

Reading Plutarch's Women: Moral Judgement in the *Moralia* and Some *Lives**

[Lectura de las Mujeres de Plutarco: Juicio Moral
en los *Moralia* y en Algunas *Vidas*]

by

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Abstract

Plutarch has two distinct bodies of work: the *Moralia* and the *Lives*. Increasingly, however, questions about the unity of Plutarch's work as a whole have been raised, and it has become of some concern to scholars of ancient biography to establish the level of philosophical content in the *Lives*. A comparative study of the women of the *Lives* and those in the *Moralia* may provide some insight into Plutarch's greater philosophical project and narrative aims. Plutarch's writings on and for women in the *Conjugalia praecepta*, *Mulierum virtutes*, *Amatorius*, *De Iside et Osiride*, and *Consolatio ad uxorem* lays a firm groundwork for the role of Woman in society and the marital unit. The language in these works is consistent with the language used to describe women in the *Lives*, where historical women appear as exempla for the moral improvement of his female students. This case study of five prominent women in the *Lives* reveals an uncomfortable probability: Plutarch presents women in the *Lives* in accordance with the principles set out in the *Moralia* and uses certain concepts to guide his readers towards a judgement of the *exempla* that agrees with his views on the ideal Woman.

Key-Words: Plutarch, *Exempla*, Women, Moral education, Virtue.

Resumen

Plutarco tiene dos *corpora* distintos en su obra: los *Moralia* y las *Vidas*. Sin embargo, cada vez se plantea más la unidad de la obra de Plutarco como un todo y ha sido tarea de los estudiosos de la biografía antigua establecer el nivel de contenido filosófico en las *Vidas*. Un estudio comparado sobre las mujeres de las *Vidas* y de los *Moralia* puede arrojar cierta luz sobre el proyecto principalmente filosófico de Plutarco y sobre sus objetivos narrativos. Los escritos de Plutarco sobre y para las mujeres en *Conjugalia praecepta*, *Mulierum virtutes*, *Amatorius*, *De Iside et Osiride*, y *Consolatio ad uxorem* constituyen una obra básica en relación con el papel de las mujeres en la sociedad y en la unidad del matrimonio. El lenguaje en estas obras es coherente con el lenguaje utilizado para describir a las mujeres en las *Vidas*, donde aparecen mujeres históricas como *exempla* para la formación de sus estudiantes femeninas. Este estudio particular de cinco destacadas mujeres de las *Vidas* descubre una probabilidad incómoda: Plutarco presenta a las mujeres en las *Vidas* de acuerdo con los principios establecidos en los *Moralia* y utiliza determinados conceptos para conducir a sus lectores hacia un enjuiciamiento de los *exempla* que coincide con su visión sobre la Mujer ideal.

Palabras-clave: Plutarco, *Exempla*, Mujeres, Educación moral, Virtud.

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In the last two decades, the relationship between Plutarch's *Lives* and his *Moralia* has increasingly occupied scholars. Several publications have approached the topic in varying ways. Duff has shown that the *Lives* has a strong implicit moralistic purpose, while the more recent collection edited by Nikolaidis has made significant contributions to the study of the complex interplay between the two bodies of work¹. The collection contains five essays on themes relating to women, including marriage, a perennially popular topic. Elsewhere, discussions of the women that feature so prominently in both bodies of work have been relatively scarce. In some ways, this is not surprising. Plutarch is a remarkably versatile author and philosopher, who offers us a broad and complex range of texts to analyse.

Women do, however, occupy an important space within Plutarch's philosophy and he devoted enough time to discussions of womanhood, virtue and femininity to warrant dedicated study of their place in his conceptual world.

Five extant texts in the *Moralia* are especially relevant to the understanding of Plutarch's Woman: *Conjugalia praecepta*, *Mulierum virtutes*, *Consolatio ad uxorem*, *Amatorius*, and *De Iside et Osiride*. We can add a sixth if we include the spurious *Lacaenarum apophthegmata*². As for the women in the *Lives*, there are too many to mention. This paper focuses on five of the most well-known: Octavia, Cornelia, Cleopatra, Olympias, and Aspasia. I have chosen these five women not only because of their reputations, but because of their differences in class, culture and social status. This choice is a deliberate attempt to apply intersectionality theory to the work of one of the most prolific and generically diverse authors of the ancient world.

The breadth of Plutarch's extant corpus provides us a rare opportunity to study the characterization of women across a number of genres with markedly different content, context and aims. The sheer variety often makes it particularly difficult to reconcile what sometimes seems like contradictory views. We know far too little still of the place of women in Plutarch's conceptual world. Scholarship on the topic has yielded results ranging from

¹ T. E. DUFF, *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice*, Oxford, 1999, 55; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS (ed.), *The Unity of Plutarch's Work: 'Moralia' Themes in the 'Lives', Features of the 'Lives' in the 'Moralia'*, Berlin, 2008. Russell also connected the *Moralia* and the *Lives*, but largely ignored any question of women; D. A. RUSSELL, "On Reading Plutarch's 'Lives'", *G&R* 13/2 (1966) 139-154.

² That these works form part of a coherent whole has not yet been adequately shown. However, Plutarch's interest in women, female virtue and conjugality is clear; see M. VALVERDE SÁNCHEZ, "Amor y matrimonio en el Erótico de Plutarco", in J. M. NIETO IBÁÑEZ (ed.), *Lógos Hellenikós. Homenaje al Profesor Gaspar Morocho Gayo*, vol. I, León, 2003, p. 442.

Walcot's excessively negative assessment of Plutarch's views on women to Nikolaidis' rather optimistic analysis that Plutarch was, in fact, a proto-feminist³. While I disagree with Nikolaidis' view on the feminism of Plutarch, it also seems unlikely that he was wholly negative towards women as a category. It is my view that in reality, his interactions with women were varied and informed by ideology, his philosophical views, and a number of other factors we could deduce (if only in part)

from his work. Intersectionality theory suggests that it is perhaps unreasonable, and certainly unfair, to treat women as a monolithic category which can be studied as such⁴. Instead, it suggests an approach that considers women at the intersection of oppression(s) including (but not limited to) gender, class, ethnicity and race, geopolitical circumstance, sexuality and so forth⁵. This paper will discuss the language Plutarch uses in the *Moralia* in comparison with the language used to describe five

