the same order as in the *Life*. Two of these have been placed at the beginning of the *Life* (2), one at the end (36).²⁷ That is, Plutarch, after his initial disposition, preserved in the *Ap.Lac.*, decided to move these anecdotes to positions of particular prominence. Especially interesting is the case of Agesilaus' deathbed instructions not to make any death mask or representation of him, for his deeds would be his *mnemeion*. This anecdote was originally placed as last of the series, suitable both chronologically and as a fine ending to the *Life*. In the *Life*, however, this anecdote was moved to the beginning, where Plutarch speaks of the king's deformed leg and raises the question whether the reign of Agesilaus was a lame kingship. The anecdote takes on a wholly different import, and we can catch Plutarch reshaping his interpretation and presentation of the king.

2. The place of *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum*

The *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum* dedicated to Trajan represents a quite different case. This collection is more pol-

²⁶ Santaniello, *Detti* 15–18, examines several points concerning the relation of *Agesilaus* to *Ap.Lac.* and Xenophon. His observations are perceptive, but he presumes that *Ap.Lac.*, if it were a source, would be followed slavishly, which is not Plutarch's method. Several changes are related to Plutarch's interpretation of Agesilaus' life.

²⁷ They are nos. 24 (on rejecting luxury, cf. *Ages* 36.10), 26 (on erecting statues of Agesilaus, cf. *Ages*. 2.4), and 79 (on his memorial being his deeds, not statues, cf. *Ages*. 2.4).

ished than *Ap.Lac.* and does not contain repetitions.²⁸ Although often thought to be spurious, there seems to be no valid reason to question its authenticity.²⁹ The dedicatory letter to Trajan, which has attracted special criticism, has been shown by Flacelière and Beck to be utterly genuine.³⁰ We must therefore think of this text as one published by Plutarch, in contrast to *Ap.Lac.*, which was a working document not intended for publication.³¹

The collection is not arranged alphabetically but by peoples, first barbarians (Persian, Egyptian, Thracian, Scythian), then those on the edges of Greece (Sicilians, Macedonians), then Greeks (Athenians, Spartans, Thebans), then Romans.³² With-

²⁸ See Furhrmann, *Plutarque* 4.

²⁹ See Furhrmann, *Plutarque* 3–15, with bibliography. Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 85, concludes that the author of the collection is “much more likely to be Plutarch” than some later editor, and that it might indeed have been written for Trajan.

³⁰ R. Flacelière, “Trajan, Delphes et Plutarque,” in *Recueil Plassart: Etudes sur l’antiquité grecque offertes à André Plassart* (Paris 1976) 97–103; M. Beck, “Plutarch to Trajan: the Dedicatory Letter and the Apophthegmata Collection,” in *Sage and Emperor* 163–173. S. Swain in his review of Furhrmann, *Plutarque*, *CR* 40 (1990) 247–248, finds it difficult to believe that Plutarch would dedicate such a mediocre work to Trajan. However, Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 75 and n.29, notes that the style is precisely what might be expected: “the watchwords are economy, directness, and simplicity, with everything subordinate to the forceful direct speech itself.” The selection of anecdotes needs to be studied more carefully with Trajan in mind, especially considering anecdotes that might have been included but were not (cf. Pelling 82). If the letter is genuine, as is probable, it shows that Plutarch was confident of his relation to the emperor, perhaps because of his friendship with Sosius Senecio, and adjusted his style to fit the emperor’s need rather than use his best rhetorical technique to impress him. His letter presumes that Trajan already knows of his *Parallel Lives* (172C).

³¹ Contrary to Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 69–70, I do not consider *Ap.reg.* “part of [the *Lives*] preparation” but a separate work, based on the anecdote collection which Plutarch also used for the *Lives*.

³² Although the Roman anecdotes are sometimes kept separate as *Apophthegmata Romaika* there is no separation in the manuscripts and they seem

in each group, the arrangement is chronological, with some exceptions.³³ The name of the protagonist marks the first anecdote of each series devoted to an individual.

