

Chapter 8

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Beyond Bacon: Plutarch and Boiotian Culture

In 1789, Simon Parr, an English cleric and schoolmaster, wrote to his friend Charles Burney. He had just moved to rural Norfolk and was complaining that he had little to read. He begged him, “Do you hear any literary news? For I live quite in Boiotia, and Boiotize daily, and, what is worse, I shall not visit you Attic folks in the spring.”¹ The reputation that Pindar lamented over 2000 years before Parr’s letter (*Olymp.* 6.89–90), had clearly continued: Boiotian swine, Boiotian crudeness, Boiotian stupidity: to Boiotize.

It was not until recently that the scholarship on Boiotia, its history, and its culture came to light as something unique and worthy of turning our gaze away from Athens and Sparta.² As a result, this country-bumpkin reputation, the jibe of ‘Boiotian swine’, is now recognized as originating in and propagated by Athens. It was a constructed Athenocentric narrative, one that grew from conflict and tension between the Athenians and Boiotians. It became a part of Athens’ projection of its image to claim political leadership and cultural superiority, through the moulding of Boiotia as an ‘anti-Athens’.³ And it does seem as if this Athenian propaganda successfully dominated the rhetoric concerning this region of Greece, as we

1 Johnstone 1828: 410.

2 See, e.g., Roesch 1965, 1982, 1989a, 1989b; Buck 1979, 1981, 1994; Fossey 1979, 1988, 1990, 1991, 2014, 2019; Schachter 1981–1994, 2016; Beck 1997; Kühr 2006a, 2006b; Larson 2007, 2014; Buckler & Beck 2008; Ganter 2013; Beck & Ganter 2015.

3 Beck 2014: 19. Buck (1981: 47) and Cawkwell (2010: 102) also discuss the Athenocentric nature of these slanders. Tufano (2019) pushes us to see beyond these narratives by reconstructing the Boiotian voice using fragments from Boiotian historiographers.

find Athenian echoes in the writings of men like Simon Parr and his daily ‘Boiotizing’, while simultaneously seeming to lack any comprehensive Boiotian response to this slander.

In this chapter, I will contribute to the efforts to lift the veil surrounding Boiotian narratives by giving Plutarch’s response. For Plutarch, Boiotian swine was nothing but a hateful rumour. He looked, and indeed wanted us to look, beyond the ‘bacon’, beyond the pig, and instead, to the farm, the plains, and the people that constituted his Boiotia.

To begin investigating what Plutarch represented as uniquely Boiotian and how this stood out from or became entangled with the world of the Roman Empire, I examine two themes. The first contextualizes Plutarch’s narrative with a brief summary of Boiotia and its peoples. The second investigates what Plutarch tells us about Boiotian culture and what, if anything, we can draw from his representation of this region and its people. In the end, I show not only that Plutarch disagreed with the Athenian stereotypes of Boiotia, but that his explicit mentions of Boiotia created a relational identity between the Boiotians and other peoples. His characterization of Boiotian military prowess was understandable and inspirational, especially for his Roman readers. Furthermore, his implicit referrals carried a message of equality, one that likened Boiotia and its culture to the ‘greats’ of Greece, in other words, to Athens and Sparta, and even occasionally, to the Romans that now dominated their soil.

When looking for evidence of Boiotian culture in Plutarch’s oeuvre, I first sought potential symbols that illuminated the differences between Boiotia, the rest of the Greek world, and Rome, including material symbols such as temples. However, Plutarch did not provide many descriptions of material symbols in his oeuvre, and as a result, I also examined Boiotian culture through non-material symbols, such as descriptions of interactions between people. In such instances, Plutarch was more forthcoming. He described not only Boiotian rituals, but also those of other regions in Greece and Rome in a way that attempted to break down boundaries and ‘othering’ to create common understanding.⁴ Yet, even if he was aiming for appreciation through relational identity, his descriptions help to differentiate Boiotia.

It must also be acknowledged that Plutarch was not always eager to create symmetry between groups. Thanks to Thomas Schmidt, for example, we have Plutarch’s views of the

⁴ For more on Plutarch’s audience and his ultimate goal in writing, see Humble, in this volume.

relational differences between Greeks and barbarians.⁵ Think, also, to the confrontation in *On the Malice of Herodotus* and the role of this ‘discursive space’ in creating a sense of ‘othering’ between Athenian and Boiotian narratives in relation to the memory of the Persian Wars.⁶ And even in Plutarch’s representation of Boiotia, he sometimes created a sort of ‘othering’ amongst Boiotian poleis through his need to explain them and their practices. We see this, for example, in his discussion on the kind of love practised in Thebes, which Plutarch said should not be emulated.⁷ Boiotia, therefore, was not always a synchronized unit in Plutarch’s oeuvre.

I am thus understanding Boiotian culture as the way in which Plutarch represented the material and immaterial symbols and practices found within the geographic region of Boiotia that he used to define and give meaning and value to the everyday lives of the people who lived within its boundaries. In this way, I also focus on the more general attributes that Plutarch granted to individual Boiotians, including cultural icons like Pindar and, I will argue, Herakles, and to the Boiotians as a whole. Both categories (symbols and attributes) must set the Boiotians apart from other peoples and thus serve as a source of regional identity. In many cases, what Plutarch represented as being from or particular to Boiotia often equated his regional identity to the stronger, popularized narratives of Athens and Sparta.

Building Boiotia

Boiotia is approximately 80 km east to west and 40 km north to south, comprising an area of 2,818km², only slightly larger than Attica (2,540km²).⁸ With only two mountain ranges, it is thus otherwise defined by its agriculturally rich land, found in the interior and largely made possible by 3 lakes, the most prominent being Lake Kopaïs.⁹ Lake Kopaïs varied with the seasons, flooding the land around it, then receding – leaving the Kopaïc basin with good

5 Schmidt 2000 and 2008. See also his contribution in this volume, as well as that of Moorman. There are other instances in Plutarch of ‘othering’, such as dinner practices in Egypt (*Conv. sept. sap.* 148b), or the mourning rituals of other cultures (*Consol. ad Ap.* 113a–b). For Plutarch on Isis and Osiris, see Richter 2001.

6 For more on national remembering and discursive spaces, see Wertsch 2018: 260, 272.

7 Hupperts 2005.

8 Buck 1979: 1; Gonzalez 2006: 43–44. For matters involving Boiotian landscape and agriculture, see the thorough investigation by Farinetti 2011.