- ³ A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, "Plutarch on Women and Marriage", *WS*, 110 (1997) 27-88, esp. pp. 87-88; P. WALCOT, "Plutarch on Women", *SO*, 74 (1999) 163-183. See also F. LE CORSU, *Plutarque et les femmes dans les Vies parallèles*, Paris, 1981; K. BLOMQUIST, "From Olympias to Aretaphila: Women in Politics in Plutarch", in J. MOSSMAN (ed.), *Plutarch and His Intellectual World*, London, 1997, pp. 73-98; S.B. POMEROY (ed.), *Plutarch's 'Advice to the Bride and Groom' and 'A Consolation to His Wife': English translations, commentary, interpretive essays, and bibliography*, Oxford, 1999; V. CASTELLANI, "Plutarch's 'Roman' Women", in E. N. OSTENFELD (ed.), *Greek Romans and Roman Greeks: Studies in Cultural Interaction*, Aarhus, 2002, pp. 142-155; J. MCINERNEY, "Plutarch's Manly Women", in R. M. ROSEN & I. SLUITER (eds.), *Andreia: Studies in Manliness and Courage in Classical Antiquity*, Leiden, 2003, 319-344; B. BUSZARD, "The Speech of Greek and Roman Women in Plutarch's 'Lives'", *CP*, 105 (2010) 83-115; E. J. HÅLAND, "Women, Death, and the Body in Some of Plutarch's Writings," *Mediterranean Review*, 4 (2011) 1-48.

- ⁴ Rabinowitz notes that it has long been a tendency in classical scholarship to treat 'women' as "some pre-existent singular entity". In recent scholarship, especially that of feminist classicists, much work has been done to abolish this idea and move towards a more complex understanding of women in the ancient world. Even so, studies of homoeroticism tend to focus on male homosexuality and especially pederasty, while similar studies of lesbianism are in short supply; Rabinowitz argues that feminist classicists have turned to gender studies, because "it is safer; by never studying women without men, such studies avoid the specter of lesbianism"; N.S. RABINOWITZ, "Introduction", in N. S. RABINOWITZ & A. RICHLIN (eds.), *Feminist Theory and the Classics*, New York, 1993, p. 11.

- ⁵ K. CRENSHAW, "Demarginalizing the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics", *University of Chicago Legal Forum* (1989) 139-167; K. CRENSHAW, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence against Women of Color", *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (1991) 1241-1299. Intersectionality theory has been slow to

women in the *Lives*. It is, above all, an attempt to further our understanding of Plutarch's characterization of women the *Lives*, not only in relation to men but in relation to other women⁶. It is unlikely that we will learn anything new about the women themselves. Instead, using intersectionality as a theoretical framework, I suggest that we might gain valuable insight into Plutarch's conscious and subconscious treatment of women, and therefore the complexity of gendered oppression in the ancient world.

Women in the Moralia

Before we can address the characterisation of women in the *Lives*, we should attempt to formulate some idea of ideal

Womanhood. What does Plutarch say about women in the *Moralia*⁷? As far as theory goes, *De Iside et Osiride* and *Amatorius* both present a fairly positive picture, as does *Mulierum virtutes*, that women are fully capable of virtue⁸. That is not to say that Plutarch is throwing gender roles out of the window. Believing that women are *capable* of the same things as men and believing that they *should* do the same things as men are not one and the same. This is what makes Plutarch so wonderfully complex and infuriatingly elusive. Rather than attempting to interpret Plutarch's views at this point, I will present instead an overview of recurring themes in the *Moralia*, highlighting some contradictions and incongruities and pointing out

make its way into ancient studies in a formal way, although several recent publications have made use of intersectionality as a theoretical framework. See for example M. B. KARTZOW, *Destabilizing the Margins: An Intersectional Approach to Early Christian Memory*, Oregon, 2012; A. GARCÍA-VENTURA, "The Sex-based Division of Work *versus* Intersectionality: Some strategies for engendering the Ur III textile work force", in B. LION & C. MICHEL (eds.), *The Role of Women in Work and Society in the Ancient Near East*, Berlin, 2016, pp. 174-192; R. AASGARD, "How close can we get to ancient childhood? Methodological achievements and new advances", in C. LAES & V. VUOLANTO (eds.), *Children and Everyday Life in the Roman and Late Antique World*, New York, 2016, pp. 318-331; R. AASGARD & C. HORN (eds.), *Childhood in History: Perceptions of Children in the Ancient and Medieval Worlds*, London, 2017.

⁶ Durán Mañas argues that Plutarch's representation of female characters in the *Lives* reveal his attitudes toward women; M. DURÁN MAÑAS, "Las mujeres en la Vida de Pericles", in L. VAN DER STOCKT, F. TITCHENER, H. G. INGENKAMP & A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ (eds.), *Gods, Daimones, Rituals, Myths and History of Religions in Plutarch's Works*. Studies devoted to Professor Frederick E. Brenk by The International Plutarch Society, Málaga-Logan, 2010, p. 144, cf. p. 159.

⁷ There is, of course, significant overlap between Plutarch's views, especially those set out in the *Coniug. praec.*, and other *peri gamou* literature. Chapman provides an excellent overview of these influences in Plutarch; A. CHAPMAN, *The Female Principle in Plutarch's Moralia*, Dublin, 2011, pp. 15-31.

⁸ *De Is. et Os.* 373c, 383a; *Amatorius* 766d-767a, 769c; *Mulier. virt.* 243a; See also P. A. STADTER, "Philosophos kai philandros: Plutarch's View of Women in the 'Moralia' and the 'Lives'", in POMEROY (ed.), 1999, p. 175.

concepts and phrases we might expect to find elsewhere.

In the *Moralia*, Plutarch argues for equal ability while also betraying himself as somewhat sceptical. According to Gilabert Barberà, his arguments in the *Amatorius* oppose those that believe that women aren't capable of *erōs* because he believes the Realm of Truth is genderless and does not discriminate⁹. Plutarch is essentially arguing that women are no different from men, while elsewhere in the *Moralia* he adds, *except when they are*. Perhaps this is why the *Conjugalia praecepta*, one of his most important moral-philosophical texts for women,

is primarily aimed at the bride. Out of the 47 precepts in the treatise, 25 are aimed directly at Eurydice, while only 7 are aimed at Pollianus (the remainder are mutual)¹⁰. 23 of the exempla are women, highlighting the aim of the letter in reinforcing Plutarch's ideas about gendered virtue¹¹.

What emerges from these works is a view of Woman's role in the household which sees her as primary domestic peacekeeper¹². The philosophical basis for this assumption lies in *De Iside et Osiride*, where Isis, as the "female principle of nature"¹³, acts as harmoniser between Osiris and Typhon (369b-f; 372f)¹⁴. In

⁹ P. GILABERT BARBERÀ, "Love in Plutarch: The Necessary Platonic Correction of Plato", in J. M. NIETO IBÁÑEZ & R. LÓPEZ LÓPEZ (eds), *El amor en Plutarco. Actas del IX Simposio Internacional de la Sociedad Española de Plutarquistas*, León, 28-30 September 2006, León, 2007, p. 124.

