

***Conference report for the
Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies
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“Generic Enrichment in Plutarch’s *Lives*: Narrative, Character, and Moralising” was the title of a one-day workshop at the university of Oxford organized by Chrysanthos Chrysanthou. The invited speakers perused the question whether the works of the Greek biographer and philosopher were enriched through other genera. The origin of this so-called *generic enrichment* can be traced back to the Latinist Stephen Harrison who exemplified this concept on two Augustan poets in his book from 2007 „Generic Enrichment in Vergil and Horace.“ As a keynote speaker Harrison opened the workshop by presenting his intertextual-model of generic crossing with some fitting examples of Plutarch’s writings: e.g. the *Consolatio ad uxorem* as a mix between letter and treatise, the *Apophthegmata regum et imperatorum* between Letter and chreia, the *Quaestiones Romanae* or *Graecae* between aetiological elements and a peripatetic problem-tradition, or the *De cohibenda ira* between dialogue and diatribe.

One of the most important archaic authors for Plutarch was definitely Hesiod. Thanks to the Lamprias-catalogue we know that he wrote (a now lost) biography of Hesiod; beside that he wrote a commentary of the *Works and Days*, and within the corpus of the *Moralia* a plenty of Hesiod quotations can be found. In her speech Zoe Stamatopoulou focused on Hesiod’s reception in Plutarch’s *Lives*: Plutarch used the poetry of Hesiod not only as a historical source to reconstruct the past, but also as a didactic vehicle for his own time. Larry Kim on the other side looked at Plutarch’s knowledge of early archaic lyric poetry. The usage of archaic lyric poets was surprisingly limited, just with Archilochos, Sappho and Solon he had a deeper firsthand familiarity. Solon verses were normally utilized to illuminate his political and juridical actions, but they served as well to describe lyrical topics like homosexuality, luxury and pleasure. Therefore, the poetry itself provided authority to the historicity. Kim saw especially in the conversations with Thales in the chapters 6f. and with Croesus in the chapters 27f. of Solons Life an echo of the lyric poetry world, which Plutarch describe in *On the Pythian Responses*.

Alexei Zadorojnyi’s paper “The Unbearable Lightness of *philosophia*” dealt with Plutarch’s expectations about philosophy. Principally the Plutarchan idea of philosophy postulated a concord between principles and living, integrity in conduct and speech, and the preference of content over style; than it included as well a sort of benchmark to judge intellectual and literary enterprises. In this way the Plutarchan philosophy set itself apart from non-philosophy genera. In the *Life of Solon* Zadorojnyi demonstrated how a philosopher like Solon belied Plutarch’s philosophical expectations. Still, this discrepancy between the philosophical ideal and the reality was very useful because it opened the possibility to work on non-philosophical problems in the *Lives*.

Then, Timothy Duff spoke about Plutarch’s engagement with the Platonic texts. Without doubt the influence of Plato on Plutarch was a strong one, but today that is a common place. So, Duff concentrated his attention on Plutarch’s imitation of the Platonic dialogue – very blunt in the three Delphic dialogues, less obvious in the *Lives*. A good example is the *Life of Alcibiades* in which can be detected many allusions to Plato’s *Charmides*, *Alcibiades*,

Phaedrus or *Lysis*. Based on the *Life of Demosthenes*, Mike Edwards made the rhetorical influences on Plutarch's composition the subject of his discussion. After that Judith Mossman analyzed chapter 38 of the *Life of Demetrius*, in which Plutarch describes how Seleucus I. gave up his wife to the love-drunken son Antiochus I. The author has played in this passage with both tragic and comedy elements. Maria Vamvouri Roufou checked if the numerous references to physiology and medical therapies in the *Lives* are in debt to a medical interdiscourse. She argues that the sheer number and the specific vocabulary are owed to a medical interdiscourse, which comes close to a medical writer. Perhaps Plutarch used this sort of sociolect to present the virtue and vices of one of his heroes in the *Lives*.

In the speech "Plutarch's landscapes" Jason König tried to depict Plutarch's description of landscapes, particularly the mountain battle scenes. These scenes often contained an image of confusion, provoked by a difficult terrain and by cases of trickery. The inclusion of such situations served to characterize the prudence or the tailspin of a person. Craig Cooper gave them an overview of Plutarch's use of non-literary texts, like inscriptions or monuments. These sources highlighted and underlined the biographical verdict in the *Lives*. Following this, Lucy Fletcher examined to what extent one can discern between historiographic and fictional narratives: Under the first of them falls a source-owed record, under the second one a lesser source-oriented narrative. Together they reveal the intertextual dimension of the Plutarchan *Lives*.

Chris Pelling gave at the end of the workshop a summary with a focus on the applicability of the generic enrichment-model and the utility for the future Plutarchan scholarship. First, he asked for the value of enrichment. Pelling addressed the danger that the meaning of the concept may be drained, and he wonders who is the enricher and who is being enriched. For that reason it is important that one consider the different generic matters in Plutarch. Generally, he worked after a historiographic, biographic, didactic and intertextual method and in a way that blurred the parameters of the genera. Nevertheless, the genus demarcations are central to Plutarch. He not only borrowed from other genera, but he traced out clear boundaries of what he wanted to accomplish with his *Lives*. Taken as a whole, the concept displays again that Plutarch was anxious in showing how the persons in his *Lives* were a failure or not.