9 Gonzalez 2006: 45. For Lake Kopaïs and its relationship to Hellenistic Boiotian history and life, see Post forthcoming.

farmland¹⁰ and providing the impetus for drainage systems that became the focus of different groups at different times, including the Mycenaeans, Epaminondas, and Emperor Hadrian.¹¹

However, it is not Boiotia's agriculture nor its advanced hydraulic systems that usually draw our attention. Rather, it is Boiotia's central position in Greece that largely dictated its history. Boiotia acted as a sort of buffer for the ancient Greek world when they allied to fight foreign incursions, but it was also frequently a convenient plain when the Greeks wished to fight each other. Think, of course, of the famous confrontations, stretching from 338 BCE to 1825, that occurred around Chaironeia.¹² The ancient battles almost certainly affected Plutarch's understanding of his hometown and its local landscape, while also informing his view of the peoples who lived within the surrounding region. We will turn to this later.

When looking at landscapes, they must be considered in relation to their inhabitants and how these people granted meaning to their land. For this investigation, however, this idea is complicated by the concept of the Boiotians as a people, which is not easily defined. The main question is whether and when the Boiotians considered themselves a distinct people, an *ethnos*, and not simply poleis with a political *koinon*.¹³ To investigate what bound them, scholars often turn to different aspects of Boiotian culture: they look to the unique Boiotian dialect as a source of unity and identity;¹⁴ to their pottery as differing from Attic examples;¹⁵ and to their myths, festivals, and cults as bringing them together in celebration, ritual, and belief.¹⁶ They also turn to the traditions concerning the settlement of Boiotia as well as the history of the name *Boiotoi*, with their poleis first appearing as a unit in the Homeric *Catalogue of Ships* (*Iliad* 5.708–710), and later as an established people with leaders, *boiotarchs*

10 Buck 1979: 3; Vottero 1998: 15; Gonzalez 2006: 44; Farinetti 2011: 48, 54; Post forthcoming.

11 Allen (1997: 48) points to the Mycenaeans, Minyans. Schachter (2016: 5–6) speaks of the importance for the drainage to the economy of Orchomenos at the time of the Minyans. Fossey (1991: 14–16) lists the Mycenaeans, Crates (at the time of Alexander the Great), Epaminondas, and Hadrian.

12 338 BCE (Philip); 245 BCE: Aitolian League vs Boiotian League; 146 BCE (Roman general Matellus defeats 1000 Arkadians); 86 BCE (Sulla vs Mithridates); 1311 (Catalans vs Franks – Catalans win); 1823, 1825: Greeks vs Turks during the Greek revolution. For more on conflicts in Boiotia, see the contributions in Beck & Marchand 2020. For the conflicts on Chaironeia's soil, see Giroux 2021: 171–181, Giroux forthcoming.

13 These terms, of course, come with their own set of debates and difficulties. For a discussion of these terms and their relationship to Boiotia, see: Buckler & Beck 2008: xi–xii, 13–14; Beck 2014: 19–44; Beck & Funke 2015: 1–29.

14 Buck 1981: 47 (among other attributes); Bakhuizen 1986: 65–69; Vottero 1998, 2001; Beck 2014: 27–28; Schachter 2016: 21.

15 Ure 1932; Kilinski 1977, 1978, 1986; Avronidaki 2008.

16 Buck 1981: 47; Schachter 1981–1994, 2016: 21; Bakhuizen 1986: 68–69; Kühr 2006a 2006b; Larson: 2007; Mackil 2013: 9–11; Beck 2014; Beck & Ganter 2015: 135–136.

(Hdt. 5.77.4; 5.79.2, 9.15.1), and as an alliance, a *symmachia* (συμμαχία; Thuc. 2.2.4).¹⁷ Interestingly, or perhaps we should say unsurprisingly, given the nature of their land as prime real estate for war, the original mentions of Boiotians, not just in the literary sources but also in inscriptions, were related to warfare.¹⁸ This is also reflected in their regional coinage, with the easily identifiable Boiotian shield and legend (BOI or BOIO).¹⁹ As a result of these enterprises, the Boiotians began to develop local identities in the Archaic Age that eventually shifted into regional awareness, affiliation, and government.²⁰

Whenever the official Boiotian alliance began, we cannot say with absolute certainty, but it is almost certain that they had formed an alliance, the Boiotian League, by the time of the Persian Wars. And yet, even this is complicated by the polis-by-polis submission to the Persian king, rather than a unified decision of the Boiotians.²¹ However, it is through this submission and the later resulting punishment that we see the Boiotians becoming closer and bridging the gap between Boiotian poleis like Orchomenos and Thebes, who had a tumultuous history.²² In fact, it is probably the self-promotion of Thebes, its aggressive policy to dominate Boiotia, and its constructed narratives of kinship, ancestry, and cult, that brought about Boiotian regional identity.²³ This unified Boiotia as a region that was distinct from other areas of Greece continued into Plutarch's day, informing his views.

So now we must ask, how did Plutarch view Boiotia and its culture? Was it distinct from the rest of Greece? And, perhaps most interestingly, were his mentions of Boiotia part of any program or message that he wished to impart to his reader? It is to these questions that I now turn.

17 Bonner & Smith 1945: 11-13; Buck 1979: 34; Buck 1981: 48; Bakhuizen 1986: 68-69; Hammond 2000: 81; Larson 2014; Schachter 2016: 19-20; Giroux 2021: 215-239.

18 Beck 2014: 27. They also fought together beginning in the Bronze Age, suggesting some kind of cultural entity, though not necessarily a strictly organized one (Mackil [2013: 22] argues that, in the 8th century, Boiotian identity was as much about competitions as cooperation. Cf. Schachter 2016: 19).

19 Hammond 2000: 81-82; Meidani 2008: 157; Beck & Ganter 2015: 138; Schachter 2016: 48-49. Note, however, as Hammond (2000: 87) and Beck & Ganter (2015: 138) point out, that Orchomenos, Thebes, Tanagra, and Thespiiai all issued their own coinage. Larson (2007: 106-109) argues that these coins are more indicative of a cultural unit than a political one, as she believes that they were festival issues. For a critical and skeptical response to the use of coinage as being indicative of regional cooperation, see Mackil 2013: 26.

20 Hansen 1996: 74-77; Beck 2014: 36; Beck & Ganter 2015: 138.

21 With the exceptions of Plataea and Thespiiai, who supported the Greeks, as well as a Theban unit at Thermopylae, representing the internal divisions of that polis (Mackil 2013: 29).

