Integrating Marriage and Homonoia

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Plutarch’s narratives operate within the prevailing ideology of his time and reflect contemporary realities. What Plutarch’s corpus may reveal about his society and milieu is the focus of my research, and my methodology is based on history, epigraphy, philology, gender studies, and archaeology. In this paper, I explore the institutional role of marriage in the social and civic life of the polis and the empire as presented in the Life of Romulus and the theft of the Sabine women, in particular, and in the “scandalous” events of the Erotikos, in order to examine the political function of marriage in the ideology of Plutarch.

The historicity of Plutarch’s Lives has not been refuted by modern historians. The Lives have been used as sources for the (re)construction of the history of Archaic and Classical Greece, and Republican Rome. The Moralia, however, have been often dismissed by modern historians and philologists as philosophical and didactic. Yet, Plutarch’s moralizing and philosophical

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2 On Plutarch’s ideology in the Moralia see Panagopoulos.

3 Plutarch’s Lives are biographies not histories; Alex. 1.1; Boulet, 246. See, however, Späth, who argues that the focus of history writers, such as Cassius Dio and Appian, is also biographical, and that the moral personality of their figures is composed by selection from a fixed repertoire of Graeco-Roman and aristocratic political and social principles; both biography and historiography, therefore, construct individual character from the same repertoire.
discussions outline his political attitudes connecting, thus, ethics with politics and philosophy with history. One, therefore, can no longer doubt the historicity of the Lives and the Moralia as primary sources for the history of provincial Greece in the first and second centuries CE, for that suggests skepticism about Plutarch as a historical person and his self-portrayal as a Greco-Roman aristocratic statesman, a Delphic priest and a diplomat.

In both the Lives and the Moralia, Plutarch often draws from anecdotes and true stories that were known to many in order to create his narrative, make it pleasing and accessible to his readers, and persuade his audience. In the Precepts of Statecraft (803A), he invites politicians to use gnomologia, historia, mythoi, metaphorai, as occasion demands, to capture the attention of the audience. There is no doubt that Plutarch is a skilled story-teller with a purpose. He frequently uses not only the individuals and events of the past as examples for his discussions, but, more importantly, his own friends and relatives are also characters in the Moralia as well as the recipients of his works.

In the Erotikos, for example, Plutarch creates his historical narrative by setting the dialogue in the past. One of Plutarch’ sons, Autoboulos relates to a certain Flavianus and to others the conversation Plutarch had with his friends and acquaintances years earlier. The discussion had taken place at the grove of the Muses at Mt. Helikon during the festival to Eros (i.e. Erotidia) after 96 C.E. when Plutarch was still a newly-wed, and had emerged out of a controversy in the town of Thespiai regarding the appropriateness of a widow’s marriage (Ismenodora’s) to a local young man (Bacchon). After Flavianus’ request that Autboulos dismiss Platonic topoi, and after Autoboulos’ prayer to Mnemosyne, the dialogue-proper begins. Autoboulos’ mention of Mnemosyne is not to be taken lightly, however, since memory is necessary for history.

Although the narrative of the Erotikos does not teach retrospectively in the same way as the biographies of the celebrated Romans and Greeks in the Lives, it reflects on events set in the recent past and carries the moral code to a current setting. The story of Ismenodora and Bacchon in the Erotikos is an example of contemporary behavior and thinking interlaced with prescriptive attitudes by Plutarch to evoke a new vision of conjugal and civic relations. The setting of the dialogue (a major Greek city during a festival attested in inscriptions) and the historicity of the characters (Autoboulos, Plutarch, Soclaros, Pemptides, and Ismenodora) generate credibility for the incident and

4 An seni. 796C–D; de Blois 2004, 1.
5 For Plutarch, persuasion is more important than absolute truth. Plutarch can and does manipulate his chronologies to fit his purposes: Duff, 18–19 and Appendix 2, 313; Stadter, 2002a; de Blois and Bons, 159; Flacelière, 407.
suggest that the events of the Erotikos are more than a literary construct. As I will argue, Plutarch’s conjugal ideology is used to suppress difference in the present, and to impose a unitary social and civic vision.

Marriage was one of the most fundamental socioeconomic institutions of both Greece and Rome, because, in addition to joining two individuals and their families, it was intended to create legitimate descendants on whom their parents would bequeath their property, status, character, and household gods.

