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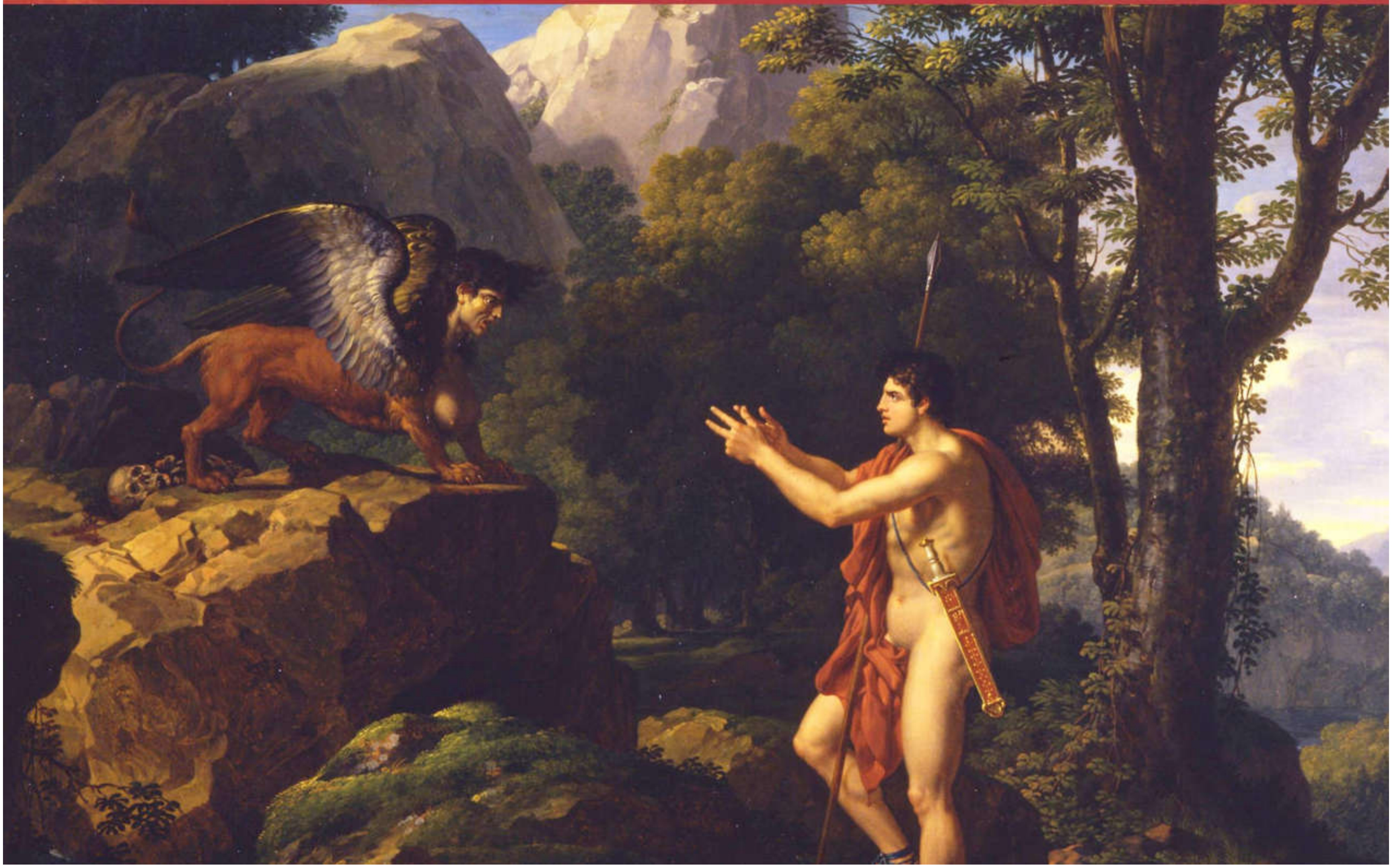
Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World



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TEIRESIAS SUPPLEMENTS ONLINE

Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität
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Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World

Edited by Chandra Giroux

Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 3

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Forward

The connected character of Plutarch's world is epitomized by the opening of *On the Obsolescence of Oracles*, where the old legend of Zeus releasing two eagles, one from the East, one from the West, whose flight converged at the navel of the world in Delphi, is updated to introduce two of the participants in the dialogue: Demetrius of Tarsus, who has been travelling in Britain, and Cleombrotus of Sparta, who has just returned from Egypt, and has visited 'the country of the Troglodytes' and sailed far up the Red Sea.[1] Other dialogues have Roman participants as well as Greek; and Plutarch projects internationalism back into the pre-Persian Wars period in *The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*, which boasts a Scythian participant, Anacharsis, and the involvement at a distance of the Egyptian pharaoh Amasis.

This diverse 'human community'[2] in Plutarch's writings is the subject of the essays in this volume, which mirror that diversity and provide a rich series of readings of the ways in which Plutarch articulates the connectivity of his cultural and political world.

Karin Schlapbach's analysis of Plutarch's writing about dance, a cultural practice which connected great swathes of Plutarch's geographical and cultural world, demonstrates that the experience of dance described in Plutarch is particularly valuable in connecting us to ancient society. This is true not least because of all the arts, dance is the hardest to record. Sebastian Scharff notes that Plutarch is very fond of athletic metaphors, and both the first two essays offer reminders that metaphor both explains the world it describes and also is illuminated, even created, by it. In general in the volume, connections are forged, often very deliberately by Plutarch himself, not only between contemporaries but between the past and Plutarch's present, and between that present and ours.

Rebecca Moorman's meticulous examination of the brutal execution of Mithridates in Plutarch's *Artaxerxes* introduces another form of connection between the reader and the text

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[1] We are protected from cynical assumptions about the possibility of Plutarch exaggerating the cosmopolitan nature of his world by archaeological finds such as the tombstone of Regina at Arbeia (South Shields) on Hadrian's Wall. Regina was a woman of the Catuvellauni (whose territory lay north of London in modern Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, and Hertfordshire). She was the freedwoman and wife of Barates, who was from Palmyra in Syria, and who caused a line of Palmyrene to be added to the tomb's Latin inscription.
See: https://romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1065#edition (accessed 9 November 2022).

[2] I borrow the phrase from Richter 2011: 21-54.

– the heady combination of disgust and fascination which the narrative provokes, and the resulting connection of feeling between the reader and the narrated Persians. The relationship between the global and the local, and the intermediate position between the two occupied by Rome, is further explored by Schmidt, who notes that the *Roman Questions* are concentrated on the city of Rome itself. Schmidt also brings into sharp relief the (perhaps inevitable) Hellenocentric perspective of the *Roman Questions*.

Jeffrey Beneker's analysis of the *Philopoemen-Flamininus*, however, suggests Plutarch can be more critical of the Greek past, especially of its disunity. Here and in Schmidt's essay, too, the present is visible in the past and vice versa, and Plutarch's own world is connected to, and partly explained by, the past. Plutarch was capable of deploring Roman disunity as well as Greek (see *Pompey* 70, where the best of the Romans and some Greek observers reflect sadly on the waste of civil war), but Beneker is undoubtedly right that this pair calibrates itself around a triple focus on the local, the national (that is, Greece as a whole) and the global (that is, Greece under the sway of Rome). The last of the Greeks is overtaken by something bigger than Greece. Beneker also stresses the connection of the narrative to the Plutarchan presence via visual reminders of the Greek past.

Susan Jacobs focusses more on the practical significance of the links Plutarch builds between the past and his contemporary present, and between Greeks and Romans; Noreen Humble, by contrast, concentrates on Sparta and assesses Plutarch's relationship with it. Once again, the imagined Sparta of the past and the Sparta of the present are held in a continuum, though as Humble points out, Plutarch's contemporary Sparta was very different from the Sparta of his *Lives*, which was itself an evolving construct. Once again, the perspective imposed by Rome alters the dynamic.

Finally, Chandra Giroux, the editor of the volume and to whom we also owe the excellent colloquium on which it is based, and the thoughtful Preface, considers Plutarch in his Boiotian context. Plutarch's localism, as Giroux convincingly shows, is demonstrated by his knowledge and love of his whole region, not only Chaironeia, with whose history he is minutely acquainted. My own favourite example of his use of local Boiotian history is the story with which Plutarch opens his *Life of Cimon,* a sad tale of a wild boy who murders the Roman commander who has made unwelcome romantic overtures to him, returns to murder the magistrates who condemn him, and runs away to lead the life of a bandit. When he is lured back and murdered in the bathhouse, his spirit haunts the place in such a sinister way that the baths have to be abandoned.[3] The awkward relationship with the occupying Romans (the commander is planning to consummate his passion for Damon by force when he is killed sacrificing in the market-place – but Chaironeia has embraced *Romanitas* to the extent of having a bathhouse), the sense of the city's hinterland, and its troubles – it is small and neglected, which emboldens the Roman, and it can ill afford the rapacity of the vengeful Damon, introduces Plutarch's declaration of intent to write the life of Lucullus, the pair of *Cimon*, since Lucullus twice assists the city after this distressing incident. The haunting persists even to Plutarch's own day, making one of the now familiar connections between the Greek past and the contemporary present; but happily, it is implied, after Lucullus relations with Rome are better. Giroux captures with a wealth of detail the zest with which Plutarch introduces the reader to his city and his region, its customs, its strategic importance, and the tapestry of its history.

The volume as a whole demonstrates clearly the capaciousness of Plutarch's view of the world, his ability to look beyond the local without overlooking its importance; his ability both to feel – and demonstrate in practical ways – a local attachment and yet also to swim in a bigger river, to meet Romans and others on an equal footing, and to seek to understand the full gamut of the connected world of the Roman empire.

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[3] On this passage see Ma 1994: 49-80; Blamire 1989 ad loc., and Mossman 2019: 59-75, esp. 61-66.

Preface

This volume derives from an international workshop of the same name, organized by Hans Beck and Chandra Giroux at Münster University, Germany, on February 6 and 7, 2020. The event was made possible through funding from the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation and the Chair of Greek History at Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität Münster.

For this workshop, we asked our participants to consider how Plutarch represented cultural practices in the past and in his present, and how he engaged with said cultural practices before the backdrop of an increasingly connected world. Cultural practice, for our purposes, refers to the activities, events, rituals, language, and expressions that were used, produced, and repeated to create meaning in the everyday lives of the participants. The practices could be traditional or newly constructed but were all exposed to change and challenge over time. They were helpful compasses of orientation for both insiders and outsiders because of their ability to instill a sense of belonging when combined with local discourses. Keeping these ideas in mind, we asked how Plutarch conceived of cultural phenomena in local spheres and in relation to the wider world. Was it possible to discern expressions of cross-fertilization, hybridization, or entanglement? The present volume is the result of the fruitful and lively discussion during the workshop and in the ensuing months to publication.

Almost immediately after our workshop in Münster the world went into lockdown because of the COVID-19 pandemic. For many of us, it was our last in-person event for approximately 1.5-2 years. Right after we discussed how international our meeting was, with participants from Canada, Germany, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and the United States of America, we were confined to our local worlds in a wholly unique way. Although our individual experiences were unique, the pandemic brought to light and connected us to the local in new ways, in some cases heightening our local awareness. We limited our travel and existed primarily in our local spheres. But we remained connected to our global networks and friends through the internet and social media outlets. It became common to ask, “How are the case counts in your area? What kind of restrictions are in place?”, and comparing the answers to our own experiences. Our local and global peripheries had never been so obvious, and yet we also gained an appreciation for how they were intricately intertwined. In some ways, living through the pandemic enabled us to consider the workshop questions from a new perspective. Granted from a changed personal experience with our own local cultural practices and the global ones that were no longer as available to us. Plutarch's parochial life in Chaironeia – see specifically his statement in *Demosthenes* 2.2 – suddenly became much more relatable.

Nonetheless, much like Plutarch, we remained connected to the outside world. Our personal and academic networks, collaborations on projects (such as this one), and planning for future travel, kept us engaged with our global contexts. This volume comes not only from our rich academic discussions pre-COVID 19, but also from our own lived experiences through the pandemic as we witnessed the changing and challenging times that affected more than just cultural practices.

It is from this atmosphere of change and challenge that this volume arose, and for this I have many people whom I would like to thank. First, Hans Beck, whose support, not only of the initial conference but also of the edited volume, is immeasurable. Next, thank you to the entire editorial board of Teiresias Supplements Online, who offered their encouragement, thoughts, and excitement about this volume. Thanks are also due to the two peer-reviewers whose observations and critical eyes improved this collection of papers and helped to transform it into a comprehensive whole. Lastly, I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the contributors of this volume, not only for their endless enthusiasm but also for being such an inspiration in how they supported each other throughout the entire process, from conference presentation to final submission. In a world of isolation, you have all made everything feel so close. Thank you.

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Abbreviations for Plutarch’s Works

The following abbreviations have been employed for Plutarch’s works:

Lives

Aem.	Aemilius Paullus
Ages.	Agesilaus
Alc.	Alcibiades
Alex.	Alexander
Ant.	Antony
Arat.	Aratus
Art.	Artaxerxes
Arist.	Aristides
Caes.	Julius Caesar
Cam.	Camillus
Cat. Mai.	Cato Maior
Cat. Min.	Cato Minor
Cic.	Cicero
Cim.	Cimon
Cleom.	Cleomenes
Cor.	Coriolanus
Crass.	Crassus
Demetr.	Demetrius
Dem.	Demosthenes
Eum.	Eumenes
Fab.	Fabius Maximus
Flam.	Titus Flamininus
Galb.	Galba
Luc.	Lucullus
Lyc.	Lycurgus
Lys.	Lysander
Marc.	Marcellus
Mar.	Marius
Nic.	Nicias
Num.	Numa Pompilius

Ot.	Otho
Pel.	Pelopidas
Per.	Pericles
Phoc.	Phocion
Phil.	Philopoemen
Pomp.	Pompeius
Pub.	Publicola
Pyrrh.	Pyrrhus
Rom.	Romulus
Sert.	Sertorius
Sol.	Solon
Sull.	Sulla
Them.	Themistocles
Thes.	Theseus
Ti. Gracch.	Tiberius Gracchus
Tim.	Timoleon

Moralia

Amat.	Amatorius (Dialogue on Love)
An seni	An seni respublica gerenda sit (Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs)
An vit. ad infel. suff.	An vitiositas ad infelicitatem sufficiat (Whether Vice is Sufficient to Cause Unhappiness)
An. virt.	An virtus doceri possit (Can Virtue be Taught?)
Apophth. Lac.	Apophthegmata Laconica (Sayings of Spartans)
Comm. not.	De communibus notitiis adversus Stoicos (Against the Stoics on Common Conceptions)
Consol. ad Ap.	Consolatio ad Apollonium (A letter of Condolence to Apollonius)
Conv. sept. sap.	Convivium septem sapientium (The Dinner of the Seven Wise Men)
De amic. mult.	De amicorum multitudine (On Having Many Friends)
De cap. ex inim. util.	De capienda ex inimicis utilitate (How to Profit by one’s Enemies)
De def. or.	De defectu oraculorum (On the Obsolescence of Oracles)

De esu carnium	De esu carnium orationes (On the Eating of Flesh)
De facie	De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet (On the Face which Appears in the Orb of the Moon)
De fort. Rom.	De fortuna Romanorum (On the Fortune of the Romans)
De frat. am.	De fraterno amore (On Brotherly Love)
De garr.	De garrulitate (On Talkativeness)
De gen.	De genio Socratis (On the Sign of Socrates)
De gloria Athen.	De gloria Atheniensium (Were the Athenians more famous in War or in Wisdom?)
De Herod. malig.	De Herodoti malignitate (On the Malice of Herodotus)
De invidia	De invidia et odio (On Envy and Hate)
De Is. et Os.	De Iside et Osiride (Isis and Osiris)
De lib. ed.	De liberis educandis (On the Education of Children)
De mul. vir.	De mulierum virtutibus (Bravery of Women)
De plac. phil.	De placitis philosophorum (On the Opinions of the Philosophers)
De primo	De primo frigido (On the Principle of Cold)
De Pyth. or.	De Pythiae oraculis (Oracles at Delphi no longer given in Verse)
De. rec. rat. aud.	De recta ratione audiendi (On Listening to Lectures)
De sera	De sera numinis vindicta (On the Delays of Divine Vengeance)
De soll. an.	De sollertia animalium (Whether Land or Sea Animals are Cleverer)
De superst.	De superstitione (On Superstition)
De tranq. an.	De tranquilitate animi (On Tranquility of Mind)
De tuenda san.	De tuenda sanitate praecepta (Advice about Keeping Well)
De virt. mor.	De cirtute morali (On Moral Virtue)
Inst. Lac.	Instituta Laconica (The Ancient Customs of the Spartans)
Non posse	Non posse suaviter vivi secunsum Epicurum (That Epicurus Actually Makes a Pleasant Life Impossible)
Par. Graec. et Rom.	Parallela Graeca et Romana (Greek and Roman Parallel Stories)
Praec. conj.	Coniugalia praecepta (Advice to the Bride and Groom)
Praec. ger. reip.	Praecepta gerendae reipublicae (Precepts of Statecraft)

Quaest. Graec.	Quaestiones Graecae (Greek Questions)
Quaest. conv.	Quaestionum convivales (Table Talk)
Quaest. Rom.	Quaestiones Romanae (Roman Questions)
Quomodo adol.	Quomodo adolescens poetas audire debeat (How a Young Man Should Study Poetry)
Quomodo adul.	Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur (How to Tell a Flatterer from a Friend)
Quomodo quis suos	Quomodo quis suos in virtute sentiat profectus (How a Man may become Aware of his Progress in Virtue)
Reg. et imp. apophth.	Regum et imperatorum apophthegmata (Sayings of Kings and Commanders)

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Chapter 1

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

ἔνθα ἂν 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. [1]

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 / τῷ ἴκελον οἷόν ποτ’ ἐνὶ Κνωσῷ 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).[2] 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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[1] 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 observtions.

[2] See, e.g., Postlethwaite 1998: 94–95, and Coray 2016: 255–260 for an overview of interpretations.

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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".[3]

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.[4] 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.[5]

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.[6] 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.[7]

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, song, music, and festivals.[8] 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.[9]

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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.

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.[10] 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 way towards filling the gaps by supplying information on dances performed on specific occasions and in determinate settings.[11]

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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 hommage 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.

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.[12] 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.[13] 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).[14] Although the personal pronouns (μεθ᾽ ὑμῶν – παρ᾽ ἡμῖν) 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 persist or are newly revived based on transmitted knowledge of earlier practices.[15] 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.

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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᾽ ἡμῖν ἐν τῇ Ἑλλάδι (*Quaest. conv.* 612e).

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᾽ ἁπαλὸν γελάσαι καί τ᾽ ὀρχήσασθαι ἀνῆκε.᾽ καί τί τὸ δεινότατον; ᾠδὴ καὶ

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[15] See Graf 2022.

> γέλως καὶ ὄρχησις; οὐδὲν ἄχρι τούτων· 'καί 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).[16]

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 seemlessly 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).[17] The fact that dance is lumped together with a series of other entertainments is typical.[18]

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 instance in *De tuenda sanitate praecepta* and in the *Table Talk*.[19] 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 *paides* (boys or slaves) because he is known as a fine dancer in the *palaistra*, where he practices the pyrrhic and "shadow-boxing" (χειρονομία).[20] 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 (ὀρχηστρίδες) are credited with immense power over men in the *Amatorius*.[21]

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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 ^{2}2017 no. 907).

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

[18] See Senn 1978: 60-61.

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.[22] 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 ἡ 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 κατά τινα τόπον τῆς Ἀσίας καὶ θεασάμενος φύλλοις ἐλαίας ἐστεφανωμένους γεωργοὺς 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 γεωργοὺς ἐστεφανωμένους καὶ χορεύοντας. γενόμενος δὲ κατά τινα τόπον τῆς Ἰταλίας καὶ θεασάμενος ἀγροίκους πρινίνοις κλάδοις ἐστεφανωμένους καὶ ὀρχήσει προσευκαιροῦντας, ἔκτισε πόλιν, ἀπὸ τοῦ συγκυρήματος Πρίνιστον ὀνομάσας, ἣν Ῥωμαῖοι παραγώγως 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*).[23]

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).[24]

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.[25] 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.[26] The space destined for the new city is neither farmland – the farmers won't trample their crops[27] – 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.

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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 repertories 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.

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 ἱστάντος 'εὖγε' εἶπεν, 'ὦ χοραγέ, ἐξεῦρες πῶς καὶ αὕτη ἡ χώρα ἄτιμος οὖσα 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).[28]

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.[29] 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 ἁρπάσας ἐκ χοροῦ ἔφυγεν. ὁ δὲ πατὴρ διώξας καὶ μὴ συλλαβὼν εἰς τὸν Λυκόρμαν ἔρριψεν ἑαυτὸν ποταμὸν καὶ ἀθάνατος ἐγένετο· ὡς Δοσίθεος ἐν πρώτῳ Αἰτωλικῶν.

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[27] 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.

[28] 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.

[29] 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]).

> ΑΝΝΙΟΣ δὲ Τούσκων βασιλεὺς ἔχων θυγατέρα εὔμορφον τοὔνομα Σαλίαν, παρθένον ἐτήρει. Κάθητος δ᾽ ἐκ τῶν ἐπισήμων ἰδὼν τὴν παρθένον παίζουσαν ἠράσθη, καὶ μὴ στέγων τὸν ἔρωτα ἥρπασε καὶ ἦγεν εἰς Ῥώμην. ὁ δὲ πατὴρ ἐπιδιώξας καὶ μὴ συλλαβὼν ἥλατο εἰς τὸν Παρεούσιον ποταμόν, ὃς Ἀνίων μετωνομάσθη· τῇ δὲ Σαλίᾳ συγγενόμενος Κάθητος ἐποιήσατο Λατῖνον καὶ Σάλιον, ἀφ᾽ ὧν οἱ εὐγενέστατοι κατῆγον τὸ γένος· ὡς Ἀριστείδης Μιλήσιος καὶ Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ Πολυΐστωρ 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.[30] While in ch. 41, the dance of the farmers marks the 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.

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[30] Slightly more detail on Marpessa's dance is offered in schol. Hom. *Il.* 9.557: ἥρπασε τὴν κόρην χορεύουσαν ἐν Ἀρτέμιδος (see Ibáñez Chacón 2014: 476).

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.[31] 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 ἠϊθέων 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 ἁπάντων.
>
> 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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[31] 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.[32] 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.[33] 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 μετακοσμῆσαι 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 φιλάνθρωπον 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.[34] 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 probably a more settled life, with processions and dances instead of incursions and battles, even if some of the dances involved carrying weapons.

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[34] 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.

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 Σαλίους ἱερεῖς. Σάλιοι δὲ ἐκλήθησαν, οὐχ, ὡς ἔνιοι μυθολογοῦσι, Σαμόθρᾳκος ἀνδρὸς ἢ Μαντινέως, ὄνομα Σαλίου, πρώτου τὴν ἐνόπλιον ἐκδιδάξανκρούοντες. ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ἀπὸ τῆς ὀρχήσεως αὐτῆς, ἁλτικῆς οὔσης, ἣν ὑπορχοῦνται διαπορευόμενοι τὴν πόλιν, ὅταν τὰς ἱερὰς πέλτας ἀναλάβωσιν ἐν τῷ Μαρτίῳ μηνί, φοινικοῦς μὲν ἐνδεδυμένοι χιτωνίσκους, μίτραις δὲ χαλκαῖς ἐπεζωσμένοι πλατείαις καὶ κράνη χαλκᾶ φοροῦντες, ἐγχειριδίοις δὲ μικροῖς τὰ ὅπλα κρούοντες. ἡ δὲ ἄλλη τῆς ὀρχήσεως ποδῶν ἔργον ἐστί· κινοῦνται γὰρ ἐπιτερπῶς, ἑλιγμούς 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.[35] But alternative accounts circulated – Varro knew both hypotheses – even though the attempt to trace the Salii back to Greek roots, just as it was done for other Roman religious institutions, seems to be historically unfounded.[36] Samothrace and Mantineia 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.[37]

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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.

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 ἱππέων σχολὴν ἀγόντων (ἔτυχε γὰρ αὐτοῖς ἀνὴρ Λίβυς ἐπιδεικνύμενος ὄρχησιν ἅμα καὶ μοναυλῶν θαύματος ἀξίως, οἱ δὲ τερπόμενοι καθῆντο τοῖς παισὶ τοὺς ἵππους ἐπιτρέψαντες), ἐξαίφνης περιελθόντες ἐμβάλλουσιν οἱ πολέμιοι, καὶ τοὺς μὲν αὐτοῦ κτείνουσι, τοῖς δὲ εἰς τὸ στρατόπεδον προτροπάδην ἐλαυνομένοις συνεισέπεσον. εἰ δὲ μὴ Καῖσαρ αὐτός, ἅμα δὲ Καίσαρι Πολλίων Ἀσίννιος βοηθοῦντες ἐκ τοῦ χάρακος ἔσχον τὴν φυγήν, 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 dancers and musicians that allowed dancers more freedom of movement.[38] 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.[39]

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[36] Isidor, *orig.* 18.50: *Saltatores autem nominatos Varro dicit ab Arcade Salio, quem Aeneas in Italiam secum adduxit, quique 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.

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 Ξοῦθοι χοραῦλαι καὶ Μητρόδωρός τις ὀρχηστὴς καὶ τοιοῦτος ἄλλος Ἀσιανῶν ἀκροαμάτων θίασος, ὑπερβαλλομένων λαμυρίᾳ καὶ βωμολοχίᾳ τὰς ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰταλίας κῆρας, εἰσερρύη καὶ διῴκει τὴν αὐλήν, οὐδὲν ἦν ἀνεκτόν, εἰς ταῦτα φορουμένων ἁπάντων; 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”.[40] This captures well the ambivalent reputation of dancers in the early empire, which was often tied to their far-away places of origin.[41]

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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 Africum* 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.[42] 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 ἐρωτικὸς ἐκεῖ γενόμενος καὶ τοῖς καλοῖς ὁμιλήσας ᾗ θέμις, ἐπτέρωται καὶ κατωργίασται καὶ διατελεῖ περὶ τὸν αὕτοῦ θεὸν ἄνω χορεύων καὶ συμπεριπολῶν, ἄχρι οὗ πάλιν εἰς τοὺς Σελήνης καὶ Ἀφροδίτης λειμῶνας ἐλθὼν καὶ καταδαρθὼν ἑτέρας ἄρχηται γενέσεως.

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[42] 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".[43] 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.[44] 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".[45] But these instances where Plutarch talks about his own participation in festivals and, perhaps, dances, are not easy to pin down. A passage from *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* offers a rare glimpse into Plutarch's biography:

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[43] καὶ τόποι καθαροὶ καὶ λειμῶνες ἐδέξαντο, φωνὰς καὶ χορείας καὶ σεμνότητας 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.

> Καὶ μὴν οἶσθά με τῷ Πυθίῳ λειτουργοῦντα πολλὰς Πυθιάδας· ἀλλ᾽ οὐκ ἂν εἴποις ‘ἱκανά 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”.[46]

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.[47] 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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[46] *An seni* 792f, trans. H.N. Fowler, quoted by Bowie (ibid.). He also refers to *An seni* 787b-c (see above p. 21).

[47] *Prae. ger. reip.* 822b. See Desideri 1986: 376-377.

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TSO
TEIRESIAS SUPPLEMENTS ONLINE

Chapter 2

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No Life without Athletics. Plutarch and Greek Sport

> "Tension between alternative viewpoints thus lies at the heart of athletic representation."
> (König 2005: 346)

At the beginning of Plutarch's *Life of Philopoemen* we find an interesting story on the question of whether or not athletic training was of good use for Greek soldiers. The passage reads as follows:

> ἐπεὶ δὲ καὶ παλαίειν εὐφυῶς ἐδόκει καὶ παρεκάλουν αὐτὸν ἐπὶ τὴν ἄθλησιν ἔνιοι τῶν φίλων καὶ τῶν ἐπιτρόπων, ἠρώτησεν αὐτούς μή τι πρὸς τὴν στρατιωτικὴν ἄσκησιν ὑπὸ τῆς ἀθλήσεως βλαβήσοιτο. τῶν δὲ φαμένων, ὅπερ ἦν, ἀθλητικὸν στρατιωτικοῦ σῶμα καὶ βίον διαφέρειν τοῖς πᾶσι, μάλιστα δὲ δίαιταν ἑτέραν καὶ ἄσκησιν εἶναι, τῶν μὲν ὕπνῳ τε πολλῷ καὶ πλησμοναῖς ἐνδελεχέσι καὶ κινήσεσί τεταγμέναις καὶ ἡσυχίαις αὐξόντων τε καὶ διαφυλαττόντων τὴν ἕξιν ὑπὸ πάσης ῥοπῆς καὶ παρεκβάσεως τοῦ συνήθους ἀκροσφαλῆ πρὸς μεταβολὴν οὖσαν, τὰ δὲ πάσης μὲν πλάνης ἔμπειρα καὶ πάσης ἀνωμαλίας προσῆκον εἶναι, μάλιστα δὲ φέρειν ῥᾳδίως μὲν ἔνδειαν εἰθισμένα, ῥᾳδίως δὲ ἀγρυπνίαν, ἀκούσας ὁ Φιλοποίμην οὐ μόνον αὐτὸς ἔφυγε τὸ πρᾶγμα καὶ κατεγέλασεν, ἀλλὰ καὶ στρατηγῶν ὕστερον ἀτιμίαις καὶ προπηλακισμοῖς, ὅσον ἦν ἐπ᾽ αὐτῷ, πᾶσαν ἄθλησιν ἐξέβαλεν ὡς τὰ χρησιμώτατα τῶν σωμάτων εἰς τοὺς ἀναγκαίους ἀγῶνας ἄχρηστα ποιοῦσαν

Chandra Giroux (editor). Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World. Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 3. 2022: 40-55. © Sebastian Scharff 2022. License Agreement: CC-BY-NC (permission to use, distribute, and reproduce in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed and not used for commercial purposes).

> He (sc. Philopoemen) also seemed to have had a talent for wrestling, and when some of his friends and guardians suggested that he should take up athletics, he asked them whether it might have a negative effect on his military training. They told him the truth – that the physique and lifestyle required for athletics were completely incompatible with military life, especially in respect of the regimen and training involved. Athletes, they told him, both develop and maintain their condition by sleeping a great deal and regularly eating their fill, and by fixed periods of activity and inactivity; and so their condition is liable to be worsened by the slightest imbalance and departure from routine. A soldier, however, should be inured to every kind of inconstancy and irregularity, and above all should be able to cope easily with lack of food or sleep. This not only made Philopoemen shun and scorn athletics himself, but in his later life he wielded punitive measures and expressions of contempt in a determined effort to banish athletics completely from the armies under his command, on the grounds that it took a perfectly serviceable body and made it useless and incapable of fighting when necessary (*Phil.* 3.2-4; trans. R. Waterfield).

The message of the episode is very clear: Plutarch characterizes athletics as "completely incompatible with military life". In doing so, he decides the old question of the possible use of athletic training for future (or current) soldiers to the detriment of athletics which is regarded rather as an obstacle for developing the necessary skills of a successful warrior. This view is presented as a universal truth ("They told him the truth [ὅπερ ἦν]") which also implies that it is to be understood as identical to Plutarch's own position.

This is peculiar for two reasons: first, the argument itself is not very persuasive with regard to the form in which it is put forward, since no differentiation between 'heavy weights' and those athletes competing in track-and-field events is made. With regard to a long distance runner, the argument that he needs a lot of food is simply not very convincing; second, although the argument is in line, for instance, with the way Alexander's attitudes towards athletics are depicted by Plutarch,[1] there is an obvious contradiction to other passages in his work like in the second book of his *Table Talks*, where he even argues that the Thebans defeated the Spartans at Leuctra because they were good wrestlers (and not, as one might have thought, due to the oblique order, the Sacred Band or the military genius of Epaminondas).[2] This entails the question of how this tension, if it is one, is to be understood and why Plutarch expresses such opposing views on the relation between athletics and warfare. Might it be possible to reveal Plutarch's general attitude towards athletics?

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[1] In the words of Kyle ^{2}2015: 237: "Plutarch (…) has the later Achaean general Philopoemen (…) echo Alexander: although he had a good body and talent as a wrestler, Philopoemen would not compete because it would undermine his future as a soldier, (…)". The *locus classicus* for Alexander's attitudes towards athletics is Plut. *Alex*. 4.5 (cf. *Reg. et imp. apophth*. 179d) including young Alexander's famous skeptical answer to the idea that he should compete in the footrace at Olympia: "if kings were my contestants".

It is striking to note that these questions have not puzzled previous research very much. There are only a few pages dedicated to the topic in some of the major companions and introductions to ancient athletics or the Second Sophistic.[3] Plutarch's view on athletics is sometimes touched by studies on ancient critics of Greek sport.[4] Mostly, however, his work is rather used as a quarry for references to all things athletic.[5] In any case, a systematic study on Plutarch's perception of athletics is a desideratum.[6]

It lies beyond the scope of this article to comprehensively fill this gap. What this contribution can offer is a focus on two specific aspects of Plutarch's perception of athletics: the relation of war and athletics and the role athletics played in the composition of his *Lives*. In order to analyze both aspects, I will focus on the *Lives*, but will also have a look at the *Moralia* when necessary. I will start by putting *Philopoemen* 3 into context, then turn to examples of negative attitudes towards athletics in Plutarch's work before finally discussing cases of positive perception of athletics by the same author.

Putting Philopoemen 3 in Context: Plutarch and His Hero

The *Lives* of Philopoemen and Flamininus form the only pair of lives in Plutarch's collection in which the protagonists were contemporaries and interacted with each other. Throughout his *Life*, Philopoemen is described as a successful military leader, “the last of the Greeks”[7]. In order to emphasize Philopoemen’s military strengths, Plutarch makes good use of a long established notion of (intellectual) criticism of athletics. He may have held some intellectual reservation against athletics from a philosophical point of view.[8] Yet, Plutarch’s negative approach with regard to the usefulness of athletic training in his *Life of Philopoemen* is clearly motivated by another reason.

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[2] Plut. *Quaest. conv.* 639a–640a. The specific question raised by Plutarch here is why Homer always has the disciplines of boxing, wrestling, and running in that order. The answer is all about the notion that athletics were once introduced for military reasons, an argument which is also to be found in Plutarch's Spartan Lives.

[3] Golden 1998; Kyle ^{2}2015: 236–238; König 2017: 162–164.

[4] Müller 1995; Papakonstantinou 2014: 327.

[5] This includes some of my own studies on Hellenistic athletics (see esp. Scharff forthcoming). An illuminating example is represented by Golden 2008 who, according to the book's index, cited more passages from Plutarch (43) than from Pausanias (26) and Pindar (15) combined.

[6] The only study exclusively devoted to the topic is the article by Hamilton 2007. There even is a surprising absence of Plutarch in König's magisterial *Athletics and Literature in the Roman Empire* (2005), only partly filled by his short but instructive comments in König 2017: 162–164.

Athletics, although also practiced by some Romans, were still conceived as a rather Greek activity in Plutarch’s times.[9] Plutarch’s aim in his parallel *Lives of Flamininus and Philopoemen* was to show, if not even the latter’s overall superiority, then at least his equality to the victor of Cynoscephalae who was one of the most prominent Romans of all times among the Greeks.[10] In order to achieve this goal, his Philopoemen had to excel not so much in a Greek-style activity like athletics, but in a field of Roman dominance. This is why he is presented as “the more experienced general”[11], as Plutarch concludes in his syncrisis.[12] In order to emphasize this aspect, Philopoemen is equaled with two very prominent figures of the Greek past which embodied military skills and excellence for Plutarch more than anyone else: Alexander III of Macedon, undoubtedly the ‘first of the Greeks’ in terms of military achievements, and Epaminondas, the victor of Leuctra and Plutarch’s local hero.[13] According to *Philopoemen* 3.1, the Achaean general “took Epaminondas as his primary role model”[14] and it is in this context that Philopoemen’s Homeric branding belongs: When his childhood is compared to that of Achilles and when he is characterized as very interested especially in the more martial parts of the *Iliad*,[15] this echoes Plutarch’s Alexander, as did Philopoemen’s approach to athletics. All in all “Philopoemen comes across as a heroic figure”[16] who engages in battle himself, as it was expected from a victorious king of the Hellenistic period.[17] So it comes as no surprise that a “story about Philopoemen at the Nemean festival”[18] is all about his military glory.

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[7] Plut. *Phil*. 1.4 (also in *Arat*. 24.2).

[8] van Hoof 2010: 211-254; cf. König 2017: 162-164, both focusing on Plutarch’s *Advice about Keeping Well* in the *Moralia*, see also Corvisier 2003.

[9] On the perception of Greek athletics in Rome, see Mann 2014: 173: “The exclusion of Greek athletics from Roman culture in discourse went hand in hand, (…) with inclusion in practice”.

[10] For a somewhat different view of this pair of *Lives*, see Beneker, in this volume. On both *Lives*, see Swain 1988; Walsh 1992; Pelling & Melandri 1997; Schrott 2014; Erskine 2016. On Flamininus as a historical figure, see Baldson 1967; Badian 1971, 1973; Beck 2005: 368-394; Pfeilschifter 2005. On Philopoemen, see Errington 1969.

[11] Plut. *Comp. Phil.-Flam*. 2.1: ἡ Φιλοποίμενος ἐμπειρία βεβαιοτέρα.

[12] Note the very last sentence of the syncrisis: τῷ μὲν Ἕλληνι τὸν ἐμπειρίας πολεμικῆς καὶ στρατηγίας στέφανον, τῷ δὲ Ῥωμαίῳ τὸν δικαιοσύνης καὶ χρηστότητος ἀποδιδόντες (…) – “I award the Greek the prize for military experience and generalship, and the Roman the prize for integrity and honesty” (trans. R. Waterfield).

[13] See Giroux, in this volume, for more on Epaminondas and his connection to Plutarch’s regional world.

[14] Plut. *Phil*. 3.1: καίπερ Ἐπαμεινώνδου βουλόμενος εἶναι μάλιστα ζηλωτής, (…).

[15] Erskine 2016: 352 who sees “echoes of the Homeric age” in Plut. *Phil*. 1, 3-4, 9, 21.

[16] Erskine 2016: 352.

To put it in a nutshell, an analysis of the narrative context of the episode cited above shows that the most eminent example of Plutarch’s negative attitude towards athletics in his *Lives* is rather motivated by the need for portraying his leading character as a successful soldier than by his supposed contempt for athletics. In this episode, Plutarch’s approach is a rather playful one aimed at emphasizing his leitmotif.

A Negative Perception of Athletics: Plutarch Demonstrating His paideia

Apart from *Philopoemen* 3, there are surprisingly few passages in the *Lives* that show a clearly dismissive tone towards athletics. *Agesilaus* 20.1 reveals that Cynisca’s brother convinced her to participate in chariot races in order to demonstrate that an Olympic victory was no big deal, but simply a question of wealth.[19] The historicity of the episode which originally stems from Xenophon[20] is rather questionable,[21] since Cynisca invested a lot of money and was obviously very proud of her success as her famous epigram from Olympia clearly demonstrates.[22] The passage appears rather abruptly in Plutarch’s account of Agesilaus’ *Life* and it is possible that he simply retells Xenophon here who is directly referred to in the previous chapter.[23] If the episode should express Plutarch's own reservation towards the value of equestrian victories, he does not stress it.

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[17] Esp. telling in this regard is Plut. *Phil.* 10 where it is told how Philopoemen defeated the Spartan tyrant Machanidas in a duel. On the victorious king, see Gehrke ^{2}2013.

[18] Plut. *Phil.* 11.1.