22 Beck & Ganter 2015: 139-140. For more on Orchomenos and Thebes, see Giroux 2020.

23 Kühr 2006b; Ganter 2013.

Plutarch's 'Pigs'

Peeling back the layers of Plutarch's works to garner a response to the slander against the Boiotians and to build a new reputation for their culture is not an easy task. It was clearly not Plutarch's primary purpose in writing. Instead, he focused on philosophical questions, providing *exempla* for his reader, and exploring connections between Greeks, Romans, and barbarians.²⁴ Yet, it is possible to gain some insight into his understanding of the Boiotian people as unique, but also tied to the wider Greek and Roman worlds. In this way, Plutarch's representation of Boiotian culture becomes a micro-exploration of those Greek, Roman, and barbarian connections, while also exemplifying Boiotia as a place and a people worthy of imitation.

Boiotia, its peoples, topography, and customs are found sprinkled throughout Plutarch's writings. His comments, even if they do not always provide much detail, nonetheless allow Plutarch to create a sketch of the region. Unfortunately, not all of Plutarch's works survive, but even a quick glance through the *Lamprias Catalogue* reveals that he was, indeed, concerned with Boiotia and its peoples. For example, the titles of some lost treatises, including *On the Descent into the Cave of Trophonios* (#181) and *On the Festival of Wooden Images at Plataea* (#201), seem to show this interest.²⁵ While we cannot speak with any authority on the nature, length, or opinions expressed in these treatises, they still provide a clue as to Plutarch's interest in his region and its religious practices. His concern with Boiotian religious life implies that Plutarch viewed Boiotia as a region that was just as interesting as other regions, or at least interesting enough, to use as an example for his readers. Boiotia, in this way, shared the spotlight with Delphi and was thus subtly compared to it. Yet, without more information we cannot push this conclusion too far.

More clues concerning Plutarch's implicit message about Boiotia are found in the lost *Lives* in the *Lamprias Catalogue*, including Epaminondas (#7), Herakles (#34), Hesiod (#35), Pindar (#36), and Crates (#37). The choice of these men speaks not only to Plutarch's interest in preserving the traditions and the actions of great Boiotian men, but also to his belief that they were worthy of comparison with some of the great men of Rome. Thus, without even

24 A thorough summary of Plutarch's investigation of historic figures as moral *exempla* is given by Duff 1999 (for the heroes of the *Parallel Lives*) and Xenophon 2016 (Plutarch's ethical education). For the use of Plutarch's work as practical models for his reader, see Jacobs 2018. For comparisons between Greeks, Romans, and barbarians, see Schmidt 2000, 2002, 2008; Stadter 2002a, 2002b, 2002c, 2010, 2014a, 2014b; Mossman 2006;

25 Note that the numbers listed with these treatises as well as the ones with the lost *Lives* below, are the number that they were given in the *Lamprias Catalogue* in the Loeb editions of Plutarch's works.

reading his works we have an indication of Plutarch’s potential message for his audience: the Boiotians were no backwater people, but rather, merited a share in the spotlight with other regions of Greece and were thus worthy of imitation.

However, when we begin investigating the Boiotia of Plutarch’s oeuvre by compiling the more obvious, explicit mentions of the region, we find a space that was fuelled by conflict and violence. His most common referrals to places in Boiotia concerned the locations of conflict, battles, or strategic movements and withdrawals. Plutarch mentioned battles in Boiotia not only in relation to his hometown of Chaironeia,²⁶ but also to Anthedon (*Sull.* 16.4), Eleutherai (*Thes.* 29.5), Halai (*Sull.* 16.4), Haliartus (*Lys.* 29.7; *Comp. Sull.-Lys.* 4.2), Kithairon (*Dem.* 23.3), Koroneia,²⁷ Larymna (*Sull.* 16.4), Lebadeia (*Lys.* 28.2; *Sull.* 26.4), Leuctra,²⁸ Orchomenos,²⁹ Oropus (*Cat. Mai.* 22.1; *Dem.* 5.1), Plataea,³⁰ Tanagra (*Cim.* 18.3; *Pel.* 15.4), Tegyra (*Pel.* 16.1), Thebes,³¹ Thespiiai (*Pel.* 14.2, 15.4), and Boiotia more generally.³² Many of these explicit mentions of Boiotia and its use as a battle arena were in relation to its topography and its affects on the conflicts. For example, Plutarch had Mardonius praise the plain of Boiotia: “...broad is the land of Thessaly and fair the plain of Boiotia for brave horsemen and men-at-arms to contend in” (πλατεῖα μὲν ἡ Θετταλῶν γῆ, καλὸν δὲ τὸ Βοιωτικὸν πεδῖον ἀγαθοῖς ἰππεῦσι καὶ ὀπλίταις; *Arist.* 10.2; trans. B. Perrin³³). The same thought is echoed in *Sulla* (15.2, 20.3–5), where the plains were again praised as a good ground for cavalry. We also find referrals to rivers as the locations where generals, like Sulla, crossed.³⁴ Clearly, through these numerous mentions, it did not escape Plutarch that Boiotian history and thus the landscape of Plutarch’s time (think of his mentions of inscriptions³⁵), was largely shaped by the battles fought there. He even had his favourite Boiotian, Epaminondas, call Boiotia, ‘the dancing floor of Ares’ (βαθυπτολέμου τέμενος Ἄρεως; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 193e; *Marc.* 21.2). Plutarch’s representation of Boiotia thus seems

²⁶ *Phoc.* 26.6; *Arat.* 16.1; *Dem.* 14.2; *Alex.* 9.2; *Luc.* 3.8, 11.3; *Cam.* 19.5; *Sull.* 11.3–4, 16.8; *Pel.* 28.5; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 177e; *Apophth. Lac.* 218e–f; *De mul. vir.* 259d.

²⁷ *Per.* 18.3; *Alc.* 1.1; *Ages.* 13.1, 15.3, 18.1; *Apophth. Lac.* 212a.

²⁸ *Cleom.* 6.2; *Lyc.* 30.6; *Cor.* 4.3; *Lys.* 28.1; *Comp. Lys.-Sull.* 4.2; *Ages.* 15.3.

²⁹ *Arat.* 28.1; *Cleom.* 4.1–2, 23.1, 26.3; *Luc.* 3.6, 11.3; *Lys.* 28.2; *Sull.* 20.3–5.

³⁰ *Aem.* 25.1; *Them.* 16.5; *Cam.* 19.3; *Arist.* 1.8, 5.7; *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 2.1, 5.1; *Pel.* 15.4.

