

## Chapter 1

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### The Place of Dance in Plutarch's World. Written Traces of a Physical Cultural Practice

ἔνθα ἄν ἴδῃ χορεύοντας. . . *Par. Graec. et Rom.* 41

Dance is closely tied to space, and so it seems a perfect topic to explore the question of local and connected aspects of a cultural practice in Plutarch's world.<sup>1</sup>

Dancing necessarily takes place in a space. The very mention of dance evokes a space, even if the latter is not named or described at all. It might be useful to recall the notorious ambiguity of the Greek word *chorós*, which can mean a place for dancing – a dance floor – or the dancing itself. A case in point is *Iliad* 18.590–2, from the final part of the ekphrasis of Achilles' shield: Ἐν δὲ χορὸν ποίκιλλε περικλυτὸς ἀμφιγυήεις / τῶ ἴκελον οἶόν ποτ' ἐνὶ Κνωσῶ εὐρείῃ / Δαίδαλος ἤσκησεν καλλιπλοκάμῳ Ἀριάδνῃ (“On it the reknowned god of the two strong arms fashioned a dance floor, similar to the one which once in the wide spaces of Knossos Daidalos built for Ariadne of the lovely tresses”, trans. R. Lattimore, adapted). The translation as “dance floor” seems uncontroversial, and yet the word does more than merely evoke a physical space; it anticipates the vignette of young men and young girls enlivening the space with their dances (593–4).<sup>2</sup> This ambiguity of *chorós* points to the perfect interdependence of the dance and its space: the dance floor enables the dancing, and the dancing constitutes a dance floor. It is noteworthy that in the passage at hand, the dance

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Chandra Giroux and Hans Beck for the invitation to the conference at the University of Münster. I delivered an updated version of the paper at the University of Ottawa (online) on Nov. 9, 2020. I am grateful for the questions and comments I received on both occasions. Special thanks also to Zoa Alonso Fernández for her astute observations.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., Postlethwaite 1998: 94–95, and Coray 2016: 255–260 for an overview of interpretations.

floor does not receive any physical attributes; the only specification given is that it looks like another dance floor, one known from myth but equally devoid of material detail. Beyond this almost tautological juxtaposition, the dance floor is first of all characterized by what happens in it, namely the dancing. It is this interactive quality of dance that interests in the context of this essay. Dance transforms the spaces in which it is performed, it singles them out and makes them special. It acts upon its surroundings, including the audience, which is a major factor in the spatial relationality of the dance and which in turn acts upon the dance in a “feedback loop”.<sup>3</sup>

In one way or another, then, the category of space comes into play when dance is addressed, and vice-versa, as Fitzgerald and Spentzou rightly note, one of the parameters that characterise and define space is movement.<sup>4</sup> Unlike what they might seem, spaces are not static and rigid physical entities but, as we know thanks to the sophisticated analyses by Cassirer, Foucault, Lefebvre, Said, and others, they are dynamic constructs informed by agents and ideologies.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, the fundamental role of ancient Greek civic choruses in fostering a sense of belonging to a community is well known. The shared rhythms of communal dancing and singing in the public space attune the individual to the group and strengthen the ties that hold them together.<sup>6</sup> Dance is thus doubly relevant for an enquiry into cultural practice in its relatedness to specific settings. On a larger scale, dance culture in Plutarch’s time is dominated by professional pantomimes who, following in the footsteps of tragedy, performed the ancient myths, some of them travelling widely and acquiring great fame.<sup>7</sup>

Dance and dancers, choruses and dancing, are mentioned frequently in Plutarch’s works. But the enquiry into Plutarch’s views on dance, into who dances in his works, and where and when, is complicated by two factors in particular. On the one hand, hardly any of the passages featuring dancers or dances offer a sustained discussion of the practice. Dance is part of *mousiké*, and so it is not surprising that dance is often lumped together with poetry,

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3 For this concept, see Fischer-Lichte 2008: ch. 3. I am borrowing the phrase “making special” from Habinek 2010.

4 Fitzgerald & Spentzou 2018: 3.

5 See Cassirer 1931 (2009); Foucault 1967; Lefebvre 1974; Said 1978, all of which gave important impulses for the so-called ‘spatial turn’. For ancient Rome, see Alonso Fernández 2016: 17–20.

6 Kowalzig (2004: 56) writes that “a community’s existence and identity were based on its choral rituals”. Among more recent studies on the Greek chorus, see Wilson 2000; Athanassaki & Bowie 2011; Kowalzig 2011; Kurke 2012; Kowalzig & Wilson 2013; Billings, Budelmann & Macintosh 2013; Gagné & Hopman 2013; Calame 2017.

7 See Schlapbach 2020; Wiseman 2014; Hall 2013; Webb 2008; Hall & Wyles 2008; Lada-Richards 2007.

song, music, and festivals.<sup>8</sup> It is part of a set of closely related practices and rarely singled out and examined on its own – with the notable exception of the *Table Talk*, which brings up the subject of dance in various chapters and concludes with an extended discussion of this art (*Quaest. conv.* 747a–748d). One of the outcomes of the research for this essay was in fact the realization that the *Table Talk*, or rather the sophisticated analysis of the formal elements of dance in the last chapter of this work, is like an erratic block in Plutarch’s oeuvre. The detailed attention to dance is not matched in any other work by Plutarch. Of course within the literary tradition of *symposia*, the presence of dance is not an isolated phenomenon. The major model among extant literary drinking parties is Xenophon’s *Symposium*, and given the ubiquitous but cursory mentions of dance elsewhere in Plutarch’s oeuvre, one might suspect that the discussion of dance in the *Table Talk* is first of all prompted by generic convention, in addition to a general interest in culture and erudition typical of the period.<sup>9</sup>

On the other hand, the endeavour of tracing Plutarch’s take on dance as a cultural practice in a connected world must reckon with the overwhelming presence of the past in his writings. It is impossible to address the question of how he represents dance without also examining the role of the past and the function of an erudition largely centred on the past, the famous *paideia* of the sophists of the first and second century CE. So, despite a great abundance of passages that can be assembled via a TLG-search for Greek words to do with dancing, there is little to go by if we want to find out what dances Plutarch witnessed in Chaironeia, Rome, or elsewhere, and what he thought about them in particular.<sup>10</sup> This is very much in line with a broader observation made by F. Naerebout in an essay from 2006: most information we have on ancient dance is generic and ahistoric. It comes from antiquarians, musicologists, sophists, and philosophers, who assemble names of dances or consider the phenomenon as such but offer little on specific dances or specific events that involved dancing. Naerebout argues that help comes from epigraphy, which can go some

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8 Similarly, Görgemanns & Hirsch-Luipold (2010: 251) note that the mentions of music in Plutarch are generally circumstantial.