Emotional attachment between husband and wife was not always necessary. Plutarch’s ideology of marriage and love, based on the laws of nature and the polis (φυσικός καὶ πολιτικός), is fleshed out in the Erotikos. The lover (1qytij¹r!mµq) is heterosexual, married, and a ‘good citizen’. The argument, according to Plutarch, is that the gentleman (i.e. upper-class, free, citizen, adult male) will love according to nature and law, and marry for the benefit and well-being of the polis. Therefore, Plutarch argues against same-sex relationships between free-born citizens, which are against nature (παρὰ φύσιν), for they are without χάρις (favor, gratification). The goals of marriage include procreation, assimilation of resources, the betterment of the members of the conjugal unit and the οίκος, and the improvement of society as a whole. The offspring of legitimate marriages are to become not only the new citizens and benefactors of the poleis but also of the Empire.

The traditional view that the purpose of marriage is the procreation of children is still in force (754C), but Plutarch proposes a new definition of marriage: it is a sharing of every aspect of life (βίου κοινωνία, 138C) and a complete fusion of the partners through eros (δι’ ἰδίων κράσις, 769F). Plutarch,

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7 Studies on Greek marriage include Cox 1998; Pomeroy 1999; Sinos and Oakley; Vatin; Vérlilhac and Vial. Standard works on Roman marriage include Evans Grubbs 2002; Humbert; Rawson; Treggiari; Frier and McGinn is helpful with the legal aspects of the institution.
8 In the Life of Lycurgus, whom Plutarch praises for the laws concerning paideia and marriage, he elaborates on the Spartan custom of wife-sharing or polyandry that aimed at procreation and eugenics and adds: “ταύτα δὲ οὕτως πραττόμενα φυσικός καὶ πολιτικός τότε τοσοῦτον ἰπείχε τῆς ύστερον λεγομένης γενέσθαι περὶ τὰς γυναῖκας εὐχερείας ὡστε ὅλος ἐπιστόν εἰναι τὸ τῆς μοιχείας παρ’ ούτοῖς (15.9).
9 Daphneus (with whom Plutarch sides in the Erotikos) argues at 751C–D that “εἶ γάρ ἡ παρὰ φύσιν οὐκ εἶναι πρὸς δρένειας ὄνει ἀναφέρει τὴν ἐρωτικήν εὐνοιαν οὐδὲ ἠλπίται, πολὺ μᾶλλον εἰκὸς ἔστι τῶν γυναικῶν καὶ ἀνδρῶν ἐρωταὶ τῆς φύσις χρώμουν εἰς φιλίαν διὰ χάριτος ἐξικενεῖσθαι.” In the Erotikos, Plutarch does not argue against the institution of pederasty per se (i.e. romantic and sexual affairs with free-born youth), which he probably accepted as part of the education and socialization of a young man before he develops into an adult and a free-born citizen, but against same-sex relationships between free-born males of equal social and political status.
thus, expands on the Xenophonic model of marriage and the family as institutions of procreation and production by introducing emotional attachment and the element of *eros* between partners.\(^{10}\) Νόμιμος ἑρως, i.e. conjugal *eros*, has a dual purpose: it is the agent of unity between persons that provides cohesion for a marriage (as Jeffrey Beneker maintains in this volume) and, as I will argue, it also provides unity and cohesion for the society as a whole.\(^{11}\) For Plutarch, conjugality is the institution that controls uproar in the *polis*, joins *ethnos* together, and promotes *homonoia* at all levels of the socially and ethnically diverse world of the Empire.

I have argued elsewhere about the infiltration of Roman practices and customs into the marriage and wedding ceremony between Bacchon and Ismenodora.\(^{12}\) The main points of that argument are summarized here. Several fundamental aspects of traditional Greek marriage practices such as the conventional age difference between the partners (i.e., a younger wife, an older husband), and the traditional process of marrying (i.e., betrothal, celebration, sexual union and cohabitation) are modified in Ismenodora’s and Bacchon’s case. 1) The marriageable age for men has been lowered compared to that found in the classical period, and the age difference between bride and groom has been reduced for the Empire.\(^{13}\) 2) The prerequisite of a betrothal can, under certain circumstances (for example, widowhood in Ismenodora’s case), be waived. 3) Consent of the partners is what is necessary in contracting a marriage.\(^{14}\)

