

PORTRAITS OF THE PHILOSOPHER:
PLUTARCH'S SELF-PRESENTATION IN THE
*QUAESTIONES CONVIVALES*¹

INTRODUCTION

Teaching the reader how to live well in the culturally belated era of the second century C.E. is a recurrent strand in Plutarch's corpus, and one which has been an underlying hermeneutic in many scholarly studies on the author. The present article explores the operation of this crucial theme in the *Quaestiones Convivales*, a lengthy and fascinating text, which details the conversations of Plutarch and his friends at the philosophical dinner table. The content of the *Quaestiones* ranges from societal quandaries such as 'whether philosophy is a fitting topic for conversation at a dinner party' (*Quaest. conv.* 1.1), to literary questions ('Why Homer always arranges a series of athletic sports with boxing first, then wrestling, and last racing', 2.5), to matters of natural science ('Why pebbles and lumps of lead thrown into water serve to make it cooler', 6.5) and of philosophy ('Why the Pythagoreans used to abstain from fish more strictly than from any other living creature', 8.8); and this names just a few. The work's light-hearted tone belies the enormous breadth of its subject matter in a combination of learning and jocularity which emerges as having a programmatic role as the books progress. It is also notable that the *Quaest. conv.* is in nine books, the first eight consisting of ten questions, and the last of fifteen. Given Plutarch's knowledge of numerology² we might expect the number of books to be of significance, and we shall see that the positioning of topics in the various books has been carefully mapped out. In the preface to Book 2, the narrator asserts that 'the conversations which follow have been written in a haphazard manner (*σποράδην*), not systematically but as each came to mind' (629D). Despite this claim,³ the wealth of information has not been compiled at random. Plutarch's manipulation of the chronology of his own life raises questions about the role of autobiography, both when viewed in conjunction with Plutarch's biographical *oeuvre* the *Lives*, and within the context of philosophical literature of the second century C.E. more generally. Furthermore, while the importance of self-presentation in sophistic performance and discourse was conclusively demonstrated by Gleason in her seminal *Making Men*

¹ Text, Hubert, *Plutarchi Moralia*, vol. 4 (Leipzig, 1938; repr. 1971). Translations are those of Clement (Books 1-3), Hoffleit (Books 4-6), Minar (Books 7-8) and Sandbach (Book 9), unless otherwise stated.

² For instance in the *E at Delphi*. The number ten is the Platonic decad, which 'generate[d] all other numbers' (Dillon [1977], 4-5). The number fifteen also had a mystical-philosophical significance, as is evident for example in a medical recipe attributed to Strato (probably Strato of Beirut: appendix 13B in Desclos and Fortenbaugh [forthcoming]). Sharples observes that this is 'presumably at least in part because of the arithmetical observation, in Pythagorean style, that $15 = 1 + 2 + 3 + 4 + 5$ ' (n. 2, appendix 13B in Desclos and Fortenbaugh). Sharples has informed me that the fragment to which these comments refer had nothing to do with Strato of Lampsacus himself, and dates from a considerably later period.

³ Admittedly such remarks should be studied in close conjunction with the books which follow rather than being applied programmatically to the work as a whole. See Duff (1999), 17 for a similar caveat with reference to the *Lives*.

(1995), Plutarch's play with the facts of his life shows that such self-presenting was not exclusive to the sophistic sphere; in Plutarch, though, its function is not (just) self-promotion in a competitive world but also philosophical pedagogy. This article will show that the structure of *Quaest. conv.* is as rich and complex as its content and that the work itself warrants far more interest than it has hitherto received.

Like Plutarch's *Lives*, the *Quaestiones* is dedicated to Sosius Senecio, and as in the *Lives*, the individual books start with a preface addressed to him.⁴ The relationship between the two is foregrounded and has an exemplary quality, just as does the character of Plutarch himself. Sosius was an acquaintance both of Plutarch and of his sons, as a comment in Book 8.10 (734E) shows, and therefore may well have been several years younger than the Plutarchan narrator of the *Quaest. conv.*⁵ Although his provenance is not entirely certain,⁶ it is likely that 'his origins are . . . in the Latin-speaking West'.⁷ It is clear, too, that he had associations with those in power in Rome, holding the position of consul twice,⁸ and he was also a man of military achievements.⁹ In composing the *Quaest. conv.* for Sosius, then, Plutarch's constructs as his primary addressee a young Roman who was versed in political affairs, as well as being 'a man with broad interests and an especial taste for poetry and philosophy'.¹⁰ The friendship between dedicator and dedicatee is presented as being a close one.¹¹

Sosius was interested in philosophy, as the dedication shows,¹² and is depicted as being a sophisticated dinner-guest. In this he can be seen as representative of the Romans in the *Quaest. conv.*, all of whom are unremarkable in their behaviour—they might as well be Greek. Sosius may be a model of a distinctively Roman figure, but he is assimilated into the Hellenic context of the symposium with ease. In addressing his work to Sosius therefore, Plutarch is making several points at once: Romans can be civilized and learned, just like Greeks.¹³ Furthermore, Sosius' cleverness is illustrated by the very fact that he has chosen to turn to Plutarch for advice, and this constitutes

⁴ Jones (1971), 54-5. He was also the dedicatee of *On Progress in Virtue*, Swain (1996), 144, 426.

⁵ Plutarch describes his sons as *τοῖς μὲν οὖν σοῖς ἐταίροις ἐμοῖς δ' υἱοῖς* (734E). Swain (1987), 44, suggests on this basis that 'it may be that he was more friendly with Plutarch's sons than with Plutarch himself' but this is speculation.

⁶ Jones (1971), 55, proposes an Eastern provenance, refuted in Swain (1999), 426-7. Duff (1999), 289, is hesitant, remarking that 'he may well have had family connections in the Greek world'; but earlier describes Sosius clearly as a Roman (p. 66). Teodorsson (1989), 1.32, refers to him as 'probably one of Plutarch's best Roman friends'. Cf. Fuhrmann (1972), 3-4; Puech (1992), 4883.

⁷ Duff (1999), 289.

⁸ In 99 and 107 C.E. See Jones (1971), 56ff.; Puech (1992), 4883.

⁹ Jones (1971), 56; Duff (1999), 66; Swain (1987), 46;

¹⁰ Jones (1971), 55. Swain (1987), 47, considers him 'more than capable of participating in the conversations, but really he does not say that much . . . Sosius is shown as he was, a well-read man of good average intelligence, but not of the calibre of Plutarch or many of Plutarch's other guests'. Later Swain recants and accounts him 'a highly educated man', Swain (1999), 145.

¹¹ For instances of this, see the questions in which he appears: 1.1, 1.5, 2.1, 2.3, and especially 4.3; as well as the preamble to each book, all which are addressed to Sosius.

¹² See Swain (1987), 45-6, for discussion of Sosius' possible interest in Stoic philosophy.

¹³ Stadter (1999), 488-9, remarks that 'Roman convivia were often marked by heavy drinking . . . These are the parties whose existence is hinted by the negative comments in *Table Talk*. The power, wealth, and leisure of the upper class in Roman imperial society permitted excess in drinking as in other areas, and the convivial customs of both Greece and Rome gave frequent occasion for its practice . . .'. He concludes, 'wherever Senecio was when he made this request, one can imagine him frequently attending parties such as those hinted at by Plutarch . . .' (1999), 490.

a subtle narratorial self-compliment (612E).¹⁴ The young Senecio's philosophical and social maturity constructs a society in which young and old happily interact, the former learning from their elders (a point that will be examined in more detail below). Finally, Sosius' political importance reflects on Plutarch's own position in contemporary society.¹⁵ The friendship is presented as being mutually beneficial in the internal framework of the text (both have enjoyed their conversations, although it is Plutarch who writes them down) and is also useful in narrative terms. Through his relationship with Sosius, Plutarch constructs a relationship which shows his readers how to behave towards their Roman rulers. What Stadter says of the proems of the *Lives* may be the case here:

His readers were male, upper-class, leisured. They were distrustful of the populace . . . and supportive of the Roman order, even though they recognized that individual Romans would abuse their authority . . . Plutarch's readers were also politically active, and expected to learn from the lives of statemen and to imitate their virtues . . . Yet Plutarch never suggests, as is frequent in proems, that his readers were hurried and had to be presented with important material as rapidly as possible.