9 See García López 2002; Schlapbach 2011, 2018: 34–61; Driscoll 2019. Rosell (2019: 23) interprets the chapter as a literary homage to Ammonius, the speaker, who is presented as a new Socrates.

10 Among the most important ones are *choros*, *choreia*, *choreuomai*, *orcheomai*, *orchesis*, *orchestes*, but the Greek dance vocabulary is a lot richer than that, including words such as *skirtao* (to jump), *paizo* (to play, to dance), *kybisto* (to do a somersault), *schema* (dance figure), as well as names of particular dances such as *pyrrhiche*, *kordax*, *emmeleia*, etc. (see Naerebout 1997: 274–289). The present essay does not make any claim to exhaustiveness.

way towards filling the gaps by supplying information on dances performed on specific occasions and in determinate settings.<sup>11</sup>

I would like to add, however, that we should not underestimate the potential of literary accounts of dances belonging to a far away past or to the mythical imagination to illuminate us about the cultural meaning of dance for those who transmit those stories. While telling us little about actual practices, stories featuring dances and dancers are not abstract discussions either, and they may well disclose something about how dance was experienced.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, even the *Table Talk*, which features historical persons as participants, among them Plutarch himself, his brother Lamprias, his teacher Ammonius, and many other known individuals, and thus seems to offer precious glimpses of the world Plutarch inhabited (as opposed to the one he frequented in books), is hardly a window onto Plutarch’s daily life. As noted above, it is a literary work impregnated by generic conventions and bookish knowledge.<sup>13</sup> More importantly, the contrast I just drew up between the world Plutarch inhabited, as opposed to the one he frequented in books, is to some extent an artificial one. Inasmuch as the world we inhabit carries meaning, it is interwoven with the representations, interpretations, and ideas that are articulated in books. The term “world” in the title of this essay comprises therefore both the physical environment and a universe made up of books, stories, and anecdotes.

Perhaps one might go even further and say that a “connected” world is so at least partly thanks to the shared knowledge and views transported in books. At the beginning of the *Table Talk*, Plutarch writes that this dialogue portrays a sample of conversations that took place “in various places both at Rome in your company and among us in Greece” (612e; trans. Clement & Hoffleit).<sup>14</sup> Although the personal pronouns (μεθ’ ὑμῶν – παρ’ ἡμῶν) draw a neat line between “you” and “us”, or Rome and Greece, it does not seem to matter where exactly the conversations took place. This vagueness is indicative of an intellectual and conversational culture straddling the Greek and Roman spheres of the empire, just as contemporary spectacle culture is characterized by travelling pantomimes who draw large audiences in different parts of the empire. At the same time, local traditions of choral dancing

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11 Naerebout 2006. He cautiously notes that “the way in which texts and images relate to actual dances will remain the realm of more or less informed guesses”, and that our knowledge of who danced in the real world, and where and when, is to date very fragmentary (2006: 50).

12 See the more detailed discussion in Schlapbach 2018: 21.

13 See Klotz & Oikonomopoulou 2011.

14 σποράδην πολλάκις ἔν τε Ῥώμῃ μεθ’ ὑμῶν καὶ παρ’ ἡμῶν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι (*Quaest. conv.* 612e).

persist or are newly revived based on transmitted knowledge of earlier practices.<sup>15</sup> Local dance rituals and star dancers enthralling the whole empire exist side by side, representing different facets of imperial dance culture, which are complemented by the rich heritage of past dances whose memory is preserved in stories and anecdotes.

In a way, then, this essay examines *two* cultural practices: dancing and writing, or dancing and the way of writing about it. More to the point, it asks how the written stories about dances of the past in Plutarch’s works can shed light on contemporary notions and perceptions of dancing and in particular on the relationship between dance and space on smaller and larger scales. In the stories about past and mythical dances we find in Plutarch, dance is often combined with other types of kinetic behaviour, especially a flight or an errance, kinetic activities which occupy a different scale of space. More precisely, a dance often marks the beginning or the end of a journey, highlighting a transition from order to disorder (and vice versa) and thus structuring time as well as well as space. One could say that according to these tales dance channels kinetic energy, and in so doing it organizes both space and time.

In what follows, I will offer a quick survey of the type of contexts where dance is mentioned and then discuss of a couple of chapters of the *Parallela Graeca et Romana*, where the motif of the flight in combination with dance is prominent. Finally I will turn to a selection of passages from the *Lives* and the *Moralia*, the latter describing the dances of the afterlife which perhaps best illustrate the liminality of dance.

### Who Dances in Plutarch?

Plutarch likes to quote the great classics, and many mentions of choruses or of dancing occur in poetic quotations. Homer’s lines about wine yielding laughter and dancing, for instance, are quoted in the *Table Talk* (*Quaest. conv.* 645a) and in the treatise *On talkativeness*. In the latter, it is really the subsequent line from *Odyssey* 14 that is at stake:

‘οἶνος γὰρ ἀνώγει / ἠλεός, ὅς τ’ ἐφέηκε πολύφρονά περ μάλ’ ἀεῖσαι, / καί θ’  
ἀπαλὸν γελάσαι καί τ’ ὀρχήσασθαι ἀνῆκε.’ καί τί τὸ δεινότατον; ὦδῆ καὶ

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<sup>15</sup> See Graf 2022.