[19] Plut. *Ages.* 20.1: οὐ μὴν ἀλλὰ ὁρῶν ἐνίους τῶν πολιτῶν ἀπὸ ἱπποτροφίας δοκοῦντας εἶναι τινας καὶ μέγα φρονοῦντας, ἔπεισε τὴν ἀδελφὴν Κυνίσκαν ἅρμα καθεῖσαν Ὀλυμπίασιν ἀγωνίσασθαι, βουλόμενος ἐνδείξασθαι τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ὡς οὐδεμιᾶς ἐστιν ἀρετῆς, ἀλλὰ πλούτου καὶ δαπάνης ἡ νίκη – “However, on seeing that some of the citizens esteemed themselves highly and were greatly lifted up because they bred racing horses, he persuaded his sister Cynisca to enter a chariot in the contests at Olympia, wishing to show the Greeks that the victory there was not a mark of any great excellence, but simply of wealth and lavish outlay” (trans. B. Perrin).

[20] Xen. *Ages.* 9.6; cf. Xen. *Hiero* 11.5.

[21] Mann 2001: 161-162: “Daß der König die Wagenrennen gering geachtet, seine Schwester aber dazu angestiftet habe riesige Summen Geldes dafür aufzuwenden, hält sachkritischen Überlegungen nicht stand”.

[22] Ebert 1972, no. 33 (= *IvO* 160 + Anth. *Pal.* 13.16). The epigram of the first female Olympic victor of all times successful in 396 and 392 BC (Moretti 1957, no. 373 and 381) is also mentioned by Paus. 6.1.6. For Cynisca’s reasons to compete, see also Cartledge 1987: 150; Hodkinson 1989: 99; Hodkinson 2000: 327-328; Pomeroy 2002: 19-24; Kyle 2003; Hodkinson 2004: 111-112; Kyle 2007: 141-145; Millender 2009: 18-26; Nobili 2013 (2016): 74-81; Fornis 2014: 316; Paradiso 2015. One can see why Christesen (2019: 189 n246) calls scholarship on Cynisca “something of an industry unto itself”.

Another passage is *Alexander* 4.5-6 which is echoed by *Philopoemen* 3, as we have already seen. Yet, although Alexander is clearly presented as someone who is skeptical to compete himself and who "seems to have been opposed to athletics" in general,[24] what Plutarch really emphasizes here is that his Alexander simply had a different approach to athletics than his father Philip and used it to distance himself from his parent.[25] In the words of Plutarch:

> οὔτε γὰρ ἀπὸ παντὸς οὔτε πᾶσαν ἠγάπα δόξαν, ὡς Φίλιππος λόγου τε δεινότητι σοφιστικῶς καλλωπιζόμενος καὶ τὰς ἐν Ὀλυμπίᾳ, νίκας τῶν ἁρμάτων ἐγχαράττων τοῖς νομίσμασιν, (…)
>
> For he (sc. Alexander) did not feel attracted towards recognition *tout court*, whatever its source, as Philip did, with his tendency to preen himself on his rhetorical skill like a sophist and to engrave his successes at Olympia in the chariot-race on his coins (*Alex*. 4.5; trans. R. Waterfield).

Thus the focus of the passage is not on the value of athletic success, but on a son setting himself apart from his father.

In addition to cases like these, it may also be of interest what Plutarch does *not* tell us in his *Lives*. Although, methodologically, this means entering rather unsafe territory, the question of intended omission remains an exciting one.[26] Take the famous episode of the duel of Dioxippus versus Coragus which is told by two authors of the so-called *vulgata* tradition, Diodorus and Curtius Rufus, both probably strongly relying on Cleitarchus who was also used by Plutarch.[27] In this passage, an Athenian Olympic wrestling champion defeats a better equipped Macedonian soldier.[28] Both accounts slightly diverge but agree in the overall message which is a triumph of athletics over warfare: whereas the Macedonian nobleman fights with the typical armor of a Macedonian soldier including sarissa, shield, sword and rig, the Greek 'heavy weight' competes like a true athlete: naked, fully anointed, even with a crown. Using a club as his weapon, he presents himself as a second Herakles, patron deity not only of the gymnasion, but also of wrestlers in particular. The story is also about the level of ethnic and political identity: an 'old' polis-Greek vanquishing a Macedonian exponent of the new ruling class of the Hellenistic period.[29] In any case, the allusions are more subtle in Diodorus and Curtius Rufus apparently did not get all of them right. With regard to Plutarch, it is not surprising that he does not mention this episode in his *Alexander*. It is clear that a walk-over of athletics over warfare would have contradicted his own words in *Philopoemen* 3. Thus we may conclude that an emphasis of the superiority of military skills over athletic virtues constituted part of what Plutarch actually wanted to express.[30]

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[23] Plut. *Ages*. 19.5 and 19.6.

[24] Plut. *Alex.* 4.6. the whole sentence goes as follows: φαίνεται δὲ καὶ καθόλου πρὸς τὸ τῶν ἀθλητῶν γένος ἀλλοτρίως ἔχων πλείστους γέ τοι θεὶς ἀγῶνας οὐ μόνον τραγῳδῶν καὶ αὐλητῶν καὶ κιθαρῳδῶν, ἀλλὰ καὶ ῥαψῳδῶν, θήρας τε παντοδαπῆς καὶ ῥαβδομαχίας, οὔτε πυγμῆς οὔτε παγκρατίου μετά τινος σπουδῆς ἔθηκεν ἆθλον – "By and large, he seems to have been opposed to athletics; at any rate, although he instituted a great many tragic and musical competitions (for both the pipes and lyre), and also rhapsodic contests, games involving all kinds of hunting, and quarterstaff matches, he showed no interest in offering prizes for boxing or pankration" (trans. R. Waterfield).

[25] Much has been written about Alexander's approach to athletics. The most recent and convincing contribution is Mann 2020a. I do not agree with Kyle (^{2}2015: 227-232) that Alexander's deviation from a Macedonian tradition of participating in Greek contests was an expression of his orientalized concept of kingship according to which a king must not partake in a competition against his subjects. In my opinion, the reason is rather to be found in the changed political circumstances after Chaironeia: for Alexander, the self-attribution to the Greek world simply was less important than for his Argead predecessors because Greece was now under Macedonian control. For Alexander's approach to athletics, cf. also Weiler 1975; Brown 1977; Slowikowski 1989; Romano 1990; Lunt 2014.

However, things do not turn out as unambiguous as they might appear in the first place, for there are other omissions with regard to athletics in the *Life of Alexander*. This brings us to an episode, or rather: a saying (*apophthegma*) that Plutarch renders in his *Moralia*. It reads:

> ἐν δὲ τῇ Μιλήτῳ πολλοὺς ἀνδριάντας ἀθλητῶν θεασάμενος Ὀλύμπια καὶ Πύθια νενικηκότων, 'καὶ ποῦ τὰ τηλικαῦτα,' ἔφη, 'ἦν σώματα, ὅτε οἱ βάρβαροι ὑμῶν τὴν πόλιν ἐπολιόρκουν;'

> When he saw in Miletus many statues of athletes who had won victories in the Olympic and the Pythian Games, he said, 'Where were the men with bodies like

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[26] See, for example, the upcoming edited volume *Plutarch's Unexpected Silences* (Beneker, Cooper, Humble, & Titchener [eds.]).

[27] For the historiography of Alexander the Great, see most illuminating Wiemer ^{2}2015: 16-38.

[28] Diod. 17.100.2-101.6; Curt. Ruf. 9.29.

[29] If there is any kernel of historical truth to the episode, it may consist in probable tensions between the Macedonian and the Greek parts of Alexander's army. On Alexander's army, Sheppard 2008: 77-98; for Dioxippus (Moretti 1957, no. 458), Decker 2014: 96-98.

[30] This idea of the superiority of warfare over athletics is, for instance, clearly expressed in Plut. *Ages*. 21.3 and *Them*. 17.2.

> these when the barbarians were besieging your city?' (*Reg. et imp. apophth.* 180a; trans. F.C. Babbitt).

For Donald Kyle, the passage fits well into his overall picture of Plutarch's negative attitude towards athletics.[31] Yet it is important to note that the sentence is not cited in the *Life of Alexander* and that we do miss any context here – the passage is found in the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*. Whether or not it was intentionally omitted in Alexander's *Life* is hard to decide. What we can state is that the saying was known to Plutarch and that it is not necessarily in line with his Alexander who does not want to compete at Olympia but regularly organizes athletic and musical festivals on his campaigns.[32] Again, it has to be emphasized that Plutarch's Alexander does not show a negative attitude towards athletics in general but simply refrains from using agonistic victories for his self-presentation in order to set himself apart from his father, Philip.[33] For this purpose, the public denigration of Olympic victors simply is not necessary.

All in all, there seems to have been more examples of a negative approach to athletics in the *Moralia*. Especially telling is a series of scathing comments on athletic coaches brought forward by Plutarch's character Zeuxippus in his *Advice about Keeping Well*.[34] The critique focuses on the supposedly "anti-intellectual qualities of professional training"[35], as Jason König puts it. According to Zeuxippus, athletic trainers "claim at every opportunity that scholarly discussion at dinner spoils the food and makes the head heavy"[36]. These coaches "do not allow us to investigate or philosophize about anything else at dinner, or to read any of those things which have pleasurably alluring and sweet qualities (…)"[37]. He reasons: "we shall order them not annoy us, but to go off to the gymnasium colonnades and the *palaestras* and talk about these things with their athletes, whom they have made as shiny and stone-like as the pillars of the gymnasium by tearing them from their books, (…).”[38]

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[31] Kyle ^{2}2015: 237.

[32] For Alexander as organizer of contests, see esp. Mann 2020a who recently established "campaign *agones*" (Mann 2020b: 99) as a new category of athletic contests for which Alexander had a marked preference. On these competitions, cf. also Bloedow 1998; Adams 2007; Günther 2013.

[33] This is why we find Alexander deeply respecting and honoring an athletic victor after Gaugamela in Plut. *Alex*. 34.2 (cf. Papakonstantinou 2014: 327). A similar story is narrated by Arr. *Anab*. 2.1.15.

[34] Plut. *De tuenda san.* 133b-d; cf. van Hoof 2010: 238-239; König 2017: 162-164.

[35] König 2017: 162.

[36] Plut. *De tuenda san.* 133b-c: ἀλειπτῶν δὲ φωνὰς καὶ παιδοτριβῶν λόγους ἑκάστοτε λεγόντων ὡς τὸ παρὰ δεῖπνον φιλολογεῖν τὴν τροφὴν διαφθείρει καὶ βαρύνει τὴν κεφαλήν, (…) (trans. F.C. Babbitt).

[37] Plut. *De tuenda san.* 133c: ἡμᾶς μὴ ἄλλο τι ζητεῖν ἢ φιλοσοφεῖν ἢ ἀναγιγνώσκειν παρὰ δεῖπνον ἐῶσι τῶν ἐν τῷ καλῷ καὶ ὠφελίμῳ τὸ ἐπαγωγὸν ὑφ᾽ ἡδονῆς καὶ γλυκὺ μόριον ἐχόντων, (…) (trans. F.C. Babbitt).

Athletes are compared to “the pillars of the gymnasium” which probably means that they have an imposing physical appearance but are rather shallow figures with regard to their intellectual capacity. There can be no doubt that this passage includes a strong “denigration of athletes”[39]; and yet it is also true that we should be very careful not to equate Zeuxippus’ words a priori to Plutarch’s own position. This is a dialogue including other voices different from that of Zeuxippus.[40] What is more, even Zeuxippus’ comments are in essence rather “playful and teasing”[41] compared to what later authors like Galen wrote on the same topic.[42] But above all, the dialogue is about an author demonstrating his *paideia* by arguing for the guidance of philosophy in all matters concerning health. Having a figure like Zeuxippus make a case to the detriment of athletes and their trainers primarily served Plutarch’s own self-presentation as a philosopher and intellectual author.

This motivation, however, is not necessarily to be found in all his works in the same manner. We can expect the leitmotifs of such a productive and versatile author to differ in his writings, especially between the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, but also within his philosophical writings. The presence of the athletic trainer (*paidotribes*) Meniskos as fellow symposiast to Plutarch in his *Table Talk* is a good case in point here.[43] It indicates that we should not assume Plutarch to have had an entirely negative conception of athletics. Rather, he adapted it to whatever message he wanted to deliver in a particular passage of his writings, as we will see in the following section.

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[38] Plut. *De tuenda san.* 133d: κελεύσομεν αὐτοὺς μὴ ἐνοχλεῖν, ἀλλ’ ἀπιόντας ἐν τῷ ξυστῷ ταῦτα καὶ ταῖς παλαίστραις διαλέγεσθαι τοῖς ἀθληταῖς, οὓς τῶν βιβλίων ἐξελόντες, (…) τοῖς ἐν γυμνασίῳ κίοσιν ὁμοίως λιπαροὺς πεποιήκασι καὶ λιθίνους (trans. F.C. Babbitt).

[39] König 2017: 162.

[40] For instance, the doctor Glaukos, although it can still be argued that Zeuxippus appears as Plutarch’s “mouthpiece” (König 2017: 163).

[41] König 2017: 163.

[42] Though it must be admitted that athletic trainers are criticized elsewhere in the *Moralia*. See, for instance, a passage in the *Apophthegmata Laconica* (233c) where it is stated that the Spartans deliberatively refrained from appointing wrestling coaches “so that their *philotimia* would not be directed to *techne*, but to *arete*” (τοῖς παλαίουσι παιδοτρίβας οὐκ ἐφίστανον, ἵνα μὴ τέχνης ἀλλ’ ἀρετῆς ἡ φιλοτιμία γένηται). See also Plut. *Apophth. Lac*. 236e; cf. Finley & Pleket 1976: 70–71; Mann 2001: 130–132.

[43] Plut. *Quaest. conv*. 747a–b.

A Positive Perception of Athletics: Education and Metaphors

In the *Lives*, there are two main areas in which a positive approach to athletics can be found: the first concerns the content of the *Lives* themselves and consists of the simple fact that athletic activities appear in almost all of the Greek *Lives*, oftentimes in an early phase of the career of the respective statesman and general.

The *Lives of Pericles*, *Alexander*, *Eumenes*, *Aratus*, and *Philopoemen* show that for Plutarch, athletics regularly formed part of the life and education of a free-born Greek. All of them, with the exception of Pericles, naturally practiced athletics in their youth.[44] Others splendidly participated in equestrian competitions,[45] organized contests,[46] introduced new events to athletic festivals,[47] set rewards for athletic victors,[48] accepted the cost of a *choregia*,[49] built a theatre on campaign,[50] or even brought athletics to Rome[51]. It is interesting to note that even in the Roman *Lives* athletics sometimes formed part of the narrative: according to a passage in the *Life of Cato the Elder*, the Roman aristocrat served as an athletic trainer (*gymnastes*) for his son and taught him "not merely to hurl the javelin and fight in armour and ride the horse, but also to box, to endure heat and cold, and to swim"[52].

The Greek (and sometimes the Roman) worlds of the past as depicted by Plutarch are full of sports and competition. If we had no other surviving evidence and had to judge solely by Plutarch's *Lives*, there would still be no doubt that agonistic competition formed an integral part of the Greek world from Solon's times until "the last of the Greeks".

It is important to emphasize that we even find social advancement through athletics in the *Lives*, as in the case of Eumenes, who, according to Plutarch, citing Duris of Samos, stemmed from an impoverished family and was able to attract the attention of Philip II by his impressive performance as a wrestler and pankratiast in the local gymnasium.[53] In Eumenes' case, it clearly was a good thing that his education had included not only literature but also athletics.[54]

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[44] Plut. *Per*. 8.4 (wrestling), *Alex*. 4.5 (running), *Eum*. 1.1 (wrestling and pankration), *Arat*. 3.1 (pentathlon), *Phil*. 3 (wrestling).

[45] *Alex*. 3.5 and 4.5 (Philip's victories), Plut. *Alc*. 11.1-12.3 (cf. Plut. *Dem*. 1.1). According to Plut. *Alc*. 11.1, Alcibiades' famous Olympic victory "transcends in the splendor of its renown all that ambition can aspire to in this field" (ὑπερβάλλει λαμπρότητι καὶ δόξῃ πᾶσαν τὴν ἐν τούτοις φιλοτιμίαν; trans. B. Perrin). In a competition across time and space in which Plutarch becomes the umpire, Alcibiades even outscores the equestrian successes of kings like Philip II.

[46] Plut. *Nic*. 3.2.

[47] Plut. *Per*. 13.6 (musical contest at the Panathenaia).

[48] Plut. *Sol*. 23.3. On Athenian rewards for athletes, Papakonstantinou 2019: 69-71.

[49] Plut. *Arist*. 1.3.

[50] Plut. *Cleom*. 12.2; see Scharff forthcoming.

[51] Plut. *Pomp*. 52.4.

[52] Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20.4.

In Plutarch's view, athletics rather belonged to the early phase of the life of a successful Greek politician. For him athletics primarily had an educational function and served to prepare for a thriving career as politician and general. This is probably most clearly expressed in the words Plutarch uses to describe how the Athenian statesman and general Phocion educated his offspring:

> Φώκῳ δὲ τῷ υἱῷ βουλομένῳ ἀγωνίσασθαι Παναθηναίοις ἀποβάτην ἐφῆκεν, οὐχὶ τῆς νίκης ὀρεγόμενος, ἀλλ᾽ ὅπως ἐπιμεληθεὶς καὶ ἀσκήσας τὸ σῶμα βελτίων ἔσοιτο (…)
>
> When Phocus his son wished to compete at the Panathenaic festival as a vaulting rider of horses (*apobates*), Phocion permitted it, not because he was ambitious for the victory, but in order that care and training of the body might make his son a better man; (…) (*Phoc.* 20.1; trans. B. Perrin).

It also becomes very evident in the Spartan *Lives* in which the typical Lacedaemonian way of education, "the greatest and noblest task of the law-giver"[55], plays a key role. According to Plutarch, in Sparta even "the maidens exercise their bodies in running, wrestling, casting the discus, and hurling the javelin"[56], and there can be no doubt that athletics formed an integral part of the education of the free-born Spartan boys, the famous *agoge*, as well. Plutarch makes it very clear what the aim and purpose of these measures was: they supported in Sparta more than anywhere else the idea that athletic training was meant as a preparation for warfare or – as in the case of the Spartan maidens – a preparation for giving birth to particularly strong soldiers.[57]

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[53] Plut. *Eum.* 1.1. Eumenes' father is said to have been "driven by poverty to work as a carter" (πατρὸς μὲν ἁμαξεύοντος […] διὰ πενίαν γενέσθαι) (trans. R. Waterfield).

[54] In Plutarch's words (ibd.), "the boy received the kind of education in school and in the gymnasium that one would expect of a free-born child" (τραφῆναι δὲ ἐλευθερίως ἐν γράμμασι καὶ περὶ παλαίστραν) (trans. R. Waterfield).

[55] Plut. *Lyc.* 14.1: μέγιστον (…) τοῦ νομοθέτου καὶ κάλλιστον ἔργον (trans. B. Perrin).

[56] Plut. Lyc. 14.2: τὰ μέν γε σώματα τῶν παρθένων δρόμοις καὶ πάλαις καὶ βολαῖς δίσκων καὶ ἀκοντίων διεπόνησεν, (…) (trans. B. Perrin).

According to Plutarch's general view, an athletic education clearly seems to have been desirable for a politician in the making. It could serve as preparation for war, induration, and even social advancement. However, this does not mean that our author would argue this standpoint everywhere in his Lives, when it does not serve his superior line of reasoning (as in *Philopoemen* 3). What is more, his commonly positive perception of athletics in the *Lives* is occasionally rivalled by the intellectual author not only of the *Moralia* who advocates the predominance of rhetoric and philosophy in terms of educational meaning. This rivalry also seems to lie behind Plutarch's criticism of athletic trainers.

The second area in which athletics more often than not made a positive appearance in Plutarch's work is the field of metaphors and analogies. Plutarch clearly loved his athletic metaphors, as other authors like Polybius did as well.[58] It remains to ask whether there was a Plutarchan way of using athletic metaphors.

All in all, the two most important groups of athletic metaphors in the *Lives* are those for warfare and rhetoric. Most popular with Plutarch were athletic metaphors referring to the military sphere. The most commonly used agonistic metaphor suggests itself: wrestling is frequently applied to battles stretching over a long time or with changing fortunes. It is said about a battle which Demetrius Poliorcetes lost against Ptolemy I that "an untried youngster (*neos*) was up against a man who had graduated from Alexander's wrestling-school (*palaistra*) and had honed his skills in many great conflicts (*agones*) of his own"[59]. Yet Plutarch also used other athletic disciplines in order to refer to the course of a battle: again in the *Life of Demetrius*, the *diaulos*, an especially exhausting long sprint of about 400 meters, becomes a metaphor for the many difficulties which awaited the one-eyed Antigonus and his son Demetrius the Besieger.[60] Plutarch knew and made good use of the technical terminology of the agonistic field. In addition to athletic events like the two-stade race (*diaulos*), he also referred to *termini technici* of the self-presentation of victorious athletes: in the *Comparison of*

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[57] This was clearly not an idea restricted to Plutarch alone. Hodkinson 1999 has shown that the Lacedaemonians had an idiosyncratic "agonistic culture"; on the world of Greek athletics as a world formed by many similar but different agonistic cultures, Scharff forthcoming.

[58] For Polybius' fondness on athletic metaphors, see Wunderer 1909: 55-59 and Gibson 2012: 273-277.

[59] Plut. *Demetr*. 5.2: οἷα δὲ νέος καὶ ἄπειρος ἀνδρὶ συμπεσὼν ἐκ τῆς Ἀλεξάνδρου παλαίστρας ἠθληκότι πολλοὺς καὶ μεγάλους καθ' αὑτὸν ἀγῶνας, (…) (trans. R. Waterfield).

[60] Plut. *Demetr*. 19.1.

Lucullus and Cimon, the latter is metaphorically awarded the title of a *paradoxonikes*, an athlete who achieved victories in the 'heavy events' of wrestling and pankration on a single day because he won two military victories on land and sea on a single day.[61] That this title did not exist in Cimon's times, however, does not bother Plutarch.

Other agonistic metaphors referred to the field of rhetoric. In the *Life of Demosthenes*, the beginning of the statesman's training as an orator is compared to the way the long-distance runner Laomedon of Orchomenos came to be an athlete: by the advice of his physicians.[62] Thus yet another discipline appears among the spectrum of Plutarch's positive athletic metaphors. However, when Pericles is called a "political athlete" in his youth and his teacher in music Damon, "a consummate sophist"[63], is described as his "rubber and trainer" (ἀλείπτης καὶ διδάσκαλος) this is not meant kindly.[64] Again, Plutarch's criticism is based upon his presupposition of the negative role of some athletic trainers. Yet in most of the cases, the athletic metaphors are used in a positive sense. In *Solon* 27.7, athletic competition even becomes an analogy for life itself.

Conclusion

To sum up, Plutarch's perception of athletics is not as easy to grasp as it might appear in the first place. It is certainly true that there are a lot of passages in Plutarch with a dismissive undertone with regard to athletics. Yet it would be a mistake to conclude that Plutarch had a negative attitude toward athletics in principle. Though oftentimes criticizing athletes and their coaches, his approach to athletics is far from being persistently negative throughout his work. Rather, he adopts a playful perspective and adapts his judgement to the necessities of the particular context in which he uses athletics to talk about something else: be it Philopoemen's superiority or his own *paideia*.

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[61] Plut. *Comp. Cim.-Luc.* 2.1: ἐν δὲ τοῖς πολεμικοῖς ὅτι μὲν ἀμφότεροι καὶ κατὰ γῆν καὶ κατὰ θάλασσαν ἀγαθοὶ γεγόνασιν ἀγωνισταί δῆλον ὥσπερ δὲ τῶν ἀθλητῶν τοὺς ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ πάλῃ καὶ παγκρατίῳ στεφανουμένους ἔθει τινὶ παραδοξονίκας καλοῦσιν, οὕτω Κίμων ἐν ἡμέρᾳ μιᾷ πεζομαχίας καὶ ναυμαχίας ἅμα τροπαίῳ στεφανώσας τὴν Ἑλλάδα δίκαιός ἐστιν ἔχειν τινὰ προεδρίαν ἐν τοῖς στρατηγοῖς – "In war, it is plain that both were good fighters, both on land and sea. But just as those athletes who win crowns in wrestling and the pancratium on a single day are called, by custom, 'Victors-extraordinary,' so Cimon, who in a single day crowned Greece with the trophies of a land and sea victory, may justly have a certain pre-eminence among generals" (trans. B. Perrin).

[62] Plut. *Dem.* 6.2: καὶ καθάπερ Λαομέδοντα τὸν Ὀρχομένιον λέγουσι καχεξίαν τινὰ σπληνὸς ἀμυνόμενον δρόμοις μακροῖς χρῆσθαι τῶν ἰατρῶν κελευσάντων, εἶθ᾽ οὕτως διαπονήσαντα τὴν ἕξιν ἐπιθέσθαι τοῖς στεφανίταις ἀγῶσι καὶ τῶν ἄκρων γενέσθαι δολιχοδρόμων, οὕτως τῷ Δημοσθένει συνέβη τὸ πρῶτον ἐπανορθώσεως ἕνεκα τῶν ἰδίων ἀποδύντι πρὸς τὸ λέγειν, ἐκ τούτου κτησαμένῳ δεινότητα καὶ δύναμιν ἐν τοῖς πολιτικοῖς ἤδη καθάπερ στεφανίταις ἀγῶσι πρωτεύειν τῶν ἀπὸ τοῦ βήματος ἀγωνιζομένων πολιτῶν – "And just as Laomedon the Orchomenian—so we are told—practised long-distance running by the advice of his physicians, to ward off some disease of the spleen, and then, after restoring his health in this way, entered the great games and became one of the best runners of the long course, so Demosthenes, after applying himself to oratory in the first place for the sake of recovering his private property, by this means acquired ability and power in speaking, and at last in public business, as it were in the great games, won the first place among the citizens who strove with one another on the bema" (trans. B. Perrin).

[63] Plut. *Per.* 4.1.

[64] Ibid.

What is more, Plutarch did not intend to give a coherent picture of athletics in his works. For him, athletics rather served as a tool box that provided him with an almost endless stream of metaphors which appealed to his readers and were simultaneously not too platitudinous. On the other hand, his critique especially referred to the field of education and the role of athletic trainers who were sometimes regarded as a competition to the philosopher as an educator. In these cases, Plutarch emphasized the pre-eminence of rhetorical and philosophical education.

Nevertheless, it must be stated that there is no *Life* without athletics at least for the Greek *Lives*. This is why Plutarch became such an invaluable source of information for anyone interested in the cultural history of Greek sport.

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TSO
TEIRESIAS SUPPLEMENTS ONLINE

Chapter 3

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Feeling Scaphism: *Enargeia* and Assimilation in the *Artaxerxes*

Halfway through Plutarch's *Life of Artaxerxes*, his only extant biography to feature a subject who is neither Greek nor Roman, Plutarch describes the young Persian soldier Mithridates' execution by scaphism. In punishment for publicly contradicting the king, Mithridates is sentenced to lie between two hollowed-out boats with only his head and limbs protruding.[1] Over time, the condemned man's refuse attracts maggots and vermin, who begin to feed on Mithridates' insides as he slowly wastes away and eventually dies. The scene is often considered a turning point or revelatory moment in the *Life*:[2] while Artaxerxes receives a generally positive portrayal in the biography's first half, Mithridates' horrific execution exposes the king's underlying cruelty and volatility, which become thematic in the second half.[3]

Scholars frequently characterize this portion of the *Life* as a spectacle of Persian cruelty. In considering Plutarch's motives for writing the life of a barbarian, Judith Mossman suggests

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[1] Both Mithridates and a Carian soldier claim to have killed the king's younger brother Cyrus in combat (*Art*. 10.3-11.6; cf. Xen. *An*. 2.1.11 and 2.3.19), contradicting the king's official claim (*Art*. 14.2). The conflicting stories may have larger moral implications for the Persians; on the dichotomy of Good and Evil in Persian religion as Truth and Lie, see Orsi 1988: 140f. and Lincoln 2007: 17-32.

[2] See Almagor 2014 and 2017: 138-142. Scholars disagree on the exact nature of this turning point. For *Art.* 16 as a contradiction of Artaxerxes' previously developed character, see Schmidt 1999: 317 and Soares 2007: 95. On Artaxerxes' internally consistent character, see Mossman 2010: 150 and 157. For consideration of both views, see Almagor 2014: 284. On character development in the *Lives*, see Gill 1983, esp. 478-481.

[3] For Artaxerxes as a positive model of πραότης, see Manfredini & Orsi 1987: xxvii-xxviii; cf. Hood 1967: 68-85. Schmidt (1999: 323) argues for both a positive and negative portrait. On the ways in which the characters surrounding Artaxerxes implicitly reflect the king's character, see Almagor 2017: 151.

Chandra Giroux (editor). Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World. Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 3. 2022: 56-71. © Rebecca Moorman 2022. License Agreement: CC-BY-NC (permission to use, distribute, and reproduce in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed and not used for commercial purposes).

that the "Eastern extravaganza" of Artaxerxes' *Life* offers Plutarch's Greek and Roman readers a parade of otherness which they can observe with "a comfortable sense of distance and superiority".[4] Thomas Schmidt similarly comments that Plutarch seems interested less in offering a detailed portrait of Artaxerxes and more in describing "le monde fascinant des barbares" for the reader's entertainment.[5] We can see how the execution of Mithridates contributes to this general spectacle, as readers are disgusted and enthralled by the Persians' grotesque and unorthodox methods of punishment.[6] At the same time, however, by emphasizing the strangeness of the Persian court and arguing for a sense of cultural detachment, such interpretations overlook the biography's potential for moral instruction through the reader's intimate engagement with macabre depictions of Persian cultural practices. Building on recent reassessments of sensory experience in ancient literature, I argue that Plutarch's engagement of the senses in the scaphism scene implicates his audience in the very practices they are condemning, forcing readers to confront their own susceptibility to vice.

Plutarch's moral instruction in this scene is accomplished not through cultural detachment but through aesthetic engagement and assimilation with the Persian other. By aesthetic engagement, I mean the reader's sensory experience and appreciation of the world within an artistic medium, in this case the literary text. "Aesthetic" here has two different meanings: sensory perception (*aisthēsis*) and artistic appreciation.[7] Plutarch's technique of affectively rich and vivid description, or *enargeia*, elicits the reader's disgust and indignation at Persian methods of torture by turning the audience into an eyewitness or even participant in the scene unfolding before their eyes.[8] While vision is the most common sense associated with *enargeia*, taste, touch, and smell – the "lower" senses frequently engaged in experiences of disgust – are also often involved in creating a fully immersive literary experience.[9] *Enargeia* imparts a "bodily sense of presence," or the illusion of being physically present at the original event.[10] Ancient authors create this illusion by focalizing the event through internal spectators and characters, who connect the reader directly to their own sensory experiences. In Plutarch's account of scaphism, the reader's sustained proximity to sensory descriptors of death and decay is focalized through the original spectators of Mithridates' death, the Persians.

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[4] Mossman 2010: 159. On Plutarch's three-fold conception of cultural identity (Greek, Roman, barbarian), see Mossman 2010: 145 and Stadter 2015: 65n2.

[5] Schmidt 1999: 324.

[6] See further Flacelière & Chambry 1979: 31n1.

[7] For definitions of the aesthetic, see further Halliwell 2002: 8-14 and Dressler 2016: 48f. On aesthetics as both art and sense-perception, see Porter 2010: 40.

[8] On *enargeia*, see Zanker 1981; Webb 1993; Scholz 1998: 77; Webb 2009: 87-130; Montiglio 2014: 164. For ancient definitions of vividness, see Arist. *Poet.* 1455a; Plut. *De gloria Athen.* 346f-347d; Demetr. *Eloc.* 209-220; ps.-Long. *Subl.* 20.1-3 and 25.1; ps.-Hermogenes 10.23.

[9] On vision and *enargeia*, see Dion. Hal. *Lys.* 7 with Zanker 1981: 297. For smell, see Lucian *Fug.* 1 with Lateiner & Spatharas 2017: 33f. On the multisensory nature of *enargeia*, see Webb 2016: 211-213. On disgust and the senses, see Rozin & Fallon 1987; Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin 1994: 201-213; Miller 1997: 60-88.

The multisensory and even embodied nature of the reader's experience of scaphism belies the comfortable distance scholars have suggested Plutarch's audience might feel when reading the *Artaxerxes*. Rather than remaining distant and culturally superior, Plutarch's Greek and Roman readers assume a role not dissimilar to the Persian onlookers and participants within the scene: both groups are captivated spectators, engrossed in the sight of Mithridates' rotting corpse. The gruesome anecdotes used to illustrate Persian barbarism depend on the reader's close inspection and, as other scholars have pointed out, even fascination with the very practices a Greek or Roman would presumably regard as evidence of barbarism and otherness. Initially, readers may respond to Mithridates' death with horrified revulsion, seeking to distance themselves from the described event through a false sense of cultural superiority. Experiences of disgust, however, also possess a paradoxical attraction, as the disgusted subject seeks to understand and engage with the disgusting object.[11] In his foundational study of disgust, William Ian Miller comments that "the way disgust in fact works, means that it has to get its hands dirty… To the extent that disgust defends us against pollution it must be alert to the polluting; it has to study it and know it well."[12] In order for Plutarch's readers to gain insight into Plutarch's representation of Artaxerxes' character, they must engage with Mithridates' death on a sensory and affective level. This engagement, achieved through the reader's identification *with* the internal spectator, presents an opportunity for moral education not through cultural detachment but through aesthetic assimilation with the Persian other.

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[10] Webb 2016: 211. See further Huitink 2019 on "enactivist" readings of ancient literature.

[11] On disgust as a means of philosophical instruction through engagement rather than abstraction, see Moorman forthcoming 2022.

[12] Miller 1997: 111. For various theoretical approaches to disgust's "paradox of aversion", see Kristeva 1982; Miller 1997: 109-142; Menninghaus 2003: 372-387; Korsmeyer 2011: 39-59.

Disgust and Condemnation

Before delving further into scaphism's paradoxical allure and instructive potential, we should first consider the potential readerly responses of rejection. For Plutarch's Greek and Roman audience, the outlandish practice of executing prisoners by force-feeding them milk and honey has typically been read as a vivid illustration of Persian brutality.[13] In his presentation of Mithridates' death, Plutarch uses highly visual and sensory rhetoric to implicitly condemn Persian cruelty. Readers are confronted with a horrific description of death and decay (*Art.* 16.3-7):[14]

> Τὸ δὲ σκαφευθῆναι τοιοῦτόν ἐστι· σκάφας δύο πεποιημένας ἐφαρμόζειν ἀλλήλαις λαβόντες, εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν κατακλίνουσι τὸν κολαζόμενον ὕπτιον· εἶτα τὴν ἑτέραν ἐπάγοντες καὶ συναρμόζοντες, ὥστε τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἔξω καὶ τοὺς πόδας ἀπολαμβάνεσθαι, τὸ δ᾽ἄλλο σῶμα πᾶν ἀποκεκρύφθαι, διδόασιν ἐσθίειν τῷ ἀνθρώπῳ, κἂν μὴ θέλῃ, προσβιάζονται κεντοῦντες τὰ ὄμματα· φαγόντι δὲ πιεῖν μέλι καὶ γάλα συγκεκραμένον ἐγχέουσιν εἰς τὸ στόμα καὶ κατὰ τοῦ προσώπου καταχέουσιν. εἶτα πρὸς τὸν ἥλιον ἀεὶ στρέφουσιν ἐναντία τὰ ὄμματα, καὶ μυιῶν προσκαθημένων πλῆθος πᾶν ἀποκρύπτεται τὸ πρόσωπον. ἐντὸς δὲ ποιοῦντος ὅσα ποιεῖν ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν ἐσθίοντας ἀνθρώπους καὶ πίνοντας, εὐλαὶ καὶ σκώληκες ὑπὸ φθορᾶς καὶ σηπεδόνος ἐκ τοῦ περιττώματος ἀναζέουσιν, ὑφ᾽ ὧν ἀναλίσκεται τὸ σῶμα διαδυομένων εἰς τὰ ἐντός. ὅταν γὰρ ἤδη φανερὸς ᾖ τεθνηκὼς ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀφαιρεθείσης τῆς ἐπάνω σκάφης ὁρῶσι τὴν μὲν σάρκα κατεδηδεσμένην, περὶ δὲ τὰ σπλάγχνα τοιούτων θηρίων ἑσμοὺς ἐσθιόντων καὶ προσπεφυκότων. οὕτως ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἑπτακαίδεκα ἡμέρας φθειρόμενος μόλις ἀπέθανε.
>
> Scaphism happens in the following way: taking two boats, fashioned to fit closely with one another, they lay the condemned on his back in one boat. Then, fastening the other boat onto the first and fitting them together so the man's

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[13] See, e.g., Soares 2007: 98, who surmises that the Artaxerxes "would have appealed to readers who liked well documented information, lively descriptions, and the most horrible details of death by torture." Accounts of scaphism from antiquity are rare. Apart from *Art.* 16, Photius mentions that a certain eunuch named Aspamitres was executed by scaphism for conspiring against Dareius and Xerxes (*Bibl.* 72.40a). Both accounts are likely drawing on Ctesias as their source, and their historicity is suspect; see Flacelière & Chambry 1979: 31n1 and Binder 2008: 228-231 and 248.

[14] See Schmidt 1999: 317 and Lateiner & Spatharas 2017: 34; on this passage as a "prime example of Oriental despotism" for Greek audiences, see Lincoln 2007: 94. Text is from Flacelière & Chambry 1979. Translations are my own unless otherwise noted.

> head, hands, and feet protrude, while the rest of his body is entirely concealed within, they give him food to eat. If he refuses, they force him to eat by pricking his eyes. After he has eaten, they pour milk mixed with honey into his mouth and they smother his entire face with it. Then they turn his eyes to face the sun at all times, and a swarm of flies entirely covers his face. Since within the boats he does whatever is necessary for men to do when they eat and drink, maggots and worms bubble up from the stench and putrefaction of his refuse; from there they devour his body and seep into his bowels. For whenever the man is clearly dead, they remove the upper boat and see that his flesh is entirely gnawed through, and around his entrails swarms of these sorts of vermin eat and pullulate. In this way Mithridates slowly decayed for seventeen days and then finally died.

In their introductory discussion of disgust in antiquity, Lateiner and Spatharas cite Mithridates' execution as a paradigmatic instance of disgust's role in creating the literary experience of *enargeia*.[15] Readers vividly imagine the sight of Mithridates' decaying corpse, the cloying taste of too much milk and honey, the feel of flies settling onto his face, and the smell of his feces filling the boat. Physical details such as the maggots devouring Mithridates' intestines threaten the reader's sense of biological safety, attacking the bodily envelope and exposing Mithridates' inner organs.[16] The stench of Mithridates' fecund, rotting body, as he clings to life for seventeen days before succumbing, warns bystanders away from potential contamination.

