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Aspects of Cultural Memory in the Imperial Age: On Some Local Arcadian Traditions in Plutarch, Pliny the Elder, and Pausanias

Maria Elena De Luna

To Federicomaria Muccioli, excellent Plutarch scholar

Aiming to underline the importance of historical memory in his time, and notably the privileged memory of the Second Sophistic – in other words, Greek history from the Persian wars up to the death of Alexander the Great¹, Plutarch, in a well-known passage from the *Non posse suaviter vivi secundum Epicurum*, succinctly recalls (*Non posse* 1099E–F):

To this day the Athenians celebrate with a festival the victory at Marathon, the Thebans that at Leuctra, and we ourselves, as you all know, that of Daïphantus at Hyampolis, and Phocis is full of sacrifices and honours ... We may then conceive how great was the joy and delight and rapture that in their lifetime dwelt in the minds of the actual authors of deeds the memory of which, after five hundred years and more, has not lost the power to gladden the heart².

While presenting the biographies of illustrious men of Greek civilization Plutarch wanted to give a systematic form to his contribution to the memory of his fellow citizens and the wider Hellenic memory – within a non-linear comparative Greco-Roman classicism³–

¹ J.R. Hamilton, *Plutarch. Alexander. Foreword and Bibliography by Philip A. Stadter* (Bristol: Bristol Classical Press, 21999 [1969]) xxii.

² Transl. B. Einarson & Ph.H. De Lacy. About Daïphantus, general of the Phocians in their war against the Thesalians in the fifth century BCE, see F. Muccioli, *La storia attraverso gli esempi. Protagonisti e interpretazioni del mondo greco in Plutarco* (Milan-Udine: Mimesis, 2012) 135 and n. 17; cf. 131–154 on the recovery of the history of the classical period in the imperial age.

³ Among the many contributions on the significance of Plutarch's *Lives* I will limit myself to recalling e.g. C.B.R. Pelling, "Plutarch: Roman Heroes and Greek Culture," in M.T. Griffin & J. Barnes (eds.), *Philosophia Togata: Essays on Roman Philosophy and Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997) 199–232; C.B.R. Pelling, *Plutarch and History: Eighteen Studies* (Swansea: Duckworth-Classical Press of Wales, 2002); C.B.R. Pelling, "Synkrisis Revisited," in A. Pérez Jiménez & F. Titchener (eds.), *Historical and Biographical Values of Plutarch's Works. Studies Devoted to Professor Philip A. Stadter by the International Plutarch Society* (Málaga- Logan: Universidad de Málaga; Utah State University, 2005)

and he never ceased to express, here and elsewhere, the earnest desire to treasure aspects of the past of *poleis* and *ethne*, cities and peoples. The *Quaestiones Graecae* are emblematic of this tendency with their markedly erudite character and their focus on rare elements of institutional, religious, broadly cultural and, in part, narrative history. Studies of this *opusculum*, which is generally read in the structural context of a diptych that includes the *Quaestiones Romanae*, have widely emphasized some of its features. First, it has been observed that the questions about Greece are introduced in a different way than the ones about Rome⁴. In addition, scholars have pointed out that in the investigations of Rome in this text a frequent use is made of Greek authors in order to explain the cultural traditions of the *Urbs*. Finally, stress has been placed on the way Plutarch wanted to portray pre-imperial culture of the Greek cities in comparison to the Roman past: the past of the *poleis* is investigated over a wide area⁵ – and thus from a non-Athenian perspective – in relation to the author’s intentions to appreciate every *logos* (“account”) and *mythos* (“traditional tale”) held to be significant for specific reasons, and to emphasize those secular traditions which had survived beyond the great centers of Hellenism and in spite of Rome’s power. The habitual use of the present tense in the enquires is the first marker of this lasting resilience of the past in the present. This is a literary exegesis in full accordance with Plutarch’s life and intellectual character: a Roman citizen invested with official roles, never forgetting his home city of Chaeronea⁶ and Hellas as a whole, albeit in a context dominated politically by the *Urbs*⁷, in an ecumene

325–340; Muccioli, *La storia attraverso gli esempi*, 21–53 with an extensive bibliography; and the recent study by J. Geiger, “Greeks and the Roman Past in the Second Sophistic: The Case of Plutarch,” in A. Georgiadou & K. Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Space, Time and Language in Plutarch* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017) 119–125.

⁴ See C. Darbo-Peschanski, “Pourquoi chercher des causes aux coutumes ?” in P. Payen (ed.), *Plutarque: Grecs et Romains en Questions. Entretiens d’Archéologie et Histoire* (Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges: Musée archéologique, 1998) 21–30.