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11 The term “nominos eros” in Plutarch expresses a philosophical concept and does not reflect legal language for contracting a marriage.
13 Evidence from Attic New Comedy (Menander’s *Dyscolus*, for example) to the novel (Achilles Tatius’ *Clitophon and Leucippe*, Heliodorus’ *Aethiopica*), where the lovers are often described as “young”, confirms this observation. Roman elite men had been marrying young in the late Republic: for example, Augustus, born in 63 BCE, was only twenty five years old when he married his second wife Livia in 38 BCE, and even younger when he fathered Julia with Scribonia. More significantly, in the Erotikos, before Ismenodora fell in love with Bacchon, she and Bacchon’s mother were arranging a proper marriage for him although he was only an *ephebe*, i.e. eighteen to twenty years old. If the traditional procedure of betrothal and, then, marriage had been followed, Bacchon would probably have married within a couple of years. For the average age at marriage, for Rome see Treggiari 39–43; for the provinces see Saller 29–30; for the Hellenistic period see Pomeroy 1997, 4–9; Bremen 1996, 146, 256 n. 64, 260 n. 83.
14 Betrothal was common for both the Greeks and Romans; the father, brother, son, or the mother (during the Hellenistic period, whenever there was no male in the family) gave the bride-to-be in marriage. In imperial Rome, when there were no relatives or if the bride-to-be had married before, she could give herself in marriage (see Treggiari...
Bacchon’s father is absent from the dialogue, probably dead, while Ismenodora appears to have no family and no kyrios/tutor. Both Bacchon and Ismenodora are sui iuris, and, therefore, according to Roman law only their consent is necessary in contracting this marriage. The choice of an appropriate husband appears to lie in the hands of the woman in the Erotikos. The decreasing age difference between husband and wife combined with the financial independence women gained during the Hellenistic period can account for philosophical discussions about women’s equal worth with men and a higher status for elite women in imperial Greek society. Furthermore, the absence of a family and a kyrios/tutor, and possibly her elite status and wealth explain why Ismenodora has the primary say in the choice of a husband for herself, and why she can act on that choice without interference from any of her relatives. The religious character of the wedding ceremony at the end of the Erotikos, with the awaiting sacrifice (possibly the consultation of the auspices), the procession of the nuptial couple from the bride’s house through the agora to the precinct of Eros (and not to the house of the groom as was the Greek custom) and the allowance for a widow (Ismenodora) to marry during a religious festival (the Erotidia), points to Roman wedding customs. These indications point to a change in Greek marriage practices toward Roman practice.

In fact, one should not be surprised that the marriage practices of the Thespians, as Plutarch describes them, were influenced over the course of more than 100 years through their close interaction with the Romans (and my use of “Romans” includes Romans, Italians, Italiote-Greeks, Latins etc.), many of whom had resided in and had done business in the town since the first century BCE. Furthermore, it would not be surprising either if the two peoples intermarried. It is intermarriage between Greeks and Romans (again, applying the terms broadly to include Romanized Greeks as well as Hellenized

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134–6). For the evidence of growing independence of women in the Hellenistic and Imperial periods to choose spouses, to give themselves in marriage, and to arrange terms in marriage contracts, see Evans-Grubbs 1994; MacMullen; Pomeroy 1984, 83–124; Bremen 1983. While betrothal was a prerequisite to a legal Greek marriage, consent from both partners and their patresfamilias – if they were under such jurisdiction – made a Roman marriage legitimate. So, for example, see Paul Dig. 23.2.2: “Nuptiae consistere non possunt nisi consentiant omnes, id est qui coeunt quorumque in potestate sunt.”

15 On the Romans at Thespiai attested on inscriptions, see SEG 27.72; 31.54; 32.500; 32.499; IG VII 1862; Roesch 171–77; Kajava; Moretti; Hatzfeld 67–73; Müller 2002, 89–100. On the provenance of Romans in Greece in the Republican period see Hatzfeld; Wilson, esp. 94, 105–111. On the “hellenization” of the Romans in the East see Errington 144–5 and 148–50; Gruen 234; Wilson 134 and 141–2: “…however socially Hellenized, [Roman families] were tenacious of their Roman name, which they had strong reasons of advantage and prestige to wish to retain.”
Romans in the first and second centuries C.E.) that I would like to explore next.\(^{16}\)

I have argued elsewhere that Plutarch's Ismenodora and the woman named M. Ἰσμηνοδώρα (i.e. Μαρκία Ἰσμηνοδώρα) on IG VII 1777 were one and the same person.\(^{17}\) I have concluded that this list is a membership list of a local collegium associated with the “upper gymnasium” at Thespiae.\(^{18}\) The name M. Ismenodora is the only female name as well as the first name on the list, placed in a unique position on the last line of the superscript. The rarity of this particular name suggests that this is more than a mere coincidence. In addition to IG VII 1777 and in Plutarch’s Erotikos, the name is attested with this particular spelling only one other time: that is, in Lucian’s Dialogues of Courtesans (291.4), where a flute-girl by the name of Ismenodora is mentioned in passing.