There is also a significant moral component to these physical elicitors of disgust.[17] The rupturing of boundaries between Mithridates' intestines and the outside world is a physical manifestation of his social and moral transgression. His boast claiming sole responsibility for Cyrus' death exposes the king as a potential liar and puts the entire kingdom at risk morally and ideologically. As Benjamin Lincoln has argued, within its Persian context scaphism is more properly understood as a "judicial ordeal".[18] The executioners carrying out this ordeal feed Mithridates nothing but sweet honey and milk, foods "associated with goodness, light, happiness, and peace".[19] If Mithridates were telling the truth, he would in theory remain as pure and clean as the milk and honey he ingests. His decaying body and the foul excrement it produces are physical evidence for the moral corruption of his lie. This may explain why Plutarch is strangely prudish when discussing defecation, elliptically reported as ὅσα ποιεῖν ἀναγκαῖόν ἐστιν, but does not show any restraint when it comes to the feces itself. The focus is on the product which marks Mithridates' guilt. This product and its threat of contamination are at first carefully contained by the boats that surround him. Eventually, however, even these must be lifted for the executioners to determine his culpability, breaking the final boundary between Mithridates and the world surrounding him.[20]

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[15] Lateiner & Spatharas 2017: 34f.

[16] Haidt, McCauley, & Rozin 1994 identify seven "domains" of disgust: contaminated food; animals; bodily products; sex acts; violations of the bodily envelope; death; and hygiene. On elicitors of disgust in ancient Rome, see Kaster 2005: 104-133 and Lateiner 2017.

[17] On the manner in which disgust connects ethical judgment with sensory-based impulses, see Nussbaum 2004: 1-18. For an ancient example, see the discussion of Philoctetes' sore in Allen-Hornblower 2017.

[18] See Lincoln 2007: 87-94.

While the Persian spectator's revulsion would presumably begin and end with Mithridates' corpse, for Plutarch's readers the moral disgust elicited by Mithridates' physical decay may also transfer to Artaxerxes and the Persian court in general, contributing to readings of the scene as a major turning point in the *Life*. The apparent arbitrariness of Mithridates' sentence bolsters culturally specific impressions that the Persians possess a macabre satisfaction in developing multiple, grotesque methods of torture. Two different men, a Carian soldier and then Mithridates, are condemned to death for contradicting the king's claim that he alone was responsible for Cyrus' death.[21] Although each man commits the same crime, they receive vastly different penalties.[22] Artaxerxes at first decides to behead the Carian before his mother intervenes to impose a harsher punishment: under her direction, the Carian suffers on the rack for ten days before his eyes are gouged out and molten brass is poured into his ears (14.5).[23] The discrepancy between the Carian's death and Mithridates' execution by scaphism does not appear to have any rational basis, making Artaxerxes (and the Persians in general) appear all the more brutal and capricious. Without a proper understanding of the judicial connection in Persian culture between foul excrement and a foul soul, Plutarch's Persians appear to approach torture as a form of entertainment, as a man's excruciatingly slow putrefaction becomes a fascinating spectacle.

The Persian cultural background to scaphism, in contrast to an outside reader's understanding of the scene, offers us a model for thinking about disgust's ability to instruct through sensory engagement. While disgust is the basis of both the Persian's and the Greek or Roman reader's experience of scaphism, for the Persian spectator this disgust, specifically the stench of Mithridates' feces, is a powerful means of exploration and examination. From an outsider's perspective, the cause of Mithridates' suffering is connected directly to Artaxerxes and the Persian executioners. Mithridates' stinking waste is a symptom of Persian brutality. From a Persian perspective, on the other hand, Mithridates causes his own suffering, as the evil within him transforms milk and honey into feces and maggots. Rather than seeking distance from Mithridates' decaying corpse, the Persian executioners exhibit a productive fascination, as they must lift up the boats and look (ὁρῶσι) at Mithridates' corpse to determine his guilt.

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[19] Lincoln 2007: 90.

[20] On disgust's role in boundary creation and identity formation, see further Wilson 2002: 77-79.

[21] For the mystery of Cyrus' murder see *Art.* 10-11, with Almagor 2016: 71-73.

[22] See Binder 2008: 248-251.

[23] For the motives behind Parysatis' cruelty (vengeance), see *Art.* 17.1. For consideration of the Carian's execution from a Persian perspective, see Lincoln 2007: 85f.

Enargeia and Aesthetic Assimilation

The executioners' actions demonstrate the need for sensory connection to gain insight through disgust. If Plutarch's readers pull away and seek distance from the description of Mithridates' corpse, they put an end not only to their engagement with the scene but also to their ability to gain insight into Artaxerxes' character and Persian culture more generally. At the same time, readers who *do* become fully immersed in the narrative are themselves participants in the same spectacle that the Persians are being condemned for designing and viewing. The scaphism scene is focalized through the sensory experiences of the internal Persian spectators, meaning that Plutarch's readers comprehend and enjoy the scene not by distancing themselves from the Persians but by *aligning* with them. Plutarch's readers can only maintain their sense of cultural superiority for so long, as they look down upon the Persians for "delighting" in the contrivance of such horrific forms of torture while they themselves enjoy reading about it. By focalizing the reader's experience of Mithridates' death through internal Persian spectators, the narrative implicates Plutarch's readers in the same spectacle of execution that characterizes the Persians as stereotypically cruel barbarians.

This implication is achieved through Plutarch's use of *enargeia*, or vividness. Earlier in the *Artaxerxes*, Plutarch praises Xenophon's account of the Battle of Cunaxa for its vividness, which makes it unnecessary for Plutarch to provide a full description of the battle in his own work (*Art.* 8.1):

> τὴν δὲ μάχην ἐκείνην πολλῶν μὲν ἀπηγγελκότων, Ξενοφῶντος δὲ μονονουχὶ δεικνύοντος **ὄψει καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν** ὡς οὐ γεγενημένοις, ἀλλὰ γινομένοις,

> ἐφιστάντος ἀεὶ **τὸν ἀκροατὴν ἐμπαθῆ καὶ συγκινδυνεύοντα διὰ τὴν ἐνάργειαν**, οὐκ ἔστι νοῦν ἔχοντος ἐπεξηγεῖσθαι, πλὴν ὅσα τῶν ἀξίων λόγου παρῆλθεν εἰπεῖν ἐκεῖνον.
>
> But since many others have written about that battle, and since Xenophon all but displays it **in appearance and in reality**, as though it hadn't happened in the past but is happening now, always placing **his audience in a state of emotion and through vividness making them share in the scene's dangers**, a sensible person would not describe it in detail, except however much he has skipped over that deserves mention.

The sights and actions of the battle are "all but" (μονονουχί) right before the reader and seem to take place in the present rather than in the past (ὡς οὐ γεγενημένοις, ἀλλὰ γινομένοις).[24] Dionysius of Halicarnassus likewise observes that when reading history, people take pleasure "not only from **hearing** things said, but also from **seeing** things being done [τὰ πραττόμενα **ὁρῶσα**]" (*Ant. Rom.* 11.1.3; trans. Walker). The present tense of the participle ὁρῶσα, as Walker points out, suggests that events are not happening in the past but "transpiring before the reader's eyes."[25] It is almost as though the readers were physically present at the scene.[26] This sense of direct participation (as Plutarch says, readers "share in the scene's dangers," **συγ**κινδυνεύοντα) contributes to a feeling of benign masochism, or the enjoyment of experiences initially deemed unpleasant or dangerous, among readers during Mithridates' death.[27] The pleasure of the reader's experience hinges, in part, on the illusory aspects of the scene. *Enargeia* tricks the body into thinking it is under attack or in danger of pollution; pleasure then arises from the triumph of "mind over body" felt when the mind recognizes the threat is only an illusion.

While the audience's sense of physical involvement is located in the imagination, "like" that of a spectator or participant without actually being one, their emotional involvement can be very real, as the act of reading prompts tears, gasps, or shudders of horror.[28] The audience's active role in visualizing and mimicking the actions of a scene (this is the force of Plutarch's ὄψει καὶ τοῖς πράγμασιν) is complemented by a passive state of emotional affect (ἐμπαθῆ). Emotional involvement in past historical realities is accomplished not through cultural detachment but through close association and affective identification with the original eyewitnesses and participants. These connections are perhaps most clear in a famous passage from Thucydides' account of a pivotal battle off the coast of Syracuse, often cited in ancient discussions of *enargeia* (7.71.1-5). Thucydides' reader shares in the battle's confusion and uncertainty through the chaotic variety of reactions among eyewitnesses, whose emotions mirror the varied experiences of the sailors in the thick of battle.[29] Discussing this passage, Plutarch tells us that Thucydides aims at *enargeia* "because he desires to make the listener like a spectator and to make vivid in the reader's mind all the emotions of dismay and disturbance which the eyewitness felt" (*De gloria Athen.* 347a; trans. Russell & Winterbottom, adapted).[30] The listener is οἷον θεατὴν but still experiences the very real emotions of the internal spectators, who sway back and forth in fear and sympathy with their comrades fighting at sea (περιδεῶς **συν**απονεύων, *De gloria Athen.* 347c; cp. Thuc. 7.71.3). These internal spectators model an emotional response for readers, whose identification with the scene's original eyewitnesses and participants situates them within the narrative.

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[24] This sense of simultaneous action is a key component of *enargeia*; see ps.-Long. *Subl.* 25.1-27.4. For instances of direct speech and the present tense in *Art.* 1-19, see Soares 2007: 90f.

[25] Walker 1993: 364.

[26] The "almost" is another key component of *enargeia*. If readers are completely immersed, they experience not illusion but delusion, unable to distinguish between reality and representation. See further Werner 2013: 14-19 and Webb 2009: 103-105. Cf. Walker 1993: 358.

[27] On the role of compound *sun-* verbs in creating a sense of direct involvement for the reader, see ps.-Long. 20.2 with Huitink 2019: 180f. and 187. On benign masochism, see Rozin, Guillot, Fincher, Rozin, & Tsukayama 2013 and Lateiner & Spatharas 2017: 35.

Even without an explicitly defined internal audience, Plutarch's vivid description of Mithridates' death in the *Artaxerxes* creates what Ruth Webb has described as a "chain of images" connecting the original spectator first to the author and then to the reader.[31] According to ancient theories of imagination and aesthetic immersion, the author visualizes in his mind's eye the experiences of his character and then with his words projects that image to his audience. The image that the reader receives was thought to be identical both to the image produced by the author and "to the *direct perception* of a thing".[32] This suggests that, even without a detailed description of emotional responses like those in Thucydides' account, there is still a direct sensory link between Plutarch's readers and Plutarch's Persians through Plutarch himself.

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[28] See, e.g., Quint. *Inst.* 6.1.26-27 with Webb 2009: 104.

[29] On the close connection between visuality and emotion in experiences of *enargeia*, see Walker 1993: 360f. On the importance of emotional appeals for creating *enargeia*, see Webb 2009: 90.

[30] οἷον θεατὴν ποιῆσαι τὸν ἀκροατὴν καὶ τὰ γιγνόμενα περὶ τοὺς ὁρῶντας ἐκπληκτικὰ καὶ ταρακτικὰ πάθη τοῖς ἀναγιγνώσκουσιν ἐνεργάσασθαι λιχνευόμενος. See further Zanker 1981: 311; Walker 1993: 357-359; Webb 2009: 19f.

[31] Webb 2009: 97.

[32] Webb 2009: 93, my emphasis. In an important departure from modern views of a highly subjective reader response, ancient critics assumed that most readers would respond to a text in a uniform way. See Webb 1993: 112f. and 2009: 24 and 121-124.

Quintilian models this phenomenon by describing his own reaction to Cicero's *Against Verres*. Upon reading Cicero's description of an unkempt Verres carousing on the beach (*Verr*. 5.86), Quintilian asks (*Inst.* 8.3.65; trans. Russell):

> *non solum ipsos intueri uideatur et locum et habitum, sed quaedam etiam ex iis quae dicta non sunt sibi ipse adstruat? ego certe mihi cernere uideor et uultum et oculos et deformes utriusque blanditias et eorum qui aderant tacitam auersationem ac timidam uerecundiam.*
>
> Could anyone be so unimaginative as not to feel that he is seeing the persons and the place and the dress, and to add some unspoken details for himself into the bargain? I certainly imagine that I can see the face, the eyes, the disgusting endearments of the pair, and the silent loathing and abashed fear of the bystanders.

Just as Thucydides' Athenian spectators situate readers within the emotional turmoil of the battle, Quintilian's mortified imaginary bystanders share in his revulsion and contempt, creating an affective connection that places Quintilian right in the middle of the scene. Cicero imagines the scene so brilliantly that the reader seems to see (*intueri uideatur*) not only the details Cicero explicitly provides but even certain details he omits (*quae dicta non sunt*). It is as though the reader were personally standing in front of Verres.[33] In a subsequent discussion of a room damaged during a drunken party, Quintilian claims that anyone who had actually entered the room would have seen no more than what Cicero's readers see when reading his description (*Inst.* 8.3.67).[34] Quintilian's elision of the reader's imagined experience and the eyewitness' actual one suggests that ancient critics thought *enargeia* provided not a detached bird's eye view of a scene but an embodied experience, in which readers come into direct "contact with the experiences of another person".[35] This embodiment creates, in Webb's words, both "empathy and insight" as the reader aligns with internal spectators and participants.[36]

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[33] See further Webb 2009: 107-109 and Huitink 2019: 172-174.

[34] See Webb 2009: 91-93.

[35] Webb 2016: 213.

The sensory and affective connection that *enargeia* creates between Plutarch's readers and Persian spectators in the *Artaxerxes* presents a paradox between cultural condemnation and aesthetic appeal. Readers face a conflict between their strong urge to pull away and gain distance from potential contaminants (moral and physical), and the need for sustained connection with the Persians within the narrative to experience and understand barbarian cruelty. If readers feel only repulsion without fascination, they avoid assimilation with the Persian spectators and maintain their sense of distance and cultural superiority, but they also cannot become immersed in the narrative. In fact, the way in which Plutarch presents the scene makes such a response of pure rejection impossible: even reading the passage entails alignment with the Persians who focalize the scene.

Ancient conceptions of *enargeia* indicate that Plutarch's readers are not just watching, from a detached perspective, the Persians watch Mithridates; they are actually sharing in the spectacle as present-day witnesses or participants. The Greek or Roman reader's initial response of rejection and detachment is ironically only possible through their sensory and affective link with the Persians within the narrative. All the sensory details that might elicit feelings of disgust and cultural superiority – the insects feasting on Mithridates' organs, his stinking excrement and rotten entrails – in turn depend on the reader's close association and even identification with the internal Persian spectator. In other words, the reader's multisensory, embodied experience of Mithridates' death, achieved through an alignment with Persian spectators, not only enables but in fact *requires* sustained proximity to and assimilation with the very group the scene is condemning.

This assimilation, accomplished through *enargeia*, turns the reader's initial experience of rejection into an opportunity for fertile inquiry and self-exploration. The educational potential of disgust lies in the feeling's properties of boundary creation and boundary transgression. Constructed boundaries between Greek, Roman, and Persian evaporate as readers recognize their own complicity in the enjoyment of Mithridates' death. Like the Persian executioners who must lift up the boats to explore Mithridates' corpse, Plutarch's readers must lean into their fascination with the scaphism scene to explore vice.

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36 Ibid.

The Moral Lesson of Scaphism

Plutarch's stated aim in the *Lives* is to cultivate personal growth and the development of virtue through the examples of famous men, which act "like a mirror" for the benefit of Plutarch and his readers (*Tim.* 1.1). These examples include both positive and negative models. Just as medical professionals study disease to learn about health or musicians study discord to learn about harmony, Plutarch's readers can learn about virtue through vice (*Demetr.* 1.3).[37] In a rhetorical technique reminiscent of disgust's need to "get its hands dirty," negative examples in the *Lives* act like a mirror, too, reflecting readers' susceptibility to vice by "sensitizing" them to the deleterious effects of unrestrained passion.[38] In the *Artaxerxes*, Plutarch offers readers a moment of reflection as they connect with the Persian other on a sensory and affective level. Plutarch's ideal readers approach Mithridates' execution from a position not of distance and superiority, but of curiosity and self-recognition.

The paradoxical attraction of scaphism suggests not only the psychic disorder of Plutarch's Persians but also a potential conflict within the reader's own soul. Like Plato, Plutarch divides the soul into a rational and irrational part (*De virt. mor.* 441d-442a).[39] Virtue is a product of the well-ordered soul; reason controls and balances irrational desires. Vice, on the other hand, arises from a fundamental psychic conflict between various desires, as reason fails to hold them in check. Plato's discussion of psychic conflict in the *Republic* offers a model for Plutarch's own use of an executed criminal to instruct readers in moral virtue. During an exchange about the tripartite soul, Socrates cites the well-known story of Leontius to demonstrate the perils of a soul unrestrained by reason (439e-440a). Socrates' anecdote closely parallels the conflict between fascination and disgust in Plutarch's account of Mithridates' death but deals much more explicitly with the emotions at play. Leontius is torn between an appetitive desire to look at recently executed corpses and his spirited disgust (δυσχεραίνοι) at bodies that, as criminals, should not deserve his attention.[40] While Leontius' irrational attraction to the corpses signals his inability to control base appetites, his disgust, first at the bodies and then at his own incontinence, is an "embodied moral response" that reflects a rational recognition of the inappropriate nature of his desire.[41] The spirited part of the soul is still irrational, but it could have aided the rational part of the soul by curbing the soul's most base desires through the elicitation of anger and disgust.

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[37] See further Stadter 2003 and Duff 2004. Plutarch makes a similar argument on the importance of listening to morally suspect passages of poetry and rhetoric; see, e.g., *Quomodo adol.* 32e and *De rec. rat. aud.* 38b-c.

[38] Stadter 2003: 91.

[39] On Plutarch and the Platonic soul, see Duff 1999: 72-76 and Opsomer 2012.

[40] See Liebert 2013. Cf. Reeve 1988: 129 and Lorenz 2008: 260. The paradox of Leontius' desire, in that he yearns to gaze upon that which repulses him, recalls the tragic paradox; see Ferrari 2007: 181-182.

[41] Liebert 2013: 186.

Following Plato's view that the irrational part of the soul can at times support the rational (*De virt. mor.* 442a), Plutarch argues that the passions are essential for attaining and practicing virtue (443d; 444b).[42] Reason controls inappropriate physical desires for sex or food through emotions like fear and disgust. Lust for a sister or daughter "cowers with fear as reason takes hold" (ἔπτηξε τὸ ἐπιθυμοῦν ἁψαμένου τοῦ λόγου, 442e). After realizing a recently devoured meal was polluted, the mind's "distress and regret" quickly elicits a visceral response, as the body "shares in the revulsion" and immediately vomits (συνδιατρεπόμενον, 442f).[43] Within Plutarch's conception of moral virtue, then, disgust is an affective response to an irrational desire for pleasure. Like any other passion, disgust can be either beneficial or harmful depending on its habituation to reason. In the case of Leontius, reason was unable to control disgust, leading to agonizing psychic conflict. In this case from Plutarch, on the other hand, disgust aids reason by drawing boundaries between clean and unclean, virtuous and vicious.

The discriminatory and boundary-defining qualities of disgust make the emotion particularly useful in reason's efforts to control improper desires, but these efforts paradoxically require connection and sensory engagement. Without experiencing the taste or smell of rotten food, the mind cannot recognize pollution. Plutarch uses this need for connection to educate his readers in moral virtue, making rhetorical arguments based on the reader's sensory experience of disgust. Plutarch's rhetoric works by playing with the pleasure of disgusting experience, and the reader's own involvement in this experience. In his treatise *On the Eating of Flesh*, for instance, Plutarch affectively engages the reader in a noisome experience of meat consumption to argue that eating animals is unnatural and unethical.[44] Plutarch transforms an activity normally associated with pleasure into a stomach-churning massacre, asking how the first person to eat a dead animal could have endured the sight of slit throats, the stench of raw meat, or the taste of mutilated flesh (*De esu carnium* 993b). As Daniel King has recently argued, Plutarch utilizes the instructive power of sensory experience and disgust in his arguments on vegetarianism to "resensitize" readers to the pain and suffering of the animal other.[45] Contemporary society has become dangerously desensitized to the trauma involved in the production of meat. By "fetishiz[ing] the animal body for the consuming pleasure of the reader" while simultaneously accosting the audience with horrific accounts of animal slaughter (997a), Plutarch forces his readers to confront their own role in the violent consumption of animals, shocking them into an acceptance of the moral and physical necessity of vegetarianism.[46]

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[42] On reason and the passions in Plutarch's *Lives*, see Duff 1999: 78-98.

[43] The act of vomiting is both a physical and a moral response. Retching follows after men "perceive and learn" (αἴσθωνται καὶ μάθωσιν, 442f) that what they have just consumed is unclean (μὴ καθαροί) or taboo (μηδὲ νόμιμοι).

[44] On animals and vegetarianism in Plutarch, see Tsekourakis 1987; Newmyer 2006; Beer 2008; Steiner 2010.

[45] King 2018: 217-231. Cf. Boddice 2019: 150f.

The pleasure of the reader's experience in *De esu* and in the scaphism scene moves in opposite directions: in *De esu*, the delicious becomes disgusting; in the *Artaxerxes*, the disgusting becomes fascinating. But in both instances, a disgusting sensory experience is presented for the reader's pleasure, implicating readers in the same activities the text condemns. Plutarch's audience confronts, in the first case, the humanity of the "ultimate other" and, in the second case, the reader's own inner barbarian.[47] In both instances, too, the reader's recognition of their complicity is achieved through sensitization or resensitization to the experiences of the other – *feeling* rather than detaching.

The close engagement entailed in the reader's experience of scaphism precludes the sort of comfortable distance other scholars have used to characterize the reader's relationship to Plutarch's *Artaxerxes*. Barbarian cruelty in the biographies of Plutarch's Greek and Roman heroes is often used as a point of contrast, to highlight a hero's positive traits.[48] As we have seen, stereotypes of barbarian cruelty also characterize Artaxerxes and his Persian court, but in this case, there is no Greek or Roman hero to garner the reader's sympathy. This lends itself to interpretations of the *Life* as a spectacle of vice, with no redeeming figures within the *Life* with whom the reader can align. However, the same scenes of violence that serve to highlight Persian vice in the *Artaxerxes* also highlight the reader's own potential involvement. The more readers lean into the scene to investigate Persian brutality, the closer they come to the Persians within the narrative. The barbarian other, in this case, enables moral growth in the reader not through contrast, but through assimilation. The reader must *feel* the text to appreciate Plutarch's argument, aligning, however briefly, with the internal Persian spectators. Rather than maintain a false sense of superiority in the face of vice, Plutarch's ideal readers will recognize themselves in the Persian spectators of Mithridates' death, taking the scene as an opportunity to examine their own souls.

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[46] King 2018: 230. See further Beer 2008: 103f.

[47] Beer 2018: 231.

[48] See Schmidt 1999: 328f. For examples of barbarians that reflect on a hero's vice, see Stadter 2015.

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TSO
TEIRESIAS SUPPLEMENTS ONLINE

Chapter 4

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Local Past and Global Present in Plutarch's *Greek*, *Roman*, and *Barbarian Questions*

There is no doubt that Plutarch had an antiquarian-like curiosity for the past. This was certainly not his only way of approaching the past, but as Pascal Payen writes in his piece, "Plutarch the Antiquarian", in *A Companion to Plutarch*,[1] "it seems evident that antiquarian knowledge is integral to Plutarch's way of thinking and writing" and that it pervades his entire oeuvre. His antiquarian erudition is especially apparent in works such as the *Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, the *Bravery of Women*, the *Greek and Roman Questions*, and the nine books of *Table Talk*, but, as Payen rightly stresses, "Plutarch's wealth of antiquarian erudition is not limited to a few treatises in the *Moralia* (…). [It] is also manifest in the *Lives*. (…) One cannot overemphasize the fact that the *Parallel Lives* contain an abundance of antiquarian knowledge by virtue of the fact that, in them, Plutarch explores all aspects of the past, including those areas where legend overlaps with history, such as foundation narratives, etymological myths, and religious practices".[2] It could indeed be shown through a wealth of examples that 'Plutarch the Antiquarian' had a "passionate curiosity for the past".[3] To stay within the scope of this workshop, however, this paper will focus on Plutarch's interest in local traditions.

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[1] Payen 2014: 235. This article was originally published in French as Payen 2013.
[2] Ibid. 238 and 240.
[3] Ibid. 235.

Chandra Giroux (editor). Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World. Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 3. 2022: 72-96. © Thomas Schmidt 2022. License Agreement: CC-BY-NC (permission to use, distribute, and reproduce in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed and not used for commercial purposes).

The *Greek Questions*

This interest in local traditions is especially visible in his *Greek Questions*, a series of 59 questions on various customs, institutions, and religious practices of the Greek world, of which Plutarch tries to explain the origins. As made clear by the very title of the treatise (*Αἰτίαι Ἑλλήνων*),[4] this is an aetiological work, in the line of the long literary and scientific tradition of *Αἰτίαι* and *Προβλήματα*, known especially (but not only) from the school of Aristotle and the Peripatetics.[5]

In this work, Plutarch puts forward questions about various – often rather peculiar – practices or traditions of the Greek world, such as the following:[6] "Why is it that among the Rhodians a herald does not enter the shrine of the hero Ocridion?" (*QG* 27); "Why is it that at the Thesmophoria the Eretrian women cook their meat, not by fire, but by the rays of the sun?" (*QG* 31); "Why is it that the statue of the Labrandean Zeus in Caria is fashioned holding an axe, but not a sceptre or a thunderbolt?" (*QG* 45); or "Why is it the custom for the women of Chalcedon, whenever they encounter strange men, and especially officials, to veil one cheek?" (*QG* 49).

In accordance with the aetiological tradition, most of these questions start with "why?" (διὰ τί) or its equivalents (διὰ τίνα αἰτίαν, τίνος διανοίας, τί δήποτε, τίς ἡ αἰτία, ἀπὸ ποίας αἰτίας), but the first word can also be "what?" (τί) – e.g., "What is the 'wooden dog' among the Locrians?" (*QG* 15) – or "who?" (τίς, τίνες) – e.g., "Who are the Perpetual Sailors among the Milesians?" (*QG* 32) – or "whence?" (πόθεν, ἀπὸ τίνος) – e.g., "Whence arose the proverbial saying 'This is valid'?" (*QG* 42).[7] The questions touch upon a great variety of aspects, customs and institutions which, following Nouilhan, Pailler, and Payen, can be classified into three main fields: (1) foundations and colonisation, (2) institutions, (3) religion and sanctuaries, in which the unifying aspects are the Greek language and the general framework of the Greek polis.[8]

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[4] This is the title found in the *Lamprias Catalogue* (no. 166), a list of Plutarch's works probably dating from the 3rd or 4th c. CE (see Ziegler 1949 and Irigoin 1986). The manuscript tradition, however, has either *Προβλήματα Ἑλληνικά* or simply *Ἑλληνικά*, by reference to the *Αἴτια Ῥωμαϊκά* which immediately precedes it in the manuscripts. As Plutarch himself (*Cam.* 19.12) refers to the latter as *Αἴτια Ῥωμαϊκά*, it seems plausible that the title of the *Greek Questions* was actually *Αἴτια Ἑλληνικά*. See Boulogne 2002: 179.

[5] See e.g., Boulogne 1992; Harrison 2000; Grandjean 2008. Cf. also Payen 2014: 244.

[6] In the following, *QG* stands for *Quaestiones Graecae*, *QR* for *Quaest. Romanae* and *QB* for *Quaest. Barbaricae*. All translations and Greek quotations of *QC* and *QR* are taken from Babbitt 1936, the other quotations from their respective volumes in the Loeb Classical Library. The standard commentary on the *Greek Questions* remains Halliday 1928. Recent commentaries include Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999; Boulogne 2002; Carrano 2007.

[7] See the table in Payen 1998: 41 (also reproduced in Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999: 36).

This neat classification, however, does not account for the great diversity of subjects nor the feeling of perplexity and confusion one experiences when reading this work. This complexity is further enhanced by the large number of cities and places in which the various customs are located, as can be seen on the very convenient map drawn by Payen.[9] Some localities appear more often than others, like Samos and Megara (both 5 times), and Delphi, Boiotia and Euboea are well represented too, but so are other cities, and it appears that the places mentioned in the *Greek Questions* actually cover the entire Greek world: putting the emphasis quite obviously on Central Greece and the Peloponnese, they also include the Ionian Islands, the South of Italy, Northern Greece, the Troad, the Bosporus, the Ionian Coast, but also Crete, Cyprus and a number of small, remote and less well-known cities. There does not seem to be a unifying system at work in the *Greek Questions* (unless this randomness was part of Plutarch's plan, as K. Oikonomopoulou has recently argued)[10] – they rather illustrate the great diversity of local traditions all over the Greek world.

More precisely, this is the Greek world as known from the Archaic and Classical period. For almost all of the traditions, customs and institutions mentioned in the *Greek Questions* can be traced back to archaic and pre-classical times and more often than not, to mythical times.[11] For example, in QG 27 ("Why is it that among the Rhodians a herald does not enter the shrine of the hero Ocridion?"), the explanation is set in the mythical past of Rhodes, citing the story of Ochimus, the eldest of the seven sons of Helios and ruler of the island:

> *QG 27*: ἢ ὅτι Ὄχιμος τὴν θυγατέρα Κυδίππην ἐνεγγύησεν Ὀκριδίωνι; Κέρκαφος δ᾽ ἀδελφὸς ὢν Ὀχίμου τῆς δὲ παιδὸς ἐρῶν, ἔπεισε τὸν κήρυκα (διὰ κηρύκων γὰρ ἔθος ἦν τὸ μετέρχεσθαι τὰς νύμφας), ὅταν παραλάβῃ τὴν Κυδίππην, πρὸς ἑαυτὸν ἀγαγεῖν. τούτου δὲ πραχθέντος, ὁ μὲν Κέρκαφος ἔχων τὴν κόρην

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[8] See Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999: 35. On the importance of language in the *Greek Questions*, see also Jazdzewska 2018: she argues that language is actually the principal focus of Plutarch in this work, which she places in the line of the lexicographic tradition, but although she makes some fine observations, I am not convinced that the treatise should be read exclusively in this way. On the Greek polis as unifying element, see also Oikonomopoulou 2017.
[9] Payen 1998: 53.
[10] Oikonomopoulou 2017: 108.
[11] Cf. Payen 1998: 55.

> ἔφυγεν, ὕστερον δὲ τοῦ Ὀχίμου γηράσαντος ἐπανῆλθε. **τοῖς δὲ Ῥοδίοις ἔθος κατέστη** κήρυκα μὴ προσιέναι τῷ τοῦ Ὀκριδίωνος ἡρῴῳ διὰ τὴν γενομένην ἀδικίαν.
>
> Is it because Ochimus affianced his daughter Cydippê to Ocridion? But Cercaphus, who was the brother of Ochimus, was in love with the maiden and persuaded the herald (for it used to be the custom to use heralds to fetch the brides), when he should receive Cydippê, to bring her to him. When this had been accomplished, Cercaphus fled with the maiden; but later, when Ochimus had grown old, Cercaphus returned to his home again. **But the custom became established among the Rhodians** that a herald should not approach the shrine of Ocridion because of the wrong that had been done.

Other examples of mythical past include *QG* 43 (Sisyphus), 45 (Herakles), 41 (Trojan War), 31 (the return of Agamemnon), 14 (Odysseus at Ithaca), but many more could be added. Other questions refer to a distant past, most often in archaic times. For instance, *QG* 20 ("What is it that is called in Priene 'the darkness by the Oak'?") refers to a time "when the Samians and Prienians were at war with each other" and to the famous "Battle of the Oak", which can be dated to around the mid-6th century (as known through Herodotus 1.170). Likewise, *QG* 32 ("Who are the Perpetual Sailors among the Milesians?") is set in Miletus at the time "when the despots Thoas and Damasenor had been overthrown", i.e., at some point during the 6th century. Most of the *Greek Questions* relate to the early history of the Greek cities,[12] i.e., to the 6th or 7th century or even to the 8th, as is the case with the five *Questions* concerning Megara, which Hans Beck has analysed in greater detail in his book *Megarian Moments*.[13] Often enough, the time is simply referred to as τὸ παλαιόν or the like, i.e., "the days of old".[14]

To sum up this very brief overview: the traditions or practices mentioned in the *Greek Questions* are definitely local, and they belong to a distant past, hence the words "local past" used in the title of this paper. Is this simply 'Plutarch the Antiquarian' at work, taking us on a nostalgic tour through past traditions of his beloved Greece, in a way that foreshadows Pausanias' *Description of Greece*? I refer to Pausanias advisedly, as Pausanias has been used in recent years, notably by Tim Whitmarsh and Simon Goldhill,[15] as a paradigm of "local thinking", i.e., of a "vision of Greek culture as fragmented into a myriad, atomised locales", as opposed to Aelius Aristides' vision of a "global uniformity" of the Roman empire.[16] Where does Plutarch stand in that respect? First of all, it is important to stress that, despite Plutarch's obvious and antiquarian-like curiosity for the past, almost all of the past traditions mentioned in the *Greek Questions* are in some way connected to the present of Plutarch's own days. This can be deduced from the fact that for the vast majority of the actual questions Plutarch uses the present tense (only 6 out of 59 questions are set in a past tense). Obviously, the use of the present in itself does not necessarily mean that these traditions were still alive in Plutarch's own time. Most of the time, however, the formulation of the question itself, or of the explanation given by Plutarch, leaves no doubt about the fact that the traditions under discussion were still alive in his time, even when the events which lay at their origin are (quite obviously) narrated in a past tense. In many cases, this contemporaneity is fairly self-evident,[17] but there are also several passages where an explicit reference to the present is made by Plutarch,[18] such as the following:

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[12] See Payen 1998: 55.

[13] Beck 2018: 37-42.

[14] For instance in *QG* 6, 17, 19, 37 and 46.

> *QG 12*: τίς ἡ παρὰ Δελφοῖς Χάριλλα; τρεῖς ἄγουσι Δελφοὶ ἐνναετηρίδας κατὰ τὸ ἑξῆς, ὧν τὴν μὲν Σεπτήριον καλοῦσι, τὴν δ᾽ Ἡρωίδα, τὴν δὲ Χάριλλαν. (...) ἐκ δὲ τῶν δρωμένων φανερῶς Σεμέλης **ἄν τις** ἀναγωγὴν **εἰκάσειε**. (...) μόλις οὖν ἀνευρόντες ὅτι τοὔνομα τοῦτ᾽ ἦν τῇ ῥαπισθείσῃ παιδί, μεμειγμένην τινὰ καθαρμῷ θυσίαν ἀπετέλεσαν, ἣν ἐπιτελοῦσιν **ἔτι καὶ νῦν** δι᾽ ἐννέα ἐτῶν.
>
> Who was 'Charilla' among the Delphians? The Delphians celebrate three festivals one after the other which occur every eight years, the first of which they

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[15] See Whitmarsh 2010 and Goldhill 2010.

[16] Whitmarsh 2010: 2.

[17] See e.g., QG 3 ("Who is 'She that Kindles the Fire' among the people of Soli?") about certain ceremonies that the priestess of Athena performs at Soli; QG 13 ("What is the 'beggar's meat' among the Aenianians?") mentioning the hecatomb the inhabitants regularly offer to Apollo; QG 24 ("What is that which is called an *enknisma* (a roast) among the Argives?") on the custom of sacrificing to Apollo in times of mourning; or QG 44 ("Who were the 'solitary eaters' in Aegina?") on a sacrifice to Poseidon called *thiasoi*.

[18] On this, see also Preston 2001: 109-110; Payen 1998: 56; Payen 2014: 242.

call Septerion, the second Heroïs, and the third Charilla. (…) but from the portions of the rites that are performed in public **one might conjecture** that it represents the evocation of Semelê. (…) Accordingly, when they had discovered with some difficulty that this was the name of the child who had been struck, they performed a certain sacrificial rite combined with purification, which **even now** they continue to perform every eight years.

QG 38: τίνες οἱ παρὰ Βοιωτοῖς Ψολόεις καὶ τίνες αἱ Ὀλεῖαι; (…) φασὶ (…) αὐτὰς δὲ ‘ὀλείας’ οἷον ὀλοάς. **καὶ μέχρι νῦν** Ὀρχομένιοι τὰς ἀπὸ τοῦ γένους οὕτω καλοῦσι. καὶ γίγνεται **παρ᾽ ἐνιαυτὸν** ἐν τοῖς Ἀγριωνίοις φυγὴ καὶ δίωξις αὐτῶν ὑπὸ τοῦ ἱερέως τοῦ Διονύσου ξίφος ἔχοντος. ἔξεστι δὲ τὴν καταληφθεῖσαν ἀνελεῖν, καὶ ἀνεῖλεν **ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν** Ζωίλος ὁ ἱερεύς.

Who are the ‘Psoloeis’ and who the ‘Oleiae’ among the Boeotians? They relate that (…) the Minyads themselves were called ‘Oleiae,’ that is to say, ‘Murderesses.’ **And even to-day** the people of Orchomenus give this name to the women descended from this family; **and every year**, at the festival of Agrionia, there takes place a flight and pursuit of them by the priest of Dionysus with sword in hand. Any one of them that he catches he may kill, **and in my time** the priest Zoïlus killed one of them.

QG 41: πόθεν ἐν τῇ Βοιωτίᾳ περὶ τὸν Ἐλέωνα ποταμὸς Σκάμανδρος ὠνομάσθη; (…) Ἀκίδουσαν δὲ τὴν κρήνην ἀπὸ τῆς ἑαυτοῦ γυναικός, ἐξ ἧς ἔσχε τρεῖς θυγατέρας, ἃς τιμῶσιν **ἄχρι νῦν** ‘παρθένους’ προσαγορεύοντες.

From what cause was a river in Boeotia in the vicinity of Eleon called Scamander? (…) The spring Acidusa he named after his wife; and from her he had three daughters whom **even to this day** they honour under the name of the ‘Maidens’.

A closer look shows that in 40 of the 59 questions, i.e., 2/3 of the cases, there is a clear connection with the present, and in some cases at least it is clearly based on autopsy.[19] So in a sense, there is a Pausanian attitude at work here too: after all, Pausanias too based his description of Greece mainly on autopsy. The difference, however, is that, contrary to Pausanias, Plutarch's interests were not limited to Greece, as is evidenced by the fact that he also wrote the *Roman Questions*.

The *Roman Questions*

The *Roman Questions* are almost twice as long as the *Greek Questions*, with 113 questions (as opposed to 59) and 83 Loeb pages (as opposed to 37), and they are also concerned with past traditions.[20] However, they show lesser diversity than the *Greek Questions*, as they invariably start with the question "why?" (διὰ τί) – with only two exceptions[21] – and focus much more heavily on religious matters, with 70 questions (i.e., almost 2/3) relating to ritual, whereas 26 address questions of parentage, 18 political and military institutions, and 4 matters of calendar.[22] On the other hand, the answers to these questions are usually more diverse, with up to 6 different hypotheses, whereas the *Greek Questions* usually offer a more definite explanation in the form of a narrative or a single hypothesis.[23]

Despite these differences, it is striking that, just as in the *Greek Questions*, the customs or institutions mentioned in the *Roman Questions* all relate to a remote past, which almost exclusively coincides with the earliest history of Rome, prior to the 5th century, with only occasional incursions into the times of the early Republic and notably the Sack of Rome by the Gauls: all the rest concern (1) the mythical times of Evander and Aeneas; (2) the age of

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[19] On autopsy in Plutarch (in general), see Buckler 1992. See however Neumann 2019 for a distinction between speaker and historical author in *QG* (and *QR*).

[20] The main commentary is still Rose 1924; recent ones include Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999; Boulogne 1994 and 2002.

[21] *QR* 105 and 112. See the tables in Payen 1998: 41 and Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999: 36.

[22] See Payen 2014: 245, as well as the table in Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999: 32. For different classifications, see Preston 2001: 97-99 and Brenk 2019: 247-248.

[23] See the table in Nouilhan, Pailler, & Payen 1999: 38. On the meaning of these multiple explanations in the *Roman Questions* and the difference with the *Greek Questions*, see Boulogne 1992; Payen 1998: 45-49; Preston 2001: 95-96; Payen 2014: 245.