⁵ This wide geographical range is in evident contrast to the sole focus on Rome in the parallel *opusculum*: see P. Payen, “Rhétorique et géographie dans les *Questions romaines* et *Questions grecques* de Plutarque,” in P. Payen (ed.), *Plutarque: Grecs et Romains en Questions. Entretiens d’Archéologie et Histoire* (Saint-Bertrand-de-Comminges: Musée archéologique, 1998) 49; J. Boulogne, *Plutarque. Œuvres Morales. Vol. iv: Conduites méritoires de femmes—Étiologies romaines—Étiologies grecques* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2002) 183–185.

⁶ See K. Ziegler, *Plutarchos von Chaironeia* (Stuttgart: Druckenmüller, 1964) cols. 4–60; C.P. Jones, *Plutarch and Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1971); M. Beck, “Introduction. Plutarch in Greece,” in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Malden, MA-Oxford: Wiley- Blackwell, 2014) 1–7.

⁷ R. Preston, “Roman Questions, Greek Answers: Plutarch and the Construction of Identity,” in S. Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome. Cultural Identity, the Second Sophistic and the Development of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001) 91 writes: “As a *pepaideumenos*, Plutarch was the heir

felt as a common *spatium historicum*, but which in fact adopted a polycentric Greek viewpoint, with a consequently complex perception and representation of Greek identity.

The very way in which the various cities or communities are discussed in the *Quaestiones Graecae*, in a random order, one that avoids any cohesive presentation of the collected material, “encourages a perception of them as independent microcosms, each one with its own linguistic idioms, local culture, history, and religious life.”⁸

One line of study has underlined the likely meaning of the prevailing diversity in the form of the question and answer in the *Quaestiones Romanae* compared to the *Quaestiones Graecae*: while the explanations of the individual questions about Roman culture are multiple, those with which the learned Plutarch satisfies the requirements of the latter text are for the most part singular and undoubted. According to Rebecca Preston’s plausible interpretation, this univocality in itself represents something additional to the actual content of the reply, for it becomes “significant” of an instructive and exemplary Hellenic *paideia*⁹, which the author would intend to convey – albeit in the contemporary tension between the reality of the cities’ diversity and unified Hellenic identity – as more certain, more solid, natural, and lucid than the traditions concerning Rome¹⁰. From this general rule it is possible to extrapolate the very few cases in which Plutarch deviates from the binary schema of *question-answer* habitually used in this work.

While as a rule questions introduced with an interrogative pronoun (τίς, τίνας, τί, “who? what?”) or with interrogative syntagmata (διὰ τί, τί

and guardian of the classical heritage and of the complicated facts of Greek history. As a local officeholder and a Roman citizen, his political authority was upheld by and implicated in the authority of Rome, and yet it was also undermined by and in conflict with Roman power. The contradictions of the position of the Greek elite in general suggest that any construction of identity by Plutarch would be difficult and complex.” On the “negotiation” which the Greek elite had to undertake between their own glorious past and the present situation, see. T.E. Duff, *Plutarch’s Lives: Exploring Virtue and Vice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999) 287–298.

⁸ K. Oikonomopoulou, “Space, Delphi and the Construction of the Greek Past in Plutarch’s *Greek Questions*,” in Georgiadou & Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Space, Time and Language in Plutarch*, 108 analyzes space as a crucial viewpoint for interpreting the main themes of the *Quaestiones Graecae* and for understanding the ways in which Plutarch attempts to connect the past with the present.

⁹ Cf. S. Swain, *Hellenism and Empire. Language, Classicism, and Power in the Greek World AD 50–250* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996) 140: “Plutarch has a positive, genuine appreciation of Rome’s separate development. But as a result of this he is aware that Romans, whatever their natural qualities, had to learn to acquire Greek culture”; but see in general 137–150.

¹⁰ Preston, “Roman Questions, Greek Answers,” 97–119. Cf. p. 96: “This sharp contrast between the form of the questions and answers in the *Greek Questions* and the *Roman Questions* suggests a wider difference between Greek and Roman culture. It implies that there is an intrinsic difficulty in explaining Roman culture.” I also refer to this essay for its highly interesting observations on Plutarch’s modes of approaching and interpreting Roman culture and Greek *paideia* in the *Quaestiones*.