Moreover, the inscriber sets Markia Ismenodora's name in a distinct position, in my view, to signify her high status and possibly her wealth. Plutarch’s Ismenodora, also, has a distinct status in her society: she is wealthy and from a noble family, and everyone in the dialogue confirms this. Plutarch’s widow is the only named female character in the dialogue and, therefore, she also appears in an all-male context. Both Ismenodoras are possibly the only surviving members of their family, and heiresses to their families’ wealth and financial burdens, which would explain their financial independence and their presence in the all-male context of the gymnasium.

More significantly, both Ismenodoras are associated with the gymnasium. Markia Ismenodora is a member of a collegium connected to the gymnasium,

\(^{16}\) Wilson, 115, states that even in the late Republic intermarriage would be probable between the Romaioi and the Delian Athenians.

\(^{17}\) I have presented the research on the subject in a paper titled “Ismenodora at the Gymnasium: IG VII 1777 and Plutarch’s Erotikos,” at the American Philological Association Meeting in Boston (January 2005). I would like to thank the Ephor, Vasilis Aravantinos, and the staff of the Museum at Thebes for their support and hospitality during my visits. A new edition of IG VII 1777 with commentary is currently under preparation by the author. Previous considerations have failed to provide an apt explanation for M. Ismenodora’s place on the inscription (Müller 1996) or evidence that would make a clear connection between the two names (Harries, 191–2). For example, Müller 1996, 159–60 reconstructs Μάρκος Ἰσμηνοδώρα (sic), a male name in an ephebic list of the first century C.E.

\(^{18}\) On collegia of Romaioi on Delos during the Republic (all attested with male-only membership, however), see Wilson 112. For a comparandum, see Segre ED 228, pl. 67 (first century CE), where a female name appears at the end of a long list of names of those who entered the πρωθυποτήτων τοιαίστερα of Kos. There is no doubt that Roman and Italian men participated in Greek athletic contests and religious festivals in growing numbers during the 2nd c. BCE (e.g. IG II² 960; IG XII 9; SEG 29. 806; Errington 105–7), but there is no evidence for women’s participation in gymnasia even during the Empire. We cannot, therefore, posit that IG VII 1777 and ED 228 are ephebic lists.
while Plutarch’s Ismenodora lives close to the *palaestra*, a building often attached to or part of a gymnasium, where her beloved Bacchon goes to exercise and anoint himself. Interestingly enough, the inscription confirms the existence of a *pyriatérion*, a sauna-type building usually near a *palaestra* where the athletes could sweat and anoint themselves with oil, in the complex of the “upper gymnasium” at Thespiai.19

Plutarch was familiar with Thespiai and its festival to Eros, since he and his wife, Timoxena, went there and participated in the festival when they were still newly-weds, as we are told at the beginning of the *Erotikos*. Internal evidence suggests a dramatic date for the dialogue after 96 C.E., which agrees with the dating of the inscription to the second half of the first century C.E.

For all these reasons (the date, the rarity of the name and the locality of its attestation, the commonalities of status, of financial independence, of presence in an all–male context, and of association with the gymnasium between the two Ismenodoras), the identification of Markia Ismenodora of IG VII 1777 with Plutarch’s widow in the *Erotikos* is appropriate. Epigraphic evidence has confirmed previously that Plutarch often uses historical persons (friends and others) and widely known anecdotes in the *Moria* in order to make his didactic arguments more accessible and familiar to his audience. Therefore, it should not be surprising if he is drawing once more from an historical person (Ismenodora) and her hometown (Thespiai) to add immediacy to his arguments in the *Erotikos*.