Romulus and the foundation of Rome; (3) the reigns of Numa and Servius Tullius.[24] Even more striking is the fact that, geographically, the *Roman Questions* are strictly limited to the city of Rome and its immediate surrounding territory.[25] The vast majority of the customs, traditions or institutions under discussion are connected to specific locations (places, streets, monuments, temples, etc.) situated within the city walls. In a remarkable attempt to find a structural logic behind the diversity of customs mentioned in the *Roman Questions*, John Scheid put forward the idea that the *Roman Questions* actually follow a topographical route through the city of Rome.[26] One may or may not be convinced by his demonstration, but it is certainly true that, just as with the *Greek Questions*, some of the customs or traditions referred to in the *Roman Questions* are based on autopsy. This can been seen in the numerous places where Plutarch refers to his own times when dealing with these past traditions.[27]

Sometimes, this link to the present is visible within the question itself:

> *QR 69*: διὰ τί τῷ καλουμένῳ Σεπτομουντίῳ παρεφύλαττον ὀχήμασι ζευκτοῖς μὴ χρῆσθαι, **καὶ μέχρι νῦν** οἱ τῶν παλαιῶν μὴ καταφρονοῦντες παραφυλάττουσι;
>
> Why on the festival called Septimontium were they careful to refrain from the use of horse-drawn vehicles; and why **even to this day** are those who do not contemn ancient customs still careful about this?
>
> *QR 72*: διὰ τί τῶν ἐπ᾽ οἰωνοῖς ἱερέων, οὓς Αὔσπικας πρότερον Αὔγουρας δὲ **νῦν** καλοῦσιν, ᾤοντο δεῖν ἀεὶ τοὺς λαμπτῆρας ἀνεῳγμένους εἶναι καὶ τὸ πῶμα μὴ ἐπικεῖσθαι;

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[24] Payen 1998: 54-55. Most frequently, the time is simply referred to as τὸ παλαιόν or the like, e.g., in *QR* 4, 5, 11, 19, 20, 25, 30, 32, 33, 40, 41, 42, 43, 46, 61, 63, 66, 70, 72, 76, 85, 86, 87, 91, 92, 98, 101, 107, 111.

[25] Payen 1998: 49.

[26] See Scheid 2012 (with various maps), based on Scheid 1990-1991 and 1991-1992. See also Scheid 2018.

[27] However, see again Neumann 2019 for a distinction between speaker and historical author in *QR*.

> Why did they think that the priests that take omens from birds, whom they formerly called Auspices, but **now** Augures, should always keep their lanterns open and put no cover on them?
>
> *QR* 53: διὰ τί τοῖς Καπετωλίοις θέας ἄγοντες **ἔτι νῦν** κηρύττουσι Σαρδιανοὺς ὠνίους, καὶ γέρων τις ἐπὶ χλευασμῷ προάγεται παιδικὸν ἐναψάμενος περιδέραιον, ὃ καλοῦσι βοῦλλαν; (…) ἐπεὶ δὲ Λυδοὶ μὲν ἦσαν οἱ Τυρρηνοὶ ἐξ ἀρχῆς, Λυδῶν δὲ μητρόπολις αἱ Σάρδεις, οὕτω τοὺς Οὐηίους ἀπεκήρυττον· **καὶ μέχρι νῦν** ἐν παιδιᾷ τὸ ἔθος διαφυλάττουσι.
>
> Why do they **even now**, at the celebration of the Capitoline games, proclaim 'Sardians for sale!', and why is an old man led forth in derision, wearing around his neck a child's amulet which they call a bulla? (…) But since the Etruscans were originally Lydians, and Sardis was the capital city of the Lydians, they offered the Veians for sale under this name; and **even to this day** they preserve the custom in sport.

In other cases, as the last example has already shown, the reference to the present is found within the explanations that follow a question:

> *QR* 25: διὰ τί τὴν μετὰ καλάνδας ἡμέραν καὶ νώνας καὶ εἰδοὺς ἀνέξοδον καὶ ἀνεκδήμητον τίθενται; (…) ἐπεὶ τοίνυν πᾶσα μὲν ἀξία σπουδῆς ἀποδημία καὶ πρᾶξις οἰκονομίας δεῖται καὶ παρασκευῆς, Ῥωμαῖοι δὲ τὸ παλαιὸν ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς οὐδὲν ᾠκονόμουν οὐδ᾽ ἐφρόντιζον ἀλλ᾽ ἢ περὶ τοὺς θεοὺς ἠσχολοῦντο καὶ τοῦτ᾽ ἔπραττον, ὥσπερ **ἔτι νῦν** προκηρύττουσιν οἱ ἱερεῖς ἐπὶ τὰς θυσίας βαδίζοντες (…) ἢ καθάπερ **ἔτι νῦν** προσευξάμενοι καὶ προσκυνήσαντες ἐν τοῖς ἱεροῖς ἐπιμένειν καὶ καθίζειν εἰώθασιν, οὕτως οὐκ εὐθὺς ἐπέβαλλον ταῖς ἱεραῖς ἡμέραις τὰς ἐνεργούς, ἀλλ᾽ ἐποίουν τι διάλειμμα καὶ διάστημα, πολλὰ τῶν πραγμάτων δυσχερῆ καὶ ἀβούλητα φερόντων;
>
> Why do they reckon the day that follows the Kalends, the Nones, or the Ides as unsuitable for leaving home or for travel? (…) Since, therefore, all travel and all business of importance needs provision and preparation, and since in ancient

days the Romans, at the time of festivals, made no provision or plan for anything, save only that they were engaged in the service of their gods and busied themselves with this only, just as **even to this day** the priests cause such a proclamation to be made in advance as they proceed on their way to sacrifice. (…) Or is it **even as men now**, who have offered their prayers and oblations, are wont to tarry and sit a while in the temples, and so they would not let busy days succeed holy days immediately, but made some pause and breathing-space between, since business brings with it much that is distasteful and undesired?

QR 50: διὰ τί ὁ ἱερεὺς τοῦ Διός, ἀποθανούσης αὐτῷ τῆς γυναικὸς, ἀπετίθετο τὴν ἀρχήν, ὡς Ἀτήιος ἱστόρηκε; (...) ὅθεν οὐδ᾽ ἀποπέμψασθαι πρότερον ἐξῆν, οὐδὲ **νῦν**, ὡς ἔοικεν, ἔξεστιν, ἀλλ᾽ **ἐφ᾽ ἡμῶν** ἐπέτρεψεν ἐντευχθεὶς Δομετιανός.

Why did the priest of Jupiter (Flamen Dialis) resign his office if his wife died, as Ateius has recorded? (…) Wherefore it was formerly illegal for the flamen to divorce his wife; and it is **still**, as it seems, illegal, but **in my day** Domitian once permitted it on petition.

QR 86: διὰ τί τοῦ Μαΐου μηνὸς οὐκ ἄγονται γυναῖκας; (...) ἢ ὅτι τῷ μηνὶ τούτῳ τὸν μέγιστον ποιοῦνται τῶν καθαρμῶν, **νῦν** μὲν εἴδωλα ῥιπτοῦντες ἀπὸ τῆς γεφύρας εἰς τὸν ποταμὸν πάλαι δ᾽ ἀνθρώπους; διὸ καὶ τὴν Φλαμινίκαν, ἱερὰν τῆς Ἥρας εἶναι δοκοῦσαν, **νενόμισται** σκυθρωπάζειν, μήτε λουομένην τηνικαῦτα μήτε κοσμουμένην.

Why do men not marry during the month of May? (…) Or is it because in this month they hold their most important ceremony of purification, in which they **now** throw images from the bridge into the river, but in days of old they used to throw human beings? Wherefore **it is the custom** that the Flaminica, reputed to be consecrate to Juno, shall wear a stern face, and refrain from bathing and wearing ornaments at this time.

> *QR* 101: διὰ τί κοσμοῦσι τοὺς παῖδας τοῖς περιδεραίοις, ἃ βούλλας καλοῦσι; (...) ἢ τοῖς παλαιοῖς οἰκετῶν μὲν ἐρᾶν ὥραν ἐχόντων οὐκ ἦν ἄδοξον οὐδ᾽ αἰσχρόν, ὡς **ἔτι νῦν** αἱ κωμῳδίαι μαρτυροῦσιν.
>
> Why do they adorn their children's necks with amulets which they call bullae? (…) Or did the Romans of early times account it not disreputable nor disgraceful to love male slaves in the flower of youth, as **even now** their comedies testify.

Finally, in other cases, the Roman tradition under discussion prompts Plutarch to a comment on similar traditions in Greece:

> *QR* 16: διὰ τί δούλαις τὸ τῆς Λευκοθέας ἱερὸν ἄβατόν ἐστι, μίαν δὲ μόνην αἱ γυναῖκες εἰσάγουσαι παίουσιν ἐπὶ κόρρης καὶ ῥαπίζουσιν; (...) διὸ **καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ** πρὸ τοῦ σηκοῦ τῆς Λευκοθέας ὁ νεωκόρος λαβὼν μάστιγα κηρύττει, 'μὴ δοῦλον εἰσιέναι μὴ δούλαν, μὴ Αἰτωλὸν μὴ Αἰτωλάν.'
>
> Why is it that it is forbidden to slave-women to set foot in the shrine of Matuta, and why do the women bring in one slave-woman only and slap her on the head and beat her? (…) Wherefore **also in my native town, Chaeroneia**, the temple-guardian stands before the precinct of Leucothea and, taking a whip in his hand, makes proclamation: 'Let no slave enter, nor any Aetolian, man or woman!'
>
> *QR* 29: διὰ τί τὴν γαμουμένην οὐκ ἐῶσιν αὐτὴν ὑπερβῆναι τὸν οὐδὸν τῆς οἰκίας, ἀλλ᾽ ὑπεραίρουσιν οἱ προπέμποντες; (...) ἢ σύμβολόν ἐστι τοῦ μηδ᾽ ἐξιέναι δι᾽ αὑτῆς μηδὲ καταλιπεῖν τὴν οἰκίαν, εἰ μὴ βιασθείη, καθάπερ καὶ εἰσῆλθε βιασθεῖσα; **καὶ γὰρ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν ἐν Βοιωτίᾳ** καίουσι πρὸ τῆς θύρας τὸν ἄξονα τῆς ἁμάξης, ἐμφαίνοντες δεῖν τὴν νύμφην ἐμμένειν ὡς ἀνῃρημένου τοῦ ἀπάξοντος.
>
> Why do they not allow the bride to cross the threshold of her home herself, but those who are escorting her lift her over? (…) Or is it a token that the woman may not go forth of her own accord and abandon her home if she be not constrained, just as it was under constraint that she entered it? **So likewise**

among us in Boeotia they burn the axle of the bridal carriage before the door, signifying that the bride must remain, since her means of departure has been destroyed.

QR 40: διὰ τί τῷ ἱερεῖ τοῦ Διὸς οὐκ ἔξεστιν ἐν ὑπαίθρῳ ἀλείφεσθαι; (...) ἢ τὰ μὲν μόνῳ τῷ ἱερεῖ, τὰ δὲ πᾶσιν ὑπὸ τοῦ νόμου προστέτακται διὰ τοῦ ἱερέως; **διὸ καὶ παρ᾽ ἡμῖν** τὸ μὲν στεφανηφορεῖν καὶ κομᾶν καὶ μὴ σιδηροφορεῖν μηδὲ τοῖς Φωκέων ὅροις ἐμβαίνειν ἴδια λειτουργήματα τοῦ ἄρχοντός ἐστι...

Why is it not allowed the priest of Jupiter (Flamen Dialis) to anoint himself in the open air? (…) Or are some regulations prescribed for the priest alone, while others are prescribed for all by the law through the priest? **Wherefore also, in my country**, to wear a garland, to wear the hair long, not to have any iron on one's person, and not to set foot within the boundaries of Phocis, are the special functions of an archon...

QR 67: διὰ τί 'λικτώρεις' τοὺς ῥαβδούχους ὀνομάζουσι; (...) ἢ νῦν μὲν παρέγκειται τὸ κ, πρότερον δὲ 'λιτώρεις' ἐκαλοῦντο, λειτουργοί τινες ὄντες περὶ τὸ δημόσιον; ὅτι γὰρ λῇτον **ἄχρι νῦν** τὸ δημόσιον ἐν πολλοῖς τῶν Ἑλλήνων νόμων γέγραπται, οὐδένα ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν λέληθε.

Why do they call the rod-bearers 'lictors'? (…) Or is the c but a recent insertion, and were they formerly called *litores*, that is, a class of public servants? The fact that **even to this day** the word 'public' is expressed by *leitos* in many of the Greek laws has escaped the attention of hardly anyone.

QR 68: διὰ τί κύνα θύουσιν οἱ Λούπερκοι; (...) τῷ δὲ κυνὶ πάντες ὡς ἔπος εἰπεῖν Ἕλληνες ἐχρῶντο καὶ χρῶνταί γε **μέχρι νῦν** ἔνιοι σφαγίῳ πρὸς τοὺς καθαρμούς.

Why do the Luperci sacrifice a dog? (…) Nearly all the Greeks used a dog as the sacrificial victim for ceremonies of purification; and some, at least, make use of it **even to this day**.

All these examples show that in the *Roman Questions*, just as in the *Greek Questions*, these past traditions have a clear connection to the present, something which, once again, is confirmed by the fact that the vast majority of these questions are formulated in the present tense.

The ***Barbarian Questions***

A connection to the present would probably also have been noticeable in Plutarch's *Barbarian Questions*, a work now unfortunately lost. This treatise is listed as number 139 in the *Lamprias Catalogue* under the title *Αἰτίαι Βαρβαρικαί* and it is likely that it was meant to be the equivalent of the *Greek* and the *Roman Questions* with regard to barbarian matters. Thus, from a general comparison with those two extant works, one can reasonably postulate that the *Barbarian Questions* were constituted of a series of independent questions, on various subjects largely related to the customs of barbarian peoples, especially their religious practices, their institutions and their general way of life, and that these questions were given one or several answers, in more or less detail and in the form of successive hypotheses formulated as questions or narrations. Furthermore, as I have tried to show elsewhere,[28] thanks to Plutarch's tendency to repeat himself in his works (or, rather, to reuse material he had collected in the form of ὑπομνήματα),[29] it may even be possible to reconstruct parts of its content. Thus when I looked for possible traces of the *Barbarian Questions* in Plutarch's extant corpus, using various criteria adapted from Jean-Marie Pailler's search for traces of the *Roman Questions* in Plutarch's *Lives*,[30] I came up with a total of 51 'questions', categorized as follows:[31]

18 cases of a 'potential Question'
(= a subject-matter without an explanation)

- on barbarian evils such as smearing oneself with mud, wallowing in filth, immersions, casting oneself down with one's face to the ground (*De superst.* 166a)
- the Syrians do not eat sprats nor anchovies (*De superst.* 170d)

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[28] Cf. Schmidt 2008.
[29] For a short summary on this vast question, see Van der Stockt 2014: 329-330.
[30] Pailler 1998.
[31] The criteria and categories are explained in more detail in Schmidt 2008: 172-173.

- on human sacrifice practised by the Gauls, Scythians, Carthaginians, Persians (*De superst.* 171b-d)
- the Tyrians put chains upon their images (*Quaest. Rom.* 279a)
- in memory of Horus, the people throw down a rope and chop it up (*De Is. et Os.* 358c-d)
- the Scythians blind the slaves who produce their cream (*An virt.* 440a)
- the Scythians do not bury their dead (*An vit. ad infel. suff.* 499d)
- the Persians scourge the cloaks of culprits instead of the culprits themselves (*De sera* 565a)
- Mithridates nicknamed "Dionysus" for being the greatest drinker of his time (*Quaest. conv.* 624a)
- the barbarians use the hides of their domestic animals for clothing rather than their wool (*Quaest. conv.* 646e)
- the well-to-do Babylonians fill wineskins full of water and sleep on them to keep cool (*Quaest. conv.* 649e)
- the women of the Gauls used to take a bowl of porridge into the bath-chamber and eat it while they bathed (*Quaest. conv.* 734b)
- Egyptian women sleep beside a crocodile (*De soll. an.* 976b-c)
- among a tribe of Ethiopians a dog reigns and is addressed as king (*Comm. not.* 1064b)
- some barbarians have three months in their year (*Num.* 18.6)
- on the royal initiation of the Persian kings (*Art.* 3.2)
- on the torture of the boats among the Persians (*Art.* 16.3-7)
- on the custom among the Persians that the one appointed to the royal succession should ask a boon, and that the one who appointed him should give whatever was asked for (*Art.* 26.4-5)

12 cases of an 'outset of Question'
(= a subject-matter with a short explanation)

- the flatteresses in Cyprus acquired the nickname of "ladderesses" (*Quomodo adul.* 50d)
- as a sign of mourning, some barbarians go down into pits and remain there for several days, and some even cut off parts of their bodies (*Consol. ad Ap.* 113a-b)
- the Persian kings send their wives away when they wish to be merry and get drunk (*Praec. conj.* 140b)
- the women of Egypt, by inherited custom, were not allowed to wear shoes, so that they should stay at home all day (*Praec. conj.* 142c)
- the Egyptians call the Persian king Ochus "the Sword" (*De Is. et Os.* 355c)
- the Indian wives strive for the honour of being consumed together with their dead husband (*An vit. ad infel. suff.* 499c)
- the Scythians, Hyrcanians and Bactrians let dogs and birds devour the bodies of their dead, as this is considered a sign of happiness (*An vit. ad infel. suff.* 499d)
- the Thracians tattoo their wives to this day in revenge for Orpheus (*De sera* 557d)

- the Persian kings have the dinner of their slaves and dogs served to their friends and officers (*Quaest. conv.* 703e)
- the Ethiopians get old rapidly and the Britons live up to 120 years (*De plac. phil.* 911b)
- the Medes and the Assyrians give honours to fire, because from fear, by way of propitiation, they worship the maleficent forces rather than the reverend (*De facie* 935b)
- the Egyptians extract the viscera of the dead and cut them open in view of the sun (*De esu carnium* 996e)

1 case of an 'outline of Question'
(= a subject-matter with a short explanation and an introductory or concluding formula)

- the Egyptians think that little children possess the power of prophecy (*De Is. et Os.* 356e)

3 cases of an 'atmosphere of Question'
(= a subject-matter with a long explanation)

- in Leptis, it is an inherited custom for the bride, on the day after her marriage, to send to the mother of the bridegroom and ask for a pot (*Praec. conj.* 143a)
- the barbarians on the Po wear black in mourning for Phaethon (*De sera* 557d)
- among the Persians, a suppliant stands in a river with fire in his hands (*De primo* 950f)

5 cases of a 'quasi-Question'
(= a subject-matter with several explanations)

- why the Egyptians abstain from sea-fish (*De Is. et Os.* 353c-d)
- why once a year the Egyptians sacrifice and eat a pig whereas they usually abstain from it as being impure (*De Is. et Os.* 353f-354a)
- why the cult of the Sun can be assimilated to the cult of Osiris (*De Is. et Os.* 372c-d)
- what is the meaning of the daily offerings of incense among the Egyptians (*De Is. et Os.* 383b-d)
- why the Persians hold anyone who killed a large number of water mice to be fortunate (*De invidia* 537a-b + *Quaest. conv.* 670d + *De Is. et Os.* 369e-f)

12 cases of a 'genuine Question'
(= a subject-matter with a long explanation or several explanations and an introductory or concluding formula)

- why the deceased votaries of Isis are decked with their sacred garb (*De Is. et Os.* 352b)
- why the priests of Isis remove their hair by shaving and wear linen garments (*De Is. et*

Os. 352c–d)
- why the Egyptian priests abstain from salt (*De Is. et Os.* 352f–353a)
- on the origin of the name "Sarapis" (*De Is. et Os.* 362a–e)
- why the Egyptians regard the ass as an unclean animal and sacrifice cattle of red colour (*De Is. et Os.* 362e–363d)
- why the Egyptian priests call salt "the spume of Typhon" and abstain from it (*De Is. et Os.* 363e–f)
- why the Egyptians give Nephthys the name of "Finality" (*De Is. et Os.* 366b–c)
- whether the Jews abstain from pork because of reverence or aversion for the pig (*Quaest. conv.* 669e–671c)
- who is the god of the Jews? (*Quaest. conv.* 671c–672c)
- why do the Egyptian priests abstain completely from salt? (*Quaest. conv.* 684f–685a)
- that deliberating on public affairs over wine was no less a Greek than a Persian custom (*Quaest. conv.* 714a–d)
- why the Egyptian priests abstain from fish (*Quaest. conv.* 729a–c)[32]

From the examples listed above, it appears that the barbarian people mentioned in this attempted reconstruction of the *Barbarian Questions* are very diverse and geographically spread over a large area:[33] Egyptians (18 mentions), Persians (12), Scythians (3), Jews (3), Gauls (2), Ethiopians (2), Syrians (2) and, with one mention each, Indians, Hyrcanians, Medes, Assyrians, Libyans, Thracians, Britons and the inhabitants of Northern Italy. Occasionally, the customs under discussion are very precisely located,[34] but most of the time the references to barbarian people are generic and geographically only vaguely situated.

It is more difficult to assess whether or not the customs described in the *Barbarian Questions* belong to a distant past, as was the case with the *Greek* and the *Roman Questions*, because most of the time we lack evidence about these practices elsewhere. However, as there are cases where these practices are attested, for instance, in Herodotus, Ctesias, and other authors of the Classical period,[35] or are explicitly put in relation with figures such as Cyrus the Great and other Persian kings of olden times, one may reasonably assume that at least parts of the *Barbarian Questions* referred to ancient practices antedating the Classical period. Yet, again, just as with the *Greek* and the *Roman Questions*, there are several cases where these practices are directly connected to the present of Plutarch's own days. For instance, in the 6th question of book IV of *Table Talk* (one of the 'genuine Questions' listed above), Plutarch refers several times to his own time:

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[32] On the connections between these various questions about salt and fish, see Schmidt 2008: 177-180.

[33] See the map at the end of this paper.

[34] E.g., in Leptis (*Praec. conj.* 143a), Lycopolis and Oxyrhynchus (*De Is. et Os.* 380b), or Antaeopolis (*De soll. an.* 976b–c).

[35] Herodotus: *Praec. conj.* 142c, *An virt.* 440a, *An vit. ad infel. suff.* 499d, *Quaest. conv.* 729a. Ctesias: *Art.* 16.3-7. Other authors include e.g., Aristagoras, Megasthenes and Agatharchides of Cnidus, cf. Schmidt 2008: 182.

> *Quaest. conv.* 671c-672c: Τίς ὁ παρ' Ἰουδαίοις θεός. (...) Οἶμαι δὲ καὶ τὴν τῶν σαββάτων ἑορτὴν μὴ παντάπασιν ἀπροσδιόνυσον εἶναι· Σάβους γὰρ **καὶ νῦν ἔτι** πολλοὶ τοὺς Βάκχους καλοῦσιν καὶ ταύτην ἀφιᾶσι τὴν φωνὴν ὅταν ὀργιάζωσι τῷ θεῷ. (...) μιτρηφόρος τε προϊὼν ἐν ταῖς ἑορταῖς καὶ νεβρίδα χρυσόπαστον ἐνημμένος, χιτῶνα δὲ ποδήρη φορῶν καὶ κοθόρνους, κώδωνες δὲ πολλοὶ κατακρέμανται τῆς ἐσθῆτος, ὑποκομποῦντες ἐν τῷ βαδίζειν, **ὡς καὶ παρ' ἡμῖν**. (...) **καὶ μέχρι νῦν** τῶν τε βαρβάρων οἱ μὴ ποιοῦντες οἶνον μελίτειον πίνουσιν, ὑποφαρμάσσοντες τὴν γλυκύτητα οἰνώδεσι ῥίζαις καὶ αὐστηραῖς.
>
> Who is the god of the Jews? (…) I believe that even the feast of the Sabbath is not completely unrelated to Dionysus. Many **even now** call the Bacchants Sabi and utter that cry when celebrating the god. (…) the High Priest, who leads the procession at their festival wearing a mitre and clad in a gold-embroidered fawnskin, a robe reaching to the ankles, and buskins, with many bells attached to his clothes and ringing below him as he walks. **All this corresponds to our custom**. (…) **Even up to the present time** those of the barbarians who do not make wine drink mead, counteracting the sweetness somewhat by the use of winelike bitter roots.

In another 'genuine Question' about the religious duties of Egyptian priests, taken from book VIII of *Table Talk*, one likewise reads:

> *Quaest. conv.* 729a: οἷόν ἐστι καὶ τὸ τῶν κυάμων· οὔτε γὰρ σπείρειν οὔτε σιτεῖσθαι κύαμον Αἰγυπτίους, ἀλλ' οὐδ' ὁρῶντας ἀνέχεσθαί φησιν ὁ Ἡρόδοτος. ἰχθύων δὲ1 τοὺς ἱερεῖς **ἴσμεν ἔτι νῦν** ἀπεχομένους.

> An example is abstention from beans; Herodotus says that the Egyptians neither plant nor eat beans, and cannot even bear to look at them; and **we know that even now** the priests abstain from fish.

Further examples of such references to the present are:

> *De sera* 557d: ποῦ δὴ ταῦτα τὸ εὔλογον ἴσχει καὶ δίκαιον; οὐδὲ γὰρ Θρᾷκας ἐπαινοῦμεν, ὅτι στίζουσιν **ἄχρι νῦν**, τιμωροῦντες Ὀρφεῖ τὰς αὑτῶν γυναῖκας· οὐδὲ τοὺς περὶ Ἠριδανὸν βαρβάρους μελανοφοροῦντας ἐπὶ πένθει τοῦ Φαέθοντος, ὥσπερ λέγουσιν.
>
> Where is the logic or justice of this? Nor yet do we commend the Thracians for tattooing their own wives **even to this day** in revenge for Orpheus, nor the barbarians on the Po for wearing black in mourning for Phaethon, as the story goes.
>
> *De Is. et Os.* 380b: μόνοι γὰρ **ἔτι νῦν** Αἰγυπτίων Λυκοπολῖται πρόβατον ἐσθίουσιν, ἐπεὶ καὶ λύκος, ὃν θεὸν νομίζουσιν οἱ δ᾽ Ὀξυρυγχῖται **καθ᾽ ἡμᾶς**, τῶν Κυνοπολιτῶν τὸν ὀξύρυγχον ἰχθὺν ἐσθιόντων, κύνα συλλαβόντες καὶ θύσαντες ὡς ἱερεῖον κατέφαγον.
>
> **Even to-day** the inhabitants of Lycopolis are the only people among the Egyptians that eat a sheep; for the wolf, whom they hold to be a god, also eats it. **And in my day** the people of Oxyrhynchus caught a dog and sacrificed it and ate it up as if it had been sacrificial meat.

De Iside et Osiride actually contains several more such references to the present (9 in total),[36] and these may well point to autopsy by Plutarch, either from the time when he stayed in Egypt himself or from his personal contact with the cult of Isis elsewhere, notably in his native Boiotia, where these cults are well attested in his time.[37] Or he might have gotten his present-day information in yet another way, as he explicitly says in *On the cleverness of animals*:

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[36] Cf. *De Is. et Os.* 355c (μέχρι νῦν), 356c (ἔτι καὶ νῦν), 357c (καὶ ἔτι νῦν), 358c–d (καὶ νῦν), 360b (μέχρι νῦν), 367a (μέχρι νῦν), 367b (ἔτι νῦν), 375e (μέχρι νῦν), 380b (quoted above).

[37] Cf. Schmidt 2008: 182 n. 49. For more on Plutarch's Boiotia, see Giroux, in this volume.

> *De soll. an.* 976b–c: ἔναγχος δὲ Φιλῖνος ὁ βέλτιστος ἥκων πεπλανημένος ἐν Αἰγύπτῳ παρ' ἡμᾶς διηγεῖτο γραῦν ἰδεῖν ἐν Ἀνταίου πόλει κροκοδείλῳ συγκαθεύδουσαν ἐπὶ σκίμποδος εὖ μάλα κοσμίως παρεκτεταμένῳ. (...) ἐπεὶ καὶ περὶ Σοῦραν πυνθάνομαι, κώμην ἐν τῇ Λυκίᾳ Φελλοῦ μεταξὺ καὶ Μύρων, καθεζομένους ἐπ' ἰχθύσιν ὥσπερ οἰωνοῖς διαμαντεύεσθαι τέχνῃ τινὶ καὶ λόγῳ ἑλίξεις καὶ φυγὰς καὶ διώξεις αὐτῶν ἐπισκοποῦντας.
>
> Recently our excellent Philinus came back from a trip to Egypt and told us that he had seen in Antaeopolis an old woman sleeping on a low bed beside a crocodile, which was stretched out beside her in a perfectly decorous way. (…) Indeed, I have heard that near Sura, a village in Lycia between Phellus and Myra, men sit and watch the gyrations and flights and pursuits of fish and divine from them by a professional and rational system, as others do with birds.

Global present

As the last example has shown, Plutarch obviously also had his direct sources, and although I do not claim that all the local practices he refers to (be they Greek, Roman or barbarian) are based on first-hand information,[38] I would however wish to call his interest in them 'global', not in the sense that these practices would have been widely prevalent and universally followed in his time, but in the sense that Plutarch had a global view of the world around him. The very existence of the *Greek*, the *Roman* and the *Barbarian Questions* and, I hope, my reading of them, show that Plutarch's interests lay in the local traditions not only of the Greek world, but also in those of the Romans (admittedly limited to the city of Rome) and of the barbarians at large.[39] This global, tripartite view of the world is visible also in works such as *The Sayings of Kings and Commanders*, which are mainly a collection of sayings by famous Greeks and Romans, but do actually start with a section about barbarian kings. Likewise, the *Bravery of women* narrates noble deeds of women, mainly Greek and Roman, but 9 of the 27 stories (exactly 1/3) actually relate to barbarians. And one may add the nine books of *Table Talk*, which include several questions concerning barbarians and which, more generally, contain a lot of 'barbarian matters'.

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[38] Large parts of his *Greek* and *Roman Questions* rely of course on literary sources, as the various commentaries have established (esp. Rose 1924 and Halliday 1928).

[39] On these treatises as forming a triptych, see Darbo-Peschanski 1998: 23 and Mossman 2010: 145. Payen (1998: 39 and 49) rather considers the *Greek Questions* and the *Roman Questions* as a single unity, without being in contradiction to the existence of the *Barbarian Questions*.

Of course, I am well aware that this concept of Plutarch's global, tripartite world view has its limits. There is no denying that large parts of Plutarch's works are based on a parallelism between Greeks and Romans and on the binary vision of a strictly Greco-Roman world from which the barbarians generally seem to be absent. The *Parallel Lives*, to start with this obvious case, only compare Greeks and Romans, not Greeks with barbarians or Romans with barbarians. Likewise, the *Parallela Graeca et Romana*, if they really are by Plutarch, only contain parallels between Greeks and Romans. Furthermore, among Plutarch's works, one finds, for instance, a treatise entitled *On the Fortune of the Romans* and another one *On the Fame of the Athenians*, but nothing similar for barbarians. However, the existence of the *Life of Artaxerxes*, to which one can add the treatise *On Isis and Osiris* and, to a lesser degree, the *Dinner of the Seven Wise Men*, shows that an opening towards the barbarian world is certainly present in Plutarch's thought.[40] And, more generally, one should bear in mind that Plutarch's corpus contains an appreciable number of references to barbarians: throughout his oeuvre, more than 950 passages mention barbarians, sometimes quite extensively, and some barbarian figures definitely stand out, such as Artaxerxes, Darius, Cyrus, Surena, Spartacus, and others.[41] Therefore, it seems difficult to follow Pascal Payen when he writes that "[Plutarch's antiquarian] knowledge acquires significance *exclusively* within the context of the parallels he draws between Greece and Rome."[42] This is denying Plutarch a genuine interest in barbarian matters as well.[43]

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[40] Mossman (2010) rightly points out, however, that the *Life of Artaxerxes* remains a special case among Plutarch's works. See also Almagor 2014: 282.

[41] See Schmidt 1999. Compare also Nikolaidis 1986 and Stadter 2015.

[42] Payen 2014: 241 (my emphasis on *exclusively*).

[43] See e.g., Plutarch's interest in foreign languages (Strobach 1997) and in foreign religions (Hirsch-Luipold 2014: 163: "His interest extends beyond the Greco-Roman realm to the religions of Egypt, Iran, and India, to Zoroastrianism and Judaism, to Chaldean astrologers, to the Magi, and to the gymnosophists."). On Plutarch's multiculturalism (and its limits), see also Pelling 2016.

However, another objection to Plutarch's tripartite world view could be the fact that his *Roman Questions* are mostly explained in Greek terms, as Rebecca Preston has very convincingly shown.[44] Clearly there is a Hellenocentric approach at work in the *Roman Questions*, and it is very likely that it was the same with the *Barbarian Questions*, as some examples have shown, when Plutarch compares or explains barbarian practices with parallels taken from the Greek world. This means that Plutarch locates himself inside Greek culture and outside Roman culture.[45] Thus, Plutarch still speaks of "us (Greeks)" versus "them" (Romans or barbarians). This is not Aelius Aristides' globalizing (and probably somewhat idealizing) view in which "we" encompasses all inhabitants of the Roman Empire, be they Greek, Roman or barbarian. But neither is it Pausanias' limited view where "we" refers exclusively to the Greek world. Plutarch, it appears, although his approach was indeed Hellenocentric, had a broader view. In fact, it may be said that Plutarch was genuinely interested in the world around him, which he wanted to understand in all its aspects, as is attested by his numerous works questioning the world in the form of *Αἴτια*, *Προβλήματα*, *Ζητήματα* and other types of inquiry.[46] The *Greek*, *Roman* and *Barbarian Questions* are part of this global, almost Aristotelian approach to the world,[47] and Plutarch's interest in past traditions is to be seen in this global light too. Plutarch was not an antiquarian for the sake of being an antiquarian. He was interested in the past as explaining the present, i.e., the world around him, as he knew it from personal experience, from being a priest at Delphi or simply from living in Chaironeia (which explains a certain preponderance of Central Greece in his *Greek Questions*), but also from his travels (notably to Rome, which could plausibly explain why the *Roman Questions* are limited to the city of Rome), and, of course, from the numerous personal contacts he had – he may have been, for a large part of his life, locally confined to Chaironeia,[48] but he was quite obviously globally linked to the world around him through his many visitors.[49] The local past as described in the *Greek*, *Roman* and *Barbarian Questions* thus was actually part of the global present of Plutarch's own world.

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[44] Preston 2001. See also Boulogne 1987; Boulogne 1992: 4701-4703; Goldhill 2002: 265-271. However, see Brenk 2019 for a nuanced discussion of Preston's approach.

[45] Preston 2001: 114-119. On the contrary, Payen (2014: 241-243) sees the *Greek* and the *Roman Questions* as contributing to a "cultural unity between Greeks and Romans" and creating "an enduring Greco-Roman civilization." Boulogne (1987 and 1992: 4698-4703) also speaks of a conciliatory strategy adopted by Plutarch in these works. Likewise, Brenk (2019: 252) concludes that the Greek and Roman worlds "had become joined inextricably" in the Early Imperial Period.

[46] On Plutarch's aetiological works, see Harrison 2000; Grandjean 2008; Schmidt 2008: 165-166.

[47] According to Darbo-Peschanski 1998 and Boulogne 1998, however, Plutarch's approach remains fundamentally Platonic in his search for the universal principles behind the world.

[48] By choice, as he reminds us in his *Life of Demosthenes* (2.2).

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[49] See in particular the list of his numerous friends and acquaintances in Puech 1992.

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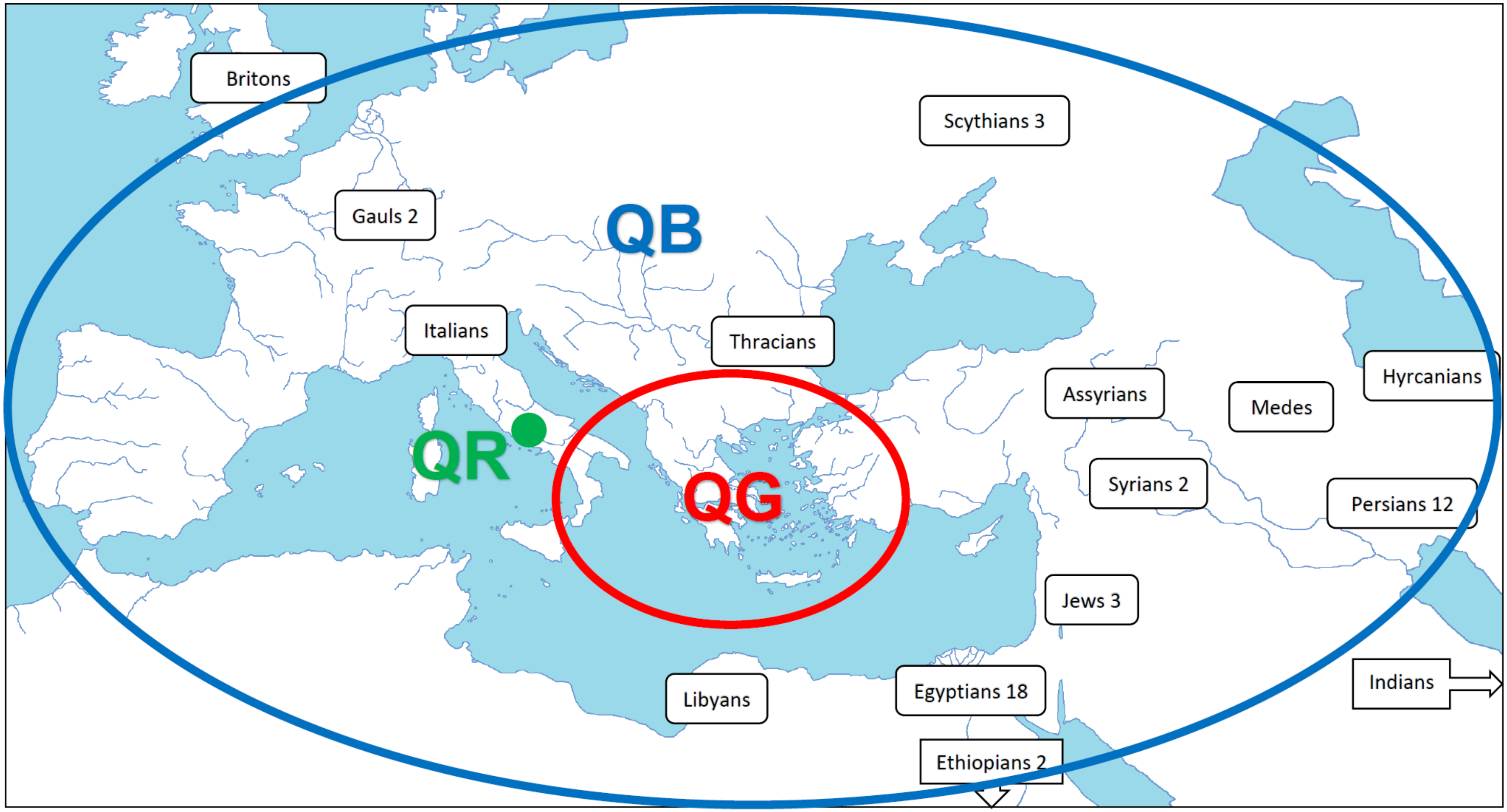
Britons
Scythians 3
Gauls 2
QB
Italians
Thracians
Assyrians
Medes
Hyrcanians
QR
QG
Syrians 2
Persians 12
Jews 3
Indians
Libyans
Egyptians 18
Ethiopians 2

Location of the barbarian people mentioned in Plutarch's (reconstructed) *Barbarian Questions* (in relation to *QG* and *QR*)

Source : Wikimedia Commons, blank map of Roman Empire, modified

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Blank_Roman_Empire.png#file

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Chapter 5

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The Last of the Greeks, and Good Riddance: Historical Commentary in Plutarch's *Philopoemen-Flamininus*

> All the stories have been told of kings in days of old, but there's no England now. All the wars that were won or lost somehow don't seem to matter very much anymore.
>
> Dave Davies, "Living on a Thin Line" (1984)[1]

Plutarch's *Philopoemen-Flamininus* is well known as the only book of *Parallel Lives* to feature two contemporary figures whose careers intersected.[2] Despite this unique situation, many studies have approached this pairing as typical, tracing syncrisis between the *Lives* and uncovering themes that run through the book.[3] Among other insights, these studies succeed in highlighting the thematic significance of liberty and in sketching the interplay between Philopoemen's contentiousness (φιλονικία) and Flamininus's love of honour (φιλοτιμία).[4]

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[1] I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Chandra Giroux for organizing and inviting me to the conference where I presented an early version of this chapter, to Hans Beck for welcoming us so warmly in Münster, and to all the participants for their camaraderie and invaluable conversations over several days. I owe thanks also to Craig Gibson and Noreen Humble for their insightful and constructive criticism as I was preparing the final version.

