



**Plutarch:
Cultural Practice
in a Connected World**

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Plutarch: Cultural Practice in a Connected World

seeks to understand how Plutarch presents cultural practices in the past and present. Cultural practice, in this sense, refers to the activities, events, rituals, language, and expressions that are used, produced, and repeated in order to create meaning in the everyday lives of its participants. These practices might be traditional or newly constructed; both are exposed to change and challenge over time. Their intrinsic value to instill a sense of belonging, associated with a particular form of local discourse, makes them helpful compasses of orientation in a global context.

In this workshop, we ask how cultural phenomena, including, but not limited to, religious and civic ritual, gender and sexual orientation, dietary practice, and medical treatment, inform how Plutarch conceives of cultural practices in their local spheres as well as in relation to the wider world. In other words, in what ways can we detect local and global relationships in Plutarch's presentation of cultural practice? Do we recognize forms and expressions of cross-fertilization, hybridization, or entanglement? The workshop ultimately aims to shed light on how Plutarch engages with cultural practice before the backdrop of an increasingly connected world.

Organizers

Hans Beck and Chandra Giroux

Sponsors

Alexander von Humboldt Foundation

The Chair of Greek History at WWU, Münster

Program

February 6

| Domplatz 23, room 102

5:00–7:00 p.m. **Public keynote lecture**
Judith Mossman (Nottingham)
**The Colours on the Wings of
the Sphinx: Plutarch, metaphor,
and connectivity**

February 7

| Mensa am Aasee, Bismarckallee 11, room 3

8:15–8:45 Welcome and Coffee

8:45–10:30

8:45–9:00 Hans Beck (Münster), Introduction

9:00–9:45 Karin Schlapbach (Fribourg)
**Who Dances in Plutarch?
Written traces of a physical
cultural practice**

9:45–10:30 Frances Titchener (Logan)
**Plutarch's Multi-Cultural
Dinner Table**

10:30–11:00 Coffee Break

Program

11:00–12:30

11:00–11:45 Thomas Schmidt (Fribourg)
**Local Past and Global Present
in Plutarch's *Greek, Roman,
and Barbarian Questions***

11:45–12:30 Jeffrey Beneker (Madison)
**The Last of the Greeks, and Good
Riddance: Reconsidering the past in
Plutarch's *Philopoemen-Flamininus***

12:30–2:00 p.m. Lunch Break

2:00–3:30

2:00–2:45 Chandra Giroux (Montreal)
**Beyond Bacon: Plutarch and
Boiotian culture**

2:45–3:30 Noreen Humble (Calgary)
**Plutarch's Imaginary Sparta:
hybridity and identity in a
paradoxical community**

3:30–4:00 Coffee Break

4:00–4:45 Michael Grünbart (Münster)
**Aspects of Plutarchean Reception
in Byzantine Learned Culture**

4:45–5:30 Closing Discussion

Keynote

Mossman, Judith

The Colours on the Wings of the Sphinx: Plutarch, metaphor, and connectivity

This paper looks at some of Plutarch's uses of metaphor and how they express the connectivity of language, thought and feeling in his intellectual world. Metaphors from grammar and from coinage emphasise the exchange of ideas; other image-groups convey the slipperiness of emotions in human life. Metaphors can be used to elide stages in an argument, but also to grant a depth and texture to ideas which lifts the text to another level. All Greek will be translated.

Workshop

Beneker, Jeffrey

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

The glory that was Greece did not provoke a sense of adulatory nostalgia in the Greco-Roman Plutarch. In his *Philopoemen-Flamininus*, the only pair of Lives featuring contemporary heroes who interacted with each other, Plutarch explores the notions of greatness that survived in Greek popular memory and challenges his readers to reconsider Greece's historical achievements in light of Rome's conquest. Both Philopoemen and Flamininus could claim to have delivered freedom to Greece, but Philopoemen, in the tradition of the great generals of the past, won his victories over fellow Greeks, making his gift of freedom just another form of servitude. Flamininus, on the other hand, broke the cycle of inter-Greek warfare and bestowed actual freedom after many centuries of strife. In this pair of Lives, Plutarch allows Philopoemen his time in the spotlight, giving his military victories their due in his own Life, but then in the Flamininus he undermines them, and calls into question all those that came before. The new political and cultural context of Roman imperial control, established first in the second century BCE and persisting until Plutarch's day, becomes the lens for interpreting not just Philopoemen but all the great men from Greece's glorious past.