¹⁰ Chapman's count is slightly different; according to her analysis 28 precepts are aimed at the bride, 11 at the groom and the remainder "focus on the partnership aspect of marriage". The result, however, remains the same: the *Coniug. praec.* has a disproportionate focus on the role of the wife in maintaining marital harmony; CHAPMAN, 2011, p. 15.

¹¹ Female exempla are never appropriate for men, unless they are used to shame them by pointing out how *a woman* can be virtuous/courageous etc. while they are failing at the task. This is a particularly harsh method; cf. I. VEGGE, *2 Corinthians – A Letter about Reconciliation. A Psychagogical, Epistolographical and Rhetorical Analysis*, Tübingen, 2008, pp. 115-117; R. LANGLANDS, "Roman *Exempla* and Situation Ethics: Valerius Maximus and Cicero *de Officiis*", *JRS*, 101 (2011) p. 104.

¹² This attitude is not unique to Plutarch, and in fact has much in common with the Pythagorean women's letters. Theano also appears at *Coniug. praec.* 142d as a model of virtue and temperance. See for example Perictione, *On the Harmony of Women*, 77; Phytis, *On the Chastity of Women*, 84-85; Theano, *Letter to Nicostrate*, 73. Stoics like Hierocles and Musonius Rufus saw harmony as the joint effort of husband and wife; see Muson. fr. 13a-b, 89-91 (tr. Lutz); Hierocles, *On Marriage*, 75-77, *Household Management*, 93-95.

¹³ All translations are from the Loeb edition of Plutarch's works.

¹⁴ J. OPSOMER, "Plutarch on the One and the Dyad," *BICS*, 50 (2007) 379-395, esp. p. 386.

Conjugalia praecepta, Plutarch says the aim of the collection is to “render [husband and wife] gentle and amiable toward one another” and to help them attain harmony in their marriage “through reason, concord, and philosophy” (διὰ λόγου καὶ ἁρμονίας καὶ φιλοσοφίας; 138c-d)¹⁵. The onus of harmony falls almost squarely on the bride, however, who is told to eat a quince before bed “that the delight from lips and speech should be pleasant and harmonious at the outset” (138d)¹⁶. The husband is advised to be patient with his wife’s “irritability and unpleasantness” (table 1), because she will likely grow out of it (138e). Precept 14 rather ominously suggests that the wife “should have no feeling of her own” but should match her mood to that of her husband (139f)¹⁷.

Keeping her mood in check is very important, thus Plutarch advises that she put aside her bad temper and appear “accommodating, inoffensive, and agreeable” (141b) to her husband. Precept 27 invokes Hera in a further attempt to

persuade the bride that it is her duty to be pleasant at all times (141f). If she is too disagreeable, her husband would be right to seek pleasure elsewhere. Plutarch supplies the maxim “I cannot have the society of the same woman as both wife and paramour” for the husband whose wife is too grumpy for his liking (140b). The precept reads as a tacit condoning of extramarital affairs for men in ‘extreme’ cases. As such it stands in contrast to his argument in the *Amatorius* that women are capable of both erotic love and *philia*, and that the conjugal relationship is the most sacred and beneficial union.

Of course, women who live with uncompromising men don’t have the same recourse. They are in all cases expected to be faithful and modest. Precept 18 recommends that the wife should always be receptive of her husband’s sexual advances, though she should never take the initiative in the bedroom (140d), and Precept 39 suggests that the wife use the bedroom as a means to avoid and resolve

¹⁵ Tsouvala sees harmony in marriage as a blending of sexual pleasure and reason. She argues that love and marriage in Plutarch is a harmonising political relationship that transcends “ancestral feuds, philosophical factions, local competitions, and any type of discord in the *polis* and the empire.” G. TSOUVALA, “Love and Marriage,” in M. BECK (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch*, Malden, 2014, pp. 191-206.

¹⁶ Goessler, in her analysis of *Coniug. praec.*, says a woman’s husband “should be her main concern”. L. GOESSLER, “Advice to the Bride and Groom: Plutarch gives a detailed account of his views on marriage”, in POMEROY, 1999, p. 99.

¹⁷ Beneker also touches on this theme when discussing the behaviour of Porcia in the *Brutus*. He argues that the wife can be a good partner if she shares in her husband’s joys and troubles without being overbearing or overly curious. It is the husband’s choice how much he wishes to share with her, and she should respect that; J. BENEKER, “Plutarch on the Role of *Eros* in a Marriage,” in NIKOLAIDIS, 2008, pp. 689-700.

conflict (143e). She should, however, be careful to appear neither too eager nor too unaffectionate towards her husband. In *Mulierum virtutes* Plutarch relates the story of the women of Ceos, who were so well-behaved that there wasn't a single case of adultery or seduction in 700 years (249d-e), implying that intemperance is ultimately the fault of women.

A good sense of shame is helpful for keeping women modest and temperate. McInerney notes that a large number of the exempla in *Mulierum virtutes* revolve around women's bodies, and often their virtuous action is a result of shame for what is improper¹⁸. Indeed, in the case of their bodies, Plutarch says a virtuous woman should become even more modest in the nude (*Coniug. praec.* 144b), and recalls the tale of the women of Miletus, who were prone to suicide until they were threatened with disgrace: they would be carried nude through the agora to their funeral (*Mulier. virt.* 249c-d; cf. *Apophth. Lac.* 242c). The thought of that shame prevented them from committing any further suicides. Similarly, the women of Egypt, deprived of luxuries, stay at home all day, and Plutarch suggests that this would be the case with most

women (*Coniug. praec.* 142c). The list of things women aren't supposed to have or wear is extensive. Plutarch mentions expensive clothes and jewellery, gold, emeralds, scarlet, gold-embroidered shoes, bracelets, anklets, purple, pearls¹⁹, and silk (table 1)²⁰. These luxuries are likely to anger their husbands, like bulls who are angered at the sight of red (144e), and therefore Plutarch advises the bride to set aside her indulgences in favour of household harmony. The husband is also advised not to indulge, at least not in the presence of his wife²¹.