As in the Spartan collection, the anecdotes that appear also in the *Lives* are usually found in the same order as given in the *Lives*, but there are a number of exceptions, indicating that *Ap. reg.* and the *Lives* distributed the anecdotes according to diverse rationales. A different order is clearly followed in *Alex.* and *Cat. Mai.* The forty-four Alexander anecdotes in *Ap. reg.* are arranged as childhood anecdotes (nos. 1–4), campaign stories (5–13), virtues (14–28), friends (29–30), kingship (31–32), and death (33–34). Fifteen of these are used in the life, six out of order. Plutarch's particular arrangement for the lives demonstrates his technique: no. 4 is moved from childhood to mark the great increase in wealth after Gaza (*Alex.* 25), no. 9 to a 'way of life' section (*Alex.* 22), the story of Xenocrates, no. 30, is moved to the philosophy section (*Alex.* 8), and so on. In most *Lives*, only a few anecdotes appear out of position. E.g., of sixteen items reported for Themistocles, fourteen appear in the *Life*, and only two are out of order, nos. 7 and 14. I believe closer examination would show that Plutarch always has special motives for reordering the anecdotes (see also above on *Agesilaus* and *Ap. Lac.*). It is improbable that the anecdotes are simply excerpts from the *Lives*, since the collection contains anecdotes for men not found in the *Lives*, and skips anecdotes in the *Lives*. The contrary view has been upheld by Tritle with regard to *Phocion* (the nineteen anecdotes of *Ap. reg.* all appear in the *Life*, in the same order), but the differences between *Ap. reg.* and other lives do not support his conclusion.³⁴

part of the same collection dedicated to Trajan. The concluding anecdotes devoted to Augustus are particularly appropriate for the emperor.

³³ The Athenian tyrants are placed at the end of the Athenian section, the Spartan kings before other Spartans. C. Popillius (cos. 172, 158), the ambassador to Antiochus IV, is placed after Sulla (202F).

³⁴ L. A. Tritle, "Plutarch's 'Life of Phocion': An Analysis and Critical Report," *ANRW* II.33.6 (1992) 4258–4297, at 4287–4290.

There are many fewer Spartans in this collection than in *Ap. Lac.*³⁵ Thus we can suppose that *Ap. reg.* represents a very small part of Plutarch's note collection in the category of kings and commanders. If we imagine that the same ratio would work for other peoples and cities as worked for Sparta, it would mean that Plutarch's notebooks of anecdotes of Athenians and Romans would have been at least as extensive as those that are preserved for Spartans in *Ap. Lac.*, and other cities would have figured in proportion to their importance. *Ap. reg.* almost certainly represents a selected, edited, and modestly embellished subset of a larger collection. *Ap. Lac.* would have been one section of that larger collection. Furthermore, we can hypothesize that all or most of the *Lives*, both Greek and Roman, were composed in the same way as the Spartan *Lives*. Long before conceiving the *Lives*, Plutarch would have excerpted anecdotes from historical works and collected them by city or protagonist. When he decided to write the *Lives*, he then organized the anecdotes of potential protagonists in the order in which he planned for them to appear in each *Life*, perhaps adding new anecdotes from his more focused research for the *Life*. He would then have used these ordered sets of anecdotes in writing the *Lives*, as he did for preparing the *Ap. reg.*³⁶ Unlike *Ap. Lac.*, *Ap. reg.* was not the source of anecdotes in the *Lives*, but both depended on an earlier stage of Plutarch's notes.³⁷ Of course, anecdotes form only part of a life. In addition to the anecdote collections, Plutarch would have used the kind of narrative *hypomnemata* discussed at length by Pelling, as well as poetic citations and all the rich embellishment which distinguishes his *Lives*.

³⁵ There are 17 Spartan men and 49 anecdotes, as opposed to 68 Spartan men and 416 anecdotes.

³⁶ This hypothesis is further supported by the close connection between the *Lives* and *Ap. reg.* suggested in the dedicatory letter to Trajan, 172C.

³⁷ Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 70–84, offers an extended proof of this statement, focusing on the Roman *Lives*, and makes a number of excellent points regarding Plutarch's method.

It has long been observed that the anecdotes of *Ap.reg.* are more spare, less elegantly written, and often show a different tone or slant than the corresponding anecdotes in the *Lives*. The story of Pompey's surrender of his public horse in *Ap.reg.* 203F–204A (Pompey no. 6) and *Pomp.* 22.4–9 provides a good demonstration.³⁸ The version in *Ap.reg.* gives a bare summary of the story, prefaced by a short description of the usual ceremony. The *Life* describes the usual ceremony in almost identical words, then greatly elaborates the scene with Pompey. First Pompey is seen coming into the forum, then he is questioned by the senior censor and offers his proud answer—both question and answer given in direct speech—and finally he returns home surrounded by the clamoring crowd. Note particularly how the scene is set, with the censors seated, the parade of knights, and then the arrival of Pompey as consul, but leading his horse. The focus zooms to Pompey before the censors: leaving his lictors behind, he leads his horse, while the crowd marvels and awe and delight seize the censors. Finally, the senior censor puts the question, and Pompey replies. The crowd bursts out in shouts, and the censors accompany him home. It is a high point for Pompey: note *χαρά, χαρῶς, χαρίζόμενοι* in the last sentences.