δήποτε, and so on) are followed by a single explanation of elements that are predominantly lexical – individual words, curious sentences, names of places, proverbs – as Katarzyna Jazdzewska has examined in detail¹¹, a small number of *Quaestiones Graecae* instead present different patterns: specific examples include *aitia* 27 (297C–D) and 28 (297D–F), where the first question is followed by another question, this time rhetorical and therefore possessing assertive pragmatic force. This is finally supplemented by a narrative addendum which, discursively adding details, explains the content of the previous rhetorical question¹². There is the same basic structure, minus the illustrative narrative, in *aition* 31 (298B–C)¹³. However, a more fully elaborated sequence constructed in the form of multiple, mutually contrasting explanations is found in *Quaestiones Graecae* 36 (299A–B)¹⁴ and 39 (300A–D), both devoted to an expression that is hard to understand. In what follows, I discuss the second of these, which is interesting for Plutarch recovers here a significant element of Arcadian religion and history which can be compared with contemporaries in the imperial period such as Pliny the Elder and Pausanias. The first object of investigation in *quaestio* 39 is the reasons and origins of one of the punishments for those who violated the prohibition against entering the abaton of the sanctuary of Zeus Lykaios, situated on the mountain of the same name, in the southwestern part of Arcadia¹⁵. The prohibition and the penalty are presented as being still in force in the time of Plutarch: διὰ τί τοὺς εἰς τὸ Λύκαιοι εἰσελθόντας ἐκουσίως καταλεύουσιν οἱ Ἀρκάδες· ἂν δ' ὑπ' ἀγνοίας, εἰς Ἐλευθεράς ἀποστέλλουσι; (“Why is it that the Arcadians stone those who voluntarily enter the Lykaion, but if they enter through ignorance, they send them away to Eleutherai?,” transl. W.R. Halliday).

Plutarch’s doubt is about the meaning of this kind of abbreviated paroemiographic utterance placed at the end (εἰς Ἐλευθεράς

¹¹ K. Jazdzewska, “Plutarch’s “Greek Questions”: Between Glossography and *Problemata*- Literature,” *Hermes* 146 (2018) 41–53.

¹² Plu. *Quaest. graec.* 297C–D: the enquiry concerns the prohibition against heralds entering the *Heroon* of Ocridion on Rhodes; *Quaest. graec.* 297D–F: there is a dual question which again concerns a prohibition against entry, in this case into the sanctuary of Tenes on Tenedos, and the prohibition against saying the name of Achilles there.

¹³ The subject is an Eretrian female ritual during the Thesmophoria.

¹⁴ In *Quaest. graec.* 299A–B the possible answers concern the particular epiclesis of Dionysus in the context of a musical performance by the Elian women; in contrast with *quaestio* 39, none of the three exegeses (one of which is justified by a *mythos* and the others by lexical interpretations of a metaphorical and metonymic character) is attested in another written source.

¹⁵ On the other sacred places in Arcadia that were the subjects of a prohibition, see M. Casevitz & M. Jost, *Pausanias. Description de la Grèce. Tome viii. Livre viii: L’Arkadie* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2002) xxxi.

ἀποστέλλουσι), which signals the fate of involuntary transgressors. It is most likely that in early antiquity those who entered the enclosure of Zeus Lykaios were condemned to death without exception, as emerges from the *mythos* of Arcas and Callisto in Ariaithos¹⁶: this rigid cultic law would arise ambiguously from an oral tradition, recalled as a form of superstition in the *Periegesis* of Pausanias (8.38.6: ὑπεριδόντα δὲ τοῦ νόμου καὶ ἐσελθόντα ἀνάγκη πᾶσα αὐτὸν ἐνιαυτοῦ πρόσω μὴ βιώσθαι, “If anyone takes no notice of the rule and enters, he must inevitably live no longer than a year”)¹⁷, whereas the distinction in the Plutarchan passage between conscious and unconscious or ignorant transgressors reflects a mitigation occurring over time.

On the meaning and origin of the expression εἰς Ἐλευθεράς Plutarch puts forward *sub specie quaestionis* three hypotheses: (1) it would have a proverbial character along the same lines as other phrases with an equivalent meaning quoted in the text (εἰς Ἀμελοῦς χώραν καὶ τὸ ἥξει εἰς Ἀρέσαντος ἔδος: “to the land of Carefree” and “you shall come to Pleasure’s Seat”); (2) Eleutherai would be a metaphor for liberty, to which, on the concrete level, would correspond the release of unintentional transgressors, either immediately or after a period of exile¹⁸; or (3) the sentence would indicate a real deportation to the city of Eleutherai, whose foundation myth Plutarch evokes: its founder would be Eleuther, son of Lycaon, who like his brother Lebados played no part in the fraud perpetrated against Zeus by their father. Being innocent, Eleuther and Lebados escaped the god’s exterminating vengeance¹⁹. In hypotheses (2) and (3) Plutarch accepts two traditions which indicate relations between Arcadia and Boeotia. And the same aside about the *isopolitia* between the *ethnos* of the Arcadia and the inhabitants of Lebadeia consolidates this pattern, all the more so since Lebadeia arose near his home city of Chaeronea, and therefore he would easily have become familiar with such a tradition. Plutarch’s choice to analyze this pericope of the Arcadians’ local history probably chimed with a specific purpose of his own, involving inevitable allusions to his own homeland²⁰.