The woman’s nomenclature suggests both Roman (Markia/Marcia) and Greek (Ismenodora) citizenship. Onomastics, however, do not help us in determining whether Ismenodora was Roman/Latin with Greek citizenship or Thespian/Greek with Roman citizenship.20

Plutarch certainly *portrays* his heroine more as a Roman than as a Greek woman. Ismenodora is the only respectable, contemporary woman who is named in the *Erotikos*. Plutarch avoids naming his own wife, Bacchon’s mother, and the young woman with whom the marriage was being arranged initially. In this, Plutarch follows traditional Greek practice of not naming respectable women in public. Ismenodora, as he makes certain to tell us, is respectable and, nevertheless, we know her name! Her assertive behavior is not typical of a Greek woman, either, and highly unacceptable as Peisias, one of the characters in the dialogue, points out because it upsets not only the laws of the *polis* (περὶ νόμων καὶ δικαίων) but those of nature as well when women

19 Plutarch in the *Life of Cimon* (1.7) suggests anointing taking place in the *pyriaterion* at Chaironeia and he might reflect the practice of his time.

20 Wilson, esp. 94, 105–111, and 154 discusses the problems associated with the terms “Greek”, “Roman”, “Italian” etc. based on onomastics.
take over the city (ἥ γὰρ φύσις παρανομεῖται γυναικοκρατουμένη). He goes on to say in dismay that the gymnasium and the bouleuterion should be handed over to the women, now that the city has been completely emasculated by Ismenodora. Male identity, according to Peisias, is to be found in the training and the education provided at the gymnasium and the exercise of citizenship at the bouleuterion. Ismenodora’s sexual “aggressiveness”, as portrayed in her self-willed action to “abduct” Bacchon, is unusual for a Greek woman since it reverses gender roles, and should have been condemned by Plutarch.

On the other hand, Bacchon’s portrayal in the Erotikos appears to be clearly rooted in the Greek institutions of paideia, which defined “Greekness” since the Hellenistic period. Bacchon is completing the Greek ephebate; he hunts with his friends and exercises in the Greek palaestra. He is called a μειράκιον, often mistranslated as “lad”, but clearly used by Plutarch throughout his works to signify the eromenos in a pederastic relationship. In all of these ways Bacchon follows Greek practices.

There is no ‘hard’ evidence to suggest that Ismenodora is Roman, but she is certainly cast in those terms. Plutarch, like the inscriber of IG VII 1777, sets Ismenodora apart by giving her a unique position in Greek and Roman literature, in that he designates her as the first and only female abductor; but instead of condemning her and her actions, he praises her and condones the marriage she initiates. Although he could have developed his character differently, Plutarch makes a choice in his specific portrayal. One has to ask: why?

Another major question with which we are faced in this discussion is whether Bacchon’s and Ismenodora’s ethnic identity (if we can apply the term to “Greek” and “Roman”) is even applicable and whether it matters. Much has been written in recent years on the questions of “ethnicity” and “identity.” A better question, perhaps, is whether and how Greekness and

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21 Amat. 755B–C: τὸν δὲ Πεισιάν ἀναπτηθήσαντα βοᾶν “ὁ θεός, τί πέρας ἔσται τῆς ἀνατρεποῦσις τῆς πόλεως ἡμῶν ἔλευθερίας; ἢ γὰρ γὰρ ἔσται τὰ πράγματα διὰ τῆς αὐτομοίρας βαδίζει. Καὶ τοιοῦτοι ἴσως ἀγανακτεῖν περὶ νόμων καὶ δικαίων, ἢ γὰρ φύσις παρανομεῖται γυναικοκρατουμένη. Τί τοιοῦτον ἢ Λήμνος; ἰσωμὲν ἡμεῖς, ἰσωμὲν ἔπειτε, ὅπως καὶ τὸ γυμνασίον ταῖς γυναιξὶν παραδώμενον καὶ τὸ βουλευτήριον, εἰ παντάπασιν ἢ πόλις ἐκεῖνῷ ὑποτίθεται.’

22 Only goddesses were abductors of men in the classical Greek world (see, for example, the discussion in Lefkowitz on the portrayals of these goddesses in art). For a summary of the history of abduction marriage in literature, see Evans Grubbs 1989, 67–79 and Lateiner.

23 See, for example, Goldhill 1–25 with relevant bibliography; Swain; Whitmarsh; Alcock 1993. On the fragmentation of Greek and Roman identity in Plutarch’s Lives, see Larmour and Asirvatham.
Romanitas mattered to Plutarch and the aristocracy of his milieu.24 Plutarch speaks of the Romans as friends when he gives advice to young Menemachus concerning public life in the Precepts of Statecraft: one should always have a friend among the really powerful people up there, since the Romans themselves are very keen to support their friends’ political interests; like Polybius and Panaetius, one can also reap a fine harvest from the friendship of the great.25 Plutarch, therefore, emphasizes not the “ethnic” or geographical distinctions between Greeks and Romans but the distinction of power between the two. The question which should be addressed, then, is why Plutarch, a major representative of a conquered people, would cast his story in such a way that would allow for intermarriage between a Greek and a Roman. The answer, in my view, lies in the way Plutarch perceives his world, and in his ideological method for healing it.