[2] For the temporal and geographic differences that are typical of paired *Lives*, see the discussion of Tatum 2010: 4.

[3] E.g., Pelling 1986, 1989, 1997; Swain 1988, 1996: 145-150; García Moreno 1995; Scuderi 1996; Walsh 1992. Swain (1988: 343) defends the typical approach: "Sufficient work has been done in recent years to make it clear that Plutarch envisages a common base between his heroes and demonstrably incorporates common themes in either half of the paired *Lives*. There is no cause to see *Phil.–Flam.* as exceptional in this respect".

[4] Some editions print φιλονεικία for φιλονικία. The latter is certainly the correct reading, but the two words have essentially the same meaning in Plutarch; see Stadter 2011: 238-241 (= 2015: 271-273).

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The readings are on the whole convincing: there can be no doubt that Plutarch meant his readers to compare the virtues and vices of these two men as in an ordinary pair of *Lives*.

At the same time, scholars have recognized that Plutarch appears to have been equally interested in using this book to explore a pivotal moment in Greco-Roman history, the moment when Roman intervention began to calm centuries of intra-Greek fighting through the defeat of Philip V and the declaration of freedom for the Greek cities. This interest certainly affected his deployment of syncrisis and articulation of themes across the *Lives*, as illustrated by his handling of φιλονικία. Plutarch quite plainly ascribes this quality to Philopoemen in sketching his character (*Phil.* 3.1), but in the actual narrative he does not include many examples of its effects.[5] In fact, φιλονικία is just as important for explaining the historical moment as for characterizing Philopoemen as an individual or comparing him to Flamininus. *Philopoemen* as a whole, with its numerous descriptions of intra-Greek warfare, serves as a demonstration of the sort of contentiousness that plagued the Greeks and prevented them from achieving freedom on their own. Philopoemen's entire career involved him in conflict with other Greeks, especially Spartans: he established his reputation fighting against King Cleomenes and serving in Crete;[6] in Achaea, his greatest victories came against Machanidas and Nabis, tyrants of Sparta; he died on campaign against the Messenians. Now the victories over tyrants, at least, may be read (narrowly) as connected to the book's theme of liberty.[7] But from the (wider) perspective of the early empire and the *pax Romana*, that is, from Plutarch's own contemporary perspective, all Philopoemen's wars are just as easily read as examples of Greek military might directed, as usual, against fellow Greeks.

By writing in the first *Life* about the wars in the Peloponnesus that both preceded and coincided with Flamininus's activity in Greece, Plutarch establishes the context for understanding the Roman general's achievement. From this angle, Philopoemen's military victories, though admirable within his *Life* and the narrow context of the Achaean League, were essentially, as Pelling writes, a demonstration of "that contentiousness that had always been the norm in Greek history, which had doomed his efforts to failure".[8] In Plutarch's rendering, therefore, Philopoemen is both an individual and a metaphor; he is his own man and at the same time embodies the deficiencies of all Greeks, past and present, while Flamininus becomes their saviour. Philopoemen's defining characteristic, φιλονικία, is the apparently congenital defect that caused even the greatest Greek leaders of the Classical past (Plutarch calls them "Agesilauses, Lysanders, Niciases, and Alcibiadeses") to deploy their celebrated military prowess against their fellow Greeks (*Flam.* 11.5-6). This contentiousness, in turn, ensured that Greece could never enjoy freedom if left to its own devices; it had to wait for a foreign power to bestow liberty as a gift. This outlook, Pelling continues, "makes this pair something more than the story of two individuals".[9]

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[5] See Pelling 1986: 85 (= 2002: 350).

[6] Philopoemen served in Crete twice, though Plutarch does not provide many details. Errington (1969: 27-48) argues that he was supporting the interests of Macedon, and so involved in the same sort of conflict that was happening in the Peloponnesus. On both occasions, according to Plutarch, his reputation preceded him back to Achaea, so that upon his return he immediately assumed positions of leadership (*Phil.* 7.1-4; 14.1).

[7] Cf. Pelling 1986: 85 (= 2002: 350).

[8] Pelling 1997: 94 (my translation from Italian).

Despite a general recognition of the complexity of this book's aims, prior studies have overlooked some important aspects of the pairing and structure of these *Lives*. In this chapter, I will show that while *Philopoemen* and *Flamininus* are indeed parallel and that a typical syncritic reading does emphasise the character of each man as well as the Roman achievement, the book's content is also so arranged that Philopoemen's story is largely subordinate to Flamininus's, serving almost as a prologue and setting up a climactic moment around the midpoint of the second *Life* (*Flam.* 10). This is Flamininus's famous declaration of freedom for the Greeks, made at the Isthmian Games in 196 BC. This event sparks a discussion among characters in the *Life* about the Greeks' failure to achieve freedom on their own. This discussion in turn provides an interpretive framework for the whole book up to that point; that is, for the whole of *Philopoemen* and the first half of *Flamininus*.

The chapter is divided into three parts. First, I explore Plutarch's decision to match Philopoemen and Flamininus in this book. I suggest that the pairing was inspired by Polybius and other literary and non-literary sources, and that it is a consequence of how the history of this period was being narrated even before Plutarch's time. In the second section I argue that Plutarch believed his Greco-Roman present to be better and more peaceful than the celebrated Greek past. This belief pervades his narrative, so that the Roman hero comes across as naturally superior to the Greek. Finally, I turn to the structure of *Philopoemen*, to show how the *Life* is written so as to represent its hero's career as circumscribed by Greek weakness and Roman power.

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[9] Ibid.

The Inspiration for the Pairing

Titus Flamininus, a Roman consul and censor, is at home among the other heroes of the *Parallel Lives*, if only for his liberation of the Greek cities, an accomplishment that became a central theme in his *Life* and would still have resonated in Plutarch's day.[10] Plutarch writes in the book's syncrisis that freedom was an incomparable gift, one that neither Philopoemen nor even "better Greek men than he was" could rival (*Comp. Phil.-Flam.* 1.1-3). So how did Philopoemen, a general of the Achaean League who fought "small border wars" (*Flam.* 13.3; cf. *Phil.* 15.1-2) and whom one historian has called "a bit player",[11] earn his place alongside such a champion? Geiger has suggested that Plutarch selected Philopoemen as a match for Flamininus while reading Polybius.[12] Philopoemen may have caught Plutarch's eye because of the favourable treatment he received in Polybius's works. Polybius's lost encomium of the Achaean general would have presented Philopoemen in the best light and was likely known to Plutarch;[13] and in the *Histories*, Polybius describes Philopoemen's deeds and character in highly favourable terms.[14] Thus, Polybius's Philopoemen may simply have presented himself as a worthy biographical subject. Frazier suggests more specifically that the theme of liberty prompted the pairing, with Philopoemen freeing Achaeans from Spartan and Macedonian influence, and even holding off Rome's domination, and Flamininus delivering a more general freedom to all Greeks.[15] Walsh, conversely, interprets *Philopoemen* as a negative *Life* and, focusing on the laudable qualities prominent in the Roman hero, suggests that Plutarch selected Philopoemen as a foil to Flamininus.[16]

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[10] On the personal qualities of Flamininus that would also have attracted Plutarch, see Pelling 1997: 88-90. Flamininus's activity in Greece and the aftermath of his victory over Philip are more complex than Plutarch allows; see Eckstein 2008: 283-302, with further bibliography. But Plutarch seems to have been aware of the reality of Roman intervention even after the declaration of freedom; see the discussion of Swain 1996: 148-150.

[11] Walsh 1992: 222.

[12] Geiger 1981: 90; see also García Moreno 1995: 130; Scuderi 1996: 65-66. In the transition between *Lives*, Plutarch appears to imply that he started with the Greek and then selected the Roman. Geiger is right to suggest that we not read too much into that statement, which serves primarily to introduce the hero of the second *Life*.

[13] Polybius describes the work in the *Histories* as an "encomium that required a summarized and amplified account of [Philopoemen's] deeds" (10.21.8). On its nature, see Farrington 2011; Alexiou 2018. Pelling (1997: 100) suggests that Plutarch, despite the encomium's amplification, could still have used the material judiciously.

[14] See Hau 2016: 38, who records that Polybius praises Philopoemen "in no fewer than four evaluative digressions" (*Histories* 10.21-24, 11.10, 21.32c, 23.12).

[15] Frazier 1987: 70-71; cf. Pelling 1989: 210, and the discussion of Nikolaidis 2005: 300-301.

[16] Walsh 1992: 217-218: "How could he have better demonstrated the destructiveness of Greek contentiousness and anger than by juxtaposing a Greek hero with those characteristics with a Roman of the opposite character when Greece was in decline?" For comment on Walsh's argument, and discussion of negative *Lives* in general, see Duff 1999: 56.

An implicit assumption of this sort of analysis is that Plutarch, since he used Polybius as a source, also turned to him in search of content for the *Parallel Lives* and there "found" Philopoemen or Flamininus, or both.[17] In fact, though Polybius was not one of the canonical historians taught in the schools, Plutarch had almost certainly read the *Histories* well before he began work on his biographical project. His ideas about the Greek and Roman past, moreover, would also have been influenced by other sources, both literary and non-literary.[18] If we grant that he was interested in this pivotal moment in history, then we may suppose that when he came to write about it in the *Parallel Lives*, he started with preconceived ideas of its significance and its framing.[19] These ideas would have affected his selection of the heroes themselves, as well as the book's content, themes, and structure. In what follows I argue that Plutarch had reason to conceive of Philopoemen and Flamininus as a natural and rather obvious pair, perhaps long before he decided to write their *bioi*.

In Polybius, Plutarch would have found the two men's stories already intertwined, and the achievements of the Greek *strategos* evaluated through syncrisis with the Roman consul.[20] A real, historically documented rivalry between the two men appears to have arisen out of the joint Achaean and Roman conflict with Nabis of Sparta. The record of the two men's animosity (which might not have been mutual) goes back to Polybius and appears to have been rooted in the Achaeans' decision not to follow Flamininus's direction.[21] While modern historians rightly seek the political and diplomatic context for this rivalry, Plutarch, in his quest to study character, focused on the personal aspects. These may also have been present in Polybius. Only bits of that narrative have survived, though we can read it indirectly in Livy's account, as well as in Plutarch. This, briefly, is the background. Following Nabis's capture of Messene, Philopoemen, acting as a private citizen, led an army from Megalopolis and freed the city (Poly. *Hist.* 16.13, 16.16-17.7; Plut. *Phil.* 12.4-6). Then he left the Peloponnesus for a second spell in Crete (200-194 BC). In his absence, Flamininus defeated

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[17] See, for example, García Moreno 1995: 130: "Y parece probable que el de Queronea se acercase a la gran obra del megalopolitano para buscar personajes y datos para sus biografías de romanos".

[18] For Plutarch's life of reading, see the discussion of Stadter 2015: 124-125, with further bibliography; on reading Polybius, see Pelling 1979: 74 (= 2002: 1). Stadter observes (2015: 124) that the *Moralia* reveal "a broad and deep acquaintance with Greek historical and antiquarian literature of all periods". Frost (1980: 47-48) describes the various ways that a Greek youth would learn history "long before he looked into his first roll of papyrus".

[19] Plutarch is likely to have composed *Phil.-Flam.* early in the series of *Parallel Lives*, perhaps indicating a special interest in this period of history; on the dating see Jones 1966; Nikolaidis 2005.

[20] Polybius also employs a three-fold syncrisis between Philopoemen, Hannibal, and Scipio Africanus (23.12); see Foulon 1993.

[21] See Errington 1969: 90-115; Gruen 1984: 465; Raeymaekers 1996.

Nabis (195 BC) and negotiated a truce that left him in power (Livy 34.29-40). The seeds of the rivalry were sown when Philopoemen returned to the mainland to find the Achaeans at war again with Sparta (Livy 35.25-30; Plut. *Phil.* 14-15, *Flam.* 13.1-4).[22] He was quickly elected *strategos* of the Achaean League and moved against Nabis before the Romans arrived. After a disastrous attempt to fight a sea battle, Philopoemen attacked by land, and his forces were nearly trapped in mountainous terrain before he cunningly turned the tables and routed Nabis's army. He then followed up this success by killing many of the Spartans as they made their way disorganized back to the city.[23]

Both men, then, had a go at Nabis, and this appears to have led naturally to a contemporaneous comparison between them. Thus, Livy reports that "the Achaeans were judging [Philopoemen] equal to the Roman commander in the glory of his accomplishments, and for what he had done in the war with Sparta, they thought he even surpassed him"[24] (*aequantibus eum gloria rerum Achaeis imperatori Romano, et quod ad Laconum bellum attineret, praeferentibus etiam*, 35.30.13). The scope of the comparison as reported by Livy, and so probably as found in Polybius, might have been limited to the men's actions in the two recent wars with Sparta, or the Achaeans might have been comparing Philopoemen's victory over Nabis with Flamininus's accomplishments in general, including his victory over Philip and declaration of freedom.[25] Plutarch, however, when he reports the praise of Philopoemen, does not say that the Achaeans compared him with Flamininus at all. Instead, he imagines that Flamininus made this connection himself and, further, took insult at the magnitude of his new rival's glory. His response was to transfer their competition to a larger context and invoke his superior accomplishment:

> ἐπὶ τούτοις ἀγαπώμενος καὶ τιμώμενος ἐκπρεπῶς ὑπὸ τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἐν τοῖς θεάτροις, φιλότιμον ὄντα τὸν Τίτον ἡσυχῇ παρελύπει. καὶ γὰρ ὡς Ῥωμαίων ὕπατος ἀνδρὸς Ἀρκάδος ἠξίου θαυμάζεσθαι μᾶλλον ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν, καὶ ταῖς εὐεργεσίαις ὑπερβάλλειν οὐ παρὰ μικρὸν ἡγεῖτο, δι᾽ ἑνὸς κηρύγματος ἐλευθερώσας τὴν Ἑλλάδα πᾶσαν, ὅση Φιλίππῳ καὶ Μακεδόσιν ἐδούλευσεν.

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[22] Here I follow Plutarch, who condenses considerably, since the details are not as important to him as the outcome. On the form of his account and comparison with Livy, see Pelling 1997: 218 n. 290.

[23] In a third conflict with Sparta, after Nabis's death, Philopoemen intervened as a private citizen to resolve the dispute and pre-empted Flamininus's attack on the city (*Phil.* 16.1-3).

[24] All translations are my own, unless otherwise indicated.

[25] The former seems more likely to me; Briscoe 1981: 189 assumes the latter.

> As a result of his victory, Philopoemen was beloved and prominently honoured by the Greeks in their theatres, which secretly annoyed Flamininus because of his love of honour. For as a Roman consul, he believed that he should be admired more by the Achaeans than a man from Arcadia, and he believed that he had in no small way outdone Philopoemen in his benefactions, since through a single proclamation he had freed all parts of Greece that had been enslaved to Philip and the Macedonians (*Phil*. 15.1-2; cf. *Flam.* 13.1-3).

Plutarch is demonstrating the Roman's φιλοτιμία, one of his defining characteristics, but to do so, he must emphasise Flamininus's annoyance at the attention paid to Philopoemen. This, too, he may have gleaned from his source. Though not overtly reported in Livy, there must have been hard feelings between the men, since later, as Errington shows, the Aetolians will attempt to exploit their mutual animosity to disrupt cooperation between the Achaeans and Romans.[26] Though Livy does not connect this animosity to a rivalry, Polybius might have done so, or Plutarch might have read a personal rivalry into the political circumstances. Either way, there was a ready-made pairing to be found in Polybius's reporting of contemporary syncrisis between Philopoemen and Flamininus.[27]

But the influence on Plutarch's choice was likely more than literary. His conception of this period of history would have been reinforced and expanded through a lifetime of intellectual activity, including the observation of the monuments he encountered at Delphi, where the rivalry of Philopoemen and Flamininus was still being played out in his own day. Delphi was Plutarch's "second home"[28] and was filled with dedications that recalled the Greek past. We know from Plutarch's own testimony that these dedications were a major attraction, and that the narratives behind the objects were retold during both private and professional tours of the sanctuary.[29] That Philopoemen was represented among them is clear from the *Life*. Plutarch cites a statue commemorating his slaying of Machanidas, which portrays him in the very act (τοῦτ᾽ ἔχων τὸ σχῆμα, *Phil.* 10.13), and he claims that the Achaean was not as homely as some think, "for we see the likeness of him that still remains at Delphi" (εἰκόνα γὰρ αὐτοῦ διαμένουσαν ἐν Δελφοῖς ὁρῶμεν, *Phil.* 2.1).[30] I do not want to read too much into Plutarch's grammar; however, the present tense of ὁρῶμεν suggests to me an active appreciation of the visual evidence.

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[26] Errington 1969: 99, citing Livy 35.47.4.

[27] Justin's epitome of Pompeius Trogus, also relies on syncrisis: "He displayed such great excellence in that war [against Nabis] that everyone thought he was the equal of Flamininus, the Roman commander" (*cuius in eo bello tanta virtus enituit, ut opinione omnium Flaminino, Romano imperatori, conpararetur*, 31.3.4). Yardley 2018: 87 n. 108, in the Loeb translation of Livy, takes *conpararetur* to mean that Philopoemen "merited comparison" with Flamininus and sees Plutarch as taking up the challenge. Pausanias, conversely, says simply that Philopoemen "was elevated to even greater glory among the Greeks" (δόξης ἔτι ἐς πλέον παρὰ τοῖς Ἕλλησιν ἤρθη, 8.50.9) but makes no mention of a comparison to Flamininus.

[28] Stadter 2004: 19 (= 2015: 70).

[29] See *Oracles at Delphi no longer given in Verse* 394d, 395a, with Buckler 1992: 4808-4814; M. Dillon 1997: 81-82.

These visual reminders of the Greek past, moreover, were also in dialogue with the Roman present. "With the conquest of Greece," Stadter explains, "the sanctuary of Delphi became a display site for Roman power rather than a source of wisdom".[31] In this respect, Flamininus was typical of his class, and Plutarch also knew and cited the visual evidence that he had put on display.

> καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ μέγιστον ἐφρόνησεν ἐπὶ τῇ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐλευθερώσει. ἀνατιθεὶς γὰρ εἰς Δελφοὺς ἀσπίδας ἀργυρᾶς καὶ τὸν ἑαυτοῦ θυρεόν, ἐπέγραψε … . ἀνέθηκε δὲ καὶ χρυσοῦν τῷ Ἀπόλλωνι στέφανον, ἐπιγράψας … .
>
> But he himself took greatest pride in the freedom he bestowed on Greece. For he dedicated at Delphi silver shields and his own *scutum*, with the inscription, … . And he also dedicated a golden crown to Apollo, with this inscription … . (*Flam.* 12.11–12).

These dedications get to the heart of the matter. Flamininus was proudest of, and wished to be remembered for, his great benefaction to the Greeks. I have elided the inscriptions to emphasise this point, but the first is significant for this discussion, since it might be interpreted as showing the Roman consul nursing a grudge against the exalted Achaean, and so prolonging their rivalry into Plutarch's own time:

> Ζηνὸς ἰὼ κραιπναῖσι γεγαθότες ἱπποσύναισι
>   κοῦροι, ἰὼ Σπάρτας Τυνδαρίδαι βασιλεῖς,
> Αἰνεάδας Τίτος ὔμμιν ὑπέρτατον ὤπασε δῶρον,
>   Ἑλλάνων τεύξας παισὶν ἐλευθερίαν.

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[30] Pausanias, who could have seen the same statue but does not mention it in his account of Delphi, repeats the common opinion about Philopoemen's appearance that Plutarch sought to correct: τὸ δὲ εἶδος ἦν τοῦ προσώπου κακός (8.49.3).
[31] Stadter 2005: 206 (= 2015: 90).

> Io, you young men, sons of Zeus, who rejoice in the swift-running horses; io, you descendants of Tyndareus, kings of Sparta: Titus, a descendant of Aeneas, granted you the finest gift when he brought about freedom for the children of the Greeks (*Flam*. 12.11).

The young men invoked here are the Dioscuri, who represent the mythical royal line at Sparta. Flamininus is claiming descent from Aeneas, a hero of the same generation as the Dioscuri. Thus, this dedication elevates the Roman's ancestry and demonstrates Sparta's obligation to him as grantor of "the finest gift."[32]

Flamininus's aim in addressing Sparta is obscured because we do not know when or why he made this dedication.[33] But Plutarch might not have known that detail either. Reading the inscription centuries later, therefore, with Polybius's syncrisis in the back of his mind, or perhaps picking up Polybius second after having read this inscription as a boy or young man, Plutarch could have formed an early impression of Flamininus as a man who jealously protected his legacy, with glory in the conflict with Sparta having been an especially prickly subject. Plutarch, in fact, conflates the two wars against Nabis into one in *Flamininus* (13), thus demonstrating his interest in the conflict primarily as a flashpoint for his heroes' rivalry.[34] Moreover, an inscription read by Pausanias at Tegea can give us a sense of what, in Plutarch's mind at least, provoked this jealous response. The Tegeans honoured Philopoemen with a statue in their theatre, the place where Plutarch reports honours being dedicated to him by various Greek cities. This dedication may or may not have been part of that movement, but the inscription attached to its base nonetheless communicates a message that would have annoyed the honour-loving Roman. The first lines extol Philopoemen's virtue and glory and commend his accomplishments in war before concluding with these couplets:

> μανύει δὲ τρόπαια τετυγμένα δισσὰ τυράννων
>   Σπάρτας· αὐξομέναν δ᾽ ἄρατο δουλοσύναν.
> ὧν ἕνεκεν Τεγέα μεγαλόφρονα Κραύγιδος υἱόν
>   στᾶσεν, ἀμωμήτου κράντορ᾽ ἐλευθερίας.

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[32] Erskine (2001: 41-42) raises the possibility that Flamininus dedicated his shield but did not write the inscription. He does not doubt, however, that Plutarch believed he was reading Flamininus's words.

[33] See Pelling 1997: 386 n. 123.

[34] Gruen (1984: 465 n. 161) characterises Plutarch's account of the wars as "demonstrably inaccurate" and speaks of confusion rather than conflation.

> A pair of trophies for his victories over Spartan tyrants make known [his accomplishments], for he checked the Spartans' expansion of enslavement. On this account Tegea has set here the magnanimous son of Craugis, the creator of unblemished freedom. (8.52.6)

The trophies commemorate victory over Machanidas and Nabis, and so "freedom" here is obviously freedom from Spartan domination. It is, therefore, local in scope and ripe for disparaging from a wider perspective. If this sort of praise was reaching Flamininus's ear, the subtext of his inscription at Delphi becomes clear: "I gave you real freedom." Plutarch communicates just this message on Flamininus's behalf in *Philopoemen*, in the passage that I quoted above about the aftermath of the wars with Nabis. There Plutarch is clearly referencing the proclamation at the Isthmus, making Flamininus invoke his universal benefaction to counter Philopoemen's local glory. In the briefer account found in *Flamininus*, Plutarch is more general, claiming only that Flamininus was jealous because he, "a Roman consul fighting on behalf of Greece" (Ῥωμαίων ὑπάτῳ προπολεμοῦντι τῆς Ἑλλάδος), was made the equal of a man who "held command in small border wars" (μικρῶν καὶ ὁμόρων πολέμων στρατηγόν, *Flam*. 13.3). In both passages, however, the rivalry with Philopoemen is central, and the message in Plutarch is consistent with the inscription from Delphi: Flamininus was a true benefactor, and the Greeks should not forget that. As with Philopoemen's statue, the evidence of the dedications is suggestive but not conclusive. I propose, however, that as Plutarch walked through Delphi, perhaps giving a tour to visiting friends and explaining the sights, the claims to greatness of both Philopoemen and Flamininus would have been revived, and thus their rivalry perpetuated.

The Conception of the Lives

We must be aware, however, that Plutarch, did not see the two men's claims as equal. There is an outright rejection of equality in the opening sentences of the syncritic epilogue, which I referred to above but quote in full here:

> μεγέθει μὲν οὖν τῶν εἰς τοὺς Ἕλληνας εὐεργεσιῶν οὔτε Φιλοποίμενα Τίτῳ παραβάλλειν οὔτε πάνυ πολλοὺς τῶν Φιλοποίμενος ἀμεινόνων ἀνδρῶν ἄξιόν ἐστι· τοῖς μὲν γὰρ Ἕλλησι πρὸς Ἕλληνας οἱ πόλεμοι, τῷ δ᾽ οὐχ Ἕλληνι καὶ ὑπὲρ Ἑλλήνων· καὶ ὅτε Φιλοποίμην ἀμηχανῶν τοῖς ἑαυτοῦ πολίταις ἀμύνειν

> πολεμουμένοις εἰς Κρήτην ἀπῆρε, τότε νικήσας Τίτος ἐν μέσῃ τῇ Ἑλλάδι Φίλιππον, ἠλευθέρου καὶ τὰ ἔθνη καὶ <τὰς> πόλεις ἁπάσας.
>
> In the magnitude of their benefactions to the Greeks, neither Philopoemen nor the multitude of better men can worthily be compared to Titus. For they made war against Greeks, while he, though not a Greek, fought on behalf of Greeks. And when Philopoemen had gone off to Crete and could not defend his fellow citizens when they were under attack, then Titus defeated Philip in the very heart of Greece and set free all its people and cities (*Comp. Phil.-Flam.* 1.1-2).

Plutarch will in fact find bases on which to compare the two men, and he manages to end the formal syncrisis by claiming that the difference between them is "difficult to see" (δυσθεώρητος, 3.5). But this is only after setting aside Flamininus's great achievement.[35] Moreover, although Plutarch leads into this discussion by citing the magnitude of that achievement, he quickly clarifies that its greatness also depends on whom these generals were fighting. Philopoemen could not have equalled Flamininus because he waged his wars against his fellow Greeks rather than in defence of them; moreover, he was not even available to defend Megalopolis while Flamininus was securing victory over Philip.

This is Philopoemen's defect, but also Plutarch's basis for seeing him as a metaphor. The point made in the syncrisis comes directly from the *Lives*, where Plutarch generalizes the Arcadian's deficiency by ascribing it to Greece as a whole. This occurs after Flamininus's declaration of liberty for the Greek cities, which meant freedom from both Macedonian domination and direct Roman control. The declaration (*Flam.* 10) inspires great celebration (*Flam.* 11), in the midst of which the Greeks turn to "reasoning and conversing about Greece herself" (ἐπῄει λογίζεσθαι καὶ διαλέγεσθαι περὶ τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 11.3). Greece is personified as long-suffering and ineffective: "Though she had fought so many wars on account of freedom," Plutarch makes the Greeks observe, "she had not ever obtained a freedom more stable or pleasing than this one, for which outsiders led the struggle while she herself, essentially without blood or grief, carried off the most beautiful and fought-over prize" (ὅσους πολεμήσασα πολέμους διὰ τὴν ἐλευθερίαν, οὔπω τύχοι βεβαιότερον οὐδ᾽ ἥδιον αὐτῆς, ἑτέρων προαγωνισαμένων ὀλίγου δεῖν ἀναίμακτος αὐτὴ καὶ ἀπενθὴς φερομένη τὸ κάλλιστον καὶ περιμαχητότατον ἆθλον, 11.3). The Greeks go on to consider how the most famous leaders of their joint history—men such as Agesilaus, Lysander, Nicias, Alcibiades—had won many wars but had not known how to use their victories "to grant a noble favour or bring about what is truly good" (πρὸς χάριν εὐγενῆ καὶ τὸ καλόν, 11.5). With only a few exceptions, "Greece has fought every battle against herself for her own enslavement, and each trophy marks her misfortune and stands as a reproach, for she was toppled by the depravity and contentiousness of her leaders" (πάσας τὰς μάχας ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἐπὶ δουλείᾳ μεμάχηται πρὸς αὐτήν, καὶ πᾶν τρόπαιον αὐτῆς συμφορὰ καὶ ὄνειδος ἕστηκε, τὰ πλεῖστα κακίᾳ καὶ φιλονικίᾳ τῶν ἡγουμένων περιτραπείσης, 11.6). How strange, then, that outsiders, with hardly any share of the Greeks' "ancient ancestry" (παλαιοῦ γένους, 11.7) would be the ones to bring real freedom.

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[35] Cf. Isocrates' syncrisis of Evagoras and Cyrus the Great, in which Evagoras can be superior "if anybody should wish to judge not the magnitude of the outcomes but the virtue of each man" (εἴ τινες βούλοιντο μὴ τὸ μέγεθος τῶν συμβάντων ἀλλὰ τὴν ἀρετὴν τὴν ἑκατέρου κρίνειν, *Evag.* 38).

Though the Greeks are made to contemplate the significance of Flamininus's declaration in both Polybius (18.44-46) and Livy (33.5-7), in neither instance do they reflect upon the Greek heroes of the past.[36] The reasoning expressed in *Flamininus*, then, almost certainly reflects Plutarch's own.[37] We can, moreover, detect the same reasoning in some of his other writings. We find it expressed briefly in *Agesilaus*, when Plutarch bemoans the Spartan general's recall from Asia, which left the conquest of Persia for Alexander to accomplish. Agesilaus's generation, he asserts, "squandered the contemporary generals of the Greeks on Leuctra, Coronea, Corinth, and Arcadia" (τότε τοὺς τῶν Ἑλλήνων στρατηγοὺς περὶ Λεῦκτρα καὶ Κορώνειαν καὶ Κόρινθον καὶ Ἀρκαδίαν κατανήλωσαν, *Ages*. 15.3). We find it also in *Pericles*, in the words of Cimon's sister Elpinice, who accosts Pericles after his victory over Samos. She charges that he has "wasted many of our brave citizens, not while making war against Phoenicians or Medes, as my brother Cimon did, but while overthrowing an allied and kindred city" (ἡμῖν πολλοὺς καὶ ἀγαθοὺς ἀπώλεσας πολίτας, οὐ Φοίνιξι πολεμῶν οὐδὲ Μήδοις, ὥσπερ οὑμὸς ἀδελφὸς Κίμων, ἀλλὰ σύμμαχον καὶ συγγενῆ πόλιν καταστρεφόμενος, 28.6).[38] Making war against the Persian empire rather than Greek cities, in fact, appears to be a litmus test for good versus bad conduct. And so, in the reflection following Flamininus's proclamation, the Greeks decide that only the land battles at

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[36] See Pelling 1989: 210: "Polybius and Livy concentrate on the Romans—their greatness of spirit, their clemency, their altruism". Pausanias (8.52), writing after Plutarch, includes a critical digression on intra-Greek warfare, but speaks in his own voice.

[37] On Plutarch expressing his own judgement through the words or thoughts of onlookers, see Duff 1999: 55, 120.

[38] According to Stadter (1989: 261), Plutarch's source for Elpinice's confrontation of Pericles is unknown. Perhaps Plutarch gave her the words that he thought she should use, or he recalled this anecdote from a source now lost because it matched his own outlook.

Marathon, Plataea, and Thermopylae, the sea battle off Salamis, and Cimon's successes at the Eurymedon and around Cyprus were victories worth celebrating (*Flam.* 11.6).

We find similar criticism in Plutarch's dialogue *Oracles at Delphi no longer given in Verse* (401a–d), in a discussion that occurs amidst one of those famous tours of the monuments at Delphi. When some members of the party condemn the golden statue of the courtesan Phryne, agreeing with Crates who had called it a "trophy to the licentiousness of the Greeks" (τῆς τῶν Ἑλλήνων ἀκρασίας τρόπαιον), another member, Theon, draws a moral equivalence between the courtesan and the more distinguished generals also represented among the dedications. It is wrong to criticise Phryne, Theon counters, when his interlocutors have no problem "looking upon the god surrounded by offerings and tithes that come from murders, wars, and acts of plundering, and seeing the temple filled with spoils and booty taken from Greeks" (φόνων δὲ καὶ πολέμων καὶ λεηλασιῶν ἀπαρχαῖς καὶ δεκάταις κύκλῳ περιεχόμενον τὸν θεὸν ὁρῶν καὶ τὸν νεὼν σκύλων Ἑλληνικῶν ἀνάπλεων καὶ λαφύρων). Theon believes they should instead feel pity for the Greeks when they read "the most shameful inscriptions on the beautiful monuments" (ἐπὶ τῶν καλῶν ἀναθημάτων αἰσχίστας ἀναγιγνώσκων ἐπιγραφάς). These inscriptions, which Theon appears to be reading as he cites them, all boast of victories won by Greeks over Greeks: "Brasidas and the Acanthians from the Athenians," "The Athenians from the Corinthians," and so on.

Theon, then, adduces the same interpretive framing that was imputed to the Greeks present at the Isthmian games in *Flamininus*. He will go on to express his preference for the present moment in history based largely on the absence of the sorts of evils that sprang from regular intra-Greek conflict:

> τὰ δὲ νῦν πράγματα καθεστῶτα, … ἀγαπῶ μὲν ἔγωγε καὶ ἀσπάζομαι· πολλὴ γὰρ εἰρήνη καὶ ἡσυχία, πέπαυται δὲ πόλεμος, καὶ πλάναι καὶ στάσεις οὐκ εἰσὶν οὐδὲ τυραννίδες, οὐδ᾽ ἄλλα νοσήματα καὶ κακὰ τῆς Ἑλλάδος ὥσπερ πολυφαρμάκων δυνάμεων χρῄζοντα καὶ περιττῶν.
>
> As for the conditions that prevail now, … I myself am happy with them, and I welcome them. For there is widespread peace and calm, and war has ceased; there are no migrations, civil disturbances, or tyrannies; and Greece no longer suffers diseases and troubles that require complex and extreme treatments (*De Pyth. or.* 408b).

Theon's argument is connected to the central question of this dialogue, which is why the Pythia no longer responds in verse. The answer in brief is that better, more peaceful times allow for simpler answers.[39] If we accept the usual dating of *Oracles at Delphi no longer given in Verse* and *Philopoemen-Flamininus*, both works were written after 95 CE and so belong to the same stage of Plutarch's life, his mature years when he launched his biographical project. Both works express a similar view of Greek history, which includes an acceptance of — even a preference for — the Roman period and a resistance to the over-glorification of the Classical past. This view, then, was larger than *Philopoemen-Flamininus*, and I suggest that the pair was subsumed within it. Philopoemen did indeed fight for freedom, but his ambitions were constrained by his limited view of what was possible. He imagined freedom from the tyrants of Sparta and, his biggest aspiration, from the dominance of the Macedonian king. But he was fighting for Achaea against other Greeks. From the perspective of the early empire, this narrow conception of freedom becomes not only provincial, but even worthy of reproach. And Plutarch delivers this reproach in the words of the Greeks themselves at *Flam.* 11.

The Structure of *Philopoemen*

In this final section, I will show that even as Plutarch sets Philopoemen's accomplishments in a positive light, he nonetheless conveys his assessment of their inferiority through the structure of the *Life* and the form of his narrative. He disagrees, I suggest, with the Achaeans' view that Philopoemen had surpassed Flamininus, mainly because, perhaps like Flamininus himself, Plutarch cannot ignore the larger context in his comparison of the two men.

Philopoemen-Flamininus lacks a prologue to justify its contents, and the reader is not formally alerted to the pairing until the first sentence of the second *Life*.[40] The absence of a formal prologue is of course not unique to this book.[41] In this instance, however, Plutarch's silence about the pairing is surely deliberate, since Flamininus appears as early as the proemial opening to *Philopoemen* (2.5) and in several other chapters. Plutarch could easily have identified him as the subject of the second *Life* during the narration of the first. In fact, withholding this information allows Plutarch to treat this exceptional pairing as ordinary, as though the second *Life* were, historically speaking, entirely separate from the first. This distancing, in turn, allows for the development of syncrisis between the *Lives*. Even so, Plutarch could hardly have expected his readers to be uninformed about the pairing, either from the title (if one was present), through informal communication ("Here's my book about Philopoemen and Flamininus"), or by reading the book more than once.[42] And so in the proemial opening to the first *Life*, he includes allusions to the second *Life* that colour our interpretation of the first, playing off his own and his reader's knowledge of events. In this way, he begins to build towards the climactic moment in *Flam.* 11, where he challenges the glory of Philopoemen's achievement and elevates that of Flamininus. Thus, he lays the foundation for the integration of the two *Lives* into a unitary study of this moment in history.

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[39] See J. Dillon 1997; Whitmarsh 2001: 27 n. 123; Kim 2017, who discuss the complexities of this argument.

[40] "That is the story of Philopoemen. The person that I have set parallel to him, Titus Quintius Flamininus …" (ταῦτα περὶ Φιλοποίμενος. ὃν δὲ παραβάλλομεν αὐτῷ, Τίτος Κοΐντιος Φλαμινῖνος, *Phil.* 21.12–*Flam.* 1.1). As does Polybius, Plutarch writes "Quintius" for "Quinctius".

[41] At least seven other books lack a formal prologue; see further Duff 2014.

Plutarch commences *Philopoemen* with a description of how friends of the hero's father took responsibility for his son's education after his death, concluding with the observation that the tutors took great pride in what they had done, not just for Philopoemen but for all Greece. Though he begins by discussing the boy's childhood in Megalopolis, Plutarch swiftly widens his scope to include Greece as a whole, and thus, from the very start, sets Philopoemen's life into a larger context. This larger context, of course, allows Plutarch to compare a man from a relatively small Greek city with his Roman counterpart and so is essential to the pairing. But Plutarch also alludes to an even broader context:

> αὐτοί γε μὴν ἐν τοῖς ἄλλοις ἔργοις καὶ τὴν Φιλοποίμενος ἐποιοῦντο παίδευσιν, ὡς κοινὸν ὄφελος τῇ Ἑλλάδι τὸν ἄνδρα τοῦτον ὑπὸ φιλοσοφίας ἀπεργασάμενοι. καὶ γὰρ ὥσπερ ὀψίγονον ἐν γήρᾳ ταῖς τῶν παλαιῶν ἡγεμόνων ἐπιτεκοῦσα τοῦτον ἀρεταῖς ἡ Ἑλλὰς ἠγάπησε διαφερόντως καὶ συνηύξησε τῇ δόξῃ τὴν δύναμιν. Ῥωμαίων δέ τις ἐπαινῶν ἔσχατον αὐτὸν Ἑλλήνων προσεῖπεν, ὡς οὐδένα μέγαν μετὰ τοῦτον ἔτι τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἄνδρα γειναμένης οὐδ᾽ αὐτῆς ἄξιον.
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> These men indeed counted the education of Philopoemen as one of their accomplishments, believing that they had turned the man into a common benefit

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[42] We do not know if the original book began with a title that declared its contents; see Duff 2011: 264 n. 232.