³¹ E.g., *Alex.* 11.5–6; *Cam.* 19.6–7.

³² *Arist.* 10.2; *Mar.* 41.1; *Per.* 18.2–3; *Sull.* 16.4. N.B. that most of *Sulla* and *Agessilaus* has Boiotia as a battle ground. Cf. Giroux 2021: 272–331.

³³ Note that all translations are from the Loeb Classical Library.

³⁴ Assus River: *Sull.* 17.3; Cephissus River: *Sull.* 17.4.

³⁵ E.g., *De fort. Rom.* 318d.

to agree with our current narrative of battle and conflict. But what about those Boiotians who fought in the battles? How did Plutarch depict the people of Boiotia?

Throughout Plutarch's work, the Boiotians are represented as a single cultural unit, although at times a tumultuous one.³⁶ This is likely a reflection of Boiotia in the 1st and early 2nd centuries CE that served as a lens through which Plutarch interpreted the past, whether consciously or subconsciously, we cannot say. Whatever the cause of his certainty, the Boiotians, for Plutarch, were a united people in the Archaic and Classical periods. And one of the factors that united them, unsurprisingly, was their military prowess.

Plutarch often mentioned the military strength of Thebes. For instance, Plutarch tells of a grievance made by the Spartans: "It was for this reason also that there appeared to be no slight ground for complaint against Agesilaus, who by his almost continual inroads and campaigns into Boiotia had rendered the Thebans a match for the Spartans" (διὸ καὶ Ἀγησιλάου ἔγκλημα οὐ βραχὺ ἔδοξεν εἶναι, ταῖς εἰς τὴν Βοιωτίαν συνεχέσιν εἰσβολαῖς καὶ στρατείαις τοὺς Θηβαίους ἀντιπάλους Λακεδαιμονίοις κατασκευάσαντος; *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 227c-d; trans. F.C. Babbitt). Despite the fact that he represented them as being strong militarily,³⁷ Plutarch's opinion of Thebes is complicated to unravel. Although subtle, Plutarch built a narrative that used Thebes as a scapegoat for the Boiotians as a whole. In *Themistocles* Plutarch states that, "...the Thessalians went over to the side of the King, and everything was medising as far as Boeotia, so that at last the Athenians were more kindly disposed to the naval policy of Themistocles, and he was sent with a fleet to Artemisium, to watch the narrows" (Θετταλῶν βασιλεῖ προσγενομένων ἐμήδιζε τὰ μέχρι Βοιωτίας, μᾶλλον ἤδη τῷ Θεμιστοκλεῖ προσεῖχον οἱ Ἀθηναῖοι περὶ τῆς θαλάσσης, καὶ πέμπεται μετὰ νεῶν ἐπ' Ἀρτεμίσιον τὰ στενὰ φυλάξων; *Them.* 7.2; trans. B. Perrin). Here, it is all of Boiotia that submitted to the Persian king. However, while Plutarch acknowledged the medising tendencies of the Boiotian poleis during the Persian War, he put a positive spin on it. First, the Boiotians were not alone – the Thessalians were also supporting the Persian king. Second, it was because of the Boiotians' support of the Persian king that the Athenians followed Themistocles' plan, ultimately winning the war.

In another *Life*, that of Aristides, the theme of medising returns, but here, Plutarch generalizes the 'medising Greeks' (τῶν Ἑλλήνων οἱ μηδίζοντες; *Arist.* 18.4), without

36 He did not do this for other regions, like Attica, but he did this for Boiotia. Note that Plutarch also did not shy away from referring to Boiotia's internal conflicts.

37 For more on Plutarch and his representation of Thebes, see Cawkwell 2010: 109.

specifying the Thessalians or Boiotians. Later, however, he did refer to the Boiotians, but he shifted the blame to the Thebans. And yet, even though he recognized Thebes' involvement in medising, he was careful to temper this by blaming the influential men who brought the multitude with them (“...not of choice, but at the bidding of a few”; οὐ κατὰ γνώμην, ἀλλ’ ὀλιγαρχούμενον ἀγόντων; *Arist.* 18.6; trans. B. Perrin).³⁸ So, although he once again acknowledged the role of Boiotia in supporting the Persian king, he focused the blame on one polis, Thebes, and then moderated this charge by saying that it was not the popular decision, but one made by a few influential men who were misguided. In these instances, Thebes, in relation to Boiotia, became the Antony to the Romans. In other words, Plutarch understood that the Thebans made mistakes, and he did not hide this, but he explained these mistakes to mitigate blame as well as to show that the Thebans as a whole were not bad, just influenced by men who made poor choices. This is reinforced in *On the Malice of Herodotus* (864d-865f), where Plutarch passionately defended Boiotia and, more specifically the Thebans, against Herodotus' account when he said that they too fought with Greece against the King and were, in reality, friends of Leonidas.

In fact, Plutarch did not focus his portrayal of Thebes on its medising or on the negative aspects of its history in relation to its occasional lack of support to the rest of the Greek world, but rather, on its military strength. He said that the Thebans had the best soldiers in Greece (*Dem.* 17.4-5). This is then displayed in an act of bravery: when the Thebans allied with Athens against Alexander, the Athenians lost their courage and abandoned the Thebans, who fought on their own and lost their city (*Dem.* 23.2-3). In this passage, the Thebans are portrayed more positively than the Athenians, since they stood their ground, lived up to their word, and fought, unlike the Athenians, who scampered away.

Throughout Plutarch's works, there are also mentions of the Boiotian army, which conjures images of a force that was strong, hard to defeat, and organized. For example, in Plutarch's account of Demosthenes' surprise night attack at Epipolae, Syracuse, the Boiotians displayed unity, organization, training, and courage in managing to be the first to form into battle array and rush the Athenians, preventing their success (*Nic.* 21.5-6). In *Lycurgus*, Plutarch mentioned a Spartan law that forbade attacking the same enemy too many times because they had attacked the Boiotians so often that they were now just as strong as the Lacedaemonians (*Lyc.* 13.5-6). Further, Plutarch said that military strength was part of their

38 Note also *Alc.* 16.5, where he said that the Thebans warned Mardonius about the Athenian and Spartan plans.

character: “Now the most of this posterity were naturally men of war and courage, and so were consumed away in the Persian invasions and the contests with the Gauls, because they did not spare themselves” (οἱ μὲν οὖν πλεῖστοι τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους φύσει μάχιμοι καὶ ἀνδρώδεις γενόμενοι καταναλώθησαν ἐν ταῖς Μηδικαῖς ἐπιδρομαῖς καὶ τοῖς Γαλατικοῖς ἀγῶσιν ἀφειδήσαντες ἑαυτῶν: λείπεται δὲ παῖς ὀρφανὸς γονέων; *Cim.* 1.1–2; trans. B. Perrin). And, finally, Plutarch had the Athenian Phocion give voice to Boiotian military might by advising the Athenians to, “...fight with words, in which they were superior, and not with arms, in which they were inferior” (διὰ τῶν λόγων, ἐν οἷς εἰσι κρείττους, μὴ διὰ τῶν ὄπλων, ἐν οἷς εἰσιν ἥττους, μάχεσθαι; *Phoc.* 9.4; trans. B. Perrin).