¹⁶ Cf. Ariaitos. *FGrHist* 316 F 2a (F 2a De Luna in M.E. De Luna, *Arkadika. Testimonianze e Frammenti* [Tivoli: Tored, 2017] 106–116).

¹⁷ All the passages from Pausanias are translated by W.H.S. Jones.

¹⁸ M. Jost, *Sanctuaires et cultes d’Arkadie* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1985) 258.

¹⁹ Plu. *Quaest. graec.* 300B: ἢ κατὰ τὸν μῦθον ἐπεὶ μόνοι τῶν Λυκάωνος παίδων Ἐλευθήρ καὶ Λεβάδος οὐ μετέσχον τοῦ περὶ τὸν Δία μιάσματος ἀλλ’ εἰς Βοιωτίαν ἔφυγον, καὶ Λεβαδεῦσιν ἔστιν ἰσοπολιτεία πρὸς Ἀρκάδας, εἰς Ἐλευθεράς οὖν ἀποπέμπουσιν τοὺς ἐν τῷ ἀβάτῳ τοῦ Διὸς ἀκουσίως γενομένους. This is probably a local Boeotian tradition. Neither Pausanias (8.2–5) nor the Pseudo-Apollodorus (*Bibl.* 3.8) list Eleuther and Lebados among the sons of Lycaon.

²⁰ This mythological tradition legitimised historical relations between Arcadia and Boeotia: cf. W.R.

Not only was the Chaeronean aware of the relations between the two regions in the fourth century bce, when the Thebans' anti-Spartan efforts enabled the Arcadians' κοινόν to develop fully²¹, but neither did he overlook the vicissitudes of Eleutherai, a frontier region between Attica and Boeotia taken by the Boeotians from Athens, which kept control of it throughout the classical period²², and was only recovered successfully by Thebes after 371 BCE²³. The mention of Eleutherai in the passage under consideration suggests a date for the traditions evoked here and reflects the political solidarity that was consolidated between Boeotians and Arcadians in crucial years of the fourth century BCE.

The third explanation of the expression εἰς Ἐλευθεράς is attributed to a writer of *Arkadika*, Architimos²⁴, about whose identity nothing is known, and it contains a sort of ἀπομνημόνευμα, a *factum mirabile atque memorabile*, since it is Zeus who intervenes in the vicinity of Eleutherai with rain, thunder, and other signs, and authorizes the freeing²⁵ of the unintentional transgressors. "Some say," writes Plutarch (and here the verb translates a local oral tradition), that the event gave the place its name.

It is clear that, at least for the second and third explanations, Plutarch finds himself faced with two distinct lines of tradition, and that making a judgement through a process of elimination reveals itself to be incongruous since the *mythos* of Lebados and the story told by Architimos are both of Arcadian origin, and the centers from which all three of the proposed aetiologies were transmitted were highly diverse: the popular voice of the Arcadians in one case, which gives the most immediate solution to the proverb; the oral or aural tradition of a *mythos* in another; and lastly the written testimony of a local historian of the Hellenistic era.

Each of the explanations appears plausible in its internal coherence and

Halliday, *The Greek Questions of Plutarch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1928) 171; Jost, *Sanctuaires*, 257.

²¹ J. Roy, "Arcadia and Boeotia in Peloponnesian Affairs 370–362," *Historia* 20 (1971) 569–599; De Luna, *Arkadika*, 18–23, with sources.

²² See R.J. Buck, *A History of Boeotia* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1979) 99 and 113; L. Prandi, "Problemi del confine attico-beotico. La zona di Eleutere," in M. Sordi (ed.), *Il confine nel mondo classico* (Milan: Vita e Pensiero 1987) 61; cf. W.R. Connor, "City Dionysia and Athenian Democracy," in J.R. Fears (ed.), *Aspects of Athenian Democracy* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 1989) 8–16.

²³ Cf. S. Fachard, "Eleutherai as the Gates to Boeotia," *REMA* 6 (2013) 81–106.

²⁴ See F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker. Kommentar zu NR. 297–607 (Text)* (Leiden: Brill, 1955) 65.

²⁵ On the role of Zeus as liberator in relation to the cult of Mount Lykaion, cf. P. Ellinger, *La fin des maux d'un Pausanias à l'autre. Essai de mythologie et d'histoire* (Paris: Belles Lettres, 2005) 110–114.

so Plutarch does not decide on the basis of exclusion but adopts the stylistic features applied to the *Quaestiones Romanae*, although in a different spirit: Greek culture is complicated, not in its global identity, however, but in the details of individual local traditions. In presenting all the hypotheses, the historian-antiquarian²⁶ is able, in this specific case, to express the complexity of the traditional substratum underlying the initial question in a way that is not confused but nuanced, taking the syntagm εἰς Ἐλευθεράς as a starting point to reconstruct an erudite microcosm of local history.