Though involved in government, Plutarch's audience were also intellectuals, well-read and familiar with the science of their day. They enjoyed tragic quotations . . .¹⁶

Stadter's description of Plutarch's readers points to the aspirational life-style which is created for them, incorporating ethics and social behaviour.

As in other dialogue works by Plutarch,¹⁷ therefore, the Plutarchan narrator of the *Quaest. conv.* presents himself, his friends and his family, as philosophical *para-deigmata* whose behaviour should be emulated. In many of the questions Plutarch is an idealized symposiarch, *συμποσικώτατος*,¹⁸ and as such, he is presenting his addressee (and the reader) with a template for sociable philosophical behaviour. The ideal philosopher is not a theoretical construct, but one who has a place within society, as Plutarch repeatedly emphasizes, showing (and telling) us how such a man should behave.

A number of interconnected elements which underpin the pedagogy of the *Quaestiones* will be explored here. First of all, the pace and the place of the account are notable: the setting of each question differs, as does their temporal location, until the very last book, in which all discussions take place at the house of Plutarch's teacher Ammonius when he was strategos at Athens (9.1, 736D). Narratologists have argued that 'acceleration and deceleration are often evaluated by the reader as indicators of importance and centrality',¹⁹ and the *Quaest. conv.* has its own special rhythm. Its conversations are punctuated by silences which indicate that something important is about to be said or done by a guest; likewise, the person to break the silence, or encourage speech is normally an important figure. An informed self-

¹⁴ See Stadter (1999), 490.

¹⁵ For discussion of the similar role played by Senecio as addressee of the *Parallel Lives* see Pelling (2002), 270.

¹⁶ Stadter (1988), 292-3. Stadter notes that all the proems in the *Lives* addressed to Sosius Senecio 'are meant to express an air of friendship, intellectual pleasure, and high moral values', and this characterization could be extended to the *Quaest. conv.* Stadter further points out that the traits of Plutarch's ideal reader are very similar to the traits of Plutarch's own character (p. 293).

¹⁷ E.g. *Eroticus*, though there it is Plutarch's son, ironically named 'Independent' (Autoboulos) who is representing his father.

¹⁸ Stadter (1999), 489, describing question 1.3.

¹⁹ Rimmon-Kenan (1983), 56.

consciousness in relation to the workings of time is therefore evident²⁰ with regard both to the duration of speech, and the temporal variations in the setting of individual questions. We shall see that the kaleidoscopic operation of time in the *Quaest. conv.* plays a fundamental role in facilitating the didacticism of the work.

A second crucial feature is the range of characters included in the account. This diversity is linked with Plutarch's sympotic philosophy, as well as with the temporal movement of the *Quaestiones*, since the various characters contribute speeches of diverging length. Plutarch and his addressee Sosius appear as characters in the text. In addition, fathers, sons, grandfathers, sons-in-law and fathers-in-law all gather politely around the philosophical table. Romans (for instance, Plutarch's Roman friend Mestrius Florus, who features in 1.9, 3.3, 3.4, 5.7, 5.9, 7.1, 7.2, 7.4, 7.6, 8.1, 8.2, 8.10)²¹ and Greeks dine together happily, and from the professional sphere, philosophers, orators and even sophists play a part, along with other figures like doctors and farmers.²² In the first question the narrator tells us 'just as the wine must be common to all, so too the conversation must be one in which all will share' (614E). At the end of the question, in explicating his ideology, the Plutarchan character observes that 'when the great bowl is placed in our midst . . . I dare say it is reasonable thing to sing those songs called skolia (σκόλια)' (615B) and his final remarks in the question involve decoding the etymology of the term. This brief digression might initially appear to be tangential and irrelevant to what went before but in fact it pointedly underscores his philosophy: some people may think that the *skolion* is so called because of 'its non-common elements' (615B).²³ The song is sung not by all but by learned men (ὁ . . . πεπαιδευμένος), and it is not easy (ῥᾶδιον, 615B). For Plutarch however, the song owes its name to the fact that it is passed in a disorderly manner across the room. It was so named due to 'the intricate (ποικίλον) and twisted character of its path' (615C). Plutarch's analysis of the *skolion*, resting not on individual learnedness but on communal talents, is emblematic for his ideology of social interaction. In the *Quaest. conv.* conversation is not restricted to the πεπαιδευμένος and it is often stated that every guest should contribute.²⁴ The concept of social *poikilia* is not just reflected in the behaviour of the characters in the *Quaest. conv.*, it also informs the narrative structure of the work, since everyone is given an opportunity to contribute.²⁵

In spite of the communal principles delineated above, we shall see that Plutarch is a central figure when it comes to reading the *Quaest. conv.*, and several different aspects of his character play a vital role. The manner in which his character discusses and defends philosophy is liable to variation, as analysis of 5.2 will show, where the dialogue form temporarily disappears, and Plutarch is depicted performing an *aristeia* on poetry's behalf. Throughout the *Quaest. conv.* it is also significant that the age of the character 'Plutarch' is persistently unstated, although one thing that is clear is that

²⁰ Cf. Hadot (1998), 51. See also Reydam-Schils (2005), 1-2, 9.

²¹ Plutarch mentions Rome several times: the prologue to the first book describes the *Quaest. conv.* as a record of 'the learned discussions in which I have often participated in various places both at Rome in your company and among us at Greece'. See Teodorsson (1989), 37, for discussion of the banquets of the *Quaest. conv.* which may have taken place at Rome.

²² Farmers only feature once, in 9.14. See Teodorsson (1989), 3.356.

²³ My translation.

²⁴ Swain (1987), 42, observes that Plutarch 'by no means speaks in every question and there is occasional modesty'. However, he may sometimes dominate, as, for instance in 1.1 which I examine below (4.5.b-4.5.e).

its development is not consistent. Russell notes that this is a general feature of Plutarch's dialogues, observing, 'in Plutarch's dialogues there is a further complication because he is in the habit of introducing himself as a character, sometimes deliberately representing himself as younger at the time of writing and sometimes also making other characters say something about him'.²⁶ In the *Quaest. conv.* Plutarch the narrator never calls himself old, yet in some questions, the character 'Plutarch' is depicted as interacting with younger men (3.6,²⁷ 3.7²⁸); in others he is accompanied by his sons and their friends, who are therefore presumably meant to be sufficiently mature to talk philosophy (Plutarch's own sons: 8.2,²⁹ 8.6,³⁰ 8.10³¹). Elsewhere, by contrast, 'Plutarch' is accompanied at a dinner-party by his father³² or grandfather,³³ and in questions like 5.5 and 5.6 his grandfather himself plays a large role, so that *he* must be young enough to be mentally alert and philosophically able (which according to the narrator he is).³⁴ In the last book (Book 9), Plutarch shows himself to be in the company of his teacher, Ammonius, and he must therefore be presumed to be reasonably youthful at the time in which the question is set.³⁵ The range of ages inhabited by the narrator expresses another implicit message for the reader. Plutarch's age may vary but the reaction it engenders in his hosts, fellow-guests, and teachers is unchanging and unprejudiced.³⁶ Age does not matter in this conception of philosophy, and both young and old are accepted at the philosophical dinner table, on more or less equal terms. This point is cemented by the number of father-son or similar pairs we encounter in the course of the *Quaest. conv.*, which extends to son-in-laws and relatives by marriage.³⁷ Such replication of the father-son style model

²⁵ As Teodorsson (1989), 55, notes, 'it was . . . considered a duty of each guest to contribute to the discussion'.