This is not the only time that Plutarch supports intermarriage between different peoples. In the Life of Romulus and in the Synkrisis with Theseus, Plutarch argues that social and political considerations (not personal and private ones) constitute the primary motivating force behind the abduction of the Sabine women. In the Life, Plutarch excuses Romulus for the theft of the Sabine women and justifies the theft as a necessity (Rom. 9.2: οὕρ ὑβρεῖ τολμηθέν ἄλλα δι’ ἀνάγκην, ἐκουσίων ἄποριας γάμων). And in 14.2 and 14.7, he writes that Romulus was hoping that this deed against the Sabines would be the beginning of blending and partnership (συγκράσεως καὶ κοινωνίας ἀρχήν), since his followers were foreigners, a mix of poor and obscure people, who were looked down upon and were not expected to have a strong cohesion.26 Only a few of them had wives and, therefore, could produce the next generation of citizens.27 Marriage with the Sabines, therefore, would provide


25 Prae. ger. rep. 814D: Οὐ μόνον δὲ δεῖ παρέχειν αὐτόν τε καὶ τὴν πατρίδα πρὸς τοὺς ἡγεμόνας ἀναίτιον, ἄλλα καὶ φίλον ἔχειν ἀεὶ τινα τῶν ἄνω δυνατωτάτων, ὀσπέρ ἔρμα τῆς πολιτείας βέβαιον αὐτοῖ γὰρ εἰσὶ Ρωμαίοι πρὸς τὰς πολιτικὰς σπουδὰς προθυμότατοι τοῖς φίλοις καὶ καρπών ἐκ φίλιας ἡγεμονικῆς λαμβάνοντας, οἴον ἔλαβε Πολύβιος καὶ Παναίτιος τῇ Σκιτίωνοι εὖνόης πρὸς αὐτοὺς μεγάλα τὰς πατρίδος ὑφελήσαντες, εἰς εὐδαιμονίαν δημιουργοὶ ἐξενέγκασθαι καλὸν. On Plutarch’s use of Roman friends and important Roman connections for the improvement of the Delphic sanctuary, see Stader 2004.

26 On the idea of “proper mixing” as an important determinant of good character and harmony, not only in the soul of the statesman but also within the city, see Duff 91–4.

27 Rom. 14.7: μή μεν’ ὑβρεως μηδ’ ἀδικίας ἐλθόντας ἐπὶ τὴν ἁρπαγήν, ἄλλα συμμείξαι καὶ συναγαγεῖν εἰς ταύτα τὰ γένε ταῖς μεγίσταις ἀνάγκαις διανοηθέντας; and Rom. 14.2: ἄλλα τὴν μὲν πόλιν ὑφὸ ἐποίηκεν εὐθὺς ἐμπιπλαμενεν, ὅτι ἄλλοι γυναῖκας εἰλον, οἱ δὲ πολλοὶ μιγάδες ἐξ ἀπόρων καὶ ἀρανῶν ὄντες ὑπερευρώντο καὶ προσεχιδόντων μὴ συμμενείν βεβαιῶς, ἐλπίζων δὲ πρὸς τοὺς Σαβίνους τρόπον τινὰ συγκράσεως καὶ
for the Roman men not only wives and children, but also alliances through family ties, and thus improve their status in society. Notice that Plutarch’s narrative makes no claim for love or desire here, but, in fact, confirms the irrelevance of sexual desire or *eros* for engaging in marriage. After all, Plutarch looks down upon a man’s private desires influencing his public actions, and in the *Erotikos*, he only accepts the conjugal love (i.e. love that has developed after the marriage) as the legitimate or *nomimos eros*.