Caesar's encounter with the pirates in *Caesar* 2, parallel to *Ap.reg.* 205F–206A (Gaius Caesar no. 1), shows even greater elaboration.³⁹ The story in the *Life*, compared to the isolated anecdote, is much longer, is precise on the ransom (twenty talents that are raised to fifty vs. a sum of silver that is raised to twice as much), has two optatives as against none, uses the dual, and employs rhetorical figures (*οὐ φρουρούμενος ἀλλὰ δορυφορούμενος, συνέπαιζε καὶ συνεγυμνάζετο*). It includes striking details: the pirates are Cilicians, extremely blood-

³⁸ This item is not included in the case studies of Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 65–90.

³⁹ This is case 8 in Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 76–77.

thirsty,⁴⁰ Caesar is accompanied by one friend and two servants, and he was with the pirates thirty-eight days. Finally, the version in the *Life* adds Caesar's dealings with the proconsul Juncus, who is more interested in laying hands on the ransom money than helping Caesar. Clearly Plutarch has elaborated both the style and the content.

Significantly, in *Caesar* he has included details not found in the isolated anecdote of *Ap.reg.*, such as the sum of the ransom and the name of the proconsul. What is the source of this extra information? It may derive from a fuller version of the anecdote in the larger collection of anecdotes from which both texts draw. As we have seen in the relation between *Ap.reg.* and *Ap.Lac.*, this lost collection was occasionally fuller than the *Ap.reg.* But in any given case we cannot exclude that Plutarch either went back to his original historical source for details, as he may have done for the Megabates anecdote mentioned above,⁴¹ or recalled the details, drawing on his capacious memory. The more economical hypothesis would be that Plutarch wrote (or dictated) a fuller summary for the earlier collection, but the terseness of some of the *Ap.Lac.* summaries warns us that he may have used his summaries more as a *pro memoria* or notes for personal use than as a replacement for the original source. In the case of the pirate incident the original source seems to have been the same as that used by Suetonius, *Iul.* 4 and 74.1. Significantly, in the latter passage Suetonius refers to Caesar's mildness in having the pirates strangled before crucifixion,⁴² a

⁴⁰ The word, φονικωτάτοις, is the same as that used by Thucydides of the Thracians at Mykalessos (7.29), and suggests a high stylistic level. Fuhrmann, *Plutarque* 11 n.1, gives other examples of added information.

⁴¹ It is reasonable to suppose that Plutarch may have annotated his *hypo-mnemata* with references to sources, although these annotations are not preserved in our manuscripts. Dorandi, *Filodemo* 105, notes that *P.Herc.* 1021 seems to use a blank space to signal a change of source. Santaniello, *Detti* 15–17, discusses cases in which sources are cited in the *Lives* for anecdotes from *Ap.Lac.*

⁴² Suet. *Iul.* 74.1: *iugulari prius iussit, deinde suffigi.*

detail about which Plutarch chooses to remain silent.⁴³

In one case we can compare an anecdote in *Ap.reg.* with two versions in the *Lives*.⁴⁴ Pompey's reply to Cato's reproach after Caesar crossed the Rubicon appears at *Ap.reg.* 204D (Pompey no. 13), *Pomp.* 60.8, and *Cat.Min.* 52.1–3. The isolated anecdote sets a general rather than a specific context and gives the reply of Pompey pithily in direct discourse. The anecdote in *Pompey* is almost as terse, but gives the saying in indirect discourse and has it make a sharp contrast between what Cato said and what Pompey did. In *Cat.Min.*, Cato's reproach is put in direct discourse, giving him a greater role, and Pompey's (indirect) reply is shortened, though it preserves the contrast found in *Pompey*. There is no clear indication of borrowing among the extant versions: all three probably derive from Plutarch's anecdote in his comprehensive collection.