Plutarch thus explicitly defined the Boiotians as having a warlike and military culture. Plutarch explained that their military culture was a natural gift and that it, alongside the continual invasions of their lands, meant that the Boiotian army was equal in skill and strength to the Spartans, and was thus intimidating to the Athenians. Taking this into consideration when looking at the treatise *Were the Athenians more Famous in War or in Wisdom?* brings to light some interesting observations. Here, Plutarch concluded that Athens’ greatest success was not in its philosophy, but rather, in its military might (*De gloria Athen.* 350a–b).³⁹ Thus, he defined Athenian culture in the same terms as that of Sparta and Boiotia. He was therefore comparing Athens, Sparta, and Boiotia on the basis of their military past, their leaders, and the discipline of their troops. And in this implicit comparison, the Athenians were, on more than one occasion, thwarted by the Boiotian army, whom Phocion admitted, was better. As such, in Plutarch’s explicit mentions of Boiotian military culture, he implicitly showed that it could compare favourably with the greats of the ancient Greek world, and thus, I argue, could also be used as a model for his Roman audience. Plutarch made it clear that Boiotia was defined by its military might, which was akin to the Spartans and superior to the Athenians. Both its military and its generals were thus worthy of emulation, and therefore also worthy of being *exempla* for his Roman readers.⁴⁰

39 See also, for example, his discussion of paintings compared to the Athenian victory at Mantinea (*De gloria Athen.* 346b–f), or that historians do not match the actions of generals (*De gloria Athen.* 346f–347e). For Plutarch, not even poetry (*De gloria Athen.* 347e–348b), tragedy (*De gloria Athen.* 348b–d), or orations (*De gloria Athen.* 350b–d) could live up to the men who perform great deeds. For, Plutarch states, it is the military victories that the polis celebrates (*De gloria Athen.* 349e).

40 Epaminondas is stressed as being the best Boiotian general to emulate. Positive references to Epaminondas include: *De tranq. An.* 467e; *De lib. ed.* 8b; *De rec. rat. aud.* 39b; *Quomodo adul.* 52f; *Quomodo quis suos* 85a–b; *De amic. mult.* 93e; *Comp. Alc.-Cor.* 4.5–6; *Arat.* 19.2; *Cat.* 8.8; *Fab.* 27; *Comp. Lys.-Sull.* 4.3; *Tim.* 26.1; *Phil.* 2.1–2; *Lyc.* 13.3–4. Cf. Ziegler 1951: 896; Shrimpton 1971; Buckler 1978; Tuplin 1984; Cawkwell 2010: 101–103; Giroux 2021: 287–293. See also Rzepka 2010 for Plutarch’s views of Theban history.

However, portraying the Boiotians as a purely military culture could play into the stereotypes propagated by Athens, ones of which Plutarch was clearly aware, since we find Plutarch referring to these insults on more than one occasion. For instance, Plutarch had Caphisias, a Theban, say the following: “But since I am now come upon an embassy, and have nothing to do until I receive an answer to my memorial, to be uncivil and not to satisfy the request of an obliging friend would revive the old reproach that hath been cast upon the Boeotians for morose sullenness and hating good discourse, a reproach which began to die in the time of Socrates” (ἄχρι οὗ τὰς ἀποκρίσεις τοῦ δήμου λάβωμεν, ἀντιτείνειν καὶ ἀγροικίζεσθαι πρὸς εὐγνώμονα καὶ φιλέταιρον, δόξειεν ἂν ἐγείρειν τὸ κατὰ Βοιωτῶν ἀρχαῖον εἰς μισολογίαν ὄνειδος ἤδη μαραινόμενον παρὰ Σωκράτη τὸν ὑμέτερον; *De gen.* 575d–e; trans. P.G. de Lacy & B. Einarson). Plutarch also complained that, “The Athenians call us Boeotians gross, senseless, and stupid, for no other reason but our over-eating; and Pindar also calls us swine for the same reason. Menander the comedian calls us ‘fellows with long jaws’” (τοὺς γὰρ Βοιωτοὺς ἡμᾶς οἱ Ἀττικοὶ καὶ παχεῖς καὶ ἀναισθήτους καὶ ἡλιθίους, μάλιστα διὰ τὰς ἀδηφαγίας προσαγορεύουσιν: ‘οὔτοι δ’ αὖ συ ...’ καὶ ὁ Μένανδρος ‘οἱ γνάθους ἔχουσι’; *De esu carniū* 995e–f; trans. H. Cherniss & W.C. Helmbold). This jibe reappears in the *Table Talk* (635a) when Plutarch’s brother Lamprias is teased about his ‘Boiotian gluttony’ (ἀδδηφαγίαν Βοιωτίου).

Notably, Plutarch seemed to be aware of the practice of constructed Athenian narratives. He mentioned that some were the result of trying to please an Athenian audience (as he claimed Peisistratus did with the works of Hesiod and Homer (*Thes.* 20.1–2)). Other jibes, he contended, derived from tragic poets and their impact on the reputation of a person (such as Minyas [*Thes.* 16.3]). Plutarch thus presumably had a similar impression of the influence of Athenian narratives on the reputation of a people like the Boiotians (for which, of course, we can cite *On the Malice of Herodotus* as evidence).

Occasionally, Plutarch took the time to discuss other aspects of Boiotian culture. For example, he elaborated on differences in the Greek language, speaking of colloquialisms like the Boiotian term *platioiketas*, referring to someone who lived and owned the adjoining

property (*Quaest. Graec.* 292d).⁴¹ Most often, idiosyncrasies of terminology were found in different calendars.⁴² In one discussion, Plutarch tells us that,

τοῦτο μὲν τοίνυν Βοιωτοῖς Ἴπποδρομίου μηνός, ὡς δ' Ἀθηναῖοι καλοῦσιν Ἑκατομβαιῶνος, ἰσταμένου πέμπτη δύο λαβεῖν συνέβη νίκας ἐπιφανεστάτας, αἷς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἠλευθέρωσαν, τὴν τε περὶ Λεῦκτρα καὶ τὴν ἐπὶ Κερησσῶ ταύτης πρότερον ἔτεσι πλείοσιν ἢ διακοσίοις, ὅτε Λατταμύαν καὶ Θεσσαλοὺς ἐνίκησαν.