²⁶ Russell (1993), 428.

²⁷ νεανίσκοι τινές 652B.

²⁸ τοῖς φιλοσοφοῦσι μεираκίοις 655F. Three generations mingle here, since Plutarch's father is the host.

²⁹ τὸν Αὐτόβουλον 719C.

³⁰ τῶν υἱῶν μου τοὺς νεωτέρους 725F.

³¹ τοῖς μὲν οὖν σοῖς ἐταίροις ἐμοῖς δ' υἱοῖς 734E. In fact Sosius himself is much younger than Plutarch, as this implies. On Sosius' role see pp. 651–2 above. On his age, Swain (1987), 44ff.

³² 1.2, 1.3, 2.8, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9.

³³ 5.5, 5.6, 5.8, 5.9.

³⁴ He is portrayed as respectable, witty, and astute, as Plutarch's aside ὁ δὲ πρεσβύτης ἄμα παίζων . . . implies. As early as Book 1.5 (622E), however, Plutarch uses the past tense, ἦν, to refer to him, indicating, according to Teodorsson (1996), 45, that grandfather Lamprias 'is no more among the living'. See also Fuhrmann (1972–96), 3.xxv, xxvi.

³⁵ Jones (1967), 206, suggests that 'the dramatic date of this book must be near to that of *de E delphico*' that is, 66–67 C.E., when Plutarch is a young man (Jones [1967], 205). Stadter (1999), 487, states that 'the occasion would have been many years before, since Ammonius, the host, probably died about C.E. 85. Thus Plutarch recalls and recreates for Senecio a dinner party long past.'

³⁶ See for instance 1.2 where Plutarch, his father and Lamprias are all present at a party in the house of another brother Timon. When a discussion ensues, it is Plutarch who is appointed arbitrator (ἐγὼ διατητῆς ἡρημένος 61F), although if a hierarchy according to age were adhered to, we would expect his father to assume this role (playful though the situation may be).

³⁷ In addition to including his own sons, Plutarch introduces his 'relative by marriage' in 1.4 (ὁ γαμβρός ἡμῶν 620A); the host of another dinner is Mestrius Florus, and 'son-in-law Gaius' contributes to discussion (Γαῖος ὁ Φλώρου γαμβρός 5.7; 682F); at 7.4 both Mestrius Florus and his son Lucius are present (Λεύκιος δ' ὁ τοῦ Φλώρου υἱός 702F); at 8.3 we encounter Ammonius' son, Thrasyllus (722C). The precise meaning of the term γαμβρός is debated. Clement and Hoffleit (1969), 48, n. a, suggest 'presumably the husband of a niece'. See

repeatedly emphasizes the point: young men and old are welcome at the symposium and indeed this is its ideal composition.³⁸

It should also be noted that the relationship between the narrator (Plutarch) and the character, Plutarch, is highly important in the text. Unlike the other main characters at these dinners, Plutarch is persistently defined by the narrator in the first person, and no fellow-diner ever addresses him in the vocative. We may well wonder why the Plutarchan character (if so he is) is never named as such. Rather than downplaying his importance, this conspicuous anonymity has the opposite effect, acting as a focalizer and encouraging the reader to view events with the same first person eyes of the narrator himself. The unnamed shifting ego signifies the Plutarchan character as different from the other guests, and draws our attention to him. The anonymity of the figure in fact signals his centrality.

The *Quaest. conv.* begin with a mature narrator, looking back on his experiences (1.1), but the final question in which Plutarch speaks shows his youthful alter-ego forming and expressing the ideas which will inform his philosophy for the rest of his life (9.14).³⁹ Therefore, when we examine Plutarch's self-presentation in these questions, we should bear in mind that several Plutarchs are involved. The words of this 'Plutarch' (and those of his friends) are filtered through a nostalgic and idealizing⁴⁰ narrative voice, which is presented as being that of Plutarch's mature older self. In spite of the temporal distance between the first and last questions in which he features, the ideas voiced provide conceptual and thematic links with which to frame the work. This consistency is another central characterizing element for the ideal philosophical narrator-figure.

The first question (1.1) explored below is a programmatic one in which Plutarch plays a major role; in the second (5.2), Plutarch again is the protagonist, ardently defending the cause of the poets in a potentially hostile political world: here we see the philosopher whose political interests are put to the test, albeit in the relatively informal setting of a dinner-party. The third question studied (9.14) shows us a different Plutarch again: in accord with the precepts of communality which are suggested in Book 1.1 (and elsewhere) as being essential to a symposium, his role here is less prominent. In this question the younger Plutarch is respectful towards his teacher Ammonius, and the other guests play a greater role. Although it is Plutarch who rounds off and summarizes the discussion, his comparative reticence here is perhaps meant to be seen as a feature of his youthfulness. Indeed, in the question which follows (9.15), which has as its context the same dinner in Ammonius' house at Athens,⁴¹ and which is the final question of the work, Plutarch does not speak at

Teodorsson (1989), 1.42, on the problem. We meet another *γαμβρός*, Patrocleas, in 2.9 (642C) and 7.2 (700E).

³⁸ Such dynamics are also crucial in Plato's *Symposium*, where Alcibiades is the young student and Socrates the teacher. Alcibiades' drunken anecdotes—pointedly placed at the end of the dialogue—help to characterize Socrates. It is also interesting that the distinctions between teaching and learning are blurred in Plato's dialogue, since even as he was 'teaching' the others about love in his speech outlining what he learnt from Diotima, Socrates presented himself as a student. I am grateful to the audience at the Classical Association Conference 2007 for bringing the latter point to my attention.

³⁹ Fuhrmann (1972-96), 3.xxv, notes that 'Plusieurs parmi les discussions rapportées supposent que Plutarque était, à l'époque, fort avancé en âge'. She suggests (1998), xxvi: 'Toutes ces indications nous permettent d'établir que les *Propos de Table* . . . représentent une des dernières oeuvres de Plutarque.'

⁴⁰ 'It is in fact Plutarch's ideal of the symposium which we find preserved in the nine books of the *Table Talk*', Stadter (1999), 485.

all—a far cry from his confidently didactic opening in Book 1. The work is rounded off by a very short narratorial comment, which contrasts with the lengthy preambles we have encountered not just at the beginning of the *Quaest. conv.*, but at the start of each individual book. The distinctions between the opening(s) of the work and its conclusion suggest that the narrator is not ‘remembering’ a Plutarch who acts as a one-dimensional model for his reader, or for his addressee. Rather, the narrator creates a ‘Plutarch’ who, like the work itself, has multiple applications.

I. QUESTION 1.1: ‘WHETHER PHILOSOPHY IS A FITTING TOPIC FOR CONVERSATION AT A DRINKING PARTY’

The presentation of Plutarch in this question is pedagogic. He dispenses advice which he is then seen to carry out exactly and the relationship between the counsel that he gives and the behaviour he displays is self-reflexive, as linguistic echoes between the two emphasize. As Plutarch didactically defines the issues, so too, he enacts the very behaviour he describes.