Staying at home means that women's primary function is domestic. We see this play out in the *Mulierum virtutes*, where Plutarch tells the stories of many virtuous women acting in domestic contexts. Though their actions might at times take place outside of the home, they are always in service of harmony or in support of their husbands or fathers²². The Trojan women make the decision that it is time to settle in Italy (243f), and the Phocian women vote in favour of the men's proposal to die should the battle against the Thessalians be lost (244b-e). Elsewhere

¹⁸ MCINERNEY, 2003, p. 328.

¹⁹ Cf. *Cons. ad ux.* 609c, which also mentions perfume.

²⁰ See also Melissa, *Letter to Cleareta*, 83 on eschewing luxuries; Theano, *Letter to Euboule*, 70 on domestic duty; Muson. fr. 3, 41 on self-control and chastity; Phytis, *On the Chastity of Women*, 85; Diog. Laert. 6.7.97-98 on Hipparchia; Sen. *Helv.* 14.2 on "womanly" weakness; Xen. *Oec.* 7.14 on temperance as a virtue.

²¹ *Coniug. praec.* 140b, 140c, 144d, 145b.

²² Cf. STADTER, 1999, pp. 177-79, 182.

women act in defense of their chastity (245c, 249f, 250a, 253d-e), or with the help of men (258e-f, 261a-c). At times Plutarch ascribes this agency to divine inspiration, as in the case of Telesilla and the women of Argos (245e). In doing so he devalues the initiative of women and transposes it instead to something beyond their control. What results is a picture of women as vessels for the actions of others.

Only in extraordinary circumstances does Plutarch condone women acting in the public or political sphere. One revealing anecdote is the story of Valeria and Cloelia relayed at *Mulierum virtutes* 250c-f. Plutarch seems genuinely caught between commending them for their bravery after escaping Porsena's camp and admonishing them for their foolishness for meddling in men's affairs. After all, at the end he tells the reader that the women were sent back to Porsena's camp. Their escape ultimately would have ruined the reputations of the men who offered them as captives in the first place. Women who take public action in the political sphere usually meet an untimely or unpleasant end²³. Lampsace dies of an illness shortly after

her act of bravery, intervening on behalf of the Phocians because her father is away (255b-c). Polycrite, though acting in private, suffers the same fate (254f). Aretaphila, however, gets extra special treatment. She uses spells and potions to topple a brutal and murderous tyrant and as a result she gets tortured (255f-257d). Plutarch lauds her not only for bearing her punishment courageously, but also for declining a seat in government and instead spending the rest of her life "quietly at the loom" when the whole affair is over²⁴.

Aretaphila is a particularly enlightening case, because Plutarch disapproves of the use of spells and potions in the strongest terms (table 1)²⁵. In *Coniugalium praecepta* Plutarch warns that women are especially prone to superstition, much like their wombs are prone to developing cysts. They should avoid using φίλτρα ('love potions') and γοητεία ('witchcraft'), unless they want to have power over "dull-witted and degenerate fools" (139a). Women who catch men's attention are easily suspected of using φάρμακα ('drugs' or potions; 141c), but if they're well-educated, they will be able to prove that they have no need

²³ McInerney discusses the resolution for women who possess *andreia*, arguing that the best they can hope for is a noble death; McINERNEY, 2003, p. 325; see also C. RUIZ MONTERO & A. M. JIMÉNEZ, "Mulierum Virtutes de Plutarco: aspectos de estructura y composición de la obra", *Myrtia*, 23 (2008) 101-120.

²⁴ K. BLOMQUIST, 1997, pp. 84-85 offers a good analysis of Plutarch's treatment of Aretaphila.

²⁵ See also *De superstitione*, esp. 165c, where Plutarch says that superstition is an emotional state of false reason.

for magic²⁶. Along with magic comes outlandish superstitions (ξέναις δεισιδαιμονίαις; 140d) and participation in strange rituals. Plutarch especially disapproves of association with Dionysos and Cybele. Instead of relying on magic, a woman should rely on her charm and character, which will garner respect from her husband and ensure a good reputation.

Plutarch's idea of what a woman should be is evident also in his writing on grief²⁷. He advises her to grieve neither excessively nor publically, but instead focus on the happy (if short) life of the deceased. These are the recommendations he gives to his wife Timoxena in the *Consolatio ad uxorem* (608d-610d). Elsewhere, he praises women for grieving virtuously. In the *Mulierum virtutes* Camma is lauded for not grieving ostentatiously (257f-258c), as is Timocleia (259e), and a great number of the *Lacaenarum apophthegmata* praise Spartan mothers for the pride they show when their sons die in battle, rather than grief for having lost them²⁸.

The image of ideal womanhood that Plutarch creates in the *Moralia* (see table 1) suggests that women are capable of achieving a state of virtue on par with men, but that their virtue should be performed in

accordance with gender roles. Plutarch's women are restricted primarily to the domestic sphere and must always act in a supportive role for the men in their lives. In the *Lives* we see the application of this ideal. That is not to say Plutarch's women are not complex, on the contrary, they are often multidimensional characters in their own right.

Women's virtue and vice in the Lives

Plutarch's methodology in the *Mulierum virtutes* is similar to that of the *Lives*. He argues that comparison is the best tool through which to judge virtue and vice in both men and women (243c):

And actually it is not possible to learn better the similarity and the difference between the virtues of men and of women from any other source than by putting lives beside lives and actions beside actions, like great works of art, and considering whether the magnificence of Semiramis has the same character and pattern as that of Sesostris, or the intelligence of Tanaquil the same as that of Servius the king, or the high spirit of Porcia the same as that of Brutus, or that of Pelopi-

²⁶ Plutarch praises Timoxena for not being prone to excess and superstition (περιεργίας και δεισιδαιμονίας; *Cons. ad ux.* 608b).

²⁷ Though there are few extant examples of *consolatio* to women, Plutarch's contribution here bears many similarities to other such letters, in particular Seneca's *Ad Helviam* and *Ad Marciam*, and some themes are repeated elsewhere, e.g. Musonius Rufus fr. 3.40.

²⁸ See *Apophth. Lac.* 240c, 240f, 241a, 241c, 242a, 242b. On the gendered nature of consolation literature; A. WILCOX, "Exemplary Grief: Gender and Virtue in Seneca's Consolations to Women," *Helios*, 33 (2006) 73-100.