> to Greece through their philosophical training. For as though she had given birth to him in old age, a late-born child and successor to the virtues of the ancient leaders, Greece adored him especially and increased his power in proportion to his reputation. And a certain Roman praised him by calling him "the last of the Greeks" because after him Greece bore no other man who was great or worthy of her (*Phil.* 1.5–7).

In addition to widening the narrative scope of the first *Life*, Plutarch appears also to have in mind the crowning achievement of the second when he introduces the unnamed Roman to declare that Philopoemen marks the last great child born to Mother Greece. Philopoemen was indeed the last, but it was not a question of desire or fertility. The Romans, with their defeat of Macedon and dominating presence, make themselves the next generation of great leaders in Greece, and fittingly one of them declared (προσεῖπεν) that the last of the Greeks had come and gone, just as a Roman herald declared (ἀνεῖπεν) freedom at the Isthmian games (in *Flam.* 11). Plutarch's own *Parallel Lives* confirm the anonymous Roman's conclusion: no book features a Greek hero who lived later than Philopoemen.

Moreover, Plutarch proceeds from this opening to a physical description, a common element in his proemial openings but put to special use here. Following discussion of Plutarch's own opinion (based on the statue at Delphi mentioned above) and an anecdote about Philopoemen's reputation for being ugly, yet another Roman is given the final word. In this instance, none other than Flamininus concludes the section. Commenting ostensibly on Philopoemen's slender waist, he says: "You have such fine arms and legs, Philopoemen, but you have no stomach" (ὦ Φιλοποίμην, ὡς καλὰς χεῖρας ἔχεις καὶ σκέλη· γαστέρα δ᾽ οὐκ ἔχεις, 2.5). Plutarch explains that Philopoemen's army, though powerful, often lacked funding, which is the deeper meaning of this remark.[43] And so twice in the proemial opening, two Romans, one of them the subject of the second *Life*, are introduced to pronounce a verdict on Philopoemen. Even without knowing the subject of the second *Life*, readers can surely detect the strong Roman presence in the opening of the first. Plutarch, then, over the course of a dozen or so sentences, has drastically widened the scope of this *Life*, to take in first Megalopolis, then all of Greece, and finally Greece under the sway of

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[43] The anecdote also appears in *Reg. et imp. apophth.* 197c–d.

Rome. These are the three contexts in which we are to understand Philopoemen's life, and the presence of the third prevents us from thinking too highly of his provincial success.

After the proemial opening, Philopoemen operates primarily in that middle, Greek context, rising to power in the Achaean league and achieving military success in Crete and against Sparta. Plutarch, after reminding us of Rome's looming presence, keeps it at bay until the *Life's* first climactic moment, the celebration of Philopoemen's victory over Machanidas. Read in the Greek context, this is a great and joyous moment, but themes established in the proemial opening recur here, encouraging a consideration of the larger, Roman context and casting a shadow over the celebration. The scene is set when, after defeating the tyrant (10), Philopoemen brings his army to the festival at Nemea (11). This is, significantly, a Panhellenic festival, and Plutarch mentions Greece and the Greeks repeatedly to ensure that the reader understands the scope of the celebration. Here Philopoemen displays his troops to the assembled spectators and puts them through their manoeuvres. Then he brings his young soldiers, dressed in their military finery, into the theatre, and it just so happens (κατὰ τύχην) that as he enters, a kitharode is singing this verse: "[He], fashioning for Greece the widely renowned ornament of freedom" (κλεινὸν ἐλευθερίας τεύχων μέγαν Ἑλλάδι κόσμον, 11.3). All eyes turn toward Philopoemen and the crowd erupts in applause to express its joy, "since in their hopes the Greeks were recovering their ancient worthiness, and in their courage, they were coming very close to the high spirit of those times" (τῶν Ἑλλήνων τὸ παλαιὸν ἀξίωμα ταῖς ἐλπίσιν ἀναλαμβανόντων καὶ τοῦ τότε φρονήματος ἔγγιστα τῷ θαρρεῖν γινομένων, 11.4). This appearance at Nemea seems to fulfil, and even to extend, the promise of the proemial opening: the "ancient worthiness" and "high spirit of those [ancient] times" echo the proem's "virtues of the ancient leaders" and its claim that Philopoemen was "worthy" of Greece.

But there is more here, for hanging over this scene is the kitharode's statement about freedom for the Greeks, something not mentioned in the proem. In this context freedom can be of two types. First, as the Achaean league was expanding, several cities were freed from rule by tyrants and became members of the league (8.1–3), and indeed the victory over the tyrant Machanidas immediately precedes the display at Nemea.[44] Second, there is the anticipation that Greek cities will be rid of Macedonian interference, for one of Philopoemen's accomplishments was to make the Achaeans strong enough not to require

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[44] Cf. Pelling 1997: 208 n. 255. Though the battle and the festival are consecutive in the narrative, as a matter of history they occurred two years apart.

Macedonian military support (8.4-7). And in the chapter that immediately follows, Philip attempts to assassinate Philopoemen precisely because the Macedonian king wants to return the Achaeans to their subservient position (12.1-2).[45] The threat to Philopoemen is reported as a threat to all, since once Philip's intrigue became known, it "made him thoroughly hated and discredited among the Greeks" (παντάπασιν ἐξεμισήθη καὶ διεβλήθη πρὸς τοὺς Ἕλληνας). The spectacle at Nemea, then, causes the assembled Greeks to recall a time before the Macedonian kings came to dominate the independent Greek cities, and to nurture hopes of that time returning.

This puts Philopoemen in an excellent light in the context of Greek affairs, but the larger, Roman context makes the situation more complex. In *Flamininus*, the Greeks themselves will be made to realize that a victory over Sparta is really a misfortune and a reproach. But even in this *Life*, the defeat of Machanidas is not the end of the story, for the wars with Nabis are still to come. The even greater glory that Philopoemen wins there will nonetheless be undermined when Flamininus is made to trump the Achaean's success by invoking his greater benefaction. The hope for freedom from Macedon will in fact be realized, but not by Philopoemen. He was indeed successful in reforming the Achaean cavalry and infantry (7-9), but Philip will be removed as a threat by Flamininus at Cynoscephalae. And the reader does not have to wait until the second *Life* to understand this. Certainly, the history of this period was known to Plutarch's readers, just as I have argued it was well known to Plutarch himself. He makes this clear a few chapters later, when he reports without elaboration that Philopoemen returned from his second stint in Crete and "found that Titus had subdued Philip and that the Achaeans and Romans were making war against Nabis" (εὗρε τὸν μὲν Φίλιππον ὑπὸ τοῦ Τίτου καταπεπολεμημένον, τὸν δὲ Νάβιν ὑπὸ τῶν Ἀχαιῶν καὶ τῶν Ῥωμαίων πολεμούμενον, 14.1). Philopoemen shines in the Greek context, but the Roman context cannot be kept at bay for very long.

In the latter part of the *Life*, the inevitability of Roman domination becomes thematic. Despite the declaration at the Isthmus, the Greeks in fact were not allowed as much independence as Flamininus seemed to have promised. Plutarch devotes a chapter (*Phil.* 17) to Philopoemen's disposition, which was always opposed to the powers that sought to deprive the Achaeans of their freedom (οὕτως εἶχέ τι πρὸς τὰς ἐξουσίας ὑπὸ φρονήματος δύσερι καὶ φιλόνικον). Though he could bow to necessity and yield to the reality of the times

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[45] Cf. Errington 1969: 76: "The popular encouragement shown by this ostentatiously patriotic reception could only serve to confirm Philopoemen in his claim to Achaean independence from Macedonian hegemony".

(τὰ μὲν ἐνδιδόναι καὶ παρείκειν ἠναγκάζετο τοῖς καιροῖς), he nonetheless continued to oppose Rome's encroachment into Greek affairs. But Plutarch makes Philopoemen himself acknowledge the futility of this struggle. When one of his fellow citizens was holding office and urging compliance with the Romans, Philopoemen cried out in angry exasperation: "Why, man, are you so eager to see the fulfilment of Greece's fate?" ("ὦ ἄνθρωπε, τί σπεύδεις τὴν πεπρωμένην τῆς Ἑλλάδος ἐπιδεῖν;"). Philopoemen was indeed a local hero, but his attitude and actions were nonetheless impeding the better reality that Plutarch knew was coming.

The multi-layered context laid out in the proemial opening is in fact so significant to this *Life* that Plutarch returns to it in the conclusion. In the penultimate chapter (20), Plutarch describes Philopoemen's death in Messenia (ca. 182 BC); and in the final chapter, he reports that Philopoemen's remains were ceremoniously returned to Megalopolis and buried there (21.1-9). Then he flashes forward to the fall of Corinth (in 146 BC) to report that Greek cities in the meantime had voted to erect many statues and honours to Philopoemen, and that stirred a debate. An unnamed Roman undertook to have the memorials removed, on the ground that during his lifetime, Philopoemen had been an enemy of Rome (21.10). There was discussion (in which Polybius spoke in Philopoemen's defence), followed by a decision:

> οὔθ᾽ ὁ Μόμμιος οὔθ᾽ οἱ πρέσβεις ὑπέμειναν ἀνδρὸς ἐνδόξου τιμὰς ἀφανίσαι, καίπερ οὐκ ὀλίγα τοῖς περὶ Τίτον καὶ Μάνιον ἐναντιωθέντος, ἀλλὰ τῆς χρείας τὴν ἀρετὴν ἐκεῖνοι καὶ τὸ καλὸν ὡς ἔοικε τοῦ λυσιτελοῦς διώριζον, ὀρθῶς καὶ προσηκόντως τοῖς μὲν ὠφελοῦσι μισθὸν καὶ χάριν παρὰ τῶν εὖ παθόντων, τοῖς δ᾽ ἀγαθοῖς τιμὴν ὀφείλεσθαι παρὰ τῶν ἀγαθῶν ἀεὶ νομίζοντες.
>
> Neither Mummius nor the representatives of Rome would abide the removal of honours paid to such a glorious man, even though he had offered stiff opposition to Titus [Flamininus] and Manius [Glabrio]. But as it seems, they distinguished virtue from necessity, and what is noble from what is advantageous, believing rightly and appropriately that those who receive a benefit owe payment and gratitude to those who provide it, while good people always owe honour to those who are good (*Phil.* 21.11-12).

In the closing sentences of the *Life*, Plutarch reiterates the levels of context in which we must interpret Philopoemen's career, in the same order as they appear in the opening. Starting with the burial in Megalopolis, he widens the scope to include all of Greece (or at least Achaea) by reference to the memorials erected by the cities. But once again the Greek context is eclipsed by an enveloping Roman one when another anonymous Roman (Ῥωμαῖος ἀνήρ, 21.10; cf. Ῥωμαίων τις, 1.7) articulates his assessment of Philopoemen. Though negative and ultimately rejected, it has the same effect as the more positive "last of the Greeks" in that it gives the Romans final say. A Greek, Polybius, argues the case, but it is Mummius and his fellow Romans who decide that memorials to Philopoemen may remain. And significant as well, Plutarch mentions Flamininus by name, just as he did in the opening. The *Life* of Philopoemen is quite literally circumscribed by Flamininus and Rome.

This circumscription is, I believe, a product of Plutarch's general view of the arc of history. He certainly valued the Greek past, as evidenced by the *Parallel Lives* themselves. Though faulting the greatest heroes for their myopia in *Flamininus*, he could also find plenty to admire as he wrote their biographies. Similarly, he recognized the distinctiveness of both Philopoemen and Flamininus, evaluating them according to their character as *philonikos* and *philotimos* and in the formal syncrisis judging them to be essentially equal in virtue. But he also understood the present reality of the imperial era and could read Roman intervention into Greece as the start of a new and better age. The title "the last of the Greeks," therefore, is both an honorific and a sigh of relief.

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Chapter 6

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Building Cultural Bridges to Statesmen of the Past: Plutarch's Heroes as Guides to City Leaders

The conduct of political leaders — whether acting as representatives of the Emperor or managing public affairs in Rome or cities in the provinces — is a form of cultural practice when examined from the perspective of Plutarch's political essays in the *Moralia*[1] and his *Lives* of statesmen in the *Parallel Lives*. In both works, Plutarch's guidance on how best to meet the challenges of the public arena was illustrated with the actions, successes, and failures of heroes of the Greek city states and the Roman Republic, statesmen who were thereby transformed into role models for leaders in provincial cities of the Empire. In effect, Plutarch integrated the practice of leadership in the Greek and Roman past with the challenges facing leaders in the Imperial era, when a statesman's role was circumscribed by the Roman overlord and lay primarily in administering internal city affairs, managing relations with other cities and interacting with imperial authorities.[2]

In practical terms, the cultural heritage of the educated elite in Plutarch's day incorporated two key components: the Roman imperial structure and Greek *paideia*.[3] As noted by Wallace-Hadrill, the imperial apparatus provided the avenues for social and political

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[1] The main political essays include *Precepts of Statecraft*; *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs*; *How to Profit by one's Enemies*; *On Praising Oneself Inoffensively*; *On Compliancy*; *To the Uneducated Ruler*; *A Philosopher Ought to Converse Especially with Men in Power*.

[2] See Jones 1940: 172, 247 for common liturgies and administrative positions.

[3] Stadter (2015: 2) describes this environment as a 'middle ground' between distinct identities and total fusion, a milieu in which "the Greek and Roman threads were still distinct but interwoven so as to form one cloth".

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advancement, while Greek *paideia* established one's status as a 'learned man'.[4] Plutarch's political essays and the *Lives* were designed to integrate these two perspectives in narratives that presented the Greek and Roman heroes solving political challenges that paralleled those faced by readers and thereby provided role models for the educated elites now active as city administrators, envoys to other cities on provincial matters, and ambassadors to the Emperor.

In the analysis below, I examine how Plutarch forged inter-cultural connections between present-day political practices and the varied array of individual political constitutions and cultural heritages in the city-states and regions that were now united under the Roman Empire. After briefly reviewing the functions performed and challenges faced by leaders in provincial cities — including those reflected in Dio's *City Speeches* and Pliny's *Letters* — I discuss how Plutarch, in *Precepts of Statecraft* (the most comprehensive of his political essays), employs historical statesmen to illustrate how to deal with such challenges. Then, drawing on *Solon-Publicola*, *Aristides-Cato Maior*, and *Phocion-Cato Minor* (pairs spanning the pre-Imperial period from its earliest to final days) I demonstrate how the *Lives* depict heroes confronting the same problems as Plutarch's contemporaries, including (1) managing relations with the populace to maintain harmony; (2) managing rivalries in one's city and among cities in one's province; and (3) engaging with an over-lord to serve the city's interests. Plutarch's intention to provide paradigms for contemporary leaders is reflected in his careful modifications of the historical record to amplify the parallels between the past and present.[5] In the process, Plutarch creates mirrors that give provincial city leaders a deep sense of cultural continuity and connection with the heroes that populated the cultural and political heritage of the Roman Empire.[6]

Challenges Facing Leaders in Provincial Cities: Insights from Dio and Pliny

Within the limits set by Rome, provincial cities enjoyed some scope for independent action in three areas: administering internal affairs of their cities, working with other cities to expand economic opportunities, and interacting directly with imperial authorities to increase the privileges enjoyed by their city. After meeting Rome's expectations for tax revenues, support for Roman armies, and maintaining public order, provincial cities could largely administer their internal and local affairs without Roman supervision.[7] Within this structure, the educated elite performed a variety of administrative and diplomatic functions, the practical dynamics of which are brought into sharper focus in Dio's *City Orations*[8] and Pliny's *Letters*.[9] Euergetism also played a role, since wealthy citizens were expected to finance major events and projects, as well as to provide funds to deliver the services tied to various public offices.[10]

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[4] Wallace-Hadrill 2008: 3-7.

[5] Pelling (1980) describes a range of modifications of source material commonly found in the *Lives*.

[6] The imagery of mirrors is central to creating cross-cultural ties as readers see themselves in the portrayals of historical heroes. See Stadter 2010, 2015. On the mirror image in Plutarch, see Duff 1999: 32-34; Stadter 2000, 2015; Frazier 2011.

Administering Internal Affairs in Provincial Cities

In administering internal affairs, the primary concerns of city leaders, after tax collection, were the provision of city services, law and order, city finances, and building projects.[11] The highest civic positions were the archonship – generally held for one year – and membership on the city council, charged with selecting city officials and formulating rules and regulations that were ratified by the assembly.[12] Administrative positions paralleled the functions of the aediles, quaestors, praetors, and consuls in Rome, but were unpaid.[13] Key magistracies in the city were those overseeing the market (*agoranomi*) and food supply (*sitonae*), the gymnasium (*gymnasiarch*), and games (*agonothete*), and, as noted above, the magistrate was expected to cover the shortfalls in funds for provisions in his department.[14]

Dio brings these functions into focus in his *City Orations*. In *Oration* 40, for instance, Dio describes the problems he faces in financing and completing a project he had initiated on behalf of Prusa (*Or*. 40.5–7), while in *Oration* 46 he discusses the best way to respond to poor supervision of the market (*Or*. 46.24). Issues concerning employment and prosperity are raised in *Oration* 7 (104–232), where Dio addresses the problems confronting poor people in the city who could find no 'useful' employment (7.124) and states that the study of employment and trades is worthy of careful research (7.127). In a similar vein, *Oration* 35 details the economic benefits flowing from holding assize courts in one's city (35.15). Pliny's *Letters*, in turn, mention a variety of contexts in which cities needed the Emperor's approval on new projects, such as a public bath in Prusa (*Ep.* 10.23.1), a fire department in Nicomedia (10.34), a theater and gymnasium in Nicaea (10.39), or an aqueduct in Nicomedia (10.37-39).[15]

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[7] See Braund 1988: 1 and Campbell 2002: 86.

[8] On Dio's *City Orations*, see Jones 1978; Swain 1996: 206–241; Desideri 2000: 103–107, 2011: 91–94; Salmeri 2000; Trapp 2007: 185–200.

[9] On Pliny's *Letters*, see Radice 1969a, 1969b; Sherwin-White 1969: ix–xi; Griffin 2005: 551–555.

[10] On euergetism, see Zuiderhoeck 2009. On offices needing funding support, see Jones 1940: 247.

[11] Building projects often required approval from the governor, but once approved, were executed by the city (Pliny *Ep*. 10.23, 39).

[12] See Jones 1940: 162 and Reynolds 1988: 25.

[13] See Reynolds 1988: 31–33 and Talbert 1996.

[14] For instance, funds might be needed to cover shortages of food or oil and to furnish athletes for games.

Relations with other cities

Managing relations with other cities was important both for creating economic opportunities and for coordinating the celebrations honoring the Emperor.[16] Because cities had different statuses, conflicts often arose between the more powerful cities (a capital city, metropolis, or first city) and the smaller cities in their orbit. Since being chosen as the site of the assize courts or as a center for the imperial cult brought many economic benefits, there was much competition among cities for these privileges.[17]

Dio's *City Speeches* reveal a variety of challenges associated with managing relations with other cities. *Oration* 38, for instance, discusses competition between Nicomedia and Nicaea for the title of 'first city' in the province. Elsewhere, Dio advises powerful cities to be gracious and slow to take offense when dealing with smaller cities that resisted authority (*Or.* 34.10-15) or violated their rights (*Or.* 40.20-22). The objectives for cities, as rulers of others, were the same as for the Emperor or provincial governor: behave mildly and considerately, without hostility and hatred, to elicit willing acceptance of one's leadership (*Or.* 34.47).

Relations with Rome

The third area of concern for city leaders was managing relations with the provincial governor and Emperor. Leaders acting as envoys and ambassadors were generally tasked with persuading Rome to make investments in the city, to grant immunity from taxes or to grant privileges that would enhance the influence and prosperity of the city.[18] The Emperor could also grant approval to hold games or religious festivals, as well as permission to establish temples or cults to the Emperor. Friendly relations had to be maintained with the provincial governor, procurators, and financial procurators if a city were to retain or enhance its privileges.

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[15] Similarly, approval was needed to change laws in particular areas, such as those governing prisons (*Ep.* 10.19), foundlings (10.65) or entrance requirements for provincial senates (10.79-80).

[16] See Reynolds (1988). The provincial council served a variety of purposes, including communicating messages from the governor, proposing honors, and overseeing ceremonies and games tied to the imperial cult.

[17] Reynolds (1988: 25). Competition among cities for these privileges was often intense.

Pliny and Dio address the dynamics of relations between cities and the Emperor from opposite sides. Pliny cites a city's dignity (*Ep.* 10.23) and absence of disturbances (*Ep.* 10.34.9)[19] as considerations in granting or refusing specific requests. Dio's *City Speeches*, in turn, emphasize the need for cities to cultivate a reputation as stable and well-disposed to Rome. For instance, Dio advises Tarsus not to acquire a name as a city that brings malicious prosecutions (*Or.* 34.9) and warns Prusa that no activities — and especially rioting or discord — go unnoticed by the proconsuls (*Or.* 46.14).

Maintaining Harmony Within and Between Cities

Efficient administration of cities and provinces, as well as constructive relations with Rome, required maintenance of public order and stability. A bad reputation as an oppressive and unruly city or a disorderly province could result not only in a denial of new privileges, but also the direct intervention of Rome and loss of independence. For this reason, a common theme in Dio's *City Orations* (especially *Or.* 34-51) is the importance of dispelling discord within a city and between cities.[20] In *Orations* 44-46, Dio addresses harmonious relations within a city: between wealthy citizens and the council, between the council and the people, and amongst the people themselves.[21] The importance of concord between cities is highlighted in *Orations* 34 and 38, where Dio states that rivalry with other cities diminishes the city's reputation with the Emperor (*Or*. 34.9-10; 38.33-34).[22] Tarsus is also advised to do nothing against cities resisting its authority since even false charges could give it the reputation of being 'odious and oppressive' (ἐπαχθῆ καὶ βαρεῖαν; *Or*. 34.10-15). Prusa, in turn, is told not to be 'too precise in defending its rights' (σφόδρα ἀκριβῶς περιέχεσθαι τῶν δικαίων) against Apameia (*Or*. 40.20-22). As in the case of larger athletes competing against smaller men, rules are more strictly enforced against powerful cities (*Or*. 34.13). Tarsus is further instructed to be willing at times to concede and yield to the complaints of smaller cities and even occasionally to submit to wrong rather than leave quarrels unresolved (*Or*. 34.40-45).

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[18] Dio addresses diplomacy in *Or.*45 and 46, where he describes his embassy to Trajan — when he won assize courts for Prusa — and in *Or.* 47.12-19, where he discusses suspicions that can arise from cozy relations with Rome.

[19] For instance, Nicomedia's request for the fire department, mentioned above, was rejected because such departments had been the source of political disturbances in the past (*Ep.* 10.34.9).

[20] Pragmatic advice is prominent in *Oration* 34 (to Tarsus), 38 (to Nicomedia), 39 (to Nicaea), 40 (to Prusa), 41 (to Apameia), and 44-51 (to Prusa).

[21] *Or.* 44 discusses how internal concord can help Prusa earn status as an independent city, while *Or.* 46 advises Prusa to resolve the dispute about the markets by choosing new supervisors (wealthy men who have not performed liturgies) rather than rioting over the price of grain and drawing the attention of Rome (*Or.* 46.24).

Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft*: Attributes and Skills Needed by City Leaders

To perform their administrative and diplomatic roles, city leaders required a variety of practical skills, powers of persuasion, and good critical judgment about how to solve problems. While each magistracy called for specific skills and managerial insights (as reflected in the details of managing the water supply in Frontinus' *De Aquis*[23]), the city leader also had to be able to effectively work with many different groups: the people, colleagues, subordinates, opponents, leaders of other cities, imperial representatives, and the Emperor. The range of skills needed to be successful in leadership are discussed in Plutarch's *Precepts of Statecraft*,[24] which was addressed to Menemachus, a young man about to enter the political arena in a provincial city.[25] This essay details the actions Menemachus should take to prepare himself for a political career and the principles that should guide his conduct after he enters the arena. The principles and actions recommended are listed in Table 1.

Table 1: Key Principles of Effective Leadership in *Precepts of Statecraft (Prae. ger. reip.)*

1. Cultivating moral character and reputation: 799a-801b

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[22] Dio further argues that rivalry between cities is harmful because a city then incurs costs without any real prize (*Or*. 34.48; 38.21, 26-31), while giving tyrannical power to the smaller cities at the center of the squabble (*Or*. 38.36-37, 50). Athens and Sparta exemplify how rivalry leads to ruin (*Or*. 34.49-51; 38.25; *Or*. 38.39-42).

[23] Frontinus describes his motive for writing this work as a desire to help those who held the position after him avoid the disgrace of having to conduct his office according to the instructions of assistants (*De Aquis* 1.2).

[24] On the purpose and content of *Precepts of Statecraft*, see Swain 1996: 161-183; De Blois 2004; Trapp 2004.

[25] See Jones 1971: 110-111, 116-117 for details on Menemachus.

- Make a reasoned choice to enter public life; it can be dangerous (799a)
- Study character of the people and play to it until the you attain power (799b)
- Cultivate moral character and reduce vices as much as possible (800b)
- Live as if on an open stage – people are suspicious of leaders (800b-f)

2. Skills of persuasion: 801c-804c
    - After virtue is in order, work on persuasiveness of speech (801c)
    - Political oratory, much more than that in a court of law, admits maxims, historical and mythical tales and metaphors used sparingly and at right moment (803a)
    - Use derision and ridicule only for the right reasons and at the right moment (803c)
    - Keep speech nimble and use apt rejoinders (803f-804a)

3. Entrance into public life: 804d-806f
    - Quick and conspicuous riskier; Under mentor is slower and safer (804d-805b)
    - Options for quick entry are: lawsuits, embassies to Emperor, taking neglected problem or established evil practice or evil man in the city (805b)
    - Slow route – teaches man to rightly obey before he takes command (806f)

4. Managing friendships: 807a-809a
    - Choose friends who share your convictions (807d)
    - Be on guard not to share in wrongdoing of friends (807d-e)
    - Help friends only after public interests are served (808b-808c)
    - Share credit with friends (808d)
    - Reject inappropriate requests gently, not harshly (808d)

5. Managing enmities and rivalries: 809b-811a
    - Set aside enmities when outside city boundaries (809b-d)
    - Do not resent honors received by rivals (809e)
    - Mix praise with blame so that blame will appear justified (809f-810d)
    - Don't descend into abusive language, use effective retorts (810e-811a)

6. Accepting magistracies: 811b-812b
    - Perform any magistracies to highest standards (811b-811d)
    - Do not provoke envy or resentment by seeking office too often (811e-812b)

7. Sharing power with others: 812c-813d
    - Share power to reduce weight of hatred (812c)
    - Improve efficiency by uniting with others with complementary talents (812d-813a)
    - Employ "mock" disagreements and resolutions to engineer support (813b-813d)

8. Managing relations with the overlord: 813e-815f
    - Do not go beyond the degree of liberty in rhythms and meters permitted (813f)

- Have friend among the men of high station (814c)
- Make state obedient to overlord, but resolve internal disputes alone (814f–815c)
- Defend one's state to resolve disputes with overlord (815d–f)

9. Cooperating with colleagues and office holders: 816a–817f
    - Do not be disputatious with equals, envy superiors or despise inferiors (816b)
    - Conciliate superiors, honor equals, add prestige to inferiors (816b)
    - Share credit with others (816c)
    - Rule and be ruled; Obey those who hold offices (816d–817b)
    - Allow those in power to use (and take credit for) your best ideas (817d)
    - Continue to offer best ideas from orators' platform when out of office (817e)
10. Relations with the people: 818a–819d
    - Give way in small things so you can stubbornly resist in great matters (818a–b)
    - Do not redistribute property or distribute funds to appease the people (818c)
    - Use public funds moderately to release tensions or satisfy desires (818d–e)
    - Use indirect means to divert people from harmful to useful things (818f–819b)
    - In difficult matters, unite with other people with other talents (819b–d)
11. Discarding love of money and of honors: 819e–820f
    - Think of making money from public office like robbing sanctuaries (819e)
    - Do not pursue honors, refuse them if offered or accept very little (820b–c)
12. Cultivating goodwill through virtue and useful public spending: 821a–823e
    - Foster goodwill through your actions, not via spending (821a–f)
    - Spend money in beneficial ways, not as bribery (822a–b)
    - Do not spend money beyond your means (822d–822f)
    - Be affable, accessible, solicitous, live simply, share joys and griefs (823a–b)
13. Mediating between disputants and dispelling discord: 823f–825d
    - Converse with both parties and join neither (824b)
    - Prevent discord in advance (824c)
    - Intervene in quarrels among friends (824d)
    - Try to mollify both parties, explain virtue of ignoring wrongs (824e)
    - Instruct individually and collectively, note weakness of Greece, prizes trivial (824f)
    - Pay attention to both private and public quarrels (825a–d)

As shown in Table 1, cultivating one's moral character is only the first step on the road to effective leadership. Indeed, in the political arena, it is one's *reputation* for virtue that is critical, while vices that cannot be eliminated should be reduced as much as possible (*Prae. ger. reip.* 800b). The bulk of *Precepts of Statecraft* is devoted to considerations and challenges of a more practical nature. The areas that receive extensive attention (and illustration in the *Parallel Lives*) include: developing skills of persuasion for interacting with the people (801c-804c); managing friendships (807a-809a), rivalries (809b-811a), and relations with colleagues (812c-813d); managing relations with the overlord (813e-815f); cooperating with colleagues and office holders (816a-817f); and controlling the people by engaging in give-and-take (818a-819d). Two themes are woven through these principles: leaders must know how to rule and be ruled, and must be skilled at mediating disputes and dispelling discord.[26]

Developing skills of persuasion with the populace involved two dimensions: first, using the style of speech likely to have the greatest impact (803a, 803c), and second, designing an appeal suited to the character of the people (799b) — broad principles that covered the need to use theatrics at times to win support.[27] Winning the approval of the people also required mastery of the art of give-and-take — indulging some desires through constructive and controlled spending, but standing firm against demands that would harm the state (818a-819d). However, steering policy in the city depended even more critically on a leader's ability to employ his friends to best effect (807a-809a), to outmaneuver rivals without harming the city (809b-811a), and to work with colleagues, superiors, and inferiors to generate goodwill and win them over to one's side (816b).[28] Plutarch's guidance on working with others would apply as well to a city's relations with other cities in the province. Finally, the principles for managing relations with the overlord are spelled out: make the state readily obedient to Roman authorities, hide internal disputes and then resolve them without calling in Rome, and maintain order to avoid attracting unwanted interference by Rome (813e-815f).[29]

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[26] Leaders simultaneously ruled as administrators in their cities, but were also ruled as Roman subjects and citizens when out of office. A city may dominate ('rule') other cities or be subordinate ('ruled') within a province.

[27] Such as living 'as if on an open stage' (ὥσπερ ἐν θεάτρῳ τὸ λοιπὸν ἀναπεπταμένῳ βιωσόμενος; 800b). Policy making can involve theatrics: leaders are advised to feign differences during debates and then feign newly-acquired agreement to deflate suspicion (813b-813d).

[28] In this case, the leader was to conciliate superiors, honor equals and add prestige to inferiors (816b).

[29] Plutarch also instructs Menemachus to avert envy by sharing power with others (808d; 812c-d), not seeking high office too often (811e-812b), and giving credit to others (816c). When out of office, he was to obey men in office (816f), offer his best ideas even though others would get the credit (817d), and to stay engaged (817e).

The contemporary resonance of Plutarch's subject matter in *Precepts of Statecraft* is evident in the overlap with topics covered by Dio in his *City Orations*, where he presents himself serving as an ambassador to the Emperor (*Or*. 45), as a man trying to calm internal unrest associated with bread riots (*Or*. 46), and as a man attempting to resolve squabbles between cities in his province (*Or*. 34, 40). Dio echoes Plutarch's principles about managing relations with the overlord when he explains that Prusa needs to resolve internal differences to avoid attracting the attention of Rome (*Or*. 46.14) and that cities competing for prizes granted by Rome are competing for prizes that are trivial (*Or*. 34.48, 38.21, 38.26–31). Moreover, when Dio counsels Apameia not to insist on avenging wrongs (*Or*. 40.20–22) or Tarsus not to challenge every burdensome action (*Or*. 34.9), he promotes the same principle as Plutarch when he suggests that disputing parties be told that those who ignore wrongs are superior to those who insist on winning (824e) and that the prizes fought over are trivial (824f).

While these correspondences reinforce the contemporary underpinnings of the issues raised in *Precepts of Statecraft*, Plutarch's essay served the broader purpose of creating cultural links between the challenges faced by leaders of his own day and those faced by leaders of the Greek and Roman past. To this end, Plutarch illustrates each of his precepts using incidents from the careers of Greek and Roman heroes from different cultural and political settings. For instance, he exemplifies the principles on managing friendships (807a–809a) with actions by Solon, Themistocles, Pericles, Phocion, Agesilaus, Epaminondas, Timoleon, and Cato Minor, thereby pulling exempla from Athens, Sparta, Thebes, Corinth, and Rome over a span of more than 500 years. This cultural connectivity was reinforced in the *Parallel Lives*, in which twenty-two of the exempla of *Precepts of Statecraft* are subjects of their own *Lives*, including Solon, Aristides, Cato Maior, Phocion, and Cato Minor, heroes of the *Lives* we examine below.[30]

Lessons for City Leaders in the *Parallel Lives*

The format of the *Parallel Lives* afforded Plutarch the opportunity to broaden and amplify the cultural connections between leaders of the present and past.[31] In place of the piecemeal portraits of leaders through a series of isolated snapshots in *Precepts of Statecraft*, Plutarch was able, in the *Lives*, to create full-bodied characterizations of heroes that incorporated their moral character, motives, deliberations, and decisions, along with the consequences of their actions for the statesman and his state. In these multi-dimensional mirrors, readers could more readily identify with the heroes and recognize when to imitate or avoid their actions when confronting comparable situations in their careers as city leaders.

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[30] Each of these heroes appears as an exemplum multiple times in *Precepts of Statecraft*: Phocion (803b, 803e, 805f, 808a, 809a, 810d, 811a, 819a, 822e), Cato Maior (803c, 805f, 811a, 820b, 825e), Cato Minor (804c, 808e, 809d, 810c, 818d), Aristides (805f, 809b, 823e), and Solon (805f, 807e, 810d).

[31] Stadter (2002b, 2015) describes the contemporary relevance of the *Lives* for leaders in provincial cities.

Solon-Publicola

In pairing Solon (c. 630- c. 560 BC) and Publicola (d. 503 BC), Plutarch joined two famous lawgivers who laid the foundation for the establishment of democracy in their cities. In *Precepts of Statecraft*, Solon was cited as a positive model of how to enter the public arena boldly (805e) and to avoid abusive speech toward rivals (810d), while he was a cautionary model of a man whose friends brought him into disrepute (807e).[32] Publicola, in contrast, is not mentioned. In *Solon-Publicola*, Plutarch presents paradigms of how to meet two major contemporary challenges discussed in *Precepts of Statecraft*: (1) how to attract the willing support of the populace (799b; 800b-f); and (2) how to design laws to promote harmony and prosperity in one's city (816a-817f). These challenges are examined from different perspectives in *Solon* and *Publicola*, providing a range of ideas on how to deal with them in contemporary contexts.[33]

Attracting Support through Virtue and Timely Theatrics

The ability to win the support of the people, especially when promoting policies that would contribute to harmony in one's city, is addressed from two perspectives in this pair. On the one hand, the principle that a statesman requires a reputation for moral integrity to win the trust and ready obedience of the people (*Prae. ger. reip.* 800b) is illustrated early in both *Lives*. Plutarch establishes Solon's reputation as a man of moral integrity by characterizing him as a lover of wisdom (*Sol*. 2.2) who conversed with the most famous wise men of his day (*Sol*. 3.5-6.3), and by further citing poems by Solon that express his disdain for wealth (*Sol*. 2.2-

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[32] The incident of Solon's friends taking advantage of the disburdenment is described at *Solon* 15.6-7.

[33] For perspectives on Solon as a sage and adviser to rulers, see Stadter 2002a, 2015, 2002b, 2015; Hershbell 2008; Pelling 2004. De Blois (2008) compares Solon to Lycurgus. Desideri (2017) looks at Solon's travels.

3, 3.2) and love of justice (2.3, 3.4, 18.4). These qualities are said to have induced the Athenians to trust him in resolving the tensions between the rich and poor in Athens (*Sol.* 14.1). Publicola, in turn, is shown winning the confidence of the Roman people through his eloquence, which was always employed "with integrity and boldness in the service of justice" (ὧν τῷ μὲν ὀρθῶς καὶ μετὰ παρρησίας ἀεὶ χρώμενος ὑπὲρ τῶν δικαίων), and through his wealth, "with which he gave liberal and kindly aid to the poor and needy" (ἀφ' οὗ δὲ τοῖς δεομένοις ἐλευθερίως καὶ φιλανθρώπως ἐπαρκῶν, *Pub.* 1.2; trans. B. Perrin)[34]. His disdain for personal wealth was also displayed when he demolished his lavish house immediately upon learning that it offended the people (*Pub.* 10.1-3).[35] These qualities — combined with Publicola's accessibility (*Pub.* 4.4[36]) — induce the slave Vindicius to bring news of the Vitelli's conspiracy to Publicola, "attracted especially by the affable and kindly ways of the man" (μάλιστά τοῖς κοινοῖς καὶ φιλανθρώποις ἐπαχθεὶς τοῦ ἀνδρός, *Pub.* 4.4; trans. B. Perrin). Similarly, Plutarch later links Porsena's willingness to make peace with Rome to the confidence Porsena had in the virtue and nobility of Publicola (*Comp. Sol.-Pub.* 4.4). In these incidents, Solon and Publicola illustrate the benefits that can flow from the reputation for virtue and the cultivation of goodwill, showcasing actions that could be imitated by leaders in provincial cities of the imperial era.[37]

Plutarch also illustrates the pragmatic aspect of winning over the people by showing both heroes engaging in theatrics to win the support of the people at moments of crisis.[38] When Solon is unwilling to accept the Athenian withdrawal from the war for Salamis and is forbidden by law from proposing renewed efforts, he circumvents the law by feigning madness in the marketplace and reciting elegiac verses designed to spur renewal of the war (*Sol.* 8.1-3). Publicola, as consul, enhances his authority by adjusting how he handles the *fasces* in order to convey submissiveness to, and respect for, the people: he removed the axes from the rods and lowered them to the people as he entered (*Pub*. 10.5). Plutarch credits this action with deflating the envy of the people and raising Publicola's influence:

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[34] Unless otherwise noted, translations are my own.

[35] Plutarch ties this incident to the precept that leaders must "have ears which are open to frankness and truth instead of flattery" (ἔχειν ὦτα παρρησίαν ἀντὶ κολακείας προσιέμενα καὶ λόγους ἀληθεῖς, ἔδειξεν, *Pub.* 10.3; trans. B. Perrin): Publicola acts after his friends tell him how offensive his house is to the people.

[36] Plutarch further describes Publicola as a man who "was easily accessible to all needy, always kept open house and never refused to hear or help one of the lowly" (μὲν εὐπροσήγορος καὶ κοινὸς ὢν πελάσαι καὶ προσελθεῖν ἅπασιν, οἰκίαν τε παρέχων ἄκλειστον ὡς λιμένα φύξιμον ἀεὶ τοῖς χρῄζουσι) — an image of an ideal leader in *Prae. ger. reip.* (823a-b).