In the prologue to this book, Plutarch has already set the *Quaest. conv.* explicitly in a literary tradition,⁴² citing as his models the sympotic works of ‘Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, Speusippus, Epicurus, Prytanis, Hieronymus and Dio of the Academy’ (612 DE). In this first question, Plutarch as character reiterates and refines the text’s sympotic ancestry, this time specifying his model more precisely as being Plato’s *Symposium*. Plutarch makes Plato his example in suggesting easy philosophical topics, since

Plato in his *Symposium*, even when he talks about the final cause and the primary good . . . does not labour his proof . . . but with simple and easy premises, and with examples (*παραδείγμασι*), and with mythical legends, he brings the company into agreement with him. (614D)

Earlier on, Plutarch has told us that the guests at Plato’s *Symposium* are the kind who should talk philosophy, since they were all ‘learned men’ (*φιλολόγους*, 613D) and this composition is the ideal one for a drinking party. Consequently, although Plato’s *Symposium* is clearly crucial to Plutarch’s sympotic self-definition, it cannot be an exact model for the *Quaestiones*, since in Plutarch’s world such guests as Plato’s will not always be present, and the philosopher should learn to adapt himself accordingly.

Nevertheless, the form of this first question mimics the *Symposium*. Crato is one of the first speakers, and the concerns of his speech reappear in the main speech of Plutarch, recalling the way in which Socrates restates and refers to elements of the earlier speeches in Plato’s *Symposium*. He argues that philosophy ‘is the art of life and therefore it is not reasonably excluded from any amusement or from any pleasure that divert the mind, but takes part in all, bringing to them the qualities of proportion and fitness’ (613B). After Crato’s speech the narrator recounts how the topic was quickly changed, noting that ‘then you, Senecio, said that rather than argue with Crato about this, it was worth while to make some inquiry into the nature of philosophical talk at parties’ (613D). While little attention is paid to him at the time, in his short and seemingly unimportant contribution to the discussion Crato brings up issues which

⁴¹ In contrast with any of the other books, all the questions in Book 9 take place at a single dinner.

are drawn out and developed in Plutarch's speech that follows. The notion of a fusion of philosophy and life, and a blending of the philosophical with the pleasurable, will be crucial to Plutarch's definition of the function of philosophy as useful in contemporary times. Similarly relevant to Plutarch's dicta is Crato's final remark:

It is silly and foolish, I think, to deprive ourselves of the best conversations at a time when talk abounds . . . but to remove philosophy from the drinking parties themselves, as though it were unable to make good in practice what it teaches in theory. (613C)

This foreshadows the idea that 'men . . . practise philosophy when they are silent, when they jest, even, by Zeus, when they are the butt of jokes and when they make fun of others' (613F) which Plutarch will expound. Senecio and Plutarch may appear to gloss over Crato's argument (with which we would expect them to be in accord). But by not agreeing immediately with the sentiments Crato voiced, Sosius and Plutarch together open the way for further discussion, for what in reality becomes a didactic Plutarchan monologue.

Plutarch is implicitly presented as a paradigm both for his readers' and his internal audience's emulation in the *Quaest. conv.*; his status amongst his philosophical friends indicates that they should follow his example. Yet he does not present himself as their sole exemplum. As we have seen, he begins his speech with reference to Plato's *Symposium*, and then concedes that if the philosopher's fellow-diners are of less intellectual weight than Plato's classical models, the philosopher should be flexible in dealing with the situation.⁴³ To illustrate his point, he selects an anecdote from the archaic period, remarking that the philosopher should learn from the experiences of Pisistratus:

For when some quarrel arose between Pisistratus and his sons, and he saw the pleasure it gave his enemies, he summoned the assembly into session and announced that, though he wished to persuade his sons (*πείσαι*), since they were stubborn, he would be persuaded by them (*πεισέσθαι*) and follow them. (613EF)

Even in his use of paradigms though, Plutarch is functioning as a model. For only a few lines after recounting this story he notes that

Then, too, there are, I think, topics of discussion that are particularly suitable for a drinking-party. Some are supplied by history; others it is possible to take from current events; some contain many lessons (*παραδείγματα*) bearing on philosophy, many on piety; some induce an emulous enthusiasm for courageous and great-hearted deeds, and some for charitable and humane deeds. If one makes an unobtrusive use of them to entertain and instruct his companions as they drink, not the least of the evils of intemperance will be taken away (614AB)

Plutarch recommends his philosophically oriented internal (and external) audience to teach their listeners unobtrusively.⁴⁴ That he has just slipped such a historical

⁴² 'The large number of famous authors of convivial works in his first prooemium [is] in order to warrant his project', Teodorsson (1989), 1.35.

⁴³ Harrison (1991), 4664-5 (on Pelling [1986]): 'the eighth line of the very first paragraph contains the key word: "flexible". This justly describes Plutarch's knowledge of and attitude towards politics (and perhaps many other things)'.

⁴⁴ See Teodorsson (1989), 1.50: 'The didactic moment, always present in Plutarch's writings, explicitly stated . . . The exhilarated guests should not be troubled by a serious lecture but should learn something useful during an improvised conversation.'

exemplum surreptitiously into his own narrative reinforces his own exemplary role.⁴⁵ To emphasize the point again, he next evokes Plato, because (as we have seen)

Plato in his *Symposium* . . . with simple and easy premises, with examples (παράδειγμασι) and with mythical legends, he brings the company into agreement with him. (614D)

Plutarch's advice on using paradigms is preceded and proceeded by two such paradigms. The speaker therefore both employs exempla and functions as one, showing his internal audience how they can integrate such models into their speeches by doing so within his own. This involves a nudge in the reader's direction, reminding them that they should be alert to what is going on in the text, and how to take such paradigms; it also functions as a model to this external audience, showing them how a literary exemplum can be incorporated neatly into a text.

Plutarch's speech in this question (1.1) is long, and occasionally he even issues commands to his audience, although these are general and are not directed at any one individual. He prescribes the nature of conversation as follows: the matters of inquiry must be in themselves rather simple and easy (ύγροτέρας, 614D), or again, 'just as the wine must be common to all (κοινόν), so too the conversation must be one in which all will share' (614E). He can at times be firm, and perhaps this is because the party is composed of philosophically oriented friends; in other circumstances the philosopher will not simply be able to hold forth but will need to use different types of persuasion, as Plutarch has already told his audience. The Pisistratean anecdote, through its use of active and passive forms of πειθώ, problematizes the concept of persuasion, indicating that it will not always work: if one cannot πείσαι he should agree πείσεσθαι καὶ ἀκολουθήσειν. But this does not mean that the philosopher should not at least try to persuade, as Plutarch now reveals. Successful persuasion is one of Plutarch's principal philosophical tools, and he draws on another exemplum, that of Helen, to make his point. Comparing her with people who sprinkle alkanet on their floors in the hopes of making their dinner-party more cheerful, Plutarch suggests that they err, and puts an allegorical spin on her drugs:

This, I take it, was the 'assuaging' and pain-allaying drug (φάρμακον), a story with a timeliness (καιρόν) appropriate to the experiences and circumstances of the moment. (614C)⁴⁶

The most famous association between persuasion and the figure of Helen was made by Gorgias; that she was particularly linked to the sophistic sphere is indicated by Philostratus' use of the image of Helen's drugs at the end of his preface in the *Lives of the Sophists*. For Plutarch, the image functions not just as a symbol for *logoi*, but to emblemize appropriate narratives. And the Odyssean anecdote flags up the importance of persuasion, which 'men of breeding' must avail themselves of if they are to be successful in disseminating philosophy.

The first question of the *Quaest. conv.* can therefore be viewed as a microcosm of the *Symposium* and, as we have seen, Plutarch himself points out his affiliations with the work. The Platonic framing of this question, along with the dominant role that Plutarch assumes, encourages the reader to view him as not just a didactic figure, but also as a Socratic one. The paradigm is developed later on in the *Quaest. conv.*, and we

⁴⁵ Further emphasized in Q. 1.3, as Stadter has shown.