γέλως καὶ ὄρχησις; οὐδὲν ἄχρι τούτων· καὶ τι ἔπος προέηκεν, ὅπερ τ’ ἄρρητον ἄμεινον’

‘For wine (says the Poet) urges a man to sing, though he be wise, And stirs to merry laughter and the dance’. And what is here so very dreadful? Singing and laughing and dancing? Nothing so far – ‘But it lets slip some word better unsaid’ (*De garr.* 503e, quoting *Od.* 14.463–6; trans. W.C. Helmbold).<sup>16</sup>

The lines, which in the *Odyssey* are addressed by Odysseus to Eumaeus, evoke the *symposium* and its age-old role of testing, surpassing, and ultimately confirming the boundaries of decent behaviour. Dancing is included in a set of physical practices (along with singing and laughing) that are in themselves not judged negatively but that seem to prepare the ground for verbal transgressions. Such quotations and anecdotes characterise a literary culture typical of the beginning Second Sophistic, in which the past blends in seamlessly with the present. The literary tradition provides a treasure trove of memorable lines and anecdotes that articulate thoughts, ideas, and values around dance that are still meaningful in the present. The examples that could be adduced are abundant. In the treatise on whether an old man should be in charge of government (*An seni respublica gerenda sit*), Pindar’s line χοροὶ καὶ Μοῖσα καὶ Ἀγλαΐα (fr. 199 Snell-Maehler) serves to highlight the claim that “theatrical exhibitions, festive processions, distributions of food, ‘choruses and the Muse and Aglaïa’, and the constant worship of some god, smooth the brows of legislators in every senate and assembly and repay its troubles many times over with pleasure and enjoyment” (*An seni* 787b–c; trans. H.N. Fowler, adapted).<sup>17</sup> The fact that dance is lumped together with a series of other entertainments is typical.<sup>18</sup>

Looking for more precise answers to the simple questions of who dances in Plutarch, and where and when, the list that can be drawn up includes such diverse people and occasions as philosophers, tragedians, and other educated members of the elites past and present, as well as women, farmers, boys, slaves, and the disembodied soul. The anecdotes about Socrates’ alleged dance practice, mentioned in Xenophon’s *Symposium* in the spirit of a playful exploration of boundaries just mentioned, recur more than once in Plutarch, for

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16 The lines are quoted also at *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 179e–f; a version of the idea became proverbial (see Tosi <sup>2</sup>2017 no. 907).

17 See also *Lyc.* 21.3 and Senn 1978: 60–61.

18 See Senn 1978: 60–61.

instance in *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* and in the *Table Talk*.<sup>19</sup> In the latter work, the tragic poet Phrynichus is adduced as inventor of countless dance figures, while Plutarch’s brother Lamprias serves as an arbiter for the dancing *paidēs* (boys or slaves) because he is known as a fine dancer in the *palaistra*, where he practices the pyrrhic and “shadow-boxing” (χειρονομία).<sup>20</sup> According to the *Life of Lycurgus*, young Spartan women were encouraged “to dance and sing at certain festivals when the young men were present as spectators”, and Samian flute-girls and ballet dancers (ὄρχηστρίδες) are credited with immense power over men in the *Amatorius*.<sup>21</sup>

In line with this heterogeneous list, the contexts in which dance occurred are also diverse. In the case of free male adults, for instance, it makes all the difference where they perform their dances: while Plutarch’s brother Lamprias may dance in the *palaistra* in order to keep fit and offer an example to the young, he would not do so at the *symposion*, where dancing is an entertainment provided by slaves or professionals. Some passages reflect real-life experience, others transport bookish knowledge.

## Dance and Flight

Antiquarian, bookish knowledge is the subject of the *Parallela Graeca et Romana*, a work transmitted under the name of Plutarch which juxtaposes Greek and Roman versions of the same type of myth. According to the latest extensive treatment of the *Parallela Graeca et Romana*, this is a spurious work, perhaps a parody of the tendency to compare Greek and Roman culture so prominent in Plutarch.<sup>22</sup> As such, however, the *Parallela Graeca et Romana* neatly encapsulate elements we also find in the canonical works. The last two pairs of tales feature dancing in ways that can almost be read as a blueprint for some of the connotations of dancing that recur elsewhere in Plutarch. The collection concludes with a pair of tales mentioning each a founder of a city (ch. 41, 315f–316a):

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19 *De tuenda san.* 124e: τῷ Σωκράτει γυμνάσιον ἦν οὐκ ἀηδὲς ἢ ὄρχησις (“to Socrates, dance was a not unpleasant exercise”; cf. *De tuenda san.* 130e; *Quaest. conv.* 711e).

20 Phrynichus: 732f; cf. TrGF 1, 3 T 15; Lamprias: 747ab. Some sources suggest that under certain circumstances dance was an acceptable activity for free males in classical Athens: Aristoph. *Frogs* 727–730; Pl. *Laws* 2, 654a–655b.

21 *Lyc.* 14.2; *Amat.* 753d.

22 Ibáñez Chacón 2014. Schneider 2019 adduces fresh arguments for the authenticity (albeit without addressing the incriminated style of the work).

ΗΓΗΣΙΣΤΡΑΤΟΣ ἀνὴρ Ἐφέσιος ἐμφύλιον φόνον δράσας ἔφυγεν εἰς Δελφοὺς καὶ ἠρώτα τὸν θεὸν ποῦ οἰκήσειεν. ὁ δ’ Ἀπόλλων ἀνεῖλεν ἔνθα ἂν ἴδῃ χορεύοντας ἀγροίκους θαλλοῖς ἐλαίας ἐστεφανωμένους. γενόμενος δὲ κατὰ τινα τόπον τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ θεασάμενος φύλλοις ἐλαίας ἐστεφανωμένους γεωργούς καὶ χορεύοντας, ἔκτισεν αὐτοῦ πόλιν καὶ ἐκάλεσεν Ἐλαιοῦντα· ὡς Πυθοκλῆς ὁ Σάμιος ἐν τρίτῳ Γεωργικῶν.

ΤΗΛΕΓΟΝΟΣ Ὀδυσσέως καὶ Κίρκης ἐπ’ ἀναζήτησιν τοῦ πατρὸς πεμφθεὶς ἔμαθε πόλιν κτίσαι, ἔνθα ἂν ἴδῃ γεωργούς ἐστεφανωμένους καὶ χορεύοντας. γενόμενος δὲ κατὰ τινα τόπον τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ θεασάμενος ἀγροίκους πρηνίνοις κλάδοις ἐστεφανωμένους καὶ ὀρχήσει προσευκαίρουντας, ἔκτισε πόλιν, ἀπὸ τοῦ συγκυρήματος Πρηνίστον ὀνομάσας, ἣν Ῥωμαῖοι παραγωγῶς Πραίνεστον καλοῦσιν· ὡς ἱστορεῖ Ἀριστοκλῆς ἐν τρίτῳ Ἰταλικῶν.