[37] Stadter (2002b, 2015: 165-173) discusses the overlap of *Publicola* and Pliny's *Panegyricus* and the guidance for Trajan in the *Life*. Roskam (2014) discusses how Publicola models the qualities that produce an effective leader.

[38] The role of theatrics is suggested indirectly in *Prae. ger. reip.* where the statesman is advised to accommodate the character of people to gain influence with them (799b) and to use speech that has greatest effect (803a).

> ἐλάνθανε δὲ τούς πολλοὺς οὐχ ἑαυτὸν, ὡς ᾤοντο, ποιῶν ταπεινόν, ἀλλὰ τὸν φθόνον τῇ μετριότητι ταύτῃ καθαιρῶν καὶ κολούων, αὑτῷ δὲ προστιθεὶς τοσοῦτον μέγεθος δυνάμεως ὅσον ἀφαιρεῖν ἐδόκει τῆς ἐξουσίας, ὑποδυομένου μεθ᾽ ἡδονῆς αὐτῷ τοῦ δήμου καὶ φέροντος ἑκουσίως.
>
> And before the multitude were aware of it, he had succeeded--not by humbling himself, as they thought, but by checking and removing their envious feelings through such moderation on his part--in adding to his real influence over them just as much as he had seemed to take away from his authority, and the people submitted to him with pleasure and bore his yoke willingly (*Pub*. 10.6; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

In both examples, Solon and Publicola select their actions based on the character and susceptibilities of their populace and achieve positive outcomes for their cities.

In creating these paradigms, Plutarch largely adhered to Aristotle's account of why Solon was acceptable to both sides as the person to solve the debt crisis (*Ath. Pol*. 5). The parallel depiction of Publicola's virtue inducing the slave Vindicius to approach him is a modification of Livy's account, in which Vindicius simply "lays the matter before the consuls" (*rem ad consules detulit*, Livy 2.4).[39] Plutarch's modification not only amplifies the power of virtue to help a leader secure trust in a crisis (as in Solon's case), but also to save his state from destruction. The account of Solon's feigned madness to renew the war for Salamis may trace to Solon's poems, while Publicola's lowering of the rods is consistent with Livy 2.8.

Adapt Policies to Circumstances to Promote Harmony and Prosperity

In his description of Solon's actions to solve the debt crisis and then create a new constitution (*Sol*. 13.1-16.3), Plutarch provides one of his most comprehensive treatments of the dynamics of designing laws and policies to benefit one's city. After describing the source of the tensions (*Sol.* 13.1-3), Plutarch explains (1) why Solon was chosen to solve the debt crisis and write a new constitution (14.1-2); (2) the general considerations that influence Solon's decisions on laws (15.1-2); (3) details of the adjustments made to deal with debt, the first of his measures (15.3-5); (4) the response of both parties to the rules of disburdenment (16.1-3); and (5) a listing of major laws established by Solon (*Sol.* 17-24). Throughout this process, Solon is shown being ridiculed for resisting the suggestions of both parties that he become tyrant (*Sol.* 14.3-6); being disgraced by association when his friends take advantage of advance knowledge of the legislation (until he was the first to remit his own debts) (15.6-7); and facing the initial displeasure of both parties when his laws were revealed (16.1, 25.4-5). However, Solon is unfazed by the criticism and the Athenians ultimately see the benefits of the disburdenment and subsequently enlist him to reform other laws as well (16.3).[40]

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[39] Affortunati & Scardigli (1992) discuss a range of details in Publicola that depart from available sources.

While key elements of the intended lesson for leaders lie in Solon's steadiness in the face of criticism and the ultimate appreciation of the laws by the Athenians, Plutarch also emphasizes the pragmatic focus Solon adopted in devising his laws. In his discussion with Anacharsis (*Sol.* 5.3), Solon explains that "he was adapting his laws to the citizens" (τοὺς νόμους αὑτὸς οὕτως ἁρμόζεται τοῖς πολίταις) so that it would be clear to all that it was more advantageous to follow the laws than to break them. Similarly, regarding individual laws, Solon did not apply a general principle of justice, but rooted his decisions in practical considerations about what Athenians would accept:

> οὐ μὴν ἀπωσάμενός γε τὴν τυραννίδα τὸν πρᾳότατον ἐχρήσατο τρόπον τοῖς πράγμασιν, οὐδὲ μαλακῶς οὐδ᾽ ὑπείκων τοῖς δυναμένοις οὐδὲ πρὸς ἡδονὴν τῶν ἑλομένων ἔθετο τοὺς νόμους: ἀλλ᾽ ᾗ μὲν ἄριστον ἦν, οὐκ ἐπήγαγεν ἰατρείαν οὐδὲ καινοτομίαν, φοβηθεὶς μὴ συγχέας παντάπασι καὶ ταράξας τὴν πόλιν ἀσθενέστερος γένηται τοῦ καταστῆσαι πάλιν καὶ συναρμόσασθαι πρὸς τὸ ἄριστον: ἃ δὲ καὶ λέγων ἤλπιζε πειθομένοις καὶ προσάγων ἀνάγκην ὑπομένουσι χρήσασθαι, ταῦτ᾽ ἔπραττεν, ὥς φησιν αὐτός, "ὁμοῦ βίην τε καὶ δίκην συναρμόσας".
>
> However, though [Solon] rejected the tyranny, he did not administer affairs in the mildest manner, nor in the enactment of his laws did he show a feeble spirit,

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[40] On Solon's relations with the *demos*, see Pelling 2011.

> nor make concessions to the powerful, nor consult the pleasure of his electors. But, where a condition was as good as it could well be, he applied no remedy, and introduced no innovation, fearing lest, after utterly confusing and confounding the city, he should be too weak to establish it again and recompose it for the best. But those things wherein he hoped to find them open to persuasion or submissive to compulsion, these he did, "combining both force and justice together", as he says himself (*Sol.* 15.1; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

Solon's approach to designing the best laws Athenians would accept ultimately gains the support of the people after they set aside their initial disappointment and see the advantages of his laws. By describing Solon's process of designing laws, Plutarch creates a paradigm for city leaders.

Plutarch shows Solon again "adapting his laws to the situation, rather than situation to the laws" (Σόλων δὲ τοῖς πράγμασι τοὺς νόμους μᾶλλον ἢ τὰ πράγματα τοῖς νόμοις προσαρμόζων, *Sol.* 22.3; trans. B. Perrin) by comparing the policies of Solon and Lycurgus regarding employment — another area of concern to his readers (as reflected in Dio's *Orations* 7 and 35). Because of the limited opportunities for employment for Athens' rapidly growing population, Solon enacted laws that promoted employment in trades and manufacture: he not only compelled fathers to teach their sons a trade, but ordered the council of the Areopagus to examine every man's means of livelihood and chastise those who had no occupation (*Sol.* 22.1-3). Plutarch contrasts this reform to that of Lycurgus in Sparta, where the large population of helots made it possible — and advantageous — to allocate labor in agriculture and crafts to the helots and allow citizens to focus on military skills (*Sol.* 22.3). By contrast, in Athens the land barely provided a living to those who tilled it and could not support the city's entire population.[41]

In the paired *Life*, Plutarch provides only a brief account of Publicola's deliberations as a lawgiver, devoting only two chapters to his laws (*Pub.* 11-12). First, Publicola is said to have acted quickly, before a second consul was named, to enact his most important measures, which he feared might be opposed because of envy or ignorance (*Pub.* 11.1). These included, among others, actions to (1) re-fill the senate for full membership; (2) relieve the poor by lifting taxes; (3) reduce the penalty for disobeying consuls; and (4) place public funds in a public treasury under two quaestors (*Pub.* 11.2-12.2). The new tax law provides another perspective on policies that can stimulate prosperity: Publicola believed that after he lifted taxes the citizens would engage more energetically in manufacturing and commerce (*Pub.* 11.3).

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[41] Plutarch reinforces the importance of designing laws suitable to local conditions by comparing the reforms of Solon and Lycurgus, explaining that Lycurgus' equality was not possible in Athens because Solon lacked the authority of Lycurgus to impose it (*Sol.* 16.1-2). See also Pelling 2010: 229 and Jacobs 2020: 229-230.

In creating these paradigms for managing economic affairs, Plutarch departed from the historical accounts in Aristotle and Livy. While Plutarch's description of Solon ignoring the criticism and focusing on the best possible laws is consistent with Aristotle's account (*Ath. Pol.* 6-12), Solon's laws concerning employment are not reported in Aristotle and must therefore come from a source that has not survived or have been added by Plutarch. Similarly, Publicola's law relieving the tax burden on the poor as means of stimulating trades is not reported in Livy. The lack of mention of these initiatives in existing sources suggests that Plutarch purposely inserted these measures to amplify the contemporary resonance of policy measures enacted by the heroes in the pair. Again, the actions taken to stimulate prosperity were designed to suit the different circumstances in the two cities.

Aristides-Cato Maior

In *Aristides-Cato Maior*, Plutarch paired statesmen who played similar roles in cities at different stages of their rise to power. As Plutarch notes in the syncrisis (*Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 1.2-3), Aristides (530-468 BC) was active as Athens was just beginning its rise to power, while Cato Maior (234-149 BC) was active as the Roman Republic was reaching its zenith and had many powerful and well-established families active in the political arena. Both heroes were cited in *Precepts of Statecraft*, where Aristides models the proper management of rivalry (with Themistocles, 809b) and the qualities of a true leader (823e). Cato Maior, in turn, is a positive exemplum of willingly performing any public service (811b) and disdaining public honors (820b) but a deterrent model of inappropriately using ridicule in public speeches (803c).[42] Plutarch used the careers of these two men from different eras and cultural milieux to explore two key areas of concern for city leaders: (1) managing rivalries and (2) managing relations with allied cities to achieve common goals.[43] The destructive and complex nature of rivalry is treated extensively in *Precepts of Statecraft* (809b–811a) and is a recurring theme throughout the *Lives*. Within the context of provincial cities, these *Lives* provide insight into how to achieve harmonious (and mutually beneficial) relations within one's city and among cities in a province.

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[42] Both Aristides (under Cleisthenes) and Cato Maior (under Fabius Maximus) model the slow entry into public life (805f), while Cato is also cited for believing problems should be solved when small (825e).

Managing Rivalries

A long-lasting rivalry with one other statesman is woven through both *Lives*: Aristides' rivalry with Themistocles, and Cato's with Scipio Africanus. Given the long careers of both heroes, Plutarch can examine rivalry from many perspectives and provide a variety of lessons for city leaders. In *Aristides*, Themistocles (524–460 BC) is introduced in the second chapter (*Arist.* 2.1) as a champion of the people opposing Aristides, who, in contrast, advocates an aristocratic form of government and admires Lycurgus (*Arist.* 2.1). In *Cato Maior*, the rivalry with Scipio Africanus (235–183 BC) is first mentioned at *Cat. Mai.* 3.5, where Cato's opposition to Scipio is linked to Scipio's rivalry with (and envy of) Fabius Maximus, Cato's mentor.

The dynamics of the rivalry between Aristides and Themistocles is on full display in the first half of *Aristides*. First, because of Themistocles' reckless agitation in the assembly, Aristides felt compelled to constantly oppose Themistocles, partly to defend himself and partly to slow Themistocles' rise (*Arist.* 3.1). The harm caused by habitual opposition is shown when Aristides finds himself opposing beneficial measures, or promoting harmful ones, simply to counter Themistocles.[44] Aristides acts to minimize this negative effect[45]:

> πολλάκις δὲ καὶ δι᾽ ἑτέρων εἰσέφερε τὰς γνώμας, ὡς μὴ φιλονεικίᾳ τῇ πρὸς αὐτὸν ὁ Θεμιστοκλῆς ἐμπόδιος εἴη τῷ συμφέροντι.

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[43] Poverty and justice are also prominent issues in scholarship on this pair. See Pelling 1990, 2002; Stadter 1997, 2015; Martin 2011: 148–149; Roskam 2014: 517–518. On links to Platonism, see Nerdahl 2020.

[44] To emphasizes the destructive force of rivalry, Plutarch includes an indirect statement by Aristides that "there was no safety for the Athenian state unless they threw both Themistocles and himself on the death pit" (ὡς οὐκ ἔστι σωτηρία τοῖς Ἀθηναίων πράγμασιν, εἰ μὴ καὶ Θεμιστοκλέα καὶ αὐτὸν εἰς τὸ βάραθρον ἐμβάλοιεν, *Arist.* 3.2; trans. B. Perrin).

[45] The introduction of one man's proposal by someone more acceptable to win support is seen in *Prae. ger. reip.* 801c.

> And he would often introduce his measure through other men so that Themistocles would not be driven by the spirit of rivalry with him to oppose what was expedient for the state (*Arist.* 3.3; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

The potential risks to Athens of this rivalry are finally eliminated before Salamis, when Aristides, having been ostracized at the instigation of Themistocles (*Arist.* 7.1-6), returns and provides information on the enemy and supports Themistocles in the decision to wage battle (*Arist.* 8.1).[46] Plutarch comments that while Themistocles was general with sole powers, Aristides assisted him in every undertaking even though by doing so he thereby "for the sake of the general safety, made his primary foe the most famous of men" (ἐνδοξότατον ἐπὶ σωτηρίᾳ κοινῇ ποιῶν τὸν ἔχθιστον, *Arist.* 8.1; trans. B. Perrin, adapted)[47] — illustrating the precept at *Prae. ger. reip.* 817d that a statesman should always put his best ideas at the disposal of those in power, even though they will receive the credit as benefactors of the community.

Plutarch amplifies the importance of eliminating rivalry by reporting two comments in direct speech by Aristides (*Arist.* 8.3-4) and Themistocles (8.5) that succinctly express the lesson for statesmen. On the one hand, Aristides gives the reasons to end this rivalry:

> εἶπεν, ‘ὦ Θεμιστόκλεις, εἰ σωφρονοῦμεν, ἤδη τὴν κενὴν καὶ μειρακιώδη στάσιν ἀφέντες ἀρξώμεθα σωτηρίου καὶ καλῆς φιλονεικίας πρὸς ἀλλήλους ἁμιλλώμενοι σῶσαι τὴν Ἑλλάδα, σὺ μὲν ἄρχων καὶ στρατηγῶν...
>
> Themistocles, if we are wise, we will at last lay aside our vain and childish contentiousness, and begin a constructive and honorable rivalry with one another in competitive emulous struggles to save Hellas, you as commanding general and I as assistant counsellor... (*Arist.* 8.3; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

Themistocles, in turn, reveals that he is immediately ready to engage in this honorable rivalry when he replies, "I will try to emulate your fair beginning and surpass you in my actions" (πειράσομαι δὲ πρὸς καλὴν ἀρχὴν ἁμιλλώμενος ὑπερβάλλεσθαι τοῖς ἔργοις, *Arist.*

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[46] The theatrics of Themistocles and Aristides to get the motion accepted, by convincing people it is public advantage and not pre-arrangement that motivates the discussion, is a strategy described at *Prae. ger. reip.* 813b.

[47] Subsequently, Aristides repeatedly advises Themistocles and induces him to change course (at 9.3 he talks him out of the idea of capturing Asia in Europe; at 22.2, he argues against burning the naval station of the Hellenes).

8.5; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).[48] This exchange emphatically highlights the need for statesmen to set aside destructive forms of rivalry (*Prae. ger. reip.* 809e-f).

The contrary paradigm of unrelenting rivalry is found in *Cato Maior*, where Cato never abates in his rivalry with Scipio and, unlike Aristides, is the primary attacker (akin to Themistocles). As Scipio's quaestor in Sicily, Cato denounces Scipio's spending and spurs the Senate to investigate (*Cat. Mai.* 3.5-8). Later, he attempts unsuccessfully to convict Scipio on a capital charge (*Cat. Mai.* 15.2). Cato's animosity, moreover, overflows onto Scipio's family when Cato joins the effort against Scipio's brother Lucius and has him condemned to a large fine (15.3). As Censor, Cato had Lucius expelled from the equestrian order — an action that earns him the censure of the Romans, who believed he was trying to insult the memory of Scipio Africanus (*Cat. Mai.* 18.1). Thus, far from setting aside his rivalry while still sharing the stage with his rival, as Aristides did, Cato transfers his animosity to Scipio's family after Scipio has died. The criticism of Cato's conduct makes Cato a deterrent model in this area.

The importance of controlling rivalry as a lesson for leaders is revealed both in Plutarch's modification of Herodotus' account of Themistocles' speech to Aristides at Salamis and in the syncrisis. The comment by Themistocles "I will try to emulate your fair beginning and surpass you in my actions" (*Arist.* 8.5) is absent from Herodotus' account (Herod. 8.79-81), where Themistocles simply describes his planned strategy. Plutarch's insertion amplifies the broader implications of setting destructive rivalry aside if it is replaced by the beneficial form of rivalry. This aversion to destructive rivalry is reinforced in the syncrisis, where Plutarch credits Aristides with saving Athens by ending his rivalry and assisting Themistocles, "while Cato, by his opposition to Scipio, nearly ruined that wonderful campaign of his against the Carthaginians, in which he overthrew the invincible Hannibal" (Κάτων δ' ἀντιπράττων Σκηπίωνι μικροῦ μὲν ἀνέτρεψε καὶ διελυμήνατο τὴν ἐπὶ Καρχηδονίους αὐτοῦ στρατηγίαν, ἐν ᾗ τὸν ἀήττητον Ἀννίβαν καθεῖλε, *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 5.4; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).[49]

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[48] For additional perspective on this passage, see Frazier 2014: 495 and Stadter 2011, 2015: 281-282.

[49] Cato's later insistence that Carthage be destroyed offers a different perspective on inter-city rivalry and the function of *metus hostilis* as a means of retaining control. See Pelling 1986, 2002: 224-225.

Managing relations with allies

Plutarch also uses this pair to illustrate how to work well with allies. Aristides, in his conduct before the battle of Marathon (*Arist.* 5), at Plataea (*Arist.* 12, 16, 20), and as envoy to the Greek allies after the victory (*Arist.* 23-24), models behaviour readers could emulate in conducting relations with colleagues in their own city and as representatives in relations with other cities in their province. Three key incidents at Marathon and Plataea portray Aristides working with a group of allies to achieve a common goal, while incidents in Asia display behavior that enables Aristides to win the ready cooperation of cities under Athens' authority. Plutarch designs this series of episodes to illustrate the principles of interaction that should guide all relations between ruler and ruled, whether between Emperor and subjects, provincial governor and Greek cities, or the primary Greek city and other cities in each province.

First, at Marathon, Aristides is shown handing his day of command over to Miltiades on the grounds that Miltiades' strategy is the best. Because Aristides' example induces the other generals to do the same, he is credited with 'turning the scale' (ῥοπήν) in favor of the Greeks (*Arist.* 5.2). The exemplary nature of this incident is underscored by Plutarch's authorial comment:

> ὡς περιῆλθεν εἰς αὐτὸν ἡ ἀρχή, παρέδωκε Μιλτιάδῃ, διδάσκων τοὺς συνάρχοντας, ὅτι τὸ πείθεσθαι καὶ ἀκολουθεῖν τοῖς εὖ φρονοῦσιν οὐκ αἰσχρόν, ἀλλὰ σεμνόν ἐστι καὶ σωτήριον. οὕτω δὲ πραΰνας τὴν φιλονεικίαν καὶ προτρεψάμενος αὐτοὺς ἀγαπᾶν μιᾷ γνώμῃ τῇ κρατίστῃ χρωμένους, ἔρρωσε τὸν Μιλτιάδην τῷ ἀπερισπάστῳ τῆς ἐξουσίας ἰσχυρὸν γενόμενον.
>
> [When Aristides turned over his command to Miltiades] he taught his fellow officers that to obey and follow men of wisdom is not disgraceful, but dignified and salutary. By thus appeasing the jealousy of his colleagues and inducing them to be cheerfully contented in the adoption of a single opinion (and that the best one), he confirmed Miltiades in the strength that comes from an unrestricted power (*Arist.* 5.2; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

The general principle expressed in this passage echoes Plutarch's advice to be willing to share power and work efficiently with others in *Prae. ger. reip.* (812c–813a). In a second instance, at Plataea Aristides works with other generals to resolve a dispute by convincing them to defer to the decision of an outside mediator, the Hellenes, who in this case decide to grant the meed of valor to the Plataeans (*Arist*. 20.1-3). A common element in these incidents is the willingness to cooperate and to forego glory to achieve a larger common goal.

Second, at Plataea, Aristides displays an ability to stifle the urge for dominance among allies. In his response to the argument between the Athenians and Tegeans over who should hold the left wing, Aristides emphasizes two points: that it is futile to argue amongst themselves when they have an enemy to conquer[50] and that what is important is to perform every function well. These sentiments illustrate the principles that leaders undermine the strength of the city when they are unwilling to occupy an inferior position (*Prae. ger. reip.* 815a); instead, they should enhance an inferior office and add to it the esteem and power derived from themselves (816a-817a). Another illustration of how to secure harmonious cooperation is found at *Arist*. 16, where Aristides convinces the Athenians to willingly follow the orders of Pausanias to change their position in line by reminding them that they should be happy to be fighting barbarian troops rather than other Hellenes. While Cato's *Life* includes no comparable management of an allied effort, it does include incidents that display Cato's tendency to self-praise and aggrandizement (*Cat. Mai.* 19.3-6) that puts Aristides' constructive conduct in sharper focus, as Plutarch notes in the syncrisis (*Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 5.2). As a group, the episodes depicting Aristides dispelling discord between his city and its allies provide an array of behaviors that could be imitated by leaders in provincial cities of his era.

Plutarch offers an additional perspective on working with allies in his account of Aristides' relations with the allied Greek cities — where Athens is the leading city rather than one among equals under Spartan leadership as at Plataea. The lessons for leaders lie in the process by which Athens displaced Sparta as the leader of the Greek cities:

> ἑώρα τόν τε Παυσανίαν καὶ τοὺς ἄλλους ἄρχοντας τῶν Σπαρτιατῶν ἐπαχθεῖς καὶ χαλεποὺς τοῖς συμμάχοις ὄντας, αὐτός τε πρᾴως καὶ φιλανθρώπως ὁμιλῶν καὶ τὸν Κίμωνα παρέχων εὐάρμοστον αὐτοῖς καὶ κοινὸν ἐν ταῖς στρατείαις

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[50] "We are come, not to quarrel with our allies, but to do battle with our foes; not to heap praises on our fathers, but to show ourselves brave men in the service of Hellas" (ἥκομεν γὰρ οὐ τοῖς συμμάχοις στασιάσοντες, ἀλλὰ μαχούμενοι τοῖς πολεμίοις, οὐδ᾽ ἐπαινεσόμενοι τοὺς πατέρας, ἀλλ᾽ αὑτοὺς ἄνδρας ἀγαθοὺς τῇ Ἑλλάδι παρέξοντες, *Arist.* 12.2; trans. B. Perrin).

> ἔλαθε τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων ... εὐγνωμοσύνῃ δὲ καὶ πολιτείᾳ τὴν ἡγεμονίαν παρελόμενος.
>
> When Aristides saw that Pausanias and the other Spartan commanders were offensive and severe to the allies, he made his own dealings with them gentle and humane, and induced Cimon to be on easy terms with them and to take an actual part in their campaigns. As a result, without the Spartans noticing … by means of tact and diplomacy Aristides had stripped them of the leadership (*Arist.* 23.1; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

Plutarch ties Aristides' continued support from the allies to his fairness and equity in calculating the taxes: Aristides examined the resources available to each city and then set the assessments according to each member's worth and ability to pay (*Arist.* 24.1-2). Again, the lesson for leaders lies in the favorable reaction to this approach: the cities responded with grateful satisfaction and praise (*Arist.* 24.2-3).

Plutarch gives contemporary resonance to these events by modifying Herodotus' accounts of Marathon, Plataea, and Asia Minor. First, Herodotus makes no mention of Aristides at Marathon, where the tie-breaking vote that resulted in Miltiades' strategy being adopted was cast by the War Archon (8.109-110). Plutarch, by presenting Aristides as the catalyst, transforms this incident into a paradigm of how sharing power and letting others take the lead and claim the glory can serve the best interests of one's city. Similarly, the Athenian opposition to changing their position in the line is not in Herodotus, where instead the Athenians simply agree because they think this is a better plan (9.46). By presenting the Athenians as resisting until they consider that they will fight against barbarians rather than Hellenes, gives Plutarch a chance to interject his recurrent criticism of the destructive consequences of civil war among the Greeks.[51] This appeal had resonance in promoting peaceful relations among Greek cities in the Imperial era as a means of keeping Rome's intrusions to a minimum. Finally, the argument over the meed of valor is absent from Herodotus. By including this incident, Plutarch points to the beneficial role of arbitration by a third party as a means of resolving bitter disputes between allies.

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[51] The ruinous effects of civil war is a common theme, including in *Agesilaus-Pompey* (*Ages.* 15.1-3; *Pomp.* 70.1-4).

Phocion-Cato Minor

Phocion-Cato Minor touches more directly on the challenges faced by leaders in the provincial cities of the Roman Empire than Plutarch's other *Parallel Lives* because it addresses issues of relations between an overlord and subject cities. On the one hand, Phocion (402-318 BCE) serves as a leader of his city in freedom and as an ambassador to the overlord after Athens comes under the sway of Macedon (338 BCE).[52] On the other hand, Cato Minor (95-46 BCE) never held the consulship but, like many of Plutarch's readers, served in various administrative offices and participated in establishing policies for his city. In *Precepts of Statecraft*, Phocion is a positive model for, among other traits, keeping friendships and enmities within proper bounds (808a, 809d, 810d, 811a) and distracting the people from harmful demands (819a), while Cato Minor is cited for mixing praise and blame against opponents (810c) and judicious spending to appease the people (818e).[53] Both men enjoy a reputation for great virtue.[54] Plutarch takes advantage of the format of the *Lives* to illustrate additional principles of leadership articulated in *Precepts of Statecraft*, with Phocion providing multiple paradigms for how to deal with the Emperor and imperial authorities (*Prae. ger. reip.* 313e-316f) and Cato portraying techniques for setting the highest standards in performing administrative offices (quaestor, senator) similar to those held by leaders in cities in Imperial times (*Prae. ger. reip.* 811b-811d).[55]

Managing Relations with the Overlord

Plutarch designs his account of Phocion's interactions with the Macedonian Kings to illustrate precepts presented in *Precepts of Statecraft*, including the admonitions (1) to stay within the limits set by Rome (813e); (2) to show oneself and one's city blameless towards the rulers (814c); (3) to have friends in powerful positions (814c); and (4) to maintain harmony within one's city (823f-825a). Like Plutarch's contemporaries in provincial cities,

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[52] Phocion is a mediator between Athens and Philip (d. 336 BCE), Alexander (d. 323 BCE), and Antipater (d. 319 BCE).

[53] Phocion is also cited for his mastery of techniques of political oratory (803b; 803e), slow entry under Chabrias (805f), and confessing poverty (822e), while Cato Minor is a positive model for stamina in speaking (804c) and keeping rivalry in bounds (809d), but a deterrent model for acting too harshly towards friends (808e-f).

[54] The *Phocion-Cato* pair have comparisons to Socrates as part of the backdrop. See Beck 2014.

[55] *Phocion-Cato Minor* addresses a range of issues concerning the balance between personal ethical standards and the practical options open to city leaders. See Tritle 1988; Swain 1990: 197-199; Duff 1999: 131-160. Cato's suicide and associations with Socrates are also prominent themes. See Geiger 1999; Trapp 2007: 494-496; Zadorojnyi 2007; Beck 2014. For additional themes and lessons in this pair, see Jacobs 2017, 2018a, 2018b.

Phocion attempted to obtain as much autonomy as possible for his city on terms that were advantageous for its prosperity — issues routinely raised in Pliny's *Letters* and in Dio's *City Orations*.

Plutarch uses Phocion's interactions with Macedonian Kings to illustrate two practical skills essential to engaging constructively with the overlord: adapting one's behavior to the character of the overlord and balancing ideal objectives with practical constraints to obtain the best terms. First, in Plutarch's account of Phocion's interactions with Alexander (*Phoc.* 17.4-18.5) and Antipater (26.3-30.6), Phocion's success is tied to his ability to adapt his conduct to the moral character of each leader. In the one case, Phocion softened Alexander's attitude to Athens by saying many things that appealed to Alexander's nature and desires, and, as a result, Alexander received Phocion as a friend and listened to Phocion's appeals and advice (*Phoc.* 17.4-6). Nevertheless, Phocion set limits to this friendship when he repeatedly refused Alexander's gifts of money (*Phoc.* 18.1-2, 18.4, 18.5) on the grounds that he wanted to remain 'a man of honor and worth' (ἄνδρα καλὸν καὶ ἀγαθόν, 18.1-2). Ultimately, Phocion accepts the release of four prisoners in lieu of money. The issue raised here — of avoiding relations with the ruler that create suspicions among citizens — touches a theme also discussed by Dio (*Or.* 47.12-19).

In Antipater, Phocion faced a man with a more abrasive nature: Antipater showed 'a certain ruthlessness and hatred of goodness' (ἀγνωμοσύνῃ τινὶ καὶ μισαγαθίᾳ, *Phoc.* 27.2), was a 'more odious' (ἐπαχθέστερος) master, and was harder to appease when angry (*Phoc.* 29.2). In this case, Phocion was careful not to provoke him. For instance, Phocion did not resist Antipater's demand for a garrison — a demand that the philosopher Xenocrates strongly opposed as unworthy of free men (*Phoc.* 27.4-5). However, by acquiescing in the matter of the garrison, Phocion preserved a friendly rapport with Antipater and secured better terms in other matters, including more lenient terms for exiles (*Phoc.* 29.3) and a postponement in payments due from Athens (30.4). A similar pattern of establishing cordial relations with imperial envoys and then securing benefits for Athens is seen in Phocion's relations with Nicanor: when Nicanor takes over as the head of the garrison, Phocion by interviews (ἐντυγχάνων) and discussion (διαλεγόμενος) makes Nicanor mild (πρᾷον) and gracious (κεχαρισμένον) toward the city (*Phoc.* 31.2). The lesson for city leaders lay in demonstrating the role of compromise and give-and-take in dealing with an Emperor to secure the best possible outcomes for one's city.

Plutarch's desire to use Phocion to model how to engage with Emperors is reflected in his departure from accounts of Diodorus Siculus (16-18) and Nepos, neither of whom gives Phocion a prominent role in negotiations. In Diodorus, Demades is the envoy to Alexander and the Athenians negotiate with Antipater as a group, while in Nepos Phocion works in league with Demades to turn the city over to Antipater. By presenting Phocion as the lead ambassador in both instances, Plutarch could create paradigms for managing relations with the overlord.

Serving as a City Administrator

Cato Minor differs in significant ways from Phocion in his character and leadership. While both heroes were viewed as men of exceptional moral virtue, only Phocion demonstrates a capacity to balance moral considerations with expediency to produce positive outcomes for his city. In contrast, Cato Minor is portrayed as inflexible in his adherence to ethical considerations. Plutarch uses Cato's unwillingness to compromise his standards as the backdrop for lessons in how to perform duties tied to the administrative offices still held by Plutarch's readers. In these functions, an official had to serve as the ruler over subordinates while being ruled by the higher official in his city. In his depiction of Cato's preparation for and execution of his duties as quaestor and senator, Plutarch provides a role model for magistrates serving in provincial cities.

Plutarch's account of Cato's quaestorship (*Cat. Min.* 16-18) covers four stages: (1) Cato's preparation ahead of seeking the office; (2) his management of subordinates in office; (3) his relations with the senate and assembly; and (4) the response of the Romans to his performance. Plutarch describes how Cato prepared – by studying the laws and talking with men who had experience – and explains the reason: Cato wanted to be able to take charge immediately and not be dependent on subordinates when he took office:

> εἶτα νέους ἄρχοντας παραλαμβάνοντες δι᾽ ἀπειρίαν καὶ ἄγνοιαν ἀτεχνῶς διδασκάλων ἑτέρων καὶ παιδαγωγῶν δεομένους, οὐχ ὑφίεντο τῆς ἐξουσίας ἐκείνοις , ἀλλὰ ἦσαν ἄρχοντες αὐτοί

> When [the permanent staff in the treasury] received young magistrates who, because of their inexperience and ignorance, really needed others as instructors and tutors, they did not yield the authority of the office to those men, but were

> themselves the ones who held authority (*Cat. Min.* 16.2; trans. B. Perrin, adapted).

The considerations voiced here overlap Frontinus' motive for writing *De Aquis*: to help future water commissioners to not be dependent on instruction from subordinates (*De Aquis* 2.1-2).

Plutarch describes the results of this preparation in terms that would correspond to the experience of his readers. First, Cato was able to take charge of subordinates immediately and set the standards by which the department would operate — eliminating the corrupt practices that had become routine (*Cat. Min.* 17.2-3). He resisted efforts to misappropriate the funds under his control and thereby built up the resources available to the Roman people (*Cat. Min.* 18.1-2). Furthermore, he won the support of colleagues by taking any blame for his initiatives onto himself (*Cat. Min.* 18.2). Finally, his efficient and careful execution of the duties of his office won him the praise of his colleagues and the Roman people (*Cat. Min.* 18.3). By explaining Cato's experience of the quaestorship in this detail, Plutarch provided a role model for young leaders on how to approach the challenge of assuming an office for which they had no experience. Plutarch's intention to provide this paradigm is indicated by the absence of any detailed description of Cato's quaestorship in surviving sources, suggesting that Plutarch inserted this account to add instructive contemporary resonance.

Similarly, Plutarch presents Cato's general attitudes and actions as a senator in terms that could be imitated by senators of his own day. Cato's focus — as that of city leaders — was to preserve liberty (to the extent possible) in his city. To this end, Cato clears all business so he can attend all sessions of the Senate (*Cat. Min.* 19.1) and keeps track of all developments (decrees, trials, affairs) in the provinces through a network of connections (*Cat. Min.* 19.2). In this conduct, Cato exemplifies that life of a leader as described in *Precepts of Statecraft*:[56]

> οὐ μικρὸν ἡμέρας μέρος ἐπὶ τοῦ βήματος ἢ τοῦ λογείου πολιτευόμενος... καὶ τὴν πολιτείαν βίον καὶ πρᾶξιν οὐκ ἀσχολίαν ὥσπερ οἱ πολλοὶ καὶ λειτουργίαν ἡγούμενος...

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[56] Cato's dedication illustrates the principle in *Whether an Old Man Should Engage in Public Affairs* 796f that the true statesman is one who even when out of office is always assisting in deliberations and keeping himself informed about public affairs.

> He spends no small part of the day engaged in the public business on the orators' platform ... and regards public office as his life and his work, not, like most people, as an interruption to leisure and a compulsory expense... (*Prae. ger. reip.* 823b–c; trans. H.N. Fowler, adapted).

The effectiveness of Cato's application of these principles is reflected in his growing influence as a senator and as an advisor to men who attained the consulship, a post Cato never held.

Conclusion

The overlap between the *Lives* and the concerns highlighted in *Precepts of Statecraft*, Dio's *City Orations*, and Pliny's *Letters* indicates that Plutarch designed his paired *Lives* to produce cultural links between his contemporaries and the practices of the leaders in the free Greek city states and the Roman Republic. As shown in the analysis of the three sets of *Lives* discussed here, Plutarch made specific modifications to his source material to produce accounts of key incidents that would more closely parallel the challenges facing city leaders in his own day. By streamlining his *Lives* to amplify particular lessons that would resonate with contemporaries, and by including heroes from a variety of Greek states (including, across the *Parallel Lives*, heroes from Sparta, Syracuse, Corinth, Thebes, and Macedon) and across the pre-Imperial period, Plutarch presented his principles of effective leadership as a form of cultural practice rooted in the conduct of leaders of free states that now comprised the Roman Empire. By creating these cultural bridges, linking the principles of contemporary leadership to the practices of Greek and Roman statesmen of the pre-Imperial era, Plutarch positioned the local politics of provincial cities in his own day on a cultural continuum that extended into the far reaches of the past as well as into the future.

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Chapter 7

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Plutarch's Imaginary Sparta: Hybridity and Identity in a Paradoxical Community

The importance of Sparta for Plutarch's sense of identity has been amplified recently by Hugh Liebert's claims that "Lycurgus is Plutarch's literary alter ego", and that Sparta should be placed at the centre of Plutarch's political theorizing since Lycurgus' Sparta was for Plutarch "the city *par excellence*".[1] These are intriguing claims and if true would require a shift in some of our thinking on Plutarch and how he envisioned himself and his literary project. In particular, identity politics is at play here: does Plutarch of Chaironeia, who is also at some stage awarded Roman citizenship, actually really identify more closely with not just Sparta, but a philosophical idea of a Sparta, than anywhere else? Or to put it another way, if Sparta is "the city *par excellence*", is Plutarch aiming Lycurgus-like to mould his hometown, Chaironeia – a place he explicitly says he chose to stay in so that it might not be diminished (*Dem*. 2.2) – in the image of Sparta? Such a suggestion complicates the question of how Plutarch identified himself, something which itself is, in fact, not completely agreed upon by scholars. What follows here, therefore, will be an interrogation of Liebert's contentions situated within the broader question of Plutarch's identity politics, and I will

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[1] Liebert 2016 (with the quotations from pages 8 and 4 respectively).

Chandra Giroux (editor). Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World. Teiresias Supplements Online, Volume 3. 2022: 148-163. © Noreen Humble 2022. License Agreement: CC-BY-NC (permission to use, distribute, and reproduce in any medium, provided the original work is properly attributed and not used for commercial purposes).

start with the question of Plutarch's relationship with Rome before moving to his identification – or not, as this paper will argue – with Sparta.[2]

To help to frame this interrogation, I am going to make loose use of two points of comparison: (1) Julia Kristeva's concept of the paradoxical community, first articulated in *Strangers to Ourselves* (1991) - revised and reinterpreted since then by, among others, Homi Bhabha[3] - which in essence is her term for a community made up of foreigners reconciled to their foreignness, but in which there is not necessarily a merging of cultures; and (2) recent Indigenous criticisms of settler colonialism in Canada[4] and the politics of recognition. Neither point of comparison is meant to, nor does, provide anywhere near an exact parallel to the world of Greece under Rome – indeed Indigenous responses provide salutary critiques of the post-colonial theorizing of critics like Bhabha[5] – but aspects of both viewpoints together allow useful jumping off points to interrogate Plutarch in the complex, hybrid world of the Roman Empire.

Greek Plutarch versus Roman Plutarch

Kristeva articulated what she termed the "problem of the foreigner" as follows:[6]

> A paradoxical community is emerging, made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as foreigners... In France, at the end of the twentieth century each is fated to remain the same *and*

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[2] I would like to express warm thanks to Chandra Giroux for the invitation to speak at the workshop from which this volume sprang, to those on the ground in Münster for their wonderful hospitality, to Marc Sidwell for introducing me to the concept of preference falsification, and to Jeffrey Beneker and Keith Sidwell for close reading and pushing me towards greater clarity of argument.

[3] Bhabha 2011.

[4] These criticisms have been rightly kept at the front of public consciousness in the light of the recent (2021) discoveries of unmarked graves at sites of former residential schools (schools which were used as tools of assimilation, by separating young Indigenous children from their families and culture). Knowledge of the abuses carried out in these schools was made clear during the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2007-2015) though no concrete action was taken in response. Reports can be accessed on the official website for the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation: https://nctr.ca.

[5] See, for example, the recent critique of Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the third space by Acheraïou 2011. A key aspect of Acheraïou's work is his insistence on the importance of a diachronic approach and so he has an interesting overview of the complex relationship Rome had with Greek on the cultural level: "the tension between admiration and resistance, adoption and rejection of Hellenism within learned circles in Rome indicates how far the Roman politics of identity and the process of hybridization which informed it were politically, ideologically and emotionally charged issues" (2011: 30).