⁴⁶ Teodorsson (1989), 52, thinks that 'Plutarch repeats traditional, already proverbial matter here' but I would like to see it as something more complex. This subject merits further exploration, which, however, exceeds the scope of the current study.

will find out that just as Socrates learns from Diotima, Plutarch is someone who can learn as well as teach.

II. PHILOSOPHER AS VICTOR: *QUAEST. CONV.* 5.2, 'THAT THE POETRY COMPETITION WAS ANCIENT'

Question 5.2 details a dispute that took place at a dinner after the Pythian games. The party takes place at the house of the director of the games (674E), and Plutarch speaks at length about the original place of poetry at such contests, reiterating arguments which he tells us he had made in a more formal context earlier in the day. While 1.1 outlined the didactic (and programmatic) functions of the philosopher in the *Quaest. conv.*, this question depicts philosophy as performance, and shows how those skills and the titbits of information picked up in the symposium, as well as the symposium itself, may be put to practical use. Furthermore, the ideals which Plutarch defends have thematic connections with his sympotic principles: one reason why he is interested in retaining the tragic, lyric and other elements of the competition is because 'this gave a pleasing variety (*ποικιλίαν*) and popular appeal to the festival' (674D). *Poikilia* is desirable in public performances as well as the more private ones of the symposium.

It is important that it is 'the tribe of prose writers and poets' (674E) that is singled out for Plutarch's attention. The narrator may be arguing for the protection of the status quo, as Teodorsson suggests,⁴⁷ but he is also using prose words to represent himself using prose (and quoting literature generally) in defence of his own kind. Indeed, Plutarch's actions as described in this question can be seen as an extension of the competition, another addition to the overloaded festival programme. That the main part of his performance takes place at the home of the director of the games (*τοῦ ἀγωνοθέτου*, 674F) is an indication of this. Plutarch's deliberately combative self-presentation in this context makes his speech a kind of *aristeia*, which mirrors the physical and musical/literary contests he describes. In this highly agonistic world, in which *agon* and related words feature twelve times within only a few short pages (674D-675D), Plutarch proves himself to be an adept competitor.

The internal audience of earlier questions has evaporated, and the illusion that Plutarch is transcribing events from dinner-parties created by the dialogue form is temporarily discontinued.⁴⁸ Plutarch 'does not appear until after the impersonal presentation of the subject',⁴⁹ and the paucity of other characters places him under the spotlight. Accordingly, he indicates that the issue disputed, 'whether the newer competitions ought to be eliminated' (674D), is one that matters in the 'real' public sphere of local politics. He lets us know that host, Petraeus, is an important figure (*τοῦ ἀγωνοθέτου*, 674F),⁵⁰ and Plutarch describes the situation in detail, dropping in political references where possible. The atmosphere depicted is politically charged. The symposium itself is presented as the culmination of the political disputes, and the fact that Plutarch's long speech is the last (and deciding?) one in the series of events

⁴⁷ 'As a member of the Amphictyonic Council, Plutarch naturally considered it his duty to defend and preserve the established order': Teodorsson (1989), 155.

⁴⁸ The preceding question (5.1) is also not in dialogue form. See Teodorsson (1989), 153.

⁴⁹ Teodorsson (1989), 153.

⁵⁰ Because 'it was customary for these [figures] to entertain guests, foreign visitors as well as citizens' (Teodorsson [1989], 2.156) it is clear that Petraeus must have been rich. Teodorsson also remarks that Plutarch mentions Petraeus 'as his colleague at *De Pyth. Or.* 409C, where he also implies that Petraeus contributed much to the splendour of the sanctuary' (2.155).

gives us the impression that his words have had effect. Teodorsson notes that 'the subject is presented as being discussed on three occasions, (1) at the games, (2) during the meeting of the Council (674E) and (3) at the dinner given by Petraeus (674F)'.⁵¹ The first time he speaks, at the meeting of the Council, Plutarch is advising on the subject of literature (674E).⁵² The next time he defends it more vigorously. This repetition enables the narrator to add different layers to his portrayal of the situation, and to focus on different aspects of his own presentation with each re-telling.

As is appropriate for a speech about a competition in which music is losing out to physical feats, Plutarch refers to examples in which both are an integral feature. Some of his examples he 'omits' as being excessively obvious, in a kind of *praeteritio*—the rivalry of Homer and Hesiod at the funeral of Oeolycus (passed over, but mentioned nevertheless, 675A), and the games at the funeral of Patroclus (an example also spurned, *ibid*). In support of his arguments Plutarch rallies as evidence the games at the funeral of Acastus, at which the Sibyl won the poetic contest (*ibid*); and he compares the Pythian games with the games at Olympia (675BC). The conflation of subject matter in his examples, of athletics and music, is unsurprising given the nature of the question but is relevant too to his self-presentation, which will fuse both spheres. The dinner Plutarch attends is presided over by an *ἀγωνοθέτης*, as we have seen. The narrator designates his own behaviour in competitive terms. That he is defending literature at the symposium is stated explicitly: when the topic of the games comes up during the meal, he tells us that 'I once more defended the cause of the arts' (*ἡμύνομεν τῇ μουσικῇ*, 674F). The reason why he brushes over the example of Homer and Hesiod is because he disdains the 'hackneyed lore of the schoolroom' (*τῶν γραμματικῶν*, 675A).⁵³ Plutarch tells us how he confounded the expectations of his friends (674F),⁵⁴ and displays his superior knowledge with pride, piously underscoring it with the remark, 'I know that many of you will be interested, as you ought to be, in consulting the account of the Treasuries at Delphi by Polemon of Athens, a man of wide learning, tireless and accurate in his study of Greek history' (675B). Gradually the issue of whether or not poetry should be included in the games becomes less important, and Plutarch's display of knowledge becomes the focal point of the question. The narrator is a victor at the games of the symposium.

Plutarch's success is evident, but precarious. Having provided his listeners with a selection of *recherché* arguments, he tells how 'I was immediately fastened on by many' (*ἐπιφυσόμενων δὲ πολλῶν*, 675A); the word used to describe his predicament, *ἐπιφυσόμενων*, is evocative of dogs attacking someone or something, rather than polite guests at a dinner.⁵⁵ The narrator thus depicts himself as a hero, one who is intellectually capable of fighting off aggressors; indeed the vocabularies of heroism and athletics are intermeshed. What Plutarch shows is that dinner-party conversation is not just functional (in political terms) but also that it is as competitive, and nearly as dangerous as either athletic contests or war-time battles. Plutarch presents himself here as a champion (athletic/heroic/literary-philosophical) of the arts.

⁵¹ Teodorsson (1989), 2.153.

⁵² *ἡμεῖς οὖν ἐν τῷ συνεδρίῳ παρεμυθούμεθα τοὺς <τὰ> καθεστῶτα κινεῖν βουλομένους* 674E.

⁵³ Translation modified.

⁵⁴ *ἐνίοις μὲν οὖν ἐπίδοξος ἡμῖν ἔωλα παραθήσειν πράγματα, . . . καταβαλὼν δὲ ταῦτα τῷ διατεθρυλῆσθαι πάνθ' ὑπὸ τῶν γραμματικῶν* 674F–675A.

⁵⁵ See *LSJ* s.v. *ἐπιφύω* for the possible meanings of this word, which include 'grow upon [as an excrescence]', 'adhere', 'cling closely' and of dogs, 'stick close to'.

