Perhaps you will have heard something about me, although it is uncertain whether my poor and obscure name will travel far through time and space. And then perhaps you will want to know what kind of man I was and what happened to the books I wrote, especially those whose reputation has reached you, or of which you have heard some vague report. On the first point, no doubt, there will be various opinions. For almost everyone is driven by their own whims, not the truth, and there is no moderation when it comes to praise or blame.

I was, however, one of your race, a mere mortal man, of neither particularly high nor particularly low origins, although from an ancient family, as Augustus Caesar puts it speaking of himself. In character I was neither vicious nor immodest, except in so far as I was infected by bad behavior in others. Youth deceived me and manhood corrupted me, but age corrected me. Thus I learned from experience the truth of something that I had read much earlier, that is, that youth and pleasure are vanities. Or rather I was given the lesson by the Creator of all times and ages, who sometimes allows wretched mortals to swell up with baseless pride and to go astray solely in order that they may sooner or later become mindful of their sins and come to know themselves. As a young man, I was not especially strong physically but very agile. I do not boast of being exceptionally good-looking, but in my greener years I had a certain appeal. I had a healthy complexion that was neither too pale nor too dark, and quick eyes. My sight was very sharp for a long time, although it became unexpectedly much weaker in my sixties when I had to resort reluctantly to the aid of a lens. My body was always very sound, until the coming of old age beset me with the usual array of ills.