These examples, and those of Agesilaus mentioned above, reveal the flexibility with which Plutarch treated his historical sources and the extracts or summaries he made from them. They help us understand, perhaps, the sometimes bewildering

⁴³ If in fact the anecdote of the pirate story in Plutarch's notes was as complete as I suggest, it indicates that he had already found it a compelling narrative when he read it, and that he thought he might wish to use it in his *Life*. If, on the other hand, the anecdote was short, Plutarch would have had to think that this anecdote was promising, and return to his source or his memory for the extra detail which would make it more vivid. A. G. Nikolaidis suggests in a letter to me that Plutarch did not find the strangling mentioned by Suetonius good evidence for Caesar's mildness. Alternatively, Plutarch may have wished to emphasize his decisiveness, resourcefulness, and ruthlessness to foreshadow the potential conqueror and dictator. On this episode see also Pelling, *Caesar* 138–139

⁴⁴ Pelling, "Plutarch's Adaptation of His Source Material," in *Plutarch and History* 91–115 (reprinted and updated from *JHS* 100 [1980] 127–140), studies a number of cases of treatment of the same material in different *Lives* of the late republican group. In *Plutarch and History* 79–80 he notes also *Ap.reg.* 206 (Caesar no. 11), next to *Caes.* 44.8 and *Pomp.* 69.6–7, Caesar's criticism of Pompey's 'hold your ground' order at Pharsalus, and draws the significant conclusion that each life probably had its own draft ὑπόμνημα.

shifts of emphasis and of content which Pelling has studied in the late republican *Lives*. Anecdotes in the *Lives* interact in various ways with the historical narrative. Sometimes they come in clusters after important historical moments, sometimes intimately involved with a historical action.⁴⁵ On occasion anecdote sequences also bridge gaps in the historical narrative. Such sequences can be found e.g. in *Alex.* 25–26 and 45.4–6. In the former case, Plutarch moves the narrative from Gaza to Egypt via anecdotes; in the latter, from Zadracarta to the gates of India.⁴⁶ Making a decision on these uses would be another aspect of the preliminary disposition of anecdotes for eventual inclusion in a *Life*. Apparently Plutarch thought out his narrative presentation at the same time as he arranged his anecdotes, keeping both in mind as he designed the structure of a *Life*.

How did Plutarch manage his narrative material and integrate it with his anecdotes in composing his *Lives*? Did he prepare excerpts or summaries of historical narrative as he did of anecdotes? In the absence of separate collections such as exist for anecdotes, the question is extremely difficult. However some tentative suggestions—or rash speculations—can be advanced in the hope of encouraging further study. Many *Lives* overlap in terms of historical periods, most notably the late republican *Lives* studied by Pelling.⁴⁷ For the historical material

⁴⁵ Cf. e.g. for clustering *Them.* 17–18, after Salamis; *Alex.* 21–23, after Issus; for integration, *Per.* 33.

⁴⁶ See P. A. Stadter, “Anecdotes and the Thematic Structure of Plutarchean Biography,” in J. Fernández Delgado and F. Pordomingo Pardo (eds.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco IV Aspectos formales* (Madrid 1996) 291–303. Interestingly, neither of these sequences is represented in *Ap.reg.*

⁴⁷ Overlapping periods: *Them.* and *Arist.*; *Cim.* and *Per.*; *Nic.* and *Ale.*; *Lys.*, *Ages.*, *Epam.*, and *Pel.*; *Demetr.* and *Pyrrh.*; *Phil.* and *Flam.*; *Fab.*, *Marc.*, and *Scip.Afr.*; *Flam.*, *Cat.Mai.*, and *Aem.*; *Mar.* and *Sull.*; *Sert.*, *Pomp.*, *Caes.*, *Cras.*, *Cic.*, *Cat.Min.*, *Brut.*, *Ant.* Cf. A. G. Nikolaidis, “Plutarch’s Methods: His Cross-references and the Sequence of the Parallel Lives,” in A. Pérez Jiménez and F. Titchener (eds.), *Historical and Biographical Values of Plutarch’s Works. Studies devoted to Professor Philip A. Stadter by the International Plutarch*