This self-presentation has humorous undertones, and the narrator indicates that his moments of self-congratulation are short-lived. After providing his first example, and being 'fastened upon' for doing so, he remarks that 'luckily I remembered' (*ἐπιτυχῶς ἀναμνησθεὶς*, 675A) its source. Finally, he all but crumbles under pressure. Having given other examples of games in which poetic contests also featured, he tells us that he ended with the following statement,

I hesitate to say that in older times the duels at Pisa were carried to the point of manslaughter for the defeated as they fell, for fear that you may again demand authority for my statement and that, if the name escapes my memory because of the wine, I shall become an object of ridicule.
(675CD)

Plutarch's short aside casts his efforts in a jocular light, and undermines the seriousness of his earlier 'heroic' depiction.⁵⁶ At the same time these comments play upon the kind of pressure which speakers may have been under in some situations, a pressure which is not unlike that described by sophistic figures like Lucian and Aristides, for instance.⁵⁷ Plutarch shows himself to be capable of functioning in a world similar to theirs. The symposium provides rhetorical and literary as well as philosophical training, and these types of training have public/political (and therefore in Plutarch's terms, philosophical) applications.

In structural terms, once he has demonstrated his academic prowess (and made his point), the speaker forsakes the *agon* of public dispute and returns to a more traditionally sympotic persona, purporting to be overcome by wine. But through this brief foray into the political world Plutarch shows the philosopher in action, a figure whose seriousness may be partially undermined by the exaggerated heroic references, but who ultimately is capable of making his point; proving thereby, that the knowledge gleaned in the symposium serves a useful function in society, as do those who attend it.

III. TEACHER AND PUPIL: *QUAEST. CONV.* 9.14, 'UNUSUAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE NUMBER OF THE MUSES'

In the preface to Book 9, the Plutarchan narrator signals the difference of the book, warning that 'should it prove that the number of questions exceeds the customary ten, you must not be surprised' (736C). The number of questions stems from a considered spontaneity, according to which 'it was my duty to render to the Muses all that belonged to the Muses, and not to commit the sacrilege of robbing them of anything' (*ibid.*). In contrast with the earlier books, whose questions are chosen from different social occasions, the events and discussions in Book 9 are all presented as having taken place at a single symposium. As Stadter remarks, the ninth book is therefore 'a culminating example of the *logoi* suitable at a drinking party'.⁵⁸ Further,

⁵⁶ Teodorsson (1989) 162, states that 'as Plutarch is not able to present any evidence he tries to dispose of the issue by jesting. The contrastive parts, shocking and amusing, of this final sentence give the talk an elegant finish'. Russell (1993), 431, says of the same passage, 'it is noticeable that he sometimes appears to make fun of himself'.

⁵⁷ This type of pressure is evoked in different ways in Aristides, who likens orators to athletes (*Or.* 2) and heroes (*Or.* 2 and *Sacred Tales* e.g. 1.1, 2.41-2, 2.65, 5.45), and in Lucian, *On Salaried Posts in Great Houses* 15 where the sophist is pictured as being under intense pressure. Cf. the discussion in Schmitz (1997), ch. 4, esp. 131-3. Correspondingly, in *Quaest. conv.* 9.14 (744B) Ammonius congratulates Herodes for speaking *ἀνδρικῶς*.

⁵⁸ Stadter (1999), 487.

the number nine is highlighted in question 14 of Book 9: Lamprias' contribution to the conversation consists of a numerological sally, implying that numerology underpins the discussion; the number is also brought to our attention by Plutarch's teacher Ammonius.⁵⁹ These factors indicate that this question is of particular significance, even though it is not the last question of the *Quaest. conv.*⁶⁰ If this book (and this question) can be seen as the final point in a series of paradigmatic occasions, it is interesting that here Plutarch is a student in the presence of his teacher.⁶¹ Additionally, it is important that the concepts he espouses are effectively identical to those articulated by his older self in 1.1.

This is not a book in which Plutarch is a sole protagonist. Rather, as Teodorsson points out, 'there are seven participants—more than in any other talk—and several different opinions are presented'.⁶² The conversation is shared around, enacting the precepts inscribed in Plutarch's etymology of the *skolion*. Nevertheless, the discussion springs from a topic which is associated with Plutarch and his family more closely than with any of the other protagonists. Ammonius' house at Athens may be the setting of the discussion, but its psychological geography⁶³ is Hesiodic, and Boeotian. As earlier references to Boeotia in this work and elsewhere emphasize, Plutarch's home country (and consequently its poets) are of great importance to him and his family.⁶⁴ F. E. Brenk says of the *Eroticus* that 'Plutarchos revises his countryman Hesiodos' tale of earthy, naturalistic *eros*',⁶⁵ and the same could be argued here, since Plutarch and his friends revisit Hesiodic intellectual territory, and after the 'unusual observations' offered by his friends on the subject, Plutarch rewrites the functions of the Muses to fit them more precisely into his sympotic agenda. Hesiod himself functions as the starting point of conversation, since the topic arises after the diners made libations . . .

to the Muses and, having sung a paean to their Leader, joined Erato in singing to the lyre Hesiod's verses about the birth of the Muses. (743C)

In his concluding speech too, Plutarch emphasizes that Hesiod rather than any other authority is his point of reference: towards the beginning of his peroration he refers to Hesiod's favourite Muse, remarking that to the statesman's sphere of reason 'Hesiod tells us that Calliope is assigned' (*Theog.* 80; 746D). Hesiod's Muses, whose responsibilities are summarized and elaborated on by Plutarch (transmitted from one Boeotian to another), are where the question ends.⁶⁶

In Book 1.1 Plutarch figured as a Socratic-style teacher and in Book 9 it is Ammonius who plays that role, while Plutarch portrays himself as a (model) student. Ammonius is an authoritative pedagogic figure, who assumes control over the direction of the discussion. When there is a brief silence, we are told that Ammonius

⁵⁹ ὁ τι δ' ἐννέα καὶ οὐκ ἐλάττους οὐδὲ πλείους, ἀρ' ἂν ἡμῶν φράσεως; 744A.

⁶⁰ For Teodorsson (1989), 3.345, this question 'forms a culmination of Book IX and in a sense of the work as a whole'. Cf. his comments at (1996), 41.

⁶¹ On the period in which this work is set, see n. 18 above.

⁶² Teodorsson (1989), 3.345.

⁶³ Brenk's phrase (1998), 50, of the *Eroticus*.

⁶⁴ On Plutarch's love of his native land, Brenk (1998), 50.

⁶⁵ Brenk (1998), 53.

⁶⁶ Lamberton (1988), 491, describes Plutarch with reference to the shrine of the Heliconian Muses, as 'a local and an extraordinarily educated and articulate local. His commentary on the *Works and Days* was an act of piety for his native Boeotia much as his essay on the maliciousness of Herodotus served the same function.'

‘encouraged us to attack the problem’ (προὔτρειπεν ἡμᾶς ἐπιχειρεῖν ὁ Ἀμμώνιος, 744C), after which Plutarch’s brother Lamprias contributes. Ammonius bestows approval and praise, smiling at Herodes and encouraging him (744B).⁶⁷ Significantly, his actions echo those of the older Plutarch whom readers have encountered in earlier books: for instance at 2.10 Plutarch revealed how he influenced the direction of the conversation, when he said, ‘we praised Hagias for his remarks, then urged Lamprias to attack them’ (ἐπιθέσθαι, 643E). Later, in Book 3.7, Plutarch reported that he and his peers expressed their esteem for the young men in the company, remarking that ‘now we heartily approved (σφόδρ’ οὖν ἀπεδεξάμεθα) the ingenuity of the young men because they did not fall upon the obvious arguments’ (656A).⁶⁸ In the earlier books, it emerges, the behaviour displayed by Plutarch was in imitation of his teacher. That this only becomes clear to the narratee after the fact, is important. Such retrospective sense-making itself enacts the text’s protreptic programme, further encouraging the narratee/reader to go and behave similarly.