Virtue/Vice	Positive	Negative	Reference
Harmony	ἐμμέλειαν, ἁρμονίας (εἰρήνης)		<i>Conj. praec.</i> 138c-d (cf. <i>Mulier. virt.</i> 246c)
		χαλεπότητα, ἀηδῖαν	<i>Conj. praec.</i> 138e
	ὑποτάττουσαι	ἀηδίας, ὀλιγορίας	<i>Conj. praec.</i> 142e, 140a
	εὐάρμοστα, ἄλυπα, προσφυλῇ		<i>Conj. praec.</i> 141b
	αὐστηρὰ, σώφρωνος	ἄκρατος, ἀνήδυντος	<i>Conj. praec.</i> 142c
Temperance	σεμνότητος, εὐταξία, αἰ- δοῦς	ἱμάτια καὶ πλόκια τῶν πολυτελεῶν	<i>Conj. praec.</i> 141e
	ἀδοξίας, αἰσχύνης	Καλλωπισαμένη, ἡδονὰς, πολυτέλειαν	<i>Mulier. virt.</i> 249d, <i>Cons. ux.</i> 609a
		χρυσὸς, σμάραγδος, κόκκος	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 141e
	σεμότερον	ὑποδήματα διάχρυσα... καὶ ψέλλια καὶ περισκελίδας καὶ πορφύραν καὶ μαργαρίτας	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 142e, 142c
	παιδείαν, φιλοσοφίαν	σηρικά	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 145f, 146a
		μύροῦ, πορφύρας	<i>Cons. ad ux.</i> 609c
Superstition		φίλτρα, γοητεία	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 139a
		βακχεύμασι	<i>Cons. ad ux.</i> 609a
		κυμβάλους καὶ τυμπάνους	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 144e
	εὐνοίαν, ἀρετὴ		<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 141c
		δαισιδαίμονιαις	<i>Coniug. praec.</i> 141d, <i>Cons. ad ux.</i> 608b

Table 1: Harmony, temperance and superstition in the *Moralia*; grouped according to concepts with positive and negative connotations in the texts. All concepts are cited as they appear in the texts of the LCL.

das the same as Timocleia's, when compared with due regard to the most important points of identity and influence.

This comes with the caveat that virtues are different in different people because of nature and custom, and it is on this basis also that Plutarch examines the virtues and vices of men and women in the *Lives*. In the following section, we'll consider the characterisation of five women based on the criteria from the *Moralia* (table 2). Two women are praised for their virtue without reservation. Cornelia was highly educated Roman nobility, the daughter of Scipio Africanus and mother of Tiberius and Caius Gracchus. Much like Cornelia, Octavia's reputation for virtue would become intimately entwined with the men in her life. She was also a Roman noblewoman, the sister of Octavian (who would later become Caesar Augustus) and wife to Mark Antony. The other three women also have something in common, as Blomqvist has observed²⁹. Aspasia was a *metoikos* and *hetaira* in Athens and the mistress of Pericles. Olympias was the zealous Macedonian queen, wife to Philip II and mother of

Alexander the Great. Cleopatra was an Egyptian ruler of Greek descent in the middle of one of the most infamous wars in Roman history. Not one of them was considered truly Greek or Roman³⁰.

Cornelia

Plutarch wastes no time telling his reader that Cornelia, mother of the Gracchi, is σώφρων, the greatest testament to a woman's virtue. He praises her for loving her children (φιλότεκνον), being magnanimous (μεγαλόψυχον) and the exceptional education she gave Tiberius and Caius, which greatly contributed to their virtue (*TG* 1.4-5). As they got older, Plutarch suggests that Cornelia continued to guide the Gracchi in their political careers. Her reputation was so untarnished that Caius was able to use it against his enemies. One particularly harsh example is Caius' response to a man who was accused of pederasty: "all Rome knows that Cornelia refrained from being with men longer than you have, though you are a man" (*CG* 4.4). Cornelia was well-known for her virtue and temperance, and Plutarch says that she declined offers from other suitors to focus on raising her children.

²⁹ Blomqvist notes that Plutarch treats Aspasia, Olympias and Cleopatra as outsiders and barbarians, highlighting the aspects of their characters that were non-Greek; K. BLOMQVIST, 1997, p. 82.

³⁰ Nikolaidis suggests that Plutarch considers the Greek claim to virtue superior, and he highlights several character traits that are typically barbarian, including boldness, superstition, excessive grief, intemperance, licentiousness, jealousy and cowardice; A. G. NIKOLAIDIS, "Ελληνικός - βαρβαρικός: Plutarch on Greek and Barbarian Characteristics," *WS*, 99 (1986) 229-244.

After the death of Tiberius and Caius, Plutarch praises Cornelia for bearing her misfortunes in a noble and magnanimous spirit (εὐγενῶς καὶ μεγαλοψύχως; *CG* 19.3) and being pleasant to all her visitors. She made no change to her lifestyle, but continued to engage in literary and philosophical discussions. Her most admirable quality was speaking about her sons without grief or tears (*CG* 19.1-3). Plutarch has no bad words for Cornelia. While he does include snippets of what others said about her, he corrects them afterwards or frames the comments in such a light as to highlight her virtue.

Octavia

Octavia is similarly praised for her character. Like Cornelia, she doesn't appear too often in the narrative. Like Cornelia too, Plutarch ends his *Life* with her. Octavia's role is somewhat different, because she appears first and foremost in the context of the conjugal union, a major theme in the *Life of Antony*. In fact, Octavia was married to Antony to facilitate and preserve the peace between him and Augustus. The very first thing Plutarch tells us about her is that Augustus was incredibly fond of her and that she was "a wonder of a woman" (*Ant.* 31.2-3). Octavia is praised for her

beauty, intelligence and dignity (31.2), characteristics that should attract Antony and bring about peace. She did her job well (35.2-4), mediating between her brother and husband at certain points in the *Life* to avert war and even getting them to trade soldiers³¹. She also looked after Antony's children by his previous wife, Fulvia, while they were married (54.1-3).

After Antony abandoned her in favour of his mistress, Octavia remained devoted to him. She refused to leave his house until Antony himself sent orders that she do so and lobbied her brother for peace on behalf of her husband. Her reputation was so pure that she made Antony look even worse for treating her so cruelly (54.1-3), and she was loved by the people of Rome and Athens. After Antony's death, she took care of all his children, even those he had with Cleopatra, and married them into noble families who eventually became emperors of Rome (87.1-2; 87.4). Octavia played her part in the marital unit well, but there was always one thing in her way: Antony's love for Cleopatra.