To being with, then, it was on the fifth day of the month of Hippodromius (which the Athenians call Hecatombaeon) that the Boiotians won two illustrious victories which set the Greeks free: that at Leuctra, and that at Ceressus more than two hundred years earlier, when they conquered Lattamyas and the Thessalians.” (*Cam.* 19.2; trans. B. Perrin)

ἀνάπαλιν δ' ὁ Μεταγειτνίων, ὃν Βοιωτοὶ Πάνεμον καλοῦσιν, τοῖς Ἕλλησιν οὐκ εὐμενῆς γέγονε. τούτου γὰρ τοῦ μηνός ἑβδόμη καὶ τὴν ἐν Κρανῶνι μάχην ἠττηθέντες ὑπ' Ἀντιπάτρου τελέως ἀπώλοντο, καὶ πρότερον ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ μαχόμενοι πρὸς Φίλιππον ἠτύχησαν. τῆς δ' αὐτῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης ἐν τῷ Μεταγειτνίῳ κατὰ τὸν αὐτὸν ἐνιαυτὸν οἱ μετ' Ἀρχιδάμου διαβάντες εἰς Ἰταλίαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἐκεῖ βαρβάρων διεφθάρησαν.

Contrarywise, the month of Metageitnion (which the Boiotians call Panemus) has not been favourable to the Greeks. On the seventh of this month they were defeated by Antipater in the battle of Crannon, and utterly undone; before this

41 Another example of Plutarch explaining the Boiotian dialect is found in a fragment, where Plutarch discussed the Boiotian use of the word *rhothoi* (Plutarch Fragment 34 [from Schol. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 220]). For Plutarch's representation of Kadmos' role in the Greek alphabet, see *Quaest. conv.* 738a-b, f.

42 The Boiotian month of Alalcomenius is the same as Maimacterion (*Arist.* 21.1-5; cf. Roesch 1982: 42-5). The month of Boukatios is the fifth month of the new year: *Pel.* 25.1. Cf. Plutarch Fragment 71 (from Schol. Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 504 and Heschiuss, *s.v.* *Ληναιῶν*), where the author explains that Plutarch connects the month named Lenaion to the Boiotian month Boukatios or Hermaios (cf. Roesch 1982: 33-6). The month of Damatrios as equivalent to the Athenian Pyanepsion and the Egyptian Athyr: *De Is. et Os.* 378e (cf. Roesch 1982: 41-2). The month Panamos is the same as the Athenian month Boedromion: *Arist.* 19.7 (cf. Roesch 1982: 37-9). The month Prostaterios is the Athenian month of Anthesterion: *Quaest. conv.* 655e (cf. Roesch 1982: 36-7). For more on the Boiotian calendar, see: Buck 1979: 88 and, most thoroughly, Roesch 1982: 5-70. Interestingly, Roesch (1982: 54) explains that the Boiotians were still using the same calendar during the Roman Empire, thus pointing to some continuity in their telling of time.

they had fought Philip unsuccessfully at Chaironeia on that day of the month; and in the same year, and on the same day of Metageitnion, Archidamus and his army, who had crossed into Italy, were cut to pieces by the Barbarians there. (*Cam.* 19.5; trans. B. Perrin)

Note the interesting chiasmic structure in these two passages. In comparing the good and bad dates, Plutarch left the positive examples to the Boiotians, placing the Athenian equivalent in parentheses for reference; for the bad dates he did the reverse. Plutarch thus subtly reminded his reader of the superiority of the Boiotian army in comparison to the Athenian one, while simultaneously equating the two in the shared belief of positive and negative dates. What is more, this anecdote is given in the context of explaining a Roman belief, which regarded a day of the Allia as the unluckiest. This therefore becomes another example of relational identity not only for the Greeks as a whole to the Romans, but more specifically for the Athenians and the Boiotians to the Romans.

Plutarch also discussed specific Boiotian rituals, practices, and cults.⁴³ One area of focus on the differences of the Boiotians in relation to other Greeks was that of marriage practices. Take, for instance, his remark that every Boiotian (and Lokrian) marketplace had an altar and image of Eucleia, before which the brides and grooms offered sacrifice (*Arist.* 20.6). Plutarch thus felt the need to mention that these altars to Eucleia were both common in Boiotia (and Lokris) and, by pointing out the regional affiliation, different from other regional landscapes. Furthermore, the sacrifices performed by the bride and groom to Eucleia herself provided another item that linked the regions of Boiotia and Lokris together and also set them apart from other areas. Thus, Plutarch offered a unique indicator of Boiotian identity, one tied to Eucleia and marriages.

Another unique Boiotian marriage custom mentioned by Plutarch concerns the bride's headgear and its significance. The bride was veiled and wore a crown of asparagus (*Praec. conj.* 138d-e). The idea, Plutarch said, was that the bride acted as the fruit of this plant and withstood the unpleasantness of her husband's thorns. Here, Boiotian marriage practices were set apart from other peoples, and were not used to explain a commonality. Therefore,

43 Boiotian festivals and cults and their relationship to the Boiotian world have been investigated most thoroughly by Schachter 1981-1994, but see also: Chaniotis 2002; Ganter 2013; Beck & Ganter 2015: 152. Cf. Giroux 2021: 314-322.

when it came to marriage at least, Plutarch viewed the Greeks as having different customs from each other.⁴⁴

However, Plutarch did not always use marriages to make Boiotia unique. For example, to explain why the Romans did not allow the bride to cross the threshold themselves, Plutarch used the Boiotian example of burning the axle of the bridal carriage in front of the door, a symbolic gesture to say that the bride must remain (*Quaest. Rom.* 271d). Plutarch thus employed a Boiotian practice to help bring understanding to the two parties, serving as an additional example of relational cultural practices.⁴⁵