of the Greek *Lives*, Plutarch would have memories, notes, and extracts, going back to his earliest student days.⁴⁸ Historical summaries can also be found in some anecdotes in *Ap.Lac.* Items 11–14 under Agesilaus, for example, a series of excerpts from Xenophon's *Hellenica*, contain more historical information than usual, as do 45–47, from the same source. Items 42–44, not found in Xenophon, apparently represent excerpts from a different historical source (Theopompus?), as do 70–75.⁴⁹ In *Ap.reg.*, the anecdotes generally include less historical information, but Epaminondas no. 23 (194A–B) seems to derive from a speech in a historical work.⁵⁰ The examples just cited from *Ap.Lac.* indicate that Plutarch used notes from several works for the anecdotes of a *Life*. We may suppose that he did the same with historical notes, and then (as with anecdotes) assembled these materials in a rough manner into the order he wished to use for the *Life* before writing the *Life* itself. Such a rough version (perhaps what some writers call a *hypomnema*) would allow him to consider also the placement of anecdotes and the possible use of the anecdote sequences mentioned above. This narrative draft would have been exceptionally useful in determining the structure and rhetorical organization of the *Life*, but did not need to be excessively detailed. We may imagine that Plutarch was more careful in summarizing sources which were recondite, hard to obtain, or used only occasionally, but expected to have his major narrative source or sources (Herod-

Society (Malaga/Logan 2005) 282–323, at 316.

⁴⁸ The Lamprias catalogue lists many titles that appear to belong to such collections of historical excerpts or notes, e.g. nos. 46, *Myths* in 3 books; 51, *Benefactions of Cities*; 52, *Political Matters (Politika)* in 2 books; 62, *Historical <and> Poetic Miscellanies* in 62 (or 67) books; 125, *Apomnemonemata*; 171, *Collection of Oracles*; and 195, *City Foundations*. *Ap.reg.* and *Ap.Lac.* appear at nos. 101 and 169. Note also the separate collections of philosophical excerpts at nos. 50, 61, 134, 148, and 196.

⁴⁹ No. 74 contains Theopompan material: cf. *Ages.* 31.4 and Theopompus *FGrHist* 115 F 322.

⁵⁰ I have taken only a quick glance at this question: further study is desirable.

otus, Thucydides, Xenophon, Ephorus, etc.) at hand in the final preparation of his text.⁵¹

For the Roman *Lives*, Plutarch's reading neither began so early nor extended so broadly, but the same basic principles appear to hold. Since the excerpts/summaries in his notes tended to be a series of separate bits, it would be relatively easy for him to combine sources as he organized his historical notes. Pelling's study of the late republican *Lives* has demonstrated the manner in which he reworked his sources. The analysis of the Agesilaus, Caesar, and Cato anecdotes given above indicates how Plutarch used a relatively bland summary as the basis for a more pointed and vivid anecdote. *Cicero*, which preceded the other late republican *Lives*, apparently had its own separate historical notes.⁵² When Plutarch later prepared the other *Lives* of this period, he may have found these notes a useful beginning, but I suspect that he also drafted in rough form a historical outline for each *Life*, making many decisions at this point of what might be excluded and what included.⁵³ Used in conjunction with his anecdote collection, this outline draft would give him the basis for the composition of his final text. Pelling seems generally correct in saying that Plutarch used Pollio (or conceivably a work based on Pollio) as his principal narrative source, but the use of historical *hypomnemata*, put together from short extracts or summaries, would make it easy for him to introduce material from another source at any time.

⁵¹ We cannot finally answer whether this *hypomnema* would have contained the anecdotes to be used in a given *Life*, or merely pointed to them. Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 65–90, argues strongly for the former. The above analysis is compatible with either hypothesis. In any case, there was an ordered collection of anecdotes, which were used in the preparation of the *Lives*.

⁵² See Pelling, "Plutarch and Catiline," in *Plutarch and History* 45–63 (originally *Hermes* 113 [1985] 311–329). In *Plutarch and History* 65–90 he argues that all the late republican *Lives* had separate historical *hypomnemata*, as I suggest here.

⁵³ Thus also Pelling, *Plutarch and History* 80.

Moreover, the method suggested permits Plutarch to introduce anecdotes from a variety of sources in the same way. These conclusions cannot be taken as certain, but seem a reasonable explanation of the evidence. Further study of Plutarch's method in framing a life is in order.⁵⁴

It is puzzling, for example, that Plutarch in one *Life* occasionally directly contradicts historical information given in another *Life*. Pelling notes two cases involving numbers, where questions of interpretation should not be at issue.⁵⁵ In *Caesar*, 400,000 Usipetes and Tencteri are killed, the figure preserved also in Appian, but in *Cato Minor* and *Crassus* the number is 300,000.⁵⁶ In *Antony* three hundred persons are proscribed, as in Appian, but in *Brutus* two hundred.⁵⁷ It is noteworthy that in both cases the correct figure (assuming that Appian preserves Pollio's numbers) is found in the *Life* most relevant to the incident. Pelling reasonably postulates that whether using his Pollio-source directly or through his own *hypomnema*, he was much more casual in checking the numbers when composing *Lives* not directly related to the incident. On the other hand, it is troubling that in both cases it is the higher number that seems correct, suggesting not carelessness but manipulation of the numbers to some purpose. Numbers are easily susceptible to corruption, and to purposeful adjustments. Perhaps even the figures represent an interpretative decision.