[6] Kristeva 1991: 194-195.

> the other – without forgetting his original culture but putting it in perspective to the extent of having it not only exist side by side but also alternate with others' culture.

Though Kristeva is discussing a specific time and place here – France at the end of the twentieth century – she does discuss these ideas more broadly, including in the ancient world, though she does not actually touch upon or apply her observations to the period of the early Roman Empire. Nevertheless I think this articulation is a very useful one to keep in mind as a touchstone when examining how Plutarch presents cultural practice in his own connected world. For, if we adapt the above quotation slightly, Plutarch can be viewed as: a foreigner in the world of Rome, who is reconciled with himself to the extent that he recognizes himself as a foreigner, i.e., is both same and other, and puts his own Greek culture in perspective to the extent of having it not only exist side by side but also alternate with the culture of Rome.

Such an articulation of identity holds, I would argue, whatever view is then taken on the extent to which he embraced Rome, politically and culturally, in reality and in his writings. This question – of how Plutarch regards his own relationship with Rome – has been explored many times before and from many different angles. In a recent reappraisal of the situation Philip Stadter approached the issue by examining whether or not Plutarch regarded the Romans he was connected with as friends or patrons. Stadter concluded that Plutarch was able to view them as both, and that (1) "Plutarch accepted Rome's hegemony and Greece's subordinate status", (2) that "he was willing to accept the patronage of highly placed friends" (whatever shadowy benefit this brought – unseen to us now) but that he "maintained a strict sense of dignity, independence and his own worth" (the framing of this point bearing some resemblance to Kristeva's definition of the paradox of being a foreigner), and (3) "as part of a goodwill response that a hierarchical inferior might make to the *hêgemones*", he aimed "to educate thoughtful, moral leaders for these cities and the empire".[7]

Not everyone of course agrees with this. Theories about why Plutarch wrote *parallel* lives matching and comparing a prominent Greek figure with a Roman, for example, range across a wide spectrum. Some certainly accept a position such as the one that Stadter suggests, i.e., that the *Parallel Lives* were written in a spirit of conciliation and with acceptance of hegemony but in a dignified manner. So, for example, D.A. Russell suggests that they were to demonstrate the weight of the Greek past to the Romans, K. Ziegler that they were to show to the Greeks that the Romans were civilized.[8] More on the middle of this spectrum, perhaps, is the suggestion of A. Barigazzi that this literary project shows that the two cultures together are better than each alone, or Jeff Tatum's assessment that it represents an "assertion of Hellenic values within a safe Roman space" or Simon Swain's overall suggestion that "Plutarch did not in any way chafe at Roman rule... and yet was at heart a non-integrationist".[9] Equally, however, the *Parallel Lives* have been read more strongly by T.E. Duff as a "statement of cultural resistance" and a reversing of the political hegemony in literature at least, by the depiction of Roman history through a Greek perspective.[10] This paper does not aspire to resolve these differences but it will add a few more arguments which lean towards the latter end of the spectrum of views, i.e., that Plutarch's writing is, on some level, a form of resistance.

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[7] Stadter 2015: 21-44, with the quoted phrases coming from his concluding section on pp. 43-44. See now Giroux 2021, who develops this line of thinking further to suggest that Plutarch aimed to educate the upper echelons of Roman society too, even as far as the emperor himself.

Applying modern theoretical approaches such as postcolonial theory to try to see if we can resolve this issue about where Plutarch stands vis-à-vis hegemonic Rome is a useful exercise if done with care but has the potential to further distort things if not. Judith Mossman has argued, for example, that modern post-colonial theorizing which focusses often on the importance of decolonizing language does not always sit so easily when applied to the ancient world where Greek, not Latin, appears to have been the language of cultural power, that is, Plutarch was not constrained to write in the language of the political hegemon.[11] But of course from our own – and here I would include broadly speaking most European and North American scholars – position as cultural and political hegemons it is easy for us to imagine that this levels the playing field when dealing with colonizers and colonized. The matter is, however, not that tidy or easily resolved. Even if we were to agree that some Romans themselves generally acknowledged Greek cultural supremacy in some areas, pedestalizing Greek culture was certainly not practiced or encouraged by all Romans (for every Hadrian there was a Cato the Elder). Further, Roman appropriation of Greek cultural prestige was put to use to validate Romanness and from there to validate subjugating others to Roman will.[12] Most importantly, the hegemonic political culture of the Romans was in control of the recognition of this Greek cultural supremacy and in control of what the parameters of this recognition were.

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[8] See Russell 1966: 141, and Ziegler 1949: 260.
[9] See Barigazzi 1984; Tatum 2010: 17-18; Swain 1996: 185.
[10] Duff 1999: 287-309.
[11] Mossman 2005: 500.

The inequities inherent in the "politics of recognition" are perhaps easier to see with a contemporary example, such as the current attempts at reconciliation between colonial-settler Canada and what is left of the Indigenous population inhabiting the same land. As prominent Indigenous activist-scholars, such as Glenn Coulthard, point out, it is the oppressor who sets the terms of recognition, hence perpetuating the colonial hierarchy even as they congratulate themselves for being open-minded and inclusive.[13] Coulthard particularly argues against the position that claims that the best way to undermine colonialism is to find a way to do so from within the colonial system,[14] on the grounds that the line between interpellation – the internalization of the colonizing culture – and interpolation – the changing from within of the colonizing culture – is thin and requires a level playing field politically, economically, and militarily, a thing which does not, in practice, exist in colonial contexts.[15]

Plutarch certainly explicitly acknowledged in his *Political Praecepts* that there was no level playing field in his contemporary world. He seems to express such inequality quite clearly in a number of places in the work, for example (*Praec. ger. reip.* 814e–f):[16]

> Ποιοῦντα μέντοι καὶ παρέχοντα τοῖς κρατοῦσιν εὐπειθῆ τὴν πατρίδα δεῖ μὴ προσεκταπεινοῦν, μηδὲ τοῦ σκέλους δεδεμένου προσυποβάλλειν καὶ τὸν τράχηλον, ὥσπερ ἔνιοι, καὶ μικρὰ καὶ μείζω φέροντες ἐπὶ τοὺς ἡγεμόνας ἐξονειδίζουσι τὴν δουλείαν, μᾶλλον δ᾽ ὅλως τὴν πολιτείαν ἀναιροῦσι, καταπλῆγα καὶ περιδεᾶ καὶ πάντων ἄκυρον ποιοῦντες.
>
> However, it is necessary also that the one who makes his state obedient to those in power and hands it over to them should not degrade it further, nor, after its

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[12] See the overview in Acheraïou 2011: 28–31.

[13] Coulthard 2014 is an important analysis of the complexities of the "politics of recognition" in the Canadian Indigenous context. His chapter 2 ("The politics of recognition in colonial contexts") clearly lays out the problems.

[14] A position taken by Turner 2006.

[15] Coulthard 2014: 45–49. Giroux 2021 does not express it is this way but leans towards arguing for Plutarch aiming for interpolation.

[16] All translations are my own.

> leg has been fettered, also submit its neck to be yoked, as some do, who by putting things both small and great directly to the leaders, bring on the reproach of slavery, or rather completely destroy their politeia, making it dazed, excessively timid and powerless in all matters.

Yet even here interpretation is not uniform. Some read the *Political Praecepts* as accepting and/or conciliatory, others as a warning to fellow Greeks interested in local politics that Rome hovers threateningly over them at every turn and so their job is to promote internal harmony, i.e., as Plutarch writing pragmatically certainly, but not passively or accepting of the status quo.[17] The fact that the examples in the *Political Praecepts* come from the past, not from the present, may not indicate anything more than that the composition of this work likely belongs to the same period in which he was working on the *Parallel Lives*.[18] However, arguments that the temporal disjunction of the examples indicates a dissatisfaction with the present state of political life in Greece under Rome and thus imparts a stronger urgency to the advice are compelling.[19] Brad Cook, for example, persuasively argues that the five obscure (and so not necessarily instantly recognizable to Roman readers) examples at 814b constitute very strong, pragmatic and quietist advice.[20] So I do not think that the fact that Plutarch writes in his native language can be dismissed as evidence of cultural resistance so easily.

While I do not want to disappear down a rabbit hole here, it is also important to remember that we cannot be certain that Plutarch's carefully crafted literary persona is necessarily the same as his private persona,[21] though we can be certain that his literary works and the advice contained in them did have the potential to affect cultural practice whether or not they truly represented his inner thinking and whether or not they represent passive acceptance or active resistance of the status quo. He may not appear to be chafing at Roman rule in his writings because it was, quite simply, expedient not to do so. And it is partly the fact that we cannot be certain, combined with our own cultural baggage, both on an individual level and collectively,[22] that creates space for the wide range of views.

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[17] See, for example, Schiffman 2008 for the former view and Duff 1999: 293-298 for the latter. Support of the latter view can be gained, in an oblique fashion, by looking at the circumstances in which Plutarch is writing through a different kind of modern theoretical lens. Kuran 1997 argues that "preference falsification" (i.e., "misrepresenting one's wants under perceived social pressure") not only distorts public opinion, but also shapes collective decision-making and orients structural changes, that is, that it both *is* and *affects* cultural practice. If Plutarch is writing in Greek as a form of cultural resistance, he will, on some level, also be careful of what he is saying, because there are lines drawn in the sand by the hegemonic power beyond which it is just not possible to cross (i.e., that the politics of recognition extend only so far). Even though, therefore, we have no way of knowing how far his public literary persona matches his private thoughts, we end up trying – to use Kuran's terminology – to infer his private "truths" from what are possibly his public "lies".

[18] And so that these examples from the past were in his mind for other reasons, i.e., for his biographical project, on which see Pelling 2014: 154.

[19] Preston 2001: 117, looking at the *Roman Questions* and *Greek Questions*, argues, by contrast, that the continual focus on the past undermines Greek cultural confidence.

[20] Cook 2004. See also de Blois 2004, who argues that though Plutarch, "knew the risks of complete polis autonomy and counted the blessings of Roman imperial authority (*Praec.* 824c)" (2004: 63), he also clearly points in this work to the real and present dangers Roman soldiers posed to Greek poleis at the very basic level of taxation and requisitioning.

The differences, however, between understanding Plutarch as conciliator or as resister are significant and unbridgeable and whichever way one leans will result in a different interpretation of his presentation of his own cultural identity and cultural practices more generally on every level. Is he truly accepting of the homogenizing power of Rome or simply accepting of the fact that it exists but aware that it must be negotiated in order to preserve some idea of Greekness? Is he accepting of political hegemony but not of cultural hegemony?[23] What is he actually trying to instill a sense of belonging in? A contemporary Greek world, which is not quite free but always negotiating with the hegemonic power in some way? A Greek world that exists side by side with the Roman world but still alternative to it? A connected Romanized Greek world of some sort? Is it a lost Greek past that he longs for a return to? Does he locate the ideal of Greekness in some utopian reconstruction of Sparta? Liebert's answer to the last three questions is yes,[24] but I think his attempt to give Sparta a place of privilege in Plutarch's thought is problematic.

Chaironeian Plutarch versus Spartan Plutarch

However Plutarch viewed the co-existence of Greek and Roman culture, within the Roman world, and however he viewed himself, both politically and culturally, vis-à-vis the imperial power, this co-existence – or paradoxical community, to return to Kristeva's terminology – is a fact. Ought we to be seeing his Greek identity also as complexly hybrid? His contemporary polis identity is Chaironeian and he appears to have spent most of his life in

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[21] In fact, in the *Political Praecepts*, he makes a point of emphasizing how important it is to tailor one's rhetoric for one's audience (*Praec. ger. reip.* 799b-e), on which passage see briefly Pelling 2014: 156. See also n. 17 above.
[22] For although the majority of Classics scholars are broadly speaking colonizers, there are complex hierarchies and levels of colonization within even this small group as well.
[23] The view put forth in Beneker, in this volume.
[24] Succinctly summarized in the last paragraph of his book (Liebert 2016: 218).

Chaironeia, where he participated in polis politics (serving on embassies to proconsuls, overseeing building projects, etc.).[25] So on the surface of things, at least, it would be perverse not to see him self-identifying on this local front, even as he also holds citizenship in imperial Rome – a fact which is absent from his extant writings.[26] But Liebert wants, if not to displace that identity,[27] then to overlay it with another by suggesting that Plutarch actually identified with the Spartan lawgiver Lycurgus and that he regarded Sparta as the city *par excellence*, and, further, in the ways that were open to him, tried to introduce archaic "Spartan" ideals into contemporary Chaironeian life. We can, thus, again reframe the opening quote from Kristeva to capture Liebert's view thus: [Plutarch is] a foreigner in the world of Roman Chaironeia, who is reconciled with himself to the extent that he recognizes himself as a foreigner, i.e., is both same and other, and puts his own identification with Lycurgan Spartan culture in perspective to the extent of having it not only exist side by side but also alternate with the culture of Roman Chaironeia. This suggests, among other things, that Plutarch has a wistful nostalgia not just for the Greek past in general – a nostalgia that has been rejected by Pelling, among others[28] – but for a very specific aspect of the Greek past: the idealised world of Lycurgan Sparta, which if true, would also have to be able to be accommodated in the Roman present. This is a bold but problematic claim. Evidence for it is built up in a number of ways but there are cracks in the foundations.

First, Plutarch would be an outlier among Greek political thinkers if he held this view. This is not impossible or, indeed, implausible, and indeed Liebert argues for this, by highlighting how Plutarch rejects various Platonic and Aristotelian criticisms of Spartan practices.[29] It is certainly true that Plutarch vigorously and explicitly rejects some of Plato's and Aristotle's criticisms of Sparta at various points in the *Lycurgus*,[30] but he certainly does not reject all aspects of Plato's vision in particular, and even at times imports elements from Plato's city-in-speech in the *Republic* into his own description of Sparta.[31] Consequently, he does not entirely dispatch "his most distinguished predecessors and pioneer his own path to Sparta".

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[25] Briefly see Beck (2014: 3), who notes that Plutarch's hometown "elegantly represents the stimulating intersection of history, topography, and memory". Much more comprehensively, see now Giroux 2021.

[26] Because we have lost a considerable amount of Plutarch's corpus (see, e.g., Humble forthcoming), it is difficult to make definitive use of the fact that he does not himself mention his acquisition of Roman citizenship, but it is nonetheless interesting that had not the base for a statue of Hadrian survived (*SIG*^{3} 829a), we would be in ignorance of this fact.

[27] He does note it, in passing: e.g., Liebert 2016: 42 (where he says Plutarch is both Chaironeian and Roman), 44, and 88.

[28] Pelling 2014: 159. See now also Beneker, in this volume.

[29] Liebert 2016: 109-110.

[30] Liebert 2016: 110, gives as examples Aristotle on women (*Pol.* 1269b13-1270a7; cf. *Lyc.* 14) and inequality (*Pol.* 1270a14-b5; cf. *Lyc.* 8-10, 13.4-7) and Plato's criticism of Spartan homosexuality (*Laws* 1.636a-e; cf. *Lyc.* 17.1, 18.8-9).

The same goes for Plutarch's use of Xenophon. Because Liebert regards Xenophon as taking a stance on Lycurgus which is similar to that taken by Plutarch, he has to find some way to downplay this likely line of influence to uphold his theory of Plutarch striking out on his own. He does so by trying to suggest, through a series of questions, that Xenophon does not confront the central problems Sparta posed. As is so often the case, Xenophon is criticized for apparently not addressing criticisms which other authors had about Sparta.[32] This line of attack, however, shows some inattention to what Xenophon is saying in his *Lacedaimoniôn Politeia*. Liebert criticizes Xenophon, for example, for suggesting Lycurgus manages to educate for "all the virtues", whereas Plato's Socrates had argued that a regime focused on *philotimia* only bothered practicing virtue in public. Yet he does not consider what Xenophon might mean by "all the virtues" or the fact that the whole of Xenophon's treatise shows that attending only to ensure that virtue was practiced in public is precisely what he regards Lycurgus as having done.[33] Further, Xenophon does not give any suggestion that Leuctra revealed the flaws of Lycurgus' laws because, like Plato, he recognizes that Lycurgan laws were already inherently flawed.[34] Thus, Xenophon does indeed confront the central problems Sparta posed, and no less than Plato (and other first generation Socratics such as Antisthenes and Aeschines) and Aristotle, he othered Sparta and was critical of many aspects of its otherness. Further, he would be no more likely than any of them to have considered Lycurgus his alter ego or Sparta the best city and his spiritual home. Rather, while he may have thought favourably about certain aspects of the Spartan *politeia* (such as the idea of public education), like his contemporary political theorists, he agreed that the Spartan implementation of these practices was deeply flawed.[35] So not only does Xenophon agree with Plato in particular about the particular failings of Lycurgan Sparta, he also criticizes the Lycurgan practices themselves. This reading of Xenophon's

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[31] E.g., his discussion about children being the property of the state (*Lyc.* 15.14-16), on which see Humble 2022b: 231-235.

[32] Liebert 2016: 107-108 (Xenophon's promotion of Lycurgus), 110-111 (Liebert's attempt to suggest that Xenophon evades the central problems of Lycurgan Sparta).

[33] See Humble 2021: 157-162 on *Lac.* 10.4-8.

[34] Liebert 2016: 107 and 110 for this specific criticism of Xenophon. See Humble 2021: 249-275 for a discussion of Plato's and Xenophon's agreement on the flaws in Lycurgan practices.

[35] See Humble 2021 and 2022a.

Lacedaimoniôn Politeia, therefore, would have actually worked in favour of Liebert's contention that Plutarch's broke new ground in his analysis of Sparta.

Equally problematic for Liebert's understanding of Plutarch's nostalgia for Spartan ways, however, is his own recognition that Plutarch provides a more ambivalent portrait of Sparta across the other Spartan lives.[36] He is therefore constrained to explain this by arguing that they are not written in a "theoretical register" and need to be viewed separately from the ideal of Sparta in Plutarch's mind as shown in the *Lycurgus*. It is not so clear, however, how Plutarch might have guided his readers to follow such a reading. Michele Lucchesi, by contrast, sees continuity across the Spartan lives which together form a macrotext explaining Sparta's rise and fall.[37] In exploring the life cycle of the state in this way, Plutarch is actually broadly following in the paths of Xenophon and Plato, even if he does it in an entirely different medium. Still, these problems do not necessarily mean that within the "protected space of the past"[38] Plutarch is not engaging in a type of cultural hybridization which is different from what his philosophical mentors of the classical period were doing. He is, after all, living centuries after the collapse of the imaginary community he is setting forth in the *Lycurgus*, in a Greek world firmly under Roman control. That very fact alone suggests that he is going to bring a different perspective to things, but Liebert has not made anywhere near a watertight case for this.

Secondly, we also need to consider how Plutarch's audience would view this Spartan overlay (i.e., this desire to cross-fertilize politico-cultural practices in his Roman Chaironeian present with the politico-cultural practices of Lycurgan Sparta), given that Sparta at this period of time was very much on the level of a Chaironeia, a provincial Greek town,[39] whose wealthy elite sent their sons abroad for education and for whom Lycurgan practices were in a far distant past,[40] even if, as in other Greek poleis, they adhered to some form of archaism in certain practices, which linked them to their more glorious and more free past, but in a circumscribed way.[41] Liebert acknowledges that the Sparta of Plutarch's day bore very little resemblance to the Sparta even of the Classical period but does not seem to me to consider fully what effect this might have on his contention. If Plutarch was aiming at giving beneficial advice to deal with contemporary political life, what use would cross-fertilization with the archaic practices of a state which imploded on itself be, and how seriously would such suggestions be taken?[42]

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[36] Liebert 2016: 124-146.

[37] Lucchesi 2014.

[38] The formulation is that of Duff 1999: 298.

[39] Cartledge & Spawforth 1992: 190.

[40] Cartledge & Spawforth 1992: 176-189.

[41] The classic example here, as far as Sparta is concerned, is the flagellation contest, described by Plutarch at *Inst. Lac.* 239c-d and elsewhere (see Kennell 1995: 149-161 for other Roman-era testimony), which bears only slight resemblance to practices in Sparta in the Classical period (e.g., cf. Xen. *Lac.* 2.9).

Thirdly, Liebert's starting point for the argument that Lycurgus is Plutarch's alter ego is his own drawing of a parallel between Plutarch's writing of parallel lives and Plutarch's first comment about Lycurgus' political theorizing in the *Lycurgus* 4.4:[43]

> ἀπὸ δὲ τῆς Κρήτης ὁ Λυκοῦργος ἐπὶ Ἀσίαν ἔπλευσε, βουλόμενος, ὡς λέγεται, ταῖς Κρητικαῖς διαίταις, εὐτελέσιν οὔσαις καὶ αὐστηραῖς, τὰς Ἰωνικὰς πολυτελείας καὶ τρυφάς, ὥσπερ ἰατρὸς σώμασιν ὑγιεινοῖς ὕπουλα καὶ νοσώδη, παραβαλὼν ἀποθεωρῆσαι τὴν διαφορὰν τῶν βίων καὶ τῶν πολιτειῶν.
>
> From Crete, Lycurgus sailed to Asia, wishing, as it is said, by comparing with the Cretan way of life, which was frugal and austere, that of the Ionians, which was inclined to extravagance and luxury, to examine the differences in their modes of living and their *politeiai*, just as a doctor compares with healthy bodies those which are festering and disease-ridden.

Thus, for Liebert, just as Lycurgus compared the Cretans and Ionians so Plutarch compares the Romans and Greeks, in such a way that both he (i.e., Plutarch) and his reader can contemplate the relationship between the heroes' lives and their regimes.[44] It seems to me, however, that the very structure of the *Parallel Lives* on its own does that without any need for a forced parallel with one sentence in the *Lycurgus*. Further, the parallel drawn above does not, strictly speaking, work: Lycurgus is neither Cretan nor Ionian, whereas Plutarch is both Greek and Roman. And it further relies on being abstracted from the rest of Lycurgus' travels, which, tradition claims, took him to Egypt, Libya, Spain and India, and so does not take sufficient account of the general *topos* of lawgivers travelling to compare the practices of others before settling on their own.[45] Although Plutarch expresses a bit of increasing skepticism about these later travels, his narrative about what Lycurgus is said to have learnt from the Egyptians highlights the importance of the Egyptian model. We might also wonder why, if Lycurgus were the most important figure for Plutarch, the *Lycurgus-Numa* was not the first pair in the broader project.

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[42] Not to mention the fact that earlier, in the time of Philopoemen, Sparta was ruled by a tyrant (*Phil.* 10).

[43] Liebert 2016: 199-200.

[44] This is a point Shiffman (2017: 712) highlights in his review of Liebert's volume.

[45] Szegedy-Maszak 1978: 202.

Fourthly, Liebert's reading of the *Lycurgus* focuses on how Lycurgus, through his legislation, privileged *philotimia* ("love of honour") and competition, and claims that this constant contestation is a type of philosophizing.[46] From this he argues that Plutarch wants to reintroduce a "love of honour" in his contemporary fellow-Greeks, inspiring them by the *Lives* to contest with one another for honour (and hence for the benefit of their souls). In following this path, I think Liebert assigns too great a role to *philotimia* in Plutarch's own philosophy and also assigns it too positive a value, not adequately reconciling his theory with Plutarch's discussions of *philotimia* elsewhere.[47] For example, *philotimia* might have led Flamininus to the glorious end of "freeing Greece",[48] but it is also this quality that led him to drive Hannibal unjustly to suicide, for which Plutarch rebukes him (*Flam*. 20-21), and Plutarch's message in the *Political Praecepts* seems rather to argue *against* local contestation and "ambition" in favour of civic cooperation and self-control.[49] Further, Liebert frequently has to acknowledge that *philotimia* was valued more broadly in the Classical Greek world, somewhat undermining his claim that Sparta, and in particular Lycurgus, was for Plutarch the ultimate source of this concept and its political and civic value.[50] For example, in his concluding remarks Liebert does, in the end, admit that Plutarch does not want to "crawl crab-like back into Greece's glorious past" and "emulate Sparta's nativism by expelling foreigners", but he does think that Plutarch wants to reimport[51]

> the sorts of contests among prominent individuals ... that once animated Greek poleis and the Roman Republic... to acquaint Plutarch's contemporaries with the qualities of soul –foremost among them was *philotimia*, in all of its vigor and danger – that such competitions engaged.

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[46] Liebert 2016: 201.

[47] On *philotimia* in Plutarch see, e.g., Nikolaidis 2012 and Frazier 2014.

[48] See Beneker, in this volume, for a positive reading of Flamininus' *philotimia* "love of honour" against a negative reading of Philopoemen's *philonikia*. See also Nikolaidis 2012: 24-29 on this example. Both terms are not absolutes and the range of presentation of *philotimia* across Plutarch's corpus serves to confirm its ambiguous status, as Nikolaidis shows.

[49] See, e.g., Cook 2004 and de Blois 2004.

[50] And this happens notably both at the start of the monograph (Liebert 2016: 2) and at the end, as the following quotation shows.

[51] Liebert 2016: 217.

Here, perhaps inadvertently, though certainly correctly, he ascribes the pursuit of *philotimia* to all Greek poleis (and to the Roman Republic), in which it is, in fact, embedded in multiple ways (in political, religious and cultural contexts).[52]

Why does Liebert privilege *philotimia* in the face of so many others who argue that for Plutarch it is an ambiguous quality, as likely to lead its possessor astray as to lead to glory? He does so because of the starting point for his whole project. When Liebert says that "Plutarch's thought, understood as an exploration of the honor-loving soul and the city, speaks to a number of concerns of contemporary political theorists", what he really means is that he is going to read Plutarch's thought through a particular kind of contemporary political theory. That is to say, he is going to read Plutarch through a brand of modern neo-conservative political theorizing which wants to bring back patriotism and isolationism in the face of increasing internationalization and liberalism. Hence, he reads Plutarch as aiming to bring back polis culture in the face of imperial Rome. This modern theory, which has Straussian affiliations, also places inordinate value on honour. Sparta, therefore, is held up as the best ancient Western model for an honour-loving isolationist state, even if this model itself is an inaccurate representation of Classical Sparta.[53] Liebert is doing, therefore, what many a long line of distinguished intellectual figures before him have done, using an ancient authority to justify and further his own modern view, and it is this, in the end, which leads to the type of special pleading or stretching of evidence I have outlined above.

The modern construction of ancient Greece, which Liebert has retrojected onto Plutarch, was made to serve a modern political agenda and is itself firmly based in longstanding Western colonial attitudes which have founded their authority for millennia on their appropriation of ancient Greek authors. And this brings me back to one of my starting points. Plutarch belongs not to the colonizing culture but to the colonized culture and though the colonizers, the Romans, may have liked to parade Hellenic culture and grant it some form of privilege in their own cultural arena, that does not change the basic hierarchical relationship. Again, consider a Canadian example. The Canadian Museum of History is advertised as follows on an Ottawa tourism site:[54]

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[52] On the importance of (and concurrent danger of *philotimia*) in the polis of Athens, see, e.g., Deene 2013, and in the works of Isocrates and Xenophon, see e.g., Alexiou 2018.

[53] Plato's equation of Sparta with his second best regime, a timocracy ("rule of honour") in the *Republic* helps to reinforce this notion, but Plato characterizes this regime as possessing both *philonikia* and *philotimia* (*R.* 8.548c); see Humble 2021: 267-268 on this passage.

> The Canadian Museum of History is Canada's most visited museum for good reason – it's home to the world's largest indoor collection of totem poles, the largest exhibition about Canadian history, and it highlights the achievements of Indigenous Peoples in the First Peoples Hall.

Colonial Canada celebrates these cultural artifacts, these "achievements", of the Indigenous people of Canada whom it has systematically oppressed for centuries, at the same time as forty-five Indigenous communities across the country have long-term drinking water advisories in place,[55] with one advisory stretching back to 1995.[56] This in 2021 in one of the richest countries in the world, despite the explicit United Nations declaration – shockingly itself dating only to 2010 – that water and sanitation are basic human rights.[57] In the same way, a Roman assertion that Greek culture trumped Roman culture would hardly, for example, have comforted a small Greek polis whose food supplies were seized by Roman troops while they were carrying out the basic administrative tasks of the Empire.[58] Plutarch's Roman friends and the care he undoubtedly took as a local figure of authority to work with, not against, Rome – i.e., the type of care he advises be taken in the *Political Praecepts* – likely meant that Chaironeia in his day thrived. But such pragmatic and conciliatory political advice does not rule out a core of resistance.

Conclusion

I think, therefore, that Liebert's hypothesis is unsustainable, but it does present an interesting entry point into a discussion of broader issues of cultural cross-fertilization and hybridization, the importation of the cultural past into the cultural present and the rewriting of the cultural past in light of the cultural present, an activity in which Plutarch certainly engages, as does Liebert himself. Because Plutarch focusses on the historical, and hence cultural, past in his works it is important to ask seriously whether he is identifying with some lost idea of Greekness or not. If he is – as many would argue – it is not a narrowly Spartan one, though his reluctance to comment on his own times certainly hinders our understanding of how he viewed himself. I think that the past simply was a safer space in which to interrogate contemporary concerns, including his own understanding of his own identity, as a Greek living under Roman rule, and that – to reformulate Kristeva's words one more time – he was reconciled to being a foreigner in the world of Rome and put his own Greek culture in perspective in his writings by having it exist alongside, and as an alternative to, the culture of Rome. But in doing so, I incline still more towards the view that Plutarch's literary project is at least partially a statement of resistance against the hegemony of Rome, rather than a celebration of "the start of a new and better age" (as Beneker, this volume, phrases it).

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[54] https://ottawatourism.ca/en/ottawa-insider/ottawa-s-seven-national-museums.

[55] This figure comes from the government website updated on September 20, 2021: https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1506514143353/1533317130660. https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/auditor-general-reports-2021-1.5927572. There are no accurate corresponding figures for how many individuals these water advisories effect. Suffice it to say that such a situation would not be tolerated in non-Indigenous towns and cities.

[56] https://www.globalcitizen.org/en/content/canada-indigenous-drinking-water-dangers/.

[57] https://www.un.org/waterforlifedecade/human_right_to_water.shtml.

[58] The salient point made in de Blois 2004.

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TSO
TEIRESIAS SUPPLEMENTS ONLINE

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

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[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.

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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 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.

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

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 2,818km^2, only slightly larger than Attica (2,540km^2).[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 farmland[10] 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]

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[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.

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*

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[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.

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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 Thespiai 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 Thespiai, who supported the Greeks, as well as a Theban unit at Thermopylae, representing the internal divisions of that polis (Mackil 2013: 29).

22 Beck & Ganther 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 subtlety 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 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.

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[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 Xenophontos 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.

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] Thespiai (*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 Βοιώτιον πεδίον ἀγαθοῖς ἱππεῦσι καὶ ὁπλίταις; *Arist.* 10.2; trans. B. Perrin[33]). 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 inscriptions[35]), 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 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?

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[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 *Agesilaus* 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; Cephisus River: *Sull.* 17.4.

[35] E.g., *De fort. Rom.* 318d.

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 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.

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[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.

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 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 ὅπλων, ἐν οἷς εἰσιν ἥττους, μάχεσθαι; *Phoc.* 9.4; trans. B. Perrin).

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

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]

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[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 οὖ 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 ἠλιθίους, μάλιστα διὰ τὰς ἀδηφαγίας προσαγορεύουσιν: ‘οὗτοι δ᾽ αὖ συ …’ καὶ ὁ Μένανδρος ‘οἳ γνάθους ἔχουσι’; *De esu carnium* 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 Βοιώτιον).

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 Ἱπποδρομίου μηνός, ὡς δ᾽ Ἀθηναῖοι καλοῦσιν Ἑκατομβαιῶνος, ἱσταμένου πέμπτῃ δύο λαβεῖν συνέβη νίκας ἐπιφανεστάτας, αἷς τοὺς Ἕλληνας ἠλευθέρωσαν, τήν τε περὶ Λεῦκτρα καὶ τήν ἐπὶ Κερησσῷ 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 Μεταγειτνιών, ὃν Βοιωτοὶ Πάνεμον καλοῦσιν, τοῖς Ἕλλησιν οὐκ εὐμενὴς γέγονε. τούτου γὰρ τοῦ μηνὸς ἑβδόμῃ καὶ τήν ἐν Κρανῶνι μάχην ἡττηθέντες ὑπ᾽ Ἀντιπάτρου τελέως ἀπώλοντο, καὶ πρότερον ἐν Χαιρωνείᾳ μαχόμενοι πρὸς Φίλιππον ἠτύχησαν. τῆς δ᾽ αὐτῆς ἡμέρας ταύτης ἐν τῷ Μεταγειτνιῶνι 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

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[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 Heschius, *s.v. Ληναιών*), 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 chiastic 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, when it came to marriage at least, Plutarch viewed the Greeks as having different customs from each other.[44]

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[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.

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 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.

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[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 differred 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.

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

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[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 adol.* 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 adol.* 23e–24a). Hesiod with Archilochus and Homer: *De superst.* 169b. Hesiod and Homer: *Quomodo adol.* 24f; *Consol ad Ap.* 105d–e; *Comp. Arist.-Cat. Mai.* 3.4. Hesiod and Euripides: *Quomodo adol.* 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 Thespiai, see Lamberton 1988.

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.

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[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, 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.

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

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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Epilogue

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Chaironeia is, and has been throughout its history, a small place. The village never became a hub bristling with culture, nor did it evolve into a regional center that pulled others into its orbit. Smallness, however, does not itself suggest a backwater place. In the case of Chaironeia, the opposite holds true. Situated along a major travel artery for the movement of armies through central and into southern Greece, the environs invited a series of major and indeed famed battles in antiquity. On less violent days, the passageway from the Kephissos Valley to the Lake Kopaïs region served as a convenient route for trade, mobility, and migration. The rich epigraphic body of manumission records from the Hellenistic period suggests that the village was not flyover country exclusively, but a keen destination for many who sought liberation from slavery. And after the dust of the major battles had settled, Chaironeia attracted numerous visitors who came to explore a site where history was made. At the height of this development, during the first two centuries CE, the local horizon of Chaironeia was firmly interlocked with the all-pervasive networks of the Roman Empire, fusing distant markets with the commodities from local farmers and manufacturers, including olive oil, perfume, and reeds.

To Plutarch, Chaironeia's foremost son, the smallness of his hometown was a given, formative to the local identity of place. "I live in a small city," he asserted in a famous verdict that has been cited in this volume already, "and I prefer to dwell there that it may not become smaller still" (*Dem*. 2.2). Scholars are quick to denounce the statement - along with other appreciations of the local horizon - as a literary trope, an expression that marries romantic ideas of home with projections of boundedness. The resulting image of fixity was both inherent and vital to prominent strategies of securing social distinction and authority. In the lived experience, so the standard reading, normative fixity yielded to the omnipresent force

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of cultural connectivity that has been found to be so characteristic of settlements in Roman Greece – and elsewhere in the connected Mediterranean, for that matter. But smallness is not the same as parochialness, and localness is no synonym for fixed, frozen conditions, disconnected from the fast-paced algorithm of globality. One of the major pitfalls in the study of cultural entanglement in the ancient Mediterranean is indeed the tendency to relegate the local horizon to the realm of topicality and, effectively, dismiss the quest for the local as a shortsighted endeavor that does not grasp, and account for, the dynamics of cultural connectivity.

The writings of Plutarch bear rich testimony to the mechanics of cultural practices that on the one hand are inspired by, and reflective of, a connected world, yet on the other owe so much to the local horizon in which they were carried out. A citizen of the Roman Empire at one point in his life, a prominent office holder in his hometown, student in Athens and priest at Delphi some 30 kilometers up the road from Chaironeia, Plutarch's biography oscillated between the local and the global, with multiple realms of engagement between both.

The papers assembled in this collection add critical depth to the unravelling of the form and force of each of these horizons. First, the notion of globality. Debates about the concept attribution of the global and its derivates – globalization, globality – have somewhat cooled off in recent years. Few subscribe to the idea fostered so long, mostly by historians of modernity, that the globalization paradigm applies to the histories of the 19th and 20th centuries exclusively. Plutarch's lens captures a world that is intimately entangled, meaningfully connecting and impacting the sentiments, experiences, and opportunities of people around the Mediterranean Sea and in its adjacent lands. At the time, this was a truly global geography.

The inhabitants of this global Roman Empire formed something that has been labelled a paradoxical community. The term describes a community made up of people who reconcile to a level of foreignness but are yet tied together by bonds of togetherness, without an eminent merging or melting of the various cultures that ground their foreignness. Indeed, Noreen Humble argues that the imperial framework of the Roman Empire provided a blueprint for universal togetherness and cultural distinction and idiosyncrasy, each entity in fruitful cross-fertilization with the other. It has often been observed, but has not always been fully appreciated, that in the cultural and religious matrix of the Roman order, Rome's genuine input was hardly that of a superior, privileged entity because of the power with which it was vested, speaking down upon its subordinates in Italy and beyond.

The verdict of intricacy is important as it resonates with the old question of how Plutarch viewed intercultural conversations between Greece and Rome, starting with his own relationship with Rome, in a world that was thoroughly entangled. The hybridization of culture saw no hard borders in Plutarch's days. Mediterranean intertwinement was the new natural, a deeply internalized state of being. Susan Jacobs shows in her contribution how cultural amalgamation had advanced even to a degree where the acknowledgement of the hybrid nature of political leadership – of its foundations and traditions – was a key prerequisite for the performance of good leadership. Also, hybrid fusion was not confined to the Graeco-Roman blend. Turning to the paradigmatic pair of Philopoimen and Flamininus, Jeffrey Beneker unravels the complicated cultural conversation between Greece and Rome, and the decisive turning points along the way to amalgamation. At the same time, the global scope of Plutarch's mindset went far beyond the two, extending into realms that might be subsumed under the umbrella of 'barbarian' but that were, in Plutarch's view, not really defined by Greek nor Roman. The papers by Rebecca Moorman and Thomas Schmidt display Plutarch's sincere interest in and fascination with this otherness. In Plutarch's connected world, cultural practice was determined by contact with all. The stories that were told, the moral lessons that were learnt, the consequences that followed: all of this was drawn from an extensive array of cultural mixtures and choices.

The pick and choose from the currents of connected cultures is, however, a hard-wired practice. It requires real people making choices, implicitly or cognitively, and it calls for an arena where abstract concepts of interculturality translate into the realness of place. If "all politics is local," so is the demeanor of cultural practice. When connected worlds hit the grassroot level of the community, the prevalence of the local shines through, not only because people are concerned with their immediate environment first and foremost, but also because the act of cultural amalgamation itself is subject to the force of quotidian rhythm and local systems of truth. These, too, are tied to a local environment and its physical characteristics: a workshop or marketplace and its prevailing attitudes and beliefs, or, in the papers of Karin Schlapbach and Sebastian Scharff, a dancefloor and sports field, each one with its own regime of appropriateness.

Plutarch's writings make us wonder if, amidst a connected world, the foregrounding of the local and the stabilities it suggests to some was really just a narrative device that lent persuasiveness to the recollection of lives and moral stories. To be sure, tracing the local landscape through which Plutarch's narrative traverses, circling seamlessly from Chaironeia into its surrounding region of Boiotia and back to his hometown, Chandra Giroux demonstrates how Plutarch creatively crafted images and shaped imaginations of a local kosmos that lived up to the comparison with that of any other place in Greece, including Athens. It required the emic eye, a particular type of local knowledgeability and experience, to foreground the distinctiveness of place and highlight its role in a connected world. It is tempting to dismiss this endeavor as a romantic trope, declaring it – suggestively so – the mirage of fixity. All the while, it also documents a sense of attachment to a place where the omnipresent force of global change might be observed with composure and confidence.