Giroux, Chandra

Beyond Bacon: Plutarch and Boiotian Culture

"Now rouse your companions, Aeneas, first to shout the praises of Hera Parthenia, and then to know whether we have truly escaped the ancient reproach of men's speech, 'Boiotian swine'." (Pindar *Olympian Odes* 6.89–90)

Clearly, before Pindar wrote this Ode, Boiotia was stereotyped as a backwater of Greece, with "Boiotian swine" as a well-known Athenian taunt for those around the Kopaic Basin. 600 years after Pindar, Plutarch still seems to struggle with insults towards his countrymen (see, for example, *Against Herodotus* 1), and strives to alter what we now see as an Atheno-centric narrative. This paper will examine how Plutarch presents Boiotia and its culture in his writings. It will ask what Plutarch sees as being uniquely Boiotian and how this Boiotian culture both gains meaning in his local world of Chaironeia and how it stands out, or becomes entangled with, the 'global' sphere of the Roman Empire.

Grünbart, Michael

Aspects of Plutarchean Reception in Byzantine Learned Culture

Plutarch was received in Byzantine times in multiple ways, although little synthetic and comprehensive research has been done until recently (see, for example, Brill's Companion to the Reception of Plutarch by S. Xenophonos and K. Oikonomopoulou, which offers a wide range of case studies). Quotations and allusions from his works can be found in all kinds of Middle Greek texts,

reflecting the importance of Plutarch's corpus both as educational tools and as a sort of instruction manual on political thought. This paper will discuss which works were of particular relevance to Byzantine times as well as the examples of actions and decision making that were highlighted in this new context.

Humble, Noreen

Plutarch's Imaginary Sparta: hybridity and identity in a paradoxical community

Plutarch, to adapt Julia Kristeva (*Strangers to Ourselves*, 1991, pp. 194–5), can be defined thus: a foreigner in the world of Rome, who is reconciled with himself to the extent that he recognises 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. I want to use this theoretical definition as a way of interrogating the recent contention by Hugh Liebert (*Plutarch's Politics: Between City and Empire*, 2016) that 'Lycurgus is Plutarch's literary alter ego'. This is a provocative, and, I think, in the end an unsustainable, hypothesis, 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.

Schlapbach, Karin

Who dances in Plutarch? Written traces of a physical cultural practice

The detailed discussion of the formal elements of dance in the last chapter of Plutarch's *Table Talk* is well known. A fitting subject for sympotic conversation, dance appears in various other chapters of the same work. This paper offers a survey of other texts and contexts in Plutarch where dances and dancers are mentioned. It discusses the balance between past and present, between myth and history in these accounts, and in so doing aims to assess to what extent dance was part of the experiences, bookish and real-life, that make up Plutarch's world.

Schmidt, Thomas

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

It is generally agreed that Plutarch had an antiquarian-like interest in the past, as is especially visible in his *Greek Questions*, *Roman Questions*, and (now unfortunately lost, but partially reconstructible) *Barbarian Questions*. In these treatises Plutarch collected information about various old social, religious, and institutional practices, which can usually be traced back to archaic times and are located in particular cities or places of the Ancient World. However, through an analysis of specific examples, it is the aim of my paper to show that this 'local' past was always imbedded in the present of Plutarch's own time and that Plutarch showed not simply

an antiquarian's interest in these local traditions, but actually included them in a 'global' view of the world around him.

Titchener, Frances

Plutarch's Multi-Cultural Dinner Table

I will examine how Plutarch uses the cultural phenomena of banquets and banqueting in both the *Parallel Lives* and the *Moralia* to simultaneously highlight similarities and differences among the participants. Eating is something that most humans share in common, but the dinner table can reveal divisions as often as promote unity since these banquets are also almost theaters where people's differences can be easily discerned, whether philosophical, dietary, or musical. Plenty of exciting and dramatic events happen at the banquets of the *Parallel Lives* to the heroes and their foils, but the *Moralia* also feature many intimate dining scenes. Plutarch chose to stay home in his little town of Chaeronea, but his own education, travels, and visitors provided a rich and steady background to the meals we hear of in the QC, for instance, as Plutarch and his guests debate a wide variety of topics.



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