Hegesistratus, an Ephesian, having murdered one of his kinsmen, fled to Delphi, and inquired of the god where he should make his home. And Apollo answered: “Where you shall see rustics dancing, garlanded with olive-branches.” When he had come to a certain place in Asia and had observed farmers garlanded with olive-leaves and dancing, there he founded a city and called it Elaeüs. So Pythocles the Samian in the third book of his Treatise on Husbandry.

When Telegonus, the son of Odysseus and Circe, was sent to search for his father, he was instructed to found a city where he should see farmers garlanded and dancing. When he had come to a certain place in Italy, and had observed rustics garlanded with twigs of oak (*prininoi*) and diverting themselves with dancing, he founded a city, and from the coincidence named it Prinistum, which the Romans, by a slight change, call Praeneste. So Aristocles relates in the third book of his Italian History (trans. F.C. Babbitt).

The dancing, a key element in these tales, is the occasion for the farmers to wear garlands. And in each tale the type of garland (olive, oak) is the *aition* of the name of the newly founded city (Elaeus, Prinistum). In his 2014 dissertation, Álvaro Ibáñez Chacón notes the etymological *aition* of the name of the city, and he considers the oracle in these two tales as a variant of a more common oracle according to which someone must point the prospective



founder to the right place by showing it to him or by handing over a handful of soil (*traditio per terram / glaebam*).<sup>23</sup>

But is that all? In a context that is all about territory, or finding the right place for a new city, are we sure that the dancing has no significance in itself? If these tales were only about the etymological connection between the olive or the oak and the names of the new cities, what is the point of introducing dancing farmers? It is intriguing that Servius transmits the same etymology of the name Praeneste but does not mention dancing farmers, and it does not look like he merely abridged a longer version that included them:

Praeneste locus est haud longe ab urbe, dictus ἀπὸ τῶν πρίνων, id est, ab ilicibus, quae illic abundant (*Aen.* 7.681).<sup>24</sup>

Contrarily to what we read in Servius, the olive and the oak we encounter in the *Parallela Graeca et Romana* are not just part of the natural environment; they have been integrated into a festive ritual which allows the farmers to wear garlands and dance. This version seems to be presupposed also in Strabo and Pliny the Elder, who transmit Polystephanos and Stephane respectively as former names of Praeneste.<sup>25</sup> But while the garlands account for the name to be given to the future city, it is the dancing that singles out the place for its foundation: where the farmers dance, there is the right place for the new city. In these tales the dancing makes a place special, and it marks a new beginning. It prepares the ground, both literally and metaphorically, for a city, which will be set off from the land worked by the farmers.<sup>26</sup> The space destined for the new city is neither farmland – the farmers won’t

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23 Ibáñez Chacón 2014: 483. See Strosetzki 1958: 5–9. Konon transmits an example of *traditio per terram* (*Narr.* 25), and it is intriguing that it features “playing children” (παῖδες ... παίζοντες): they playfully formed bread loafs out of mud and handed them over to the Cretans who had been searching for Daidalos (*paizo* is one of the Greek verbs for dancing). Similarly also Plutarch, *Quaest. Graec.* 22, 296d–e.

24 Ibáñez Chacón 2014: 485f. assumes that these tales are pure fiction, invented by the pseudo-Plutarchan narrator following established patterns. As such, they might actually reflect the most common ideas associated with dance (the phenomenon is discussed in Menand 2018). On mythical and antiquarian repertoires establishing and canonizing knowledge in the early empire, see König & Woolf 2013; Zucker 2013; Horster & Reitz 2010; König & Whitmarsh 2007; for this kind of endeavour in Plutarch, see Oikonomopoulou 2013; Morgan 2011.

25 Strabo 5.3.11; Pliny, *nat. hist.* 3.64. See Ibáñez Chacón 2014: 485.

26 A parallel may be provided by a connection between bull-headed dancers and the foundation of a city, discussed by Rothwell 2007: 45–52.

trample their crops<sup>27</sup> – nor an untouched wasteland; it is a different, liminal zone halfway between nature and culture, characterized only by the dancing that takes place in it.

The simple fact that dancing serves to set off the space in which it takes place and make it special recalls an anecdote we find several times in Plutarch, for instance in *Apophthegmata Laconica* 219e:

Δαμωνίδας ταχθεὶς ἔσχατος τοῦ χοροῦ ὑπὸ τοῦ τὸν χορὸν ἰστάντος ‘εὖγε’ εἶπεν, ‘ὦ χοραγέ, ἐξεῦρες πῶς καὶ αὕτη ἡ χώρα ἄτιμος οὔσα ἔντιμος γένηται.’

Damonidas, being assigned to the last place in the chorus by the director, exclaimed, “Good! You have discovered, chorus leader, how this place which is without honour may be made a place of honour” (trans. F.C. Babbitt, adapted).<sup>28</sup>

If this Damonidas were asked what it really is that ennobles the place he is going to take up, perhaps he would reply that it is not so much the dancing as his own self. Still, he occupies his spot as a dancer, and again it seems that a physical space is singled out and transformed by what happens in it.

Dancing is mentioned also in the penultimate chapter of the *Parallela Graeca et Romana*. In the two tales, dance means a moment of heightened visibility for two maidens, Marpessa and Salia.<sup>29</sup> Each of them is snatched away by a man, who flees with her (ch. 40, 315e-f):

ΕΥΗΝΟΣ Ἄρεος καὶ Στερόπης τὴν Οἰνομάου γήμας Ἀλκίππην ἐγέννησε θυγατέρα Μάρπησσαν, ἣν παρθένον ἐφρούρει. καὶ Ἴδας ὁ Ἀφαρέως ἀρπάσας ἐκ χοροῦ ἔφυγεν. ὁ δὲ πατήρ διώξας καὶ μὴ συλλαβῶν εἰς τὸν Λυκόρμαν ἔρριπεν ἑαυτὸν ποταμὸν καὶ ἀθάνατος ἐγένετο· ὡς Δοσίθεος ἐν πρώτῳ Αἰτωλικῶν.

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<sup>27</sup> I owe this observation to Zoa Alonso Fernández, who also notes that dancing is assigned to the post-agricultural season at Hor. c. 3.18.6–16 and Calp. *Ecl.* 4.127–131.

<sup>28</sup> See also *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 191f; *Conv. sept. sap.* 149a; *Apophth. Lac.* 219e; similar remarks are made by Agesilaus at *Apophth. Lac.* 208d and by Aristippus at Diog. Laert. 2.73. See Sansone 2012.