Using Greek practices to help explain and bring a level of commonality between the Greeks and the Romans, seemed to be Plutarch's go-to strategy in relation to Rome and Boiotia. In one passage, Plutarch compared the Roman practice of not allowing the priest of Jupiter to touch ivy or pass along a road where ivy was growing on the trees, to an Athenian and Theban practice (*Quaest. Rom.* 290e-291b). In another, he compared a Spartan ritual and a Boiotian purification ceremony to explain why Roman priests avoided dogs (*Quaest. Rom.* 290d).⁴⁶ In yet another narrative, Plutarch compared the differences in keeping an eternal flame, by contrasting the Roman Vestal Virgins with widows performing the same task in the Greek world (*Num.* 9.5). On more than one occasion, he compared the Roman Mater Matuta and the rituals associated with her, to the Greek equivalent, Leucothea, who had a temple in his town of Chaironeia.⁴⁷ In these references, Plutarch not only exposed the

44 Spartan marriage customs: *Lyc.* 15.3-9 (Plutarch praises them). Athenian marriage customs: *Sol.* 20.1-5. Marriage customs that seem to be shared by all Greeks: *Per.* 7.4 (libations and wedding feast); *Art.* 23.2-5 (Greeks cannot marry their daughters, like Artaxerxes does – a case of Plutarch using customs to 'other' another culture; other examples of othering include the Persians with their wives [*Praec. conj.* 140b], wives in Egypt [*Praec. conj.* 142c], and the wedding rites of Leptis [*Praec. conj.* 143a]). See also Moorman, in this volume). Another practice where he explains a commonality between Boiotians and other Greeks is found in his description of the funeral laws of Solon, where he says that these practices were also forbidden by Boiotian laws, but with a more serious punishment: *Sol.* 21.4-5.

45 Another example of Plutarch explaining Roman customs using a Greek equivalent is found in the description of the nuptial cry of the Romans: *Rom.* 25.1-3; *Pomp.* 4.2-5. Cf. *Rom.* 15.3. Note, however, that this example is one that compares the Greek world in its entirety to that of Rome, not just Boiotia.

46 Here, Boiotia is equated not only to Rome, but also to Sparta, thus showing the relation between the three and therefore Boiotia's worthiness as a subject of imitation. Note, however, that Plutarch also referred to dog sacrifices in the rest of the Greek world as a ceremony of purification: *Quaest. Rom.* 277a-b, 280b-c. Cf. Avronidaki 2008: 10-14. So, we have evidence for dog sacrifices across the Greek and Roman worlds, but Plutarch reserved the one practice of public purification (*Quaest. Rom.* 290d) in Boiotia as unique but akin to a Spartan and Roman one. Thus, although the sacrifices are common, the rites themselves differed from region to region.

47 *Apophth. Lac.* 228e; *Quaest. Rom.* 267d-e; *De frat. am.* 492d; *Cam.* 5.2. Note that Plutarch also mentioned Theban sacrifices and lamentations to Leucothea: *Apophth. Lac.* 228e. By bringing something from his hometown into the wider Boiotian region, Plutarch connected the space and transformed the connection between Chaironeia and Rome to one that encompassed his wider, regional world.

differences in Roman and Greek culture, but he actually diminished the divide through relational practices that served to break down ideas of othering in order to equate them.

Plutarch not only ensured that the Boiotians were equal to the Athenians in terms of their military might and belief system, but also in their intellectual and literary culture.⁴⁸ For example, he spoke of the superior skill of the Boiotians in flute playing.⁴⁹ Furthermore, when he mentioned Boiotian writers, be they historians, philosophers, or poets, they were either authoritative on their own, or compared and placed on an equal scale with the ‘best’ of other regions of Greece.⁵⁰ In fact, we have an explicit example of this argument in Plutarch’s mentions of Pindar and Corinna alongside Menander and Homer, followed by the statement that Athens had no comparable famous epic poet (*De gloria Athen.* 347e-348b). Thus, according to Plutarch, when it came to poetry the Boiotians bested the Athenians. In this way, Plutarch implied that the literary, historical, and philosophical expositions of the Boiotians were comparable to other areas of Greece, like Athens, and thus merited recognition.

Similarly, in a discussion of Boiotian religious life, Plutarch referenced the practice of Boiotian women at the Agrionia festival at Orchomenos, who ‘put riddles and hard questions to one another’ after some moderate drinking, thus showing the proper balance of entertainment and philosophical discourse (*Quaest. conv.* 717a). Another festival, the Eleutheria, Plutarch explained, was a Panhellenic assembly every four years at Plataea from the time of the battle up until his day that paid homage to those who died against the Persians (*Arist.* 21.1-5). Again, Plutarch modified the medising effect in Boiotia by ensuring that he

48 This is discussed more thoroughly in Giroux 2021: 306-314.

49 *Alc.* 2.4-6; *Per.* 1.5; *Demetr.* 1.6.

50 Mentyllus, who writes a *Boiotian History* (*Par. Graec. et Rom.* 309b); Ctesiphon, who writes a *Boiotian History* (*Par. Graec. et Rom.* 308e); Daimachus of Plataea (*Comp. Sol-Pub.* 4.1). Philo, who, among others listed, writes about Alexander’s marriage and whom Plutarch defended using a letter of Alexander (*Alex.* 46.1-2). Crates of Thebes, a Cynic philosopher: *Quomodo adul.* 69c-d; *De cap. ex inim. util.* 87a; *De tuenda san.* 125f; *Praec. conj.* 141e. Examples of Pindar quotations include: Pindar alongside Homer and Sophokles: *Quomodo adul.* 17c, 21a-b. Pindar with Homer and Timotheus: *Demetr.* 42.5. Pindar alongside Aeschylus: *De cap. ex inim. util.* 88b. Pindar with Xenophon: *Marc.* 21.2. Pindar with Cicero: *De cap. ex inim. util.* 89f-91a. Pindar as the authority: *Quomodo adul.* 65b; *Quomodo quis suos* 86a; *De superst.* 167c, f; *Marc.* 29.5; *Nic.* 1.2; *Rom.* 28.6; *Them.* 8.2. Pindar as beloved of Pan, just like Archilochus and Hesiod, who were beloved of the Muses: *Num.* 6. Homer is quoted alongside Homer and Sophokles: *Quomodo adul.* 23e-24a). Hesiod with Archilochus and Homer: *De superst.* 169b. Hesiod and Homer: *Quomodo adul.* 24f; *Consol ad Ap.* 105d-e; *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3.4. Hesiod and Euripides: *Quomodo adul.* 34b. Hesiod as the authority: *Quomodo quis suos* 76c-d, 77d; *De cap. ex inim. util.* 92a; *Conv. sept. sap.* 157e-158b; *Sol.* 2.3; *Galb.* 16.4. Hesiod wins the contest against Homer: *Conv. sept. sap.* 154a-b. For more on Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Mouseia of Thespiiai, see Lambertson 1988.

emphasized those, like Plataea, who helped the Greeks and continued to be celebrated in his lifetime.