The process of choosing and arranging anecdotes and historical excerpts for a life required at some stage working with the excerpts of the parallel life, a procedure which requires further scrutiny. Items identified from the excerpts might be given

⁵⁴ See also Nikolaidis, in *Historical and Biographical Values* 289–290, on composing multiple lives for the same historical period.

⁵⁵ Pelling, "Plutarch's Method of Work in the Roman Lives," in *Plutarch and History* 1–44, at 21–22 (revised from *JHS* 99 [1979] 74–96); cf. also *Plutarch and History* 71–72.

⁵⁶ *Caes.* 22.5, *Cat.Min.* 51.1, *Comp. Nic. et Cras.* 4.2–3; cf. App. *Celt.* 18.

⁵⁷ *Ant.* 20.2, *Brut.* 27.6; cf. App. *B.Civ.* 4.2.6–7. *Cic.* 46.2 has "more than two hundred."

greater prominence if they had some parallel in the excerpts of the other hero. Again a difficulty arises: is it possible that all the parallels between the *Lives* were already to be found in the excerpts, or did Plutarch choose to reread certain sources scanning for additional similarities? Here I tend to credit most parallels to his much more thorough knowledge of Greek authors, aided by his excellent memory, rather than to rereading. It seems likely, for instance, that he encountered Hannibal's plan to spare Fabius' fields while making excerpts from his Roman reading, and immediately saw that he could parallel it to Pericles' famous promise in Thucydides.⁵⁸ Again, when reading of the fate of Crassus, unwittingly playing Pentheus, he may have recalled the story connecting Euripides' dramas to the end of the Sicilian expedition, when Athenians' won their freedom by singing Euripidean choruses.⁵⁹

It might be supposed that the *Ap.reg.* would be especially useful in establishing how Plutarch planned complementary anecdotes between two lives of a pair. However, the fact that *Ap.reg.* represents only a limited selection from a much larger store of anecdotes makes it difficult for us to trace his thinking in this manner. Anecdotes are preserved for only four pairs, *Per.-Fab.*, *Pyrrh.-Mar.*, *Ages.-Pomp.*, and *Alex.-Caes.*, and these do not show striking parallels of detail.

This analysis of the anecdote collections supports the hypothesis that Plutarch made for his use several different kinds of notebooks or commonplace books which aided in the composition of his *Parallel Lives*. He collected anecdotes of statesmen or other military or political figures, perhaps arranging them by cities, by protagonist, or both, and further organized them, when he planned a particular *Life*, in the order to be used for that work. In addition, he probably made historical summaries that permitted him to manipulate the historical material of his sources and combine it artfully with the anecdotes he had col-

⁵⁸ Cf. Thuc. 2.13.1; Plut. *Per.* 33.3, *Fab.* 7.2–3.

⁵⁹ Cf. *Nic.* 29.2–5, perhaps from Satyrus, and *Crass.* 33.3–7.

lected. Other notebooks contained the philosophical *hypomnemata* well documented by Van der Stockt and his collaborators, and still others the institutions which figure especially in the *Greek and Roman Questions*. Although much of the collecting had been done before the *Lives* were envisaged, this flexible system of notes that could be rearranged for specific purposes would be an ideal springboard for the *Lives*.⁶⁰

July, 2014

Department of Classics
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599
pastadte@live.unc.edu

⁶⁰ See also P. A. Stadter, "Notes and Anecdotes: Observations on Cross-genre Apophthegmata," in A. G. Nikolaidis (ed.), *The Unity of Plutarch's Work* (Berlin/New York 2008) 53–66, which compares anecdotes from the *Praecepta ger. reip.* that appear also in the *Parallel Lives*, *Apophthegmata regum*, and other *Moralia*. It concludes that Plutarch regularly reshaped anecdotes for their context, especially in the *Parallel Lives*.

I am grateful to Luc van der Stockt for sponsoring the original 2001 Leuven colloquium, to the discussants and audience there, to further conversations with Chris Pelling, Mark Beck, and Tasos Nikolaidis, and to the anonymous reader for comments and corrections. Errors which remain should be ascribed to the obduracy of the author.