<sup>29</sup> Dancing as occasions for courtship are common. Plutarch mentions the “custom for the maidens of Ceos to go in a company to the public shrines and spend the day together, and their suitors watched their sports and dances” (*De mulierum virtutes* 12 [249d]).

ANNIOS δὲ Τούσκων βασιλεὺς ἔχων θυγατέρα εὖμορφον τοῦνομα Σαλίαν, παρθένον ἐτήρει. Κάθητος δ’ ἐκ τῶν ἐπισήμων ἰδὼν τὴν παρθένον παίζουσαν ἠράσθη, καὶ μὴ στέγων τὸν ἔρωτα ἤρπασε καὶ ἤγεν εἰς Ῥώμην. ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἐπιδιώξας καὶ μὴ συλλαβὼν ἤλατο εἰς τὸν Παρεοῦσιον ποταμόν, ὃς Ἀνίων μετωνομάσθη· τῇ δὲ Σαλία συγγενόμενος Κάθητος ἐποίησατο Λατῖνον καὶ Σάλιον, ἀφ’ ὧν οἱ εὐγενέστατοι κατῆγον τὸ γένος· ὡς Ἀριστείδης Μιλήσιος καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Πολυῖστωρ ἐν τρίτῳ Ἰταλικῶν.

Evenus, the son of Ares and Sterope, married Alcippe, the daughter of Oenomaüs, and begat a daughter Marpessa, whom he endeavoured to keep a virgin. Idas, the son of Aphareus, seized her from a band of dancers and fled. Her father gave chase; but, since he could not capture them, he hurled himself into the Lycormas river and became immortal. So Dositheüs in the first book of his Aetolian History.

Annius, king of the Etruscans, had a beautiful daughter named Salia, whom he endeavoured to keep a virgin. But Cathetus, one of the nobles, saw the maiden dancing and fell in love with her; nor could he control his passion, but seized her and set out with her for Rome. Her father gave chase, but since he could not capture them, he leaped into the river Pareüsium, and from him its name was changed to Anio. And Cathetus consorted with Salia and begat Latinus and Salius, from whom the most noble patricians traced their descent. So Aristeides the Milesian, and also Alexander Polyhistor in the third book of his Italian History (trans. F.C. Babbitt).

The Roman version is more detailed: the destination of the couple is Rome, where they become the ancestors of important Romans, and the *narratio Romana* contains an *aition*, the name of the river Anio. It must be noted that whereas Latinus is known from many sources as the mythical ancestor of the Latin people, albeit with different genealogies, Salius is not attested as a *nomen gentile* but as the designation of the priests performing a ritual dance, the *tripudium* (see below). The name of the maiden, Salia, emphasises the dancing, which is the starting point for the plot of this tale.<sup>30</sup> While in ch. 41, the dance of the farmers marks the

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30 Slightly more detail on Marpessa’s dance is offered in schol. Hom. *Il.* 9.557: ἤρπασε τὴν κόρην χορεύουσιν ἐν Ἀρτέμιδος (see Ibáñez Chacón 2014: 476).

end of an errance, here the dance of the girls or young women gives way to a flight towards a new place and, at least in the Roman version, a new beginning. The rivalry between the father and the abductor is strong; the girls are snatched away from one community in order to be integrated into a new one, while the father dies as he pursues the couple. The dance clearly occupies different moments in the two sets of tales, but its association with a disruption of the community, a flight or departure, and a new settling can also be observed in ch. 41, where Hegesistratus committed a murder and flees, and Telegonus searches for his missing father, before they each found a new city.

A closer look at occurrences of dance in Plutarch reveals that these tales from the *Parallela Graeca et Romana* offer a pattern that is found elsewhere too. Perhaps the most conspicuous parallel is the *Life of Theseus*. Not only is it intriguing that Ariadne is known for having received a dance floor built for her by none other than Daidalos (see above, p. 16), but the fact that Theseus took her with him on his flight from King Minos is similar to the tales about Marpessa and Salia.<sup>31</sup> Also, the institution of the Crane Dance, or Geranos, on Delos clearly marks the beginning of a new tradition which, Plutarch points out, is allegedly still alive (21.1-2):

Ἐκ δὲ τῆς Κρήτης ἀποπλέων εἰς Δῆλον κατέσχε· καὶ τῷ θεῷ θύσας καὶ ἀναθεὶς τὸ ἀφροδίσιον ὃ παρὰ τῆς Ἀριάδνης ἔλαβεν, ἐχόρευσε μετὰ τῶν ἡϊθέων 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 ἀπάντων.

On his voyage from Crete, Theseus put in at Delos, and having sacrificed to the god and dedicated in his temple the image of Aphrodite which he had received from Ariadne, he danced with his youths a dance which they say is still performed by the Delians, being an imitation of the circling passages in the Labyrinth, and consisting of certain rhythmic involutions and evolutions. This kind of dance, as Dicaearchus tells us, is called by the Delians The Crane, and Theseus danced it

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<sup>31</sup> The sources mention only that Ariadne fell in love with Theseus without dwelling on the precise circumstances (Plut. *Thes.* 19.1-3; Pherecydes, FGrH 3, 148a). But of course the labyrinth, whose connection with dance will be borne out by the Geranos, plays a role.

round the altar called Keraton, which is constructed of horns (*kerata*) taken entirely from the left side of the head (trans. B. Perrin).

The *Life of Theseus* is known for its methodological remarks in the preface, where Plutarch explains that after having composed the Lives of Lycurgus and Numa, he now ventures into the uncharted territory of myth, subordinating it to reason and making it look like history. In this connection, it is not without interest if Plutarch mentions that the dance instituted by Theseus is “still now” performed (ἔτι νῦν), even though he cautiously refers to his sources (λέγουσι), among which is Dicaearchus (the passage is fr. 85 Wehrli) and perhaps also Callimachus, who describes the Geranos in his *Hymn to Delos* (lines 310–3). He does not make it entirely clear whether the generic “they say” refers to these earlier authors, or to written sources closer to his time, or even to eye witnesses of his generation. As a matter of fact it is very unlikely that the Geranos was still performed during Plutarch’s lifetime.<sup>32</sup> But Plutarch may have been interested in suggesting a continuity between the mythical past and the present, where the persistence of the ritual would offer a sort of guarantee for the veracity of the mythic tale, and the tale would in turn motivate the ritual.