Cleopatra

Plutarch has much to say about Cleopatra. He undoubtedly saw her as one of the great influences on the course of Antony's life, and he explicitly refers

³¹ Women's role as peacekeepers and mediators are central to Plutarch's conception of the relationship between the sexes; Octavia takes on this role in the *Antony* in opposition to Cleopatra. See also *Mulier. virt.* 246c, where the Celtic women arbitrate between factions. As a result of their fairness the women were consulted on political matters henceforth. Several other passages in this text highlight the importance of women's support; cf. e.g. 246f-247a, 249a, 254a-b.

to Antony's passion for Cleopatra as a "dire evil" (*Ant.* 36.1), which destroyed whatever good was left in him. When he introduces her to the narrative, the very first thing he says is that Antony's love for Cleopatra was the "crowning evil" of his life (25.1). Beneker argues that it is Antony's lack of self-control that ultimately caused his ruin³², and while this may be partly true, it is hard to deny that Plutarch places at least some of the blame on Cleopatra. When Antony abandons the Battle of Actium, Plutarch writes that he "hastened after the woman who had already ruined (ἀπολωλεκυῖαν) him, and would make his ruin still more complete (προσαπολοῦσαν)" (66.5). Despite such harsh words, Cleopatra is a complex character. Plutarch tells us that she was a good conversationalist and praises her δεινότητα and πανουργίαν (25.2). He could be referring to her 'subtlety' and 'cleverness' (as Perrin translates in the Loeb edition of the *Life of Antony*), but could also mean that she is 'shrewd' and 'forceful'. Only a few paragraphs later he describes her as unrestrained and bold,

so perhaps the ambiguity is intentional³³. He goes on to say that conversing with her was charming and that she knew many languages. Education was a sign of nobility and virtue³⁴, and thus one might be forgiven for expecting a largely positive portrait of an eloquent ruler.

However, Cleopatra is frequently in competition with Octavia. In addition to her linguistic prowess, she is κάλλος – either noble, beautiful, or both (27.2). Plutarch describes Octavia as κάλλος as well, but he makes a distinction between the two women. Unlike Octavia, he says Cleopatra's beauty was neither incomparable nor striking and that she was "haughty and astonishingly proud in the matter of beauty" (73.2)³⁵. If he had stopped there, we might be satisfied with a subtle comparison between Antony's wife and his mistress. Instead, Plutarch goes on to say that those Romans who had seen Cleopatra sympathised even more with Octavia, because they knew that she was inferior in both youth and beauty (57.3). This can hardly be more

³² J. BENEKER, "Sex, Eroticism, and Politics," in M. BECK (ed.) *A Companion to Plutarch*, Malden, 2014, p. 508.

³³ According to Plutarch, Cleopatra observed Antony's demeanour, which was that appropriate to a soldier, and adopted this manner towards him ἀνειμένως and κατατεθαρρηκότως (*Ant.* 27.1).

³⁴ Education is another common theme in ancient moral-philosophical works on women and the household. See for example Xen. *Oec.* 3.11; Muson. fr. 3, 40.18-33; Sen. *Helv.* 17.3 and *Marc.* 4.2 with a good deal of scepticism of women's ability to put their education to good use at *Helv.* 14.2 and *Marc.* 1.1.

³⁵ Cf. *Coniug. praec.* 141b-d, where Plutarch implies that noble birth and beauty is a great advantage to the virtuous woman.

than a bare-bones summation of opinions at best, while at worst it equates youth and beauty/nobility with virtue³⁶.

Cleopatra also falters in other areas. Plutarch says that she put her confidence in the “charms and sorceries” of her character (25.4). He uses μαγγανεύμασι και φίλτροις, which lends him some measure of ambiguity. We do find φίλτρον specifically in a negative context in *Conjugalia praecepta*, but here Plutarch says the magic lies in Cleopatra’s character. This recalls the anecdote in *Conjugalia praecepta* in which Olympias suspects an unnamed Thessalian woman who had caught Philip’s attention of witchcraft, but upon inspection instead exclaims that she has her magic charms in herself (141c; see below). Elsewhere, Plutarch straight-up accuses Cleopatra of witchcraft. In his view, she manipulated Antony through secret rites (53.4) and used “certain

drugs or witchcraft” (37.4) to render him incapable of rational action.

Her intemperance is also a recurring theme, and upon introduction Plutarch takes great care to describe her arrival to meet Antony. She travelled in luxurious extravagance, her barge covered in gold, silver and purple, accompanied by music. She herself was dressed like “Aphrodite in a painting” (26.1-2; cf. 26.4), while the smell of incense drifted over the water. It is impossible to cover everything Plutarch says about Cleopatra here. He calls her a flatterer surrounded by flatterers (*Ant.* 53.4-5), which is clearly not a good thing³⁷. He furthermore says that she was jealous of Octavia and actively tried to keep her and Antony apart³⁸, perhaps because she wanted the war to happen (56.2-3). He accuses her of cowardice, and of fleeing before the battle had been decided at Actium (63.5)³⁹. Her grieving

³⁶ Ramon Palerm & González Almenara argue that youth is secondary to social status. Pericles, however, weaponises age against the criticism of Elpinice, the sister of Cimon, essentially telling her she is too old to be meddling in politics (*Per.* 28.5). Plutarch seems well aware of the attractiveness of youth regardless of social status here as well as at *Demetr.* 26.4, where he says the prostitute Lamia was past her prime; V. M. RAMÓN PALERM & G. GONZÁLEZ ALMENARA, “Heteras, concubinas y jóvenes de seducción: la influencia femenina en las vidas plutarqueas de Solón, Pericles y Alcibiades”, in P. GÓMEZ CARDÓ, D. F. LEÃO, M. A. DE OLIVEIRA SILVA (eds.), *Plutarco entre mundos: visões de Esparta, Atenas e Roma*, Coimbra, 2014, p. 215.

³⁷ On that he wrote a whole treatise, *Quomodo adulator ab amico internoscatur*.

³⁸ Women in the *Mulier. virt.* tend to refuse the honours voted to them, as in the case of Aretaphila (see above) and Xenocrite (262d), while Cleopatra seeks out honours and new territories throughout the *Antony*, sometimes out of jealousy of Octavia (cf. 57.1).

³⁹ Compare the story of the Persian women at *Mulier. virt.* 246a-b. The men retreat to the city after a lost battle against the Medes, whereupon the women ridicule them for being cowardly by lifting their garments. Cleopatra, in taking the lead in flight, fails in her supportive role as Antony’s wife.

after Antony's death is long and violent; she beats her breasts and tears out her hair, smears his blood on her face and refuses to eat for a long time afterwards (77.2-3). Some have seen this as her redemption, her final act of devotion to Antony⁴⁰, but given Plutarch's views on grief in the *Moralia*, it's hard to argue that she's acting virtuously, and in committing suicide she leaves behind her children⁴¹. Even so Plutarch, through the mouth of Augustus, admires her nobility (86.4).