As in the first question (1.1), the earlier speakers introduce issues which are of thematic relevance to the rest of the question. Speaking first of all, Herodes ‘the orator’ (ὁ ῥήτωρ, 743C)⁶⁹ draws a dichotomy between philosophy and rhetoric, attempting to appropriate the Muses to the latter’s sphere. He alludes to Plato’s *Phaedrus* (259D),⁷⁰ when he complains of ‘you who drag Calliope away from us rhetoricians’ and points out that Hesiod allocates her to kings, ‘not, I imagine while they analyse syllogisms or propound fallacies of equivocation but as they engage in the business proper to orators and statesmen’ (743D). Like Crato in the first question, Herodes is not presented as being taken entirely seriously; Teodorsson argues that he is shown to have a bias towards ‘the technique of speech’ and that ‘in depicting him in this way, Plutarch probably implies a subtle irony’.⁷¹ Yet the ‘them and us’ opposition that Herodes sets up with these remarks—rhetoric versus philosophy—is a significant one, particularly in view of the fact that the *Phaedrus* will play a central (and more positive) role in Ammonius’ account later on.⁷² At this point Ammonius briefly reacts to Herodes, relating the Muses to all human activity and foregrounding the importance of knowledge over intellectual differences. He remarks as follows:

We do not all have a use for hunting or going to war or to sea or for a mechanical trade, but education and speech are needed by every one of us,

“Who take the fruits of the broad-based earth”.

(743F)⁷³

⁶⁷ Καὶ ὁ Ἀμμώνιος ἐπιμειδιάσας ἀνδρικῶς ταυτὶ διεμνημόνευσας 744 B.

⁶⁸ At 3.2 there is a silence, which Plutarch fills (after encouragement from Erato), 649A. He again assumes this role at 7.5 (706C), while Florus fills the gap at 7.1 (698E) and Diogenianus at 8.2 (718B).

⁶⁹ Translation modified.

⁷⁰ As Teodorsson (1989), 3.347, points out. The central role of the *Phaedrus* to the *Quaest. conv.* merits further exploration, but does not fall within the scope of this study.

⁷¹ Teodorsson (1989), 3.349.

⁷² The *Phaedrus* is highly important here, as it was in the *Eroticus*. The privileged position given to the dialogue deserves further study. Cf. Trapp (1990), 141-73.

⁷³ Simonides fr. 4 Diehl. See Loeb p. 269 n. e. According to Teodorsson (1989), 3.351, Plato made this poem well known through his quotation and analysis of it in *Protagoras* 339A–347A . . . Ammonius’ emphasizing of the indispensability of education is typically Platonic.

Orators and philosophers may operate in slightly different spheres, but no one should have a monopoly on learning. For Ammonius, education and the Muses should be the common property of all.

After this remark a silence (*σιωπῆς*) ensues, brought to an end by Plutarch's brother Lamprias, who provides a numerological rationale for the Muses' divisions. Lamprias posits the notion that the ancients created nine Muses because they thought 'it wrong that any of these branches [mathematics, philosophy and rhetoric] should be without its god or Muse or deprived of higher control and guidance' (744E), but his account is disparaged by Trypho the doctor and a farmer named Dionysius because it excludes them from the Muses' protection. Plutarch now joins in to support his brother, and his first contribution, in defence of a family member, therefore highlights again his commitment to family values. He too corrects his brother, however, as he shifts the conversation to a Platonic and cosmological level, referring to *Republic* 10.617C,⁷⁴ and suggesting that Plato's Fates were in fact Muses in disguised form (745C). Menephylus, who speaks next, responds to the Delphic and Platonic issues introduced by Plutarch, but suggests that rather than being associated with Necessity the Muses should be linked with its counterpoint, Persuasion (745C).

Ammonius' speech follows, and as he picks up the thread of conversation, it is clear that the opinions of Plutarch's revered teacher carry much weight. While retaining the cosmic aspect of the discussion, he gives the Muses a new psychological dimension, describing their role as aids to memory, in the Platonic sense. Initially, to correct Menephylus' view, he employs an argument freighted with Platonizing references—*Timaeus*, *Cratylus*, *Republic*. His description of the soul, as having its ears 'plastered over and blocked up, not with wax, but with carnal obstructions and affections' (745E) is based on the *Phaedrus*,⁷⁵ and he supports Plato's equation of the Sirens with the Muses, citing 'Sophocles' Odysseus' (745F) as further proof. While eight Muses govern the order of the cosmos, Ammonius thinks that one Muse governs the earth, and she is aided by Persuasion (746A).⁷⁶ In question 1.1, we saw that the Plutarchan speaker employed an Odyssean (Hellenic) image to symbolize appropriate philosophical action, and highlighted the role which persuasion can play in this. In this speech then, Ammonius builds on Menephylus' mention of Persuasion to restate Plutarch's sympotic ideology on a cosmic scale. Ammonius' speech towards the end of the *Quaest. conv.* as recounted by the Plutarchan narrator therefore validates the theories espoused by Plutarch at its beginning and gives them a universal, cosmological resonance.

Plutarch's character is next to speak but first the narrator (Plutarch) makes a point, noting that Ammonius concludes 'with a quotation from Xenophon, as was his custom' (τὰ τοῦ Ξενοφάνους ὥσπερ εἰώθει, 746B).⁷⁷ This narratorial remark constructs the sense of a close and long-running relationship between teacher and student, showing that Plutarch is familiar with Ammonius' favourite references. Furthermore, before speaking, Plutarch tells us that 'for a short time I kept quiet' (ἐγὼ μικρὸν διασιωπήσας, 746B), revealing either a diffidence which he has not earlier displayed or, more probably, the appropriate respect for his teacher's views.

⁷⁴ According to Sandbach (Loeb) 1961, 277 n. c.

⁷⁵ Teodorsson (1989), 3.364: 'This is like a paraphrase in terms of acoustics of Pl. *Phaedr.* 250B.'

⁷⁶ Indeed, Persuasion is described as 'calming' (*παραμυθουμένην*) men, a word that also describes Plutarch's activities at 5.2 when he advises the assembly (*παραμυθούμεθα*).

⁷⁷ Translation modified.

Although Plutarch's speech now takes over and concludes the discussion, he is careful to demonstrate here a reverence for the ideas of his teacher which shows him to be a good, even ideal pupil.

The young Plutarch leans on Ammonius' exposition, continuing in a cosmological and Platonic vein. However, he does not hesitate to demonstrate independent thought, inverting Ammonius' location of the Muses, since 'it is to a position here on earth, where mistakes and excesses and transgressions are numerous, that the other eight Muses should be removed' (746C). Effectively Plutarch brings the Muses down to the human world again, granting them a different kind of psychological aspect, in a way that picks up on but also amends the contributions of both his brother and his teacher. He integrates Ammonius' earlier point that education is important into his theory, but draws the topic back to the sphere of the Hesiodic, Boeotian Muses: everyone needs 'divine tutelage' (θείας . . . παιδαγωγίας, 746D) to reconcile the reasonable and emotional parts of their soul.⁷⁸ Plutarch's speech reaffirms the doctrine which informs the preceding books of the *Quaest. conv.*: 'since life consists partly of serious activity (τὸ μὲν σπουδῇ), partly of sport (τὸ δὲ παιδιᾶς μέρος) and in both we need to act artistically and without excess' (746C). Basing his ideas on Plato's *Phaedrus*, he posits the notion that two principles govern life, 'an inborn desire for pleasures' (746D) which equates with Plato's emotion, and 'an acquired belief that aims at what is best' (ibid.), that is, reason; the latter is Calliope's sphere. Thus Plutarch intertwines Plato's *Phaedrus* with Hesiod's *Theogony*. The other Muses are then assigned their respective roles, all of which can be related to a sympotic context.⁷⁹ In this speech, then, Plutarch redefines the role of the Muses to fit in with his own priorities. The Muses, who have a Hesiodic, and thus Boeotian, provenance are granted the equally Plutarchan, Platonizing (and Boeotian) sphere of the symposium (Plato's *Symposium* and *Quaestiones Convivales*) as their realm.