Plutarch also took pains to mention the numerous deities or oracles in Boiotia and the power that they either still possessed (Trophonius) or had possessed in the past. On many occasions, it was a Boiotian deity or oracle that helped the Greeks.⁵¹ It is notable that Plutarch emphasized Boiotian oracles, seeing as he was a priest of Apollo at Delphi. In fact, he even said that the first Sibyl arrived from Mount Helicon, in Boiotia, where she was reared by the Muses (*De Pyth. or.* 398c). In this way, Plutarch has the Boiotians give birth to the oracles of Greece.

Plutarch took the idea of Boiotia as the progenitor of Greek customs further in his anecdotes of the Boiotian hero Herakles.⁵² Plutarch said that Theseus was haunted by Herakles' achievements, in the same way that Themistokles was haunted by those of Miltiades, so Theseus aimed to emulate Herakles (*Thes.* 6.6-7). Themistocles thus established the Isthmian games in emulation of Herakles' establishment of the Olympian games (*Thes.* 25.4). Themistocles also returned the dead of his enemies, but Plutarch noted that Herakles was the first to do this (*Thes.* 39.4-5). Most importantly, Herakles was responsible for saving Theseus from execution, for which Theseus renamed the precincts in Athens set aside for him as Herakleia, instead of Theseia.⁵³ So, not only did the Boiotian hero save the great Athenian one, but he also served as the impetus for Theseus' actions and achievements in Athens. So, Plutarch implied, just as the Boiotian hero influenced the Athenian, so too did Boiotia influence the development of Athens. In this way, Plutarch equated the two.

Plutarch similarly referred to Sparta. According to Plutarch, not only did the Spartan kings claim descent from Herakles, but their foreign policy, largely that of Lycurgus, was based on a sort of emulation of Herakles' interactions with foreign peoples and tyrants.⁵⁴ So, the two greatest poleis in Greece, according to Plutarch at least, were the product of the emulation of a Boiotian hero.

51 *Arist.* 18.1-2; *Arist.* 19.1-2; *De gen.* 590a-f. See *De def. or.* 411d-412d, 434c; *De facie* 944e; *Lys.* 29.6-7; *Pel.* 16.3-5, 20.3-4; and *Sull.* 17.1 for the many oracles in Boiotia, which, except for the one in Lebadeia (Trophonius), were silent in Plutarch's time.

52 Cf. Giroux 2021: 324-328.

53 All except for four, which he kept: *Thes.* 35.1-2.

54 The Herakleidae: *Lyc.* 1.3, 36.1. Foreign policy: *Lyc.* 30.2.

Plutarch did not stop there. He took Herakles' influence into a wider arena, first with respect to Macedonia and then to Rome. Plutarch reminded his reader that Alexander the Great was descended from Herakles through his father's side (*Alex.* 2.1). He also said that Roma, who gave her name to Rome, as well as the family of Marc Antony, claimed descent from Herakles.⁵⁵ Therefore, not only was Boiotia connected to the Greek cities of Athens and Sparta through Herakles, but also to Alexander the Great, and to the most powerful city of Plutarch's time, Rome. And while Plutarch always gave an authority for these claims, thus informing us that they were part of a tradition and not his imagination, it is still important to recognize not only that he ensured to mention these tidbits of information, but also where he inserted these messages: the foundational hero of Athens, the lawmaker who built the society of Sparta, and the woman who gave Rome her name, alongside one of its most important families. A Boiotian hero thus became foundational to Athens, Sparta, and Rome, as well as to their respective cultures.

Conclusion: Plutarch as the Womb of Boiotian Culture

Plutarch clearly did not condone the jibes about the Boiotians, so he subtly sought to rewrite the narrative and rehabilitate his people. However, since he was writing primarily for the education of men, providing *exempla*, he did not give us an outright encomium for his culture, but rather, he dusted his narrative with Boiotian references, writers, and achievements, and sprinkled it with comparisons to Athens, Sparta, and Rome in order to bring the Boiotians to light as great Greeks. And in so doing, he subtly spoke to his reader.

For his explicit mentions that focus on Boiotian military culture, he gave the Romans, who had a grand history of empire and conquest, something that they could relate to. As such, he offered the Boiotians and their leaders, especially Epaminondas, as *exempla* for his Roman readership, worthy of consideration next to other Greek men like Themistocles and Aristides.

It is also in his implicit comparisons of Boiotian religious practice, intellectual and literary figures, and other cultural frameworks like dialect and calendars, that point to something very interesting: it is in these passages that we witness Plutarch elevating Boiotian culture to meet that of Athens and Sparta. As Plutarch constructed it, they shared a similar history,

⁵⁵ *Rom.* 2.1; *Ant.* 4.1-2; *Comp. Dem.-Ant.* 3.3.

with men who were just as courageous. Boiotian writers, like Pindar and Hesiod, could stand next to Athens' greatest. It was also the Boiotian Herakles who was responsible not only for the culture of Athens, but also that of Sparta and Rome, entangling them in joint lineage and cultural practices that linked the strongest elements of this connected world to a supposed backwater of Greece.

So, if Plutarch was so keen to focus on military aspects of Greek culture, making it Athens' highest achievement, did his downplaying of Athenian intellectual culture, mixed with his constant equating of Boiotian and Athenian writers also imply that he understood Boiotia to have a literary and philosophic culture that merited equality with Athens? In other words, did he, by modifying our view of Athenian achievements as mainly military, and subtly boosting Boiotia's literary achievements in reference to the greats of Athens, balance the scales?

Athens created a negative narrative of Boiotia to claim cultural superiority and leadership. It seems that Plutarch, then, was equating Boiotian and Athenian successes and pointing out flawed Athenian narratives as a response to their Boiotian slanders. And while he did this mainly through implicit references, his work, taken as a whole, still becomes the response we seek to these jibes. For as Plutarch himself laments, "And verily it seems to be a grievous thing for a man to be at enmity with a city which has a language and a literature" (ἔοικε γὰρ ὄντως χαλεπὸν εἶναι φωνὴν ἐχούσῃ πόλει καὶ μοῦσαν ἀπεχθάνεσθαι; *Thes.* 16.3; trans. B. Perrin).

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