Olympias

Another noble woman who is neither Greek nor Roman plays a significant role in another *Life*. Olympias is in some ways similar to Cleopatra. Plutarch says Philip feared that his wife might be using spells and magic, and thus stopped sleeping with her as often as he used to (*Alex.* 2.4). Like all the women in those parts, Olympias was addicted to Bacchic rites

and superstitions, but Plutarch says she pursued them more zealously than anyone else (2.6)⁴². He highlights her foreignness with the words βαρβαρικώτερον and ὀμῶς, and later speculates that she used potions to harm Arrhidaeus, a contender to the Macedonian throne (77.5). She is also ill-tempered, jealous and sullen (9.4), and makes no attempt to keep the peace at court. In *Conjugalia praecepta*, Olympias is set up against an unknown Thessalian woman accused of using φάρμακα to garner the affections of Philip. The woman proves herself so virtuous that Olympias exclaims, "Away with these slanders! You have your magic charms in yourself" (141c). Olympias thus believes her character is so virtuous that she does not need to use spells or potions. At first glance this might seem to be a positive depiction of Olympias⁴³, but according to Plutarch she tried to "get the woman into her power", which is in keeping with the

⁴⁰ Stadter sees Cleopatra's role after the defeat at Actium as wholly changed. In this stage of their lives he sees her as a loyal partner and affectionate lover to Antony, and thus as a woman who has finally "assumed her proper role"; P. A. STADTER, 1999, p. 181; P. A. STADTER, "'Subject to the Erotic': Male Sexual Behaviour in Plutarch", in D. C. INNES, H. HINE & C. B. R. PELLING (eds.), *Ethics and Rhetoric: Classical Essays for Donald Russell on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, Oxford, 1995, 221-236, esp. 235-236.

⁴¹ Cf. the tale about the women of Miletus at *Mulier. virt.* 249c-d (discussed above); see also *Apophth. Lac.* 242c. In his own life, Plutarch took pride in the fact that Timoxena raised their children herself (*Cons. ad ux.* 608c, 609e). Plutarch also relates the story of Stratonice, who was childless and arranged for her husband to have children by another woman, who she then raised as her own (*Mulier. virt.* 258d). These anecdotes emphasise women's role as child-bearers and caretakers.

⁴² Nikolaidis notes that her excessive superstition characterizes Olympias as barbarian; NIKOLAIDIS, 1986, p. 235.

⁴³ This is Carney's view; E. CARNEY, *Olympias: Mother of Alexander the Great*, New York, 2006, p. 134.

depiction of her character in the *Alex.* as a jealous woman who would do anything to ensure the throne for her son.

Plutarch also tells us that the paternity of Alexander was under question, but neither confirms nor denies it, implying that Olympias may have been the partner of some “superior being” (τὴν ὁμλίαν ὡς κρείττονι συνούσης; *Alex.* 2.2-2.6). Lack of temperance is a severe judgement against the character of women and as such it is difficult to gain a reputation for virtue alongside sexual experience or promiscuity⁴⁴. Caesar famously divorced Pompeia purely on the grounds of suspicion, refusing to remain married to a woman whose virtue was under question (*Caes.* 11.6). Pompeia, it was said, used the festival of the Bona Dea as a cover to consort with her lover. Naturally, these rituals were also said to have had an Orphic element (*Caes.* 9.1-10.2).

Aspasia

As far as chastity goes, no other woman of the five we treat here is more well-known for her sexuality than Aspasia. Plutarch compares her to the Ionian courtesan Thargelia, who was a great beauty and quite intelligent, or perhaps shrewd (again

δεινότητος; *Per.* 24.2). Thargelia used her influence with powerful men to “sow the seeds of Persian sympathy” in Greek cities (25.3). Aspasia apparently emulated Thargelia, and so Pericles admired her for her “rare political wisdom” (24.3), as apparently did Socrates (24.5). Despite her reputation for being intelligent, she was also well-known for being the mistress of a house of young courtesans. A reputation is no bad thing for a woman, as long as that reputation is based on her virtue (*Coniug. praec.* 142d). Plutarch admires Aspasia, like Aretaphila, for her wisdom and political acumen (cf. *Mulier. virt.* 255e). Aretaphila, however, only involves herself in politics to free the people of Cyrene and then retires (*Mulier. virt.* 257e), while Plutarch introduces Aspasia as a courtesan and instigator of the Samian war.

By comparing Aspasia to Thargelia, Plutarch very unsubtly insinuates that she was sexually (and therefore probably also generally) deviant, and he implies that she and Pericles did not share equal affection for one another. Beneker argues that the couple shared genuine love for each other based on intellectual rather than erotic attraction⁴⁵. Plutarch says that Pericles

⁴⁴ See *Mulier. virt.* 258e-f, in which a Roman soldier rapes a Galatian woman, who eventually has his head for the deed. The woman, Chiomara, delivers the head to her husband with the words, “it is a noble[r] thing that only one man be alive who has been intimate with me.”

⁴⁵ Beneker draws on the *Amatorius*, but not *Coniugalia praecepta*, to inform his reading of the relationship, arguing that Plutarch “arrang[ed] his material so that her loving companionship with Pericles is solidly established before her questionable lifestyle is brought to the foreground.” Plutarch compares Aspasia to Thargelia before turning to her relationship with Pericles, so it is rather likely that the notion of the influential courtesan is of some concern to Plutarch here; J. BENEKER, “Eros and Intellect: Plutarch’s Portrait of Aspasia and Pericles,” in NIETO IBÁÑEZ

appears to have been genuinely in love with Aspasia, while she continued to entertain men and took a lowly sheep-dealer as a lover after Pericles' death (24.4)⁴⁶. The shamefulness of the relationship is highlighted by the comedies Plutarch quotes, in which he says she was styled as Omphale, Deianira and Hera (24.6). Pericles apparently went to war against the Samians to please Aspasia (24.1), echoing Plutarch's sentiments about Cleopatra, that other intemperate woman, who inflamed the war between Antony and Augustus⁴⁷. In his introduction to Aspasia, Plutarch says it's worth wondering what kind of art or power this woman had to influence so many statesmen. The implication is clear: sexually liberated women are dangerous⁴⁸.

Conclusion

The *Moralia* makes it clear that meddling in men's affairs is forbidden for women, who must at all times try and keep the peace. In the table below there is a notable distinction between the two Roman and three non-Roman women. As they become further removed from axes of power (class, ethnicity, geopolitical location), their characterization seems to change. Plutarch highlights different aspects of their characters; here there is a particular focus on the sexuality of the latter three women. Olympias is superstitious and perhaps even the illicit lover of some god. Aspasia is sexually deviant, a prostitute. Cleopatra, by far the most complex of these characters, is a beautiful and intemperate seductress (see table 2).