Be that as it may, within the myth the performance of the Geranos highlights Theseus’ successful flight from Crete with Ariadne and the end of the recurring sacrifice of Athenian youths demanded by King Minos. It is noteworthy that Plutarch describes the dance as an imitation of the Labyrinth, interpreting it thus as a choreographic representation of Theseus’ exploit and escape from danger after having slain the Minotaur.<sup>33</sup> On this view, the dance not only celebrated Theseus’ victory and overcoming of a bloody ritual, it reenacted them, giving the progress from violent confrontation to the conquest of safety a choreographic expression.

The dances discussed so far are beginnings or end points of journeys, and they mark moments of transition: from flight or errance to security (*Par. Graec. et Rom.* 41; *Thes.* 21), from the family of the father towards a new union (*Par. Graec. et Rom.* 40; *Thes.* 21). In their very concrete way of channelling and organizing kinetic energy, they are a civilizing force that establishes order in society.

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32 Delos was destroyed in the first half of the first century BCE and seems to have been abandoned after that. On the Geranos, see Lawler 1946; Detienne, 1983; Naerebout 1997: 286 n. 656, and the literature quoted *ibid.* 131f.

33 See Olsen 2021. Naerebout (1997: 286 n. 656) doubts that there is a historical connection between the Geranos and the Labyrinth.

### Civilizing Dances, Dangerous Dances

Plutarch attributes the institution of civilizing dances in the Roman world to King Numa (*Life of Numa* 8.3):

οὕτω δὴ μετέωρον καὶ τετραχυμένον δῆμον οὐ μικρᾶς οὐδὲ φαύλης οἰόμενος εἶναι  
πραγματείας μεταχειρίσασθαι καὶ μετακοσμήσαι πρὸς εἰρήνην, ἐπηγάγετο τὴν  
ἀπὸ τῶν θεῶν βοήθειαν, τὰ μὲν πολλὰ θυσίαις καὶ πομπαῖς καὶ χορείαις, ἃς  
αὐτὸς ὠργίασε καὶ κατέστησεν, ἅμα σεμνότητι διαγωγὴν ἐπίχαριν καὶ  
φιλόφρονον ἡδονὴν ἐχούσαις, δημαγωγῶν καὶ τιθασεύων τὸ θυμοειδὲς καὶ  
φιλοπόλεμον·

Numa, judging it to be no slight or trivial undertaking to mollify and newly fashion for peace so presumptuous and stubborn a people, called in the gods to aid and assist him. It was for the most part by sacrifices, processions, and dances, which he himself appointed and conducted, and which mingled with their solemnity a diversion full of charm and a beneficent pleasure, that he won the people’s favour and tamed their fierce and warlike tempers (trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

This passage recalls Livy’s famous account of the introduction of *ludi scaenici* to Rome (7.2). Livy also notes that the dancers – who in his account were brought in from Etruria to appease a plague in the year 364 – were new for “a warlike people” like the Romans, who had hitherto known only circus games, and he has a similar emphasis on the mixture of seriousness and jesting in the newly introduced dances.<sup>34</sup> Plutarch, however, attributes the institution of choral dances (*choreiai*, Bernadotte Perrin translates “religious dances”) to a much earlier period; also, he depicts Numa as a choreographer and, hence, the dances as indigenous. Numa’s innovation marks the beginning of civilization for the Romans, and

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<sup>34</sup> Liv. 7.2.3–4: “When neither human wisdom nor the help of Heaven was found to mitigate the scourge, men gave way to superstitious fears, and, amongst other efforts to disarm the wrath of the gods, are said also to have instituted scenic entertainments. This was a new departure for a warlike people, whose only exhibitions had been those of the circus; but indeed it began in a small way, as most things do, and even so was imported from abroad. Without any singing, without imitating the action of singers, dancers who had been brought in from Etruria danced to the strains of the flautist and performed not ungraceful movements in the Tuscan fashion” (trans. B.O. Foster, adapted); *et cum vis morbi nec humanis consiliis nec ope divina levaretur, victis superstitione animis ludi quoque scenici, nova res bellicoso populo—nam circi modo spectaculum fuerat,—inter alia caelestis irae placamina instituti dicuntur; ceterum parva quoque, ut ferme principia omnia, et ea ipsa peregrina res fuit. sine carmine ullo, sine imitandorum carminum actu, ludiones ex Etruria acciti ad tibicinis modos saltantes haud indecoros motus more Tusco dabant.* See also Hor. *ep.* 2.1.139ff.

probably a more settled life, with processions and dances instead of incursions and battles, even if some of the dances involved carrying weapons.

The *Life of Numa* also contains a description of the priesthood of the Salians, with a development on their name which incidentally raises the question of whether the Salians are indigenous or not (13.4-5):

τούτων οὖν φύλακας καὶ ἀμφιπόλους ἀπέδειξε τοὺς Σάλιους ἱερεῖς. Σάλιοι δὲ ἐκλήθησαν, οὐχ, ὡς ἔνιοι μυθολογοῦσι, Σαμόθρακος ἀνδρὸς ἢ Μαντινέως, ὄνομα Σάλιου, πρώτου τὴν ἐνόπλιον ἐκδιδάξανκρούοντες. ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τῆς ὀρχήσεως αὐτῆς, ἀλτικῆς οὔσης, ἣν ὑπορχοῦνται διαπορευόμενοι τὴν πόλιν, ὅταν τὰς ἱερὰς πέλτας ἀναλάβωσιν ἐν τῷ Μαρτίῳ μηνί, φοινικοῦς μὲν ἐνδεδυμένοι χιτωνίσκους, μίτραις δὲ χαλκαῖς ἐπεζωσμένοι πλατεῖαις καὶ κράνη χαλκᾶ φοροῦντες, ἐγχειρίδιοις δὲ μικροῖς τὰ ὄπλα κρούοντες. ἡ δὲ ἄλλη τῆς ὀρχήσεως ποδῶν ἔργον ἐστί· κινοῦνται γὰρ ἐπιτερπῶς, ἔλιγμούς τινας καὶ μεταβολὰς ἐν ῥυθμῷ τάχος ἔχοντι καὶ πυκνότητα μετὰ ῥώμης καὶ κουφότητος ἀποδιδόντες.