Arcadia is ancestral land wrapped in mystery²⁷; around Mount Lykaion and the figure of Lykaon in particular, mythical and ritual traditions were elaborated, forming a complex system which in the imperial era attracted the attention not only of Plutarch but also of Pliny the Elder and later of Pausanias the Periegetes. One of the most fascinating nuclei is the phenomenon of lycanthropy, which constitutes a distinctive feature of the local religion: in a passage from the *Historia Naturalis* (HN 8.82) the Roman writer records the temporary transformation into a wolf of the Arcadian Demainetos during a sacrifice to Zeus Lykaios. The case of Demainetos is produced as an example of the Greeks' ingenuousness in the face of implausible events, and it is not the only one! In fact, a little earlier—with the aim of confirming his own sarcastic observation: *mirum est quo procedat graeca credulitas* (“it is unbelievable how far Greek credulity can go”) – Pliny (HN 8.81) mentions another tradition of the Arcadians, attributed to one Euanthes²⁸ who was considered a respectable author in his own time (*inter auctores Graeciae non spreus*), also relating to a temporary lycanthropy lasting nine years. In this case the metamorphosis concerns a member of the *gens Anthi* and is described as a true rite of passage culminating in the recovery of his human form in the tenth year, appropriately ten years older, after spending all that time as a wolf and staying far away from men. The two traditions must be kept distinct both in terms of their specific contexts and of the nature of the transformations²⁹. The backgrounds, however, are

²⁶ On the meaning of knowledge of antiquity and the value of this parallel research, see P. Payen, “Les recueils de Questions et la tradition «antiquaire» dans le corpus de Plutarque,” *Pallas* 90 (2013) 217–233; cf. P. Payen, “Plutarch the Antiquarian,” in M. Beck (ed.), *A Companion to Plutarch* (Malden, MA-Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014) 235–248.

²⁷ See M. Moggi & M. Osanna (eds.), *Pausania. Guida della Grecia. viii: L'Arcadia* (Milan: Edizione Lorenzo Valla, 2003) ix.

²⁸ Perhaps Neanthes of Cyzicus (around 200 bce), see F. Jacoby, *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker, iib: Kommentar zu NR. 297–607 (Noten)* (Leiden: Brill, 1955) 54 n. 5.

²⁹ De Luna, *Arkadika*, 51–53.

identical: i.e. the not entirely penetrable religiosity of the Arcadians and the meaning of the metamorphosis, its being a central part of a rite of passage which in Demainetos' case³⁰ has the additional value of producing enhanced abilities and skills; indeed, having recovered his own form after the ritually allotted time, the man would win the boxing tournament at the Olympic games.

The origin of the rituals on Mount Lykaion is recorded by Pausanias (8.2.3): Lykaon was turned into a wolf by Zeus because he had sacrificed an infant on the god's altar³¹; another strand of sources, of which Hesiod (via Pseudo- Eratosthenes) is the most ancient representative³², replaces the sacrifice with an impious banquet hosted in order to verify the divinity of Zeus. In the passage from the *Quaestiones Graecae* under examination, it is to this mythos that Plutarch is alluding when he recalls the μίασμα ("defilement") from which Eleuther and Lebados were exempted, and, differently from Pliny, he stops at this nucleus of the myth without taking a position on the traditions about lycanthropy which derive from them. By contrast, the Periegetes' treatment in the Antonine era of the various aspects of Arcadian religion did not omit the globality of the traditions pertaining to Mount Lykaion and, regarding the metamorphosis, distinguished the "plausibility" of Lykaon's story³³ compared to the build-up of subsequent lies with similar contents³⁴; we read this claim again, on the same subject, in 6.8.2 about the boxer Damarchos³⁵. Pausanias' intention is to endorse the rationality of the historian who is confronted, on the one hand, with a time of myth when what "is said" is considered possible and, on the other hand, with the dimension of reason which requires a critical evaluation that is reiterated elsewhere in the work: for example, in 6.3.8 we read: ἐμοὶ... λέγειν μὲν

³⁰ The same episode (apart from the variation in the boxer's name, which appears as Damarchos) is in Paus. 6.8.2; in the Roman world it appears in Augustine (*De civ. d.* 18.17), who claims that it derives from Varro.

³¹ For the references to all the sources, the number of those performing the sacrifice, and the identity of the victim, cf. Jost, *Sanctuaire*, 261 n. 6–7 and 262 n. 1–12.

³² [Eratosth.] *Cat.* i 1; Hes. Fr. 163 M.-W. See n. 16.

³³ Paus. 8.2.4: καὶ ἐμὲ γε ὁ λόγος οὗτος πείθει, λέγεται δὲ ὑπὸ Ἀρκάδων ἐκ παλαιοῦ, καὶ τὸ εἰκὸς αὐτῷ πρόσεστιν: "It has been a legend among the Arcadians from of old, and it has the additional merit of probability."