& LÓPEZ LÓPEZ (eds.), *El amor en Plutarco*, p. 252. The *hetaira* is a literary character with significant power and influence exercised primarily through seduction; on this cf. V. M. RAMÓN PALERM & G. GONZÁLEZ ALMENARA, "Heteras, concubinas y jóvenes de seducción: la influencia femenina en las vidas plutarqueas de Solón, Pericles y Alcibiades", in P. GÓMEZ CARDÓ, D. F. LEÃO & M. A. DE OLIVEIRA SILVA (eds.), *Plutarco entre mundos: visões de Esparta, Atenas e Roma*, Coimbra, 2014, p. 210. Aspasia, however, is styled as a *παλλακή* and *πόρνη* in the comedies Plutarch quotes at *Per.* 24.6, though he never directly calls her a courtesan or prostitute. Durán Mañas points out that Plutarch chose the material he presented in his biographies in line with his own views; M. DURÁN MAÑAS, "Las mujeres en la *Vida de Pericles*", in L. VAN DER STOCKT, F. TITCHENER, H. G. INGENKAMP & A. PÉREZ JIMÉNEZ (eds.), *Gods, Daimones, Rituals, Myths and History of Religions in Plutarch's Works*. Studies devoted to Professor Frederick E. Brenk by The International Plutarch Society, Málaga-Logan, 2010, p. 159.

⁴⁶ The sheep-dealer was "a man of low birth and nature" (ἀγεννοῦς καὶ ταπεινοῦ τὴν φύσιν) who gained some influence in Athens through his relationship with Aspasia (*Per.* 24.4).

⁴⁷ Plutarch also blames the war in Egypt partly on Caesar's love for Cleopatra (*Caes.* 48.2). Beneker disagrees, arguing that Plutarch withholds judgment and depicts Caesar as self-controlled and unaffected by the power of *erōs*; J. BENEKER, 2011, p. 507; cf. K. BLOMQUIST, 1977, p. 77.

⁴⁸ Several times in *Mulier. virt.* women use their bodies and their sexuality as lethal traps for men who cannot control their passions; see e.g. the story of Eryxo at 261a-b.

Who?	Positive	Negative	Virtue/vice
Cornelia	σώφρονα , φιλότεκνον, μεγαλόψυχον (<i>TG</i> 1.5); εὐγενῶς, μεγαλόψυχως (<i>TG</i> 19.1); ἡδίστη, (θαυμασιωτά- τη) ἀπενθής, ἀδάκρυτος (<i>TG</i> 19.2); εὐφυντας, καλῶς, ἀρετῆς (<i>TG</i> 19.3)		<i>Virtue</i> (agreeable, temperate, magnanimous, noble, grief, intelligent)
Octavia	χρῆμα θαυμαστόν... γυναικὸς (<i>Ant.</i> 31.1); κάλλει , σεμνότητα , νοῦν (<i>Ant.</i> 31.2); σεμνότητι , ἡδονὴν ὀμιλεῖν, θεραπεύειν (<i>Ant.</i> 53.3); καλῶς, μεγαλοπρεπῶς (<i>Ant.</i> 54.2)		<i>Virtue</i> (beauty, reserve, dignity, intelligence, devotion, harmony)
Cleopatra	[δεινότητα, πανουργίαν] (<i>Ant.</i> 25.2); [μαγγάνευμασι και φίλτροις] (<i>Ant.</i> 25.4); κάλλος (<i>Ant.</i> 26.2); εὐγένειαν (<i>Ant.</i> 86.4)	τελευταῖον κακὸν, ἡ δεινὴ συμφορὰ (<i>Ant.</i> 25.1, 36.1); [δεινότητα, πανουργίαν] (<i>Ant.</i> 25.2); chrήματα , κόσμον, [μαγ- γάνευμασι και φίλτροις] (<i>Ant.</i> 25.4); ἐμπράττετο, φαρμάκων τινῶν ἢ γοητείας (<i>Ant.</i> 53.4, 37.4); χρυσόπρυνμος , ἀλουργός, ἀργυραῖς, κεκοσμημένην βασιλικῶς (<i>Ant.</i> 26.1); κολακεῖαν (<i>Ant.</i> 29.1); ζηλοτυποῦσα (<i>Ant.</i> 62.1); λύπης (<i>Ant.</i> 82.1); λαμυρᾶς (<i>Caes.</i> 49.2)	<i>Virtue</i> (beauty (avg.), nobility, intelligence) <i>Vice</i> (Intemperance, flattery, jealousy, grief, sexuali- ty, sowing discord, ma- gic and superstition)
Olympias	[τὴν ὀμιλίαν ὡς κρεῖττονι συνούσης] (<i>Alex.</i> 2.2)	μαγείας, φάρμακα (<i>Alex.</i> 2.4); Ὀρφικοῖς , Διόνυσον ὀρ- γιασμοῖς , ζηλώσασα, βαρ- βαρικώτερον (<i>Alex.</i> 2.5); φαρμάκοις (<i>Alex.</i> 77.5); ὑποχείριον, ὡμῶς (<i>Alex.</i> 10.4), [τὴν ὀμιλίαν ὡς κρεῖττονι συνούσης] (<i>Alex.</i> 2.2)	<i>Vice</i> (superstition, disagreeable, sowing discord, sexuality)
Aspasia	σοφὴν ... πολιτικὴν (<i>Per.</i> 24.3)	ζηλώσασαν (<i>Per.</i> 24.2); οὐ κόσμιον προεστῶσαν ἐργασίας οὐδε σεμνῆς (<i>Per.</i> 24.3); παλλακὴν (<i>Per.</i> 24.6); πόρνης (<i>Per.</i> 24.6)	<i>Virtue</i> (intelligence) <i>Vice</i> (sexuality)

Table 2: Some concepts used to describe, or in relation to, each of these women in the relevant *Lives*. Overlap in terminology between the *Moralia* and *Lives* indicated in bold (cf. table 1).

There are significant connections between the descriptive language of the *Moralia* and that of the *Lives*. Further study might reveal much deeper ties than this paper can address. Plutarch's women are complex, but on balance, a picture of moral judgement emerges (though it is very often not black-and-white). It is also very likely that certain factors influence Plutarch's depiction of women in the *Lives*, including ethnicity, class and sexual status. What is not clear is whether or not Plutarch does so intentionally or subconsciously. I suspect, however, that most Plutarch scholars nowadays would argue that he chose his words with care. And what then, if these women were secondary and he chose his words haphazardly?

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