For the watch and care of these bucklers, then, he appointed the priesthood of the Salii. Now the Salii were so named, not, as some tell the tale, from a man of Samothrace or Mantinea, named Salius, who first taught the dance in armour; but rather from the leaping which characterized the dance itself. This dance they perform when they carry the sacred bucklers through the streets of the city in the month of March, clad in purple tunics, girt with broad belts of bronze, wearing bronze helmets on their heads, and carrying small daggers with which they strike the shields. But the dance is chiefly a matter of step; for they move gracefully, and execute with vigour and agility certain shifting convolutions, in quick and oft-recurring rhythm.

Plutarch considers the Salians as indigenous, and the etymology which derives the name of these priests from *salio*, to dance, is the one retained also by Varro and Festus.<sup>35</sup> But alternative accounts circulated – Varro knew both hypotheses – even though the attempt to

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35 Varro, *De lingua latina* 5.85; Festus p. 329; Serv. *Aen.* 2.325; 8.285. 663; Dion. Hal. *Ant.* 2.71.3. On Plutarch favouring Latin etymologies over Greek ones in *Romulus* and *Numa*, see Buszard 2011.

trace the *Salii* back to Greek roots, just as it was done for other Roman religious institutions, seems to be historically unfounded.<sup>36</sup> Samothrace and Mantinea are probably not chosen randomly: the former is known for its cult of *Magna Mater*, and in the latter a festival in honour of *Persephone* and *Kore* was celebrated, the *Koragia*. Dancing was very likely prominent in both of them, and so they must have seemed plausible places of origin for the Roman *Salii*.<sup>37</sup>

Moving on to protagonists closer to Plutarch’s own time, we find less positive instances of dancing in the *Lives*. The *Life of Caesar* recounts an incident involving a Libyan dancer who put Caesar’s army into peril on their campaign against the Numidians, allies of the republican forces (52.5–6):

καί ποτε τῶν Καίσαρος ἰππέων σχολήν ἀγόντων (ἔτυχε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀνὴρ Λίβυς ἐπιδεικνύμενος ὄρχησιν ἅμα καὶ μοναυλῶν θαύματος ἀξίως, οἱ δὲ τερπόμενοι καθῆντο τοῖς παισὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἐπιτρέψαντες), ἐξαίφνης περιελθόντες ἐμβάλλουσι οἱ πολέμοι, καὶ τοὺς μὲν αὐτοῦ κτείνουσι, τοῖς δὲ εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον προτροπάδην ἐλαυνομένοις συνεισέπεσον. εἰ δὲ μὴ Καῖσαρ αὐτός, ἅμα δὲ Καίσαρι Πολλίων Ἀσίνιος βοηθοῦντες ἐκ τοῦ χάρακος ἔσχον τὴν φυγὴν, διεπέπρακτ’ ἂν ὁ πόλεμος.

Indeed, while Caesar’s horsemen were once off duty and a Libyan was showing them how he could dance and play the *aulos* at the same time in an astonishing manner, and they had committed their horses to the slaves and were sitting delighted on the ground, the enemy suddenly surrounded and attacked them, killed some of them and followed hard upon the heels of the rest as they were driven headlong into camp. And if Caesar himself, and with him Asinius Pollio, had not come from the ramparts to their aid and checked their flight, the war would have been at an end (trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

The detail about this dancer’s multitasking is interesting, because at the very end of the republican period, in the 20s BCE, the sources highlight a new division of labour between

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36 Isidor, *orig.* 18.50: *Saltatores autem nominatos Varro dicit ab Arcade Salio, quem Aeneas in Italiam secum adduxit, qui que primo docuit Romanos adolescentes nobiles saltare.* The different ancient accounts are discussed by Heinzel 1996.

37 On the *Salians*, see Prescendi 2022; Castaldo 2022; Ferri 2021. Curtis (forthcoming) notes that their dance serves to sanctify the boundaries of the city.



dancers and musicians that allowed dancers more freedom of movement.<sup>38</sup> It must therefore have impressed not just Caesar’s horsemen, but perhaps even more so Plutarch’s readers, that this Libyan was able to dance and play the *aulos* at the same time. Dance is essentially a distraction here, and the Libyan dancer almost made the Romans lose the war as they barely managed to escape the assault.<sup>39</sup>

An essentially negative connotation of dance, which in this episode opens the door to calamity, recurs in many contexts, and especially where dance is associated with Africa or Asia. A passage from the *Life of Antony* is a case in point (24.2). After reaching Asia in 41 BCE, Antony lives a life of luxury, with Kings and Queens at his doorstep, and

luteplayers like Anaxenor, *aulos*-players like Xanthus, one Metrodorus, a dancer, and such other rabble of Asiatic performers, who surpassed in impudence and effrontery the pests from Italy, poured like a flood into his quarters and held sway there. It was past all endurance that everything was devoted to these extravagances (Ἀναξήνορες δὲ κιθαρῳδοὶ καὶ Ζοῦθοι χοραῦλαι καὶ Μητροδωρὸς τις ὀρχηστῆς καὶ τοιοῦτος ἄλλος Ἀσιανῶν ἀκροαμάτων θίασος, ὑπερβαλλομένων λαμυρία καὶ βωμολοχία τὰς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας κῆρας, εἰσερρῦη καὶ διώκει τὴν αὐλήν, οὐδὲν ἦν ἀνεκτόν, εἰς ταῦτα φορουμένων ἀπάντων; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

The dancer, Metrodorus, has a Greek name, but he is lumped together with a band of Asiatic entertainers, who are clearly (and unfavorably) set off from their Italian counterparts, even if the latter do not fare much better here. Ewen Bowie notes that “the types of performer mentioned (sc. in this passage) belong to the less intellectual end of the spectrum of Greek culture, though clearly these types of performer acquired international reputations and correspondingly generous honours and rewards in Plutarch’s time”.<sup>40</sup> This captures well the ambivalent reputation of dancers in the early empire, which was often tied to their far-away places of origin.<sup>41</sup>

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38 Livy 7.2.

39 Pelling (2011: 401–402) notes that the incident is not mentioned elsewhere, though it may be linked to events recounted in *Bellum Africanum* 52.