³⁴ Paus. 8.2.6: ἐν δὲ τῷ παντὶ αἰῶνι πολλὰ μὲν πάλοι συμβάντα, (τὰ) δὲ καὶ ἔτι γινόμενα ἄπιστα εἶναι πεποιήκασιν ἐς τοὺς πολλοὺς οἱ τοῖς ἀληθέσιν ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἐγενεσμένα: "All through the ages, many events that have occurred in the past, and even some that occur today, have been generally discredited because of the lies built up on a foundation of fact." On the concept of truth and lie in Pausanias' myths of Arcadia, see among others S. Saïd, "Les mythes Arkadiens dans les livre viii de la *Périégèse*," in P. Carlier et al. (eds.), *Paysages et religions en Grèce antique. Mélanges offerts à Madeleine Jost* (Paris: De Boccard, 2010) 258–265

³⁵ Cf. n. 30.

τὰ ὑπὸ Ἑλλήνων λεγόμενα ἀνάγκη, πείθεσθαι δὲ πᾶσιν οὐκέτι ἀνάγκη (“Now I am obliged to report the statements made by the Greeks, though I am not obliged to believe them all”) and in 2.17.4: τοῦτον τὸν λόγον καὶ ὅσα εἰκότα εἴρηται περὶ θεῶν οὐκ ἀποδεχόμενος γράφω, γράφω δὲ οὐδὲν ἥσσον (“This tale and similar legends about the gods I relate without believing them, but I relate them nevertheless”).

We note this rationalist stance many times in Plutarch too, and the case under examination constitutes a clear example of this when, in the final lines, he becomes a critical exegete of the plausible and the false, and asserts his own authority in order to refute a belief: “The statement, however, that no shadow is cast by the man who enters the Lykaion is false, though it is firmly believed” (*Quaest. graec.* 300C: τὸ μέντοι σκιὰν μὴ πίπτειν ἀπὸ τοῦ ἐμβάντος εἰς τὸ Λύκαιοιον λέγεται μὲν οὐκ ἀληθῶς, ἔσχηκε δὲ πίστιν ἰσχυράν). Citing this piece of hearsay sets off a process of “semantic expansion”; indeed, Plutarch widens the initial aetiological research (into the departure to Eleutherai by the transgressors of the adytum [ἄβατον] on Lykaion) into new *aitia* by repeating the previous schema: three questions introduced by πότερον, ἢ ὅτι, ἢ, containing three possible solutions to the supposed miracle of the shadow which had previously come to the attention of Theopompos³⁶, as we learn from Pausanias who, unlike Plutarch, does not take a position on the veracity of the event. Instead, he confines himself merely to emphasizing the tenacity of the tradition (8.38.6: καὶ τάδε ἔτι ἐλέγετο). We notice a particular nuance of Periegetes’ sincerity in the lines that follow those devoted to the so-called miracle of the shadow: these describe the human sacrifices that still happen (Διὶ θύουσιν) in secret (ἐν ἀπορρήτῳ) on Mount Lykaion, and Pausanias chooses to make a *tranchante* suspension of judgement, shielding himself behind an embarrassed or almost ritual silence that cannot be understood except in the context of the air of mystery in which these sacrifices are enveloped and the reticence of the local sources when questioned by the writer-traveler³⁷: πολυπραγμονῆσαι δὲ οὐ μοι τὰ ἐς τὴν θυσίαν ἠδὲ ἦν, ἐχέτω δὲ ὡς ἔχει καὶ ὡς ἔσχεν ἐξ ἀρχῆς (8.38.7: “I was reluctant to pry into the details of the sacrifice; let them be as they are and were from the beginning”).

Pausanias’ aim, in line with what was revealed earlier, is to present

³⁶ Theopomp. *FGrHist* 115 F 343 (Polyb. 16.12.7).

³⁷ Cf. e.g. S.E. Alcock et al. (eds.), *Pausanias: Travel and Memory in Roman Greece* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); M. Pretzler, *Pausanias. Travel Writing in Ancient Greece* (London: Duckworth, 2007); E. Dimauro, «So perché ho visto». *Viaggio e informazione in Pausania* (Lanciano: Carabba, 2016).

himself to his readers as an honest historian³⁸, but he does not consistently give a detailed explanation of the traditions he reports, which by contrast is fundamental in the *Quaestiones Graecae*. Besides, Pausanias can make do with narrating without necessarily interpreting and convincing; in fact, he belongs to a cultural climate in which Rome is now a reality “assimilated and elaborated” by Greek intellectuals, with the resulting attenuation on their part of the inherent intention to demonstrate the cultural superiority of Hellas and its resilience. However, the demonstrative intention is still strongly necessary in the context where Plutarch lives and works.