In accord with the precepts of sharing that are espoused throughout the *Quaest. conv.*, Plutarch does not speak at all in the final question (9.15), which consists of a monologue by Ammonius on the subject of dancing and the three different elements of which it is composed. Ammonius suggests that 'dancing and poetry are fully associated and the one involves the other' (748A), a remark which looks back to the defence of poetry enacted in question 5.2. Further, the subject matter of this concluding question recalls the conclusion of Xenophon's *Symposium*. Indeed, the sober, technical nature of Ammonius' exposition and his criticism of the degeneracy of modern music (e.g. 748C⁸⁰) distinguishes the Plutarchan narrative from the lascivious overtones of Xenophon's account,⁸¹ perhaps pinpointing a privileged, Platonic aspect of Plutarch's text.

The Plutarchan character does not feature in the fifteenth question, but the Plutarchan narrator does recount the events. It is therefore he who concludes the *Quaest. conv.*, but his last remarks to Sosius are brief, ending with a compliment to his teacher: 'That was about the end, Sosius Senecio, of the learned conversation then held at the feast of the Muses in the company of the excellent Ammonius' (ταῦτα

⁷⁸ Plutarch also shows the range of his knowledge by referring to a common theory and responding to it, remarking that ἐγὼ μέντοι 746D.

⁷⁹ Calliope: reason; Cleo: love of honour; Euterpe: study of the facts of nature; Thalia: merry-making; Erato: rational desire; Melpomene, Terpsichore: applying reason to pleasure that comes via the ear or eye.

⁸⁰ ἀλλ' οὐδὲν οὕτως τὸ νῦν ἀπολέλαυκε τῆς κακομουσίας ὥς ἡ ὄρχησις 748C.

⁸¹ Suggested by Michael Trapp.

σχεδόν, ὃ Σόσσιε Σενεκίων, τελευταία τῶν ἐν τοῖς Μουσείοις τότε παρ' Ἀμμωνίῳ τῷ ἀγαθῷ φιλολογηθέντων, 748D).⁸² The short narratorial comment contrasts with the lengthy preambles we have encountered not just at the start of the *Quaest. conv.*, but at the beginning of each individual book. Although it is Plutarch who rounds off and summarizes the discussion, his comparative reticence in this question can be seen as a feature of his youthfulness, as portrayed. Thus while Plutarch the educator featured and dominated at the beginning of the *Quaest. conv.*, Ammonius the educator features, and dominates, at its end.

CONCLUSION

The *Questiones Convivales* therefore comprise not just a simple depiction of the philosopher at dinner. Rather, we are supplied with multiple examples of philosophers at dinner, and multiple stages of the philosopher's development. We see Plutarch as mature thinker, and Plutarch as politician, as well as Plutarch as father, son, and respectful student. In the *Quaestiones* the narrator's self-representation is not singular and static, nor does it move along a linear chronological development in the course of the work. Instead Plutarch depicts himself functioning in different relationship matrices, interacting constantly with various members of his family and close friends. Just as the last lines of the *Quaest. conv.* leave open the possibility of further conversations with the subtle use of *σχεδόν*, thrown in to absolve the narrator of complete authority over his massive report, so too, the polyphonic and polymorphous depiction of philosophers (and others) at dinner leave open the reader's response. But whether the reader is young or old, in the early or later stages of philosophical development, among these ranks of teacher-pupil, father-son relationships, there will be some Plutarchan model for him to emulate.

The issues surrounding Plutarch's self-presentation do not end here. The exempla he provides, including and most importantly himself, are meant to stimulate not just emulation but also questioning, self-exploration, and most of all, further discussion in readers. The text represents not just a behavioural template for the reader to copy, but also the philosopher's own investigations as he tests out different literary models and literary forms which constitute variously effective educational techniques. If Plutarch follows his own advice at least, the *Quaest. conv.* must represent not the narrator's final words on a subject, but his ongoing (self-) exploratory thoughts.

King's College, London

FRIEDA KLOTZ
frieda.klotz@kcl.ac.uk

WORKS CITED

- Brenk, F. E. (1998). *Relighting the Souls: Studies in Plutarch, in Greek literature, Religion, and Philosophy, and in the New Testament Background* (Stuttgart).
- Desclos, M.-L. and Fortenbaugh, W.W. (edd.), *Strato of Lampsacus* (New Brunswick NJ, forthcoming).
- Dillon, J. (1977). *The Middle Platonists* (London).
- Duff, T. (1999). *Plutarch's Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford).
- Fuhrmann, F. (ed.) (1972-96). *Oeuvres morales: Propos de table*, 3 vols. (Paris).
- Gleason, M. (1998). *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton).
- Hadot, P. (1998). *The Inner Citadel: The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, tr. M. Chase (Cambridge, MA).

⁸² Translation slightly modified.

- Harrison, G. W. M. (1991). 'The critical trends of scholarship on the non-philosophical works in Plutarch's *Moralia*', *ANRW* 2.33.6 4646-81.
- Jones, C. P. (1971). *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford).
- Lamberton, R. (1988). 'Plutarch, Hesiod, and the Muses of Thespiat', *JCS* 13.2: 491-504.
- Pelling, C. B. R. (2002). *Plutarch and History* (Swansea).
- Puech, B. (1992). 'Prosopographie des Amis de Plutarque', *ANRW* 2.33.6: 4830-93.
- Stadter, P. (1988). 'The proems of Plutarch's *Lives*', *JCS* 13.2: 275-95.
- (1999). 'Drinking, Table Talk, and Plutarch's contemporaries', in M. Gala et al. (edd.), *Plutarco, Dioniso y el Vino: Actas del VI Simposio Espanol sobre Plutarco* (Madrid).
- Reydams-Schils, G. (2005). *The Roman Stoics: Self, Responsibility, and Affection* (Chicago).
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. (1983). *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London).
- Russell, D. A. (1993). 'Self-disclosure in Plutarch and in Horace', in G. W. Most, H. Petersmann and A. M. Ritter (edd.), *Philanthropia kai Eusebeia: Festschrift für Albrecht Dihle zum 70. Geburtstag* (Göttingen).
- Schmitz, T. (1997). *Bildung und Macht: zur sozialen und politischen Funktion der zweiten Sophistik in der griechischen Welt der Kaiserzeit* (Munich).
- Swain, S. (1987). 'Plutarch and Rome: three studies (Diss., University of Oxford).
- (1996). *Hellenism and Empire: Language, Classicism and Power in the Greek World A.D. 50-250* (Oxford).
- Teodorsson, S. (1989). *A Commentary on Plutarch's Table Talks*, vols. 1-3 (Göteborg).
- (1996). 'Principles of composition in the *Quaestiones Convivales*', in J. A. F. Delgado and F. P. Pardo (edd.), *Estudios sobre Plutarco: aspectos formales* (Madrid), 39-48.
- Trapp, M. B. (1990). 'Plato's *Phaedrus* in second-century Greek literature', in D. A. Russell (ed.), *Antonine Literature* (Oxford).