40 Bowie 2004–2005: 119.

41 See Schlapbach 2020 and Andújar, forthcoming, who discusses ancient Greek and Roman dance as a site of racialization.

Evidently, then, the origin and ethnic or cultural affiliations of dancers were a point of interest for Plutarch. This is, however, not unique to him or his generation, nor is the negative connotation of foreign dancers: as early as in Homer, dance is more than once associated with non-Greeks: with the Trojans or the Phaeacians (as Edith Hall showed in an essay from 2010). Dance, as much as it permeated and defined ancient Greek culture, was always susceptible to accusations of exoticism, excess, and luxury. The civic choruses are one thing, but paid entertainers or dancing slaves, male and female, are another. Plutarch transports versions of these inherited misgivings, all the while preserving the positive connotations of dance as marking moments of respite, safety, and harmony, which may be placed in between periods of danger, hostility, and flight.

### **Dancing in the Other World**

The idea of dancing as a (provisional) endpoint of a journey is perhaps taken furthest in the dances of the afterlife. Ancient Greek choral dances on the whole can be characterized as expressing civic cohesion, harmony, and well-being, and by analogy the *choreiai* of the disembodied souls, too, have entirely positive connotations. The souls of those who have lived well will partake in them.

The depiction of blissful dances in the afterlife, which is essentially a Platonic motif, is informed by the role of dance in ancient mystery cults.<sup>42</sup> Our knowledge of these cults in Eleusis, Samothrace, and many other places, is notoriously scant, but Plutarch contributes several passages that offer some indirect clues – indirect because the references to mystery rites are clear, but at the same time Plutarch describes the afterlife. One of these passages is *Amatorius* 766b:

Ὁ γὰρ ὡς ἀληθῶς ἐρωτικός ἐκεῖ γινόμενος καὶ τοῖς καλοῖς ὁμιλήσας ἢ θέμις, ἐπτέρωται καὶ κατωργίασται καὶ διατελεῖ περὶ τὸν αὐτοῦ θεὸν ἄνω χορεύων καὶ συμπεριπολῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πάλιν εἰς τοὺς Σελήνης καὶ Ἀφροδίτης λειμῶνας ἐλθῶν καὶ καταδαρθῶν ἐτέρας ἄρχηται γενέσεως.

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<sup>42</sup> For the Platonic appropriation of imagery related to mystery cults, see Riedweg 1987; on dance in mystery cults, see Schlapbach 2018: 149-154.

The true lover, when he has reached the other world and has consorted with true beauty in the holy way, grows wings and joins in the continual celebration of his god’s mysteries, escorting him in the celestial dance until it is time for him to go again to the meadows of the Moon and Aphrodite and fall asleep before he begins another existence in this world (trans. W.C. Helmbold).

This dance in the company of the heavenly bodies, which is influenced by Plato’s *Phaedrus* (249d–250c), represents not a definitive end, but a phase in between two lives, a phase of spatial and temporal alterity, an interval. Purificatory rites (*teletai* and *katharmoi*) may be necessary before the soul is able to enjoy the playing and dancing in the afterlife (*Non posse* 27, 1105b). Fragment 178 Sandbach, transmitted by Stobaeus, also describes the afterlife in terms of mystery rites. At first the soul wanders around, errs and gets lost, it is frightened and desperate, until it beholds meadows and dances: “And pure regions and meadows welcomed them, offering voices and dances and solemn ceremonies of sacred sounds and holy apparitions”.<sup>43</sup> The sequence of wandering and erring followed by a vision of orderly movement juxtaposes different types of kinetic activity, one undirected and painful, the other harmonious and blissful.<sup>44</sup> The dances mark the arrival of the soul in the imagined space of the netherworld, a temporary harbour before its journey into the next life.

## Conclusions

Ewen Bowie observed that the “civic and religious culture in which Plutarch was himself a prominent local office-holder was still one which had important musical components, and Plutarch refers to the satisfaction to be drawn from participation in musical competitive festivals (*mousikoi agones*) and processions involving music”.<sup>45</sup> But these instances where Plutarch talks about his own participation in festivals and, perhaps, dances, are not easy to

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43 καὶ τόποι καθαροὶ καὶ λειμῶνες ἐδέξαντο, φωνὰς καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότητος ἀκουσμάτων ἱερῶν καὶ φασμάτων ἁγίων ἔχοντες (fr. 178 Sandbach *On the soul* = Stob. 4.52.49). This fragment has often been used to talk about the ritual at Eleusis, but as Fritz Graf pointed out, it really refers to the other world while using the vocabulary and imagery of mystery cults (Graf 1974: 132–138).

44 Combinations of erring or searching and dancing are also known from classical drama, sometimes with allusions to mystery rites, e.g., Aristoph. *Thesmoph.* 655–687 and 947–952. The recurrence of wandering as literary motif in ancient Greek and Roman culture may be a facet of the ‘hodological’ (as opposed to cartographic) experience of space in antiquity (see Fitzgerald & Spentzou 2018: 2).

45 Bowie 2004–2005: 115–116.

pin down. A passage from *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* offers a rare glimpse into Plutarch’s biography:

Καὶ μὴν οἴσθ᾽ ἂν με τῶ Πυθίῳ λειτουργοῦντα πολλὰς Πυθιάδας· ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἂν εἴποις ἴκανά σοι, ὦ Πλούταρχε, τέθυται καὶ πεπόμπευται καὶ κεχόρευται, νῦν δ’ ὥρα πρεσβύτερον ὄντα τὸν στέφανον ἀποθέσθαι καὶ τὸ χρηστήριον ἀπολιπεῖν διὰ τὸ γῆρας.’

Now surely you know that I have been serving the Pythian Apollo for many Pythiads, but you would not say: “Plutarch, you have done enough sacrificing, marching in processions, and dancing in choruses, and now that you are older it is time to put off the garland and to desert the oracle on account of your age”.<sup>46</sup>

Further along in the same treatise, Plutarch recommends that the statesman avoid offering public entertainments that incite cruelty in the spectators – most likely he has gladiatorial games in his mind.<sup>47</sup> We may conclude *e silentio* that the benefactions he advises instead comprise choruses and perhaps pantomimes. Apart from such fleeting remarks, little can be ascertained on the role of dance in Plutarch’s daily life, but his writings offer elements of a pattern according to which dance makes the timespan and the space it occupies special, setting it apart from ordinary time and space and offering respite, harmony, and security, if only for a period.

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<sup>46</sup> *An seni* 792f, trans. H.N. Fowler, quoted by Bowie (ibid.). He also refers to *An seni* 787b–c (see above p. 21).

<sup>47</sup> *Prae. ger. reip.* 822b. See Desideri 1986: 376–377.

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