In the light of these synoptic observations it is evident that, while the ultimate aim of Plutarch and Pausanias is the same – to recover and transmit the cultural memory of Greece³⁹ in the many-sidedness and also the eccentricity of its local traditions – the intensity of their motivation is somewhat different, as we see in the differences of their expository method and the degree of “introspection” in their analysis of the transmitted λόγοι: these traditions, in the passage under discussion and in few others from the *Quaestiones Graecae*, are in line with the form of the pseudo-Aristotelian *Problemata*⁴⁰, and Plutarch’s ἱστορίη is carried out in the guise of a philosophical dialectic. The author thus seems manifestly interactive in addressing the traditions: he does not mock the openly illogical nature, as does the learned and sarcastic Roman Pliny, but neither does he take refuge in the diplomatic ἐποχή (“suspension of judgement”) sometimes chosen by the Periegetes; instead he exercises a constructive critical sense and demonstrates how what does not appear plausible and is not therefore credible *ictu oculi*, may be subjected to investigation and interpretation so as to retrieve a rational explanation for it.

And so, if it is said that those who breach the ἄβατον cast no shadow, a first possibility is to attribute this to a specific atmospheric phenomenon (the air would be condensed into clouds and would obscure those who enter), or to resort to an *aition* of a philosophical type on the Pythagorean model (for the Pythagoreans the dead do not produce a shadow, and since those who enter the sacred enclosure are invariably punished, they are

³⁸ Cf. M.E. De Luna, “Due frammenti di “seconda mano” nel libro ix di Pausania,” *QUCC* 118 (2018) 65–75.

³⁹ On the value of cultural memory see e.g. A. Erll, *Kollektives Gedächtnis und Erinnerungskulturen. Eine Einführung* (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzler, 2005); E. Franchi & G. Proietti (eds.), *Forme della memoria e dinamiche identitarie nell'antichità greco-romana* (Trento: Università di Trento, 2012), with an exhaustive bibliographic repertoire.

⁴⁰ See Jazdzewska, “Plutarch’s “Greek Questions”,” 42–43 with cited bibliography.

destined like all the dead to cast no shadow)⁴¹. The final conjecture underlines the opposition between a natural condition, that of the sun which produces shade, and a divine law which distances the sun (τὸν δ' ἥλιον ἀφαιρεῖται) from those who cross the sacred threshold, thus preventing them from seeing their own shadow⁴². This interpretation is useful for justifying a lexical curiosity: the transgressor is called ἔλαφος (whose ordinary meaning is ‘deer’) in that, according to a para-etymology untranslatable in an effective phonetic way, “he lacks the sun.” This is an expression which Plutarch describes as enigmatic, retracing its origins to the sphere of oracle with a reference to the Arcadian Kantharion who, in a famous war between Arcadia and Elis – specifically the conflict of 365/364 BCE for the possession of Triphylia⁴³ – not only betrayed his people but crossed the forbidden *limen* of Mount Lykaion⁴⁴. Because of this transgression, a space *sui generis* was contaminated, a religious landscape which on the one hand did not have the connotations of a relational space, in that it was destined by divine law to remain untouchable, but was configured at the same time as a space fundamental to the local identity: this place of common culture, *lieu de mémoire* of common traditions, was in fact endowed with a meaning shared by the whole Arcadian community⁴⁵. The traditions relating to Mount Lykaion found their origin in the mythical past (through the fate meted out to Callisto and Arcas) but persisted into the historical epoch (from the fourth century BCE and beyond) continuing to characterize a specific aspect of

⁴¹ Plu. *Quaest. graec.* 300C: πότερον τοῦ ἀέρος εἰς νέφη τρεπομένου καὶ σκυθροπάζοντος ἐπὶ τοῖς εἰσιούσιν; ἢ ὅτι θανατοῦται μὲν ὁ ἐμβάς, τῶν δ' ἀποθανόντων οἱ Πυθαγορικοὶ λέγουσι τὰς ψυχὰς μὴ ποιεῖν σκιάν μηδὲ σκαρδαμύττειν;

⁴² Plu. *Quaest. graec.* 300C: ἢ σκιάν μὲν ὁ ἥλιος ποιεῖ, τὸν δ' ἥλιον ἀφαιρεῖται τοῦ ἐμβάντος ὁ νόμος καὶ τοῦτ' αἰνιττόμενοι λέγουσι;

⁴³ Plutarch does not refer to the source of the anecdote, but there are grounds for believing that it is the same Architimos he cited earlier. Triphylia corresponds to the western part of Arcadia which extends between the rivers Alphaeus and Neda, and its history is closely linked to the fluctuations in the border between Arcadia and Elis. See e.g. J. Roy, “The Frontier between Arcadia and Elis in Classical Antiquity,” in P. Flensted-Jensen et al. (eds.), *Polis & Politics. Studies in Ancient Greek History Presented to Mogens Herman Hansen on His Sixtieth Birthday* (Copenhagen: Museum Tusculanum Press, 2000) 133–156; M. Nafissi, “Elei e Pisati. Geografia, storia e istituzioni politiche della regione di Olimpia,” *GeogrAnt* 12 (2003) 25–26; M. Nafissi, “Elis,” in P. Funke & N. Luraghi (eds.), *The Politics of Ethnicity and the Crisis of the Peloponnesian League* (Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2009) 30–48.

⁴⁴ Plu. *Quaest. Graec.* 300C–D: καὶ γὰρ ἔλαφος ὁ ἐμβάς καλεῖται. διὸ καὶ Κανθαρίωνα τὸν Ἀρκάδα πρὸς Ἡλείουσι ἀπομολήσαντα πολεμοῦντας Ἀρκάσι καὶ διαβάντα μετὰ λείας τὸ ἄβατον, καταλυθέντος δὲ τοῦ πολέμου καὶ φυγόντα εἰς Σπάρτην, ἐξέδοσαν οἱ Λακεδαιμόνιοι τοῖς Ἀρκάσι, τοῦ θεοῦ κελεύσαντος ἀποδιδόναι τὸν ἔλαφον.

⁴⁵ On the distinction between space and place see the interesting observations by C.B.R. Pelling, “Space Travel and Time Travel in Plutarch,” in Georgiadou & Oikonomopoulou (eds.), *Space, Time and Language in Plutarch*, 15–16. For other examples of religious landscapes in the *Quaestiones Graecae* see F. Tanga, “The Religious Landscape of Plutarch’s *Quaestiones Graecae*,” in R. Hirsch-Luipold et al. (eds.), *Plutarch’s Religious Landscapes* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2021) 229–238.

the region's religious and social life.

Conclusions

From what has been said, it seems we can assert that:

- the non-canonical form of a very few *Quaestiones Graecae*, and of *quaestio* 39 (300A–D) in particular, reflects a multivocality of traditions that are all significant for understanding the subject of investigation. Their simultaneous presentation is therefore a sign of completeness and an index of historiographical prudence. This mode, which is systematic in the *Quaestiones Romanae* with a view to fulfilling a dual objective – transmitting the message of a culture whose origins are often uncertain, but also showing Plutarch's intellectual commitment to understanding it – is exceptional in the *Quaestiones Graecae* and responds to specific contexts and the diverse nature of the sources;
- the explicit or allusive reference to historical elements inserted in support of the aetiological research allows us to call Plutarch's research in this *opusculum* not only erudition *tout court*, but an expression of the various permutations through which history, in the author's critical *πολυπραγμοσύνη* (“the carrying out a careful enquiry”), can present itself;
- the analyzed topic is a good example of how learned Greeks and Romans of the imperial era (specifically Plutarch and Pliny, but later and to a substantial extent Pausanias) express different attitudes in their shared attention to Greek culture. The derision of the author of the *Historia Naturalis*, who uses the Arcadian traditions as proof of the Greeks' deficient rationality, is balanced by Plutarch's care in giving voice to the inevitably immanent tension between his social position as a priest at Delphi and his integration into the political structures of the Romans. He does this with a well-balanced and respectful cultural dialectic aimed not only at safeguarding traditions peculiar to various sites of Greekness, but also at applying a method of research, exposition, and evaluation specific to those *pepaideumenoι* who were keeping the historical and cultural memory of Hellas in view, while at the same time testifying – with concealed melancholy – to its

military and political dislocation and diminution⁴⁶.

⁴⁶ Cf. S. Goldhill, "The Erotic Eye: Visual Stimulation and Cultural Conflict," in Goldhill (ed.), *Being Greek under Rome*, 156: "Throughout this period, conventionally (though not very usefully) known as the Second Sophistic, Greek learning has immense cultural capital but has to negotiate its lack of political authority"; see furthermore e.g. G.W. Bowersock, *Greek Sophists in the Roman Empire* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1969); G. Anderson, "The *Pepaideumenos* in Action: Sophists and Their Outlook in the Early Empire," *ANRW* ii.33.1 (1989) 80–208; G. Anderson, *The Second Sophistic. A Cultural Phenomenon in the Roman Empire* (London-New York: Routledge, 1993); E. Bowie, "Hellenes and Hellenism in Writers of the Early Second Sophistic," in S. Saïd (ed.), *Hellēnismos: quelques jalons pour une histoire de l'identité grecque. Actes du Colloque de Strasbourg, 25–27 Octobre 1989* (Leiden: Brill, 1991) 183–204; M. Gleason, *Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995).