In *Rom.* 16.4–5, following the dispatch of the failed embassy and the ensuing first battle, which Romulus won, he ordered the Sabines that were left behind to tear down their houses and accompany him to Rome, where he promised them they would become citizens on equal terms (ὡς πολίτης ἐπὶ τοῦ ἱσοις ἐσομένους). Plutarch goes on to say that this, i.e. the giving of citizenship on equal terms, was what made Rome great. It always won over to its side and made associates those it ruled: Τοῦτον μὲν οὖν οὐκ ἔστιν ὁ τι μᾶλλον ἡξῆνε τὴν Ῥώμη, ἀεὶ προσποιοῦσαν ἑσυτή καὶ συννέμουσαν ὁν κρατήσειν. Plutarch gives credit to Romulus for this policy as well as for the political goal of the alliance with the Sabines and the implementation of the abduction-intermarriage in achieving it. In this way he creates an exemplum of the good statesman.

On the political level, this intermarriage of Roman men and Sabine women is positive for the *polis* for it blends two peoples together making the weaker stronger and providing cohesion among its citizens. Following the intervention of the women and Hersilia’s speech, a compromise is reached on both the private and public level in 19.9.28 In the private sphere, the Sabine fathers and brothers allow the women who wished it (τὸς βουλομένας συνοικεῖν τοῦ ἔχουσιν: notice again the idea of consent here) to live with their Roman husbands exempt from all work but spinning. In the public sphere, Sabines and Romans can live in the city in common (κοινῇ); the Sabine king, Tatius, and the Roman king, Romulus, will rule the army κοινῇ. The word prevalent in this part of the narrative is κοινῇ, the root of κοινωνία. In Ch. 20, Plutarch expands on the agreements reached after the reconciliation that doubled the numbers in the city of Rome and enlarged the Roman army. The kings did not hold council together (ἐν κοινῷ) but each with his men in private (ἰδίᾳ), but later they brought them together in the same place (συνήγουν ἐς ταῦτο).

A parallel can be drawn here to the relationship between husband and wife, who after the first “sting” (πληγήν τῆς μελίττης, as Plutarch describes the couple’s first sexual encounter and the bride’s resentment against the man who inflicted her pain, in the *Marriage Precepts*, 138D) might develop a common

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28 According to Plutarch, Hersilia was the only previously-married woman to be seized by mistake, who later became the wife of Hostilius or Romulus.
mind and come to terms with each other. The physical separation of the two kings and their advisors who eventually come together is also parallel to the relationship between husband and wife: two partners with different backgrounds and experiences who have to learn to work together.

In the *Synkrisis* with Theseus, Plutarch summarizes his praise for Romulus; for after that violence and injustice Romulus did to the Sabine women, he showed that deed to be the most noble and the most political that aimed to partnership (κάλλιστον ἐργὸν καὶ πολιτικῶτατον ἐς κοινωνίαν γενομένην). Romulus intermixed and joined the two peoples with each other and thus supplied the city with a source of strength and abundance for the future. Because of that intermarriage (οἰκιστὸς), the kings became partners (ἐκινώνησαν) in ruling and the people in citizenship. For Plutarch, marriage offers the same sharing of financial resources and κοινωνία on the private level that the Romans and Sabines ultimately agree to on the political level. Marriage, thus, is perceived as a political institution that can unite not only separate individuals and their families but even hostile peoples in a mutually beneficial relationship.

Before returning to the *Erotikos*, one should keep in mind that Thespiai had received the status of *civitas libera et immunis* (i.e. a free city with tax-immune status) in the first century BCE and, because of its position on an important trade and communications route, it attracted Roman senatorial interest and Latin *negotiatores*. Furthermore, because of the Boiotian survey in

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29 *Comp. Theseus-Romulus* 3–4: ἐπείτα τῇ μετὰ ταῦτα τιμῇ καὶ ἀγαπῆσει καὶ δικαιοσύνῃ περὶ τῶς γυναικῶν ἀπέδειξε τὴν βίαν ἑκείνην καὶ τὴν ἁδικίαν κάλλιστον ἐργὸν καὶ πολιτικῶτατον ἐς κοινωνίαν γενομένην, οὕτω συνέμειεν ἄλληλοι καὶ συνέπτησε τὰ γένη, καὶ παρέσχε τηγήν τῆς εἰς αὐθίνες εὐρᾳίας καὶ δυνάμεως τοῖς πράγμασιν. αὐτοὺς δὲ καὶ φιλίας καὶ βεβαιότητος, ἦν εἰργάσατο περὶ τοῦς γόμους... τὸ δὲ τοσούτω χρόνῳ συμμαρτυρεῖ καὶ τὰ ἔργα. καὶ γάρ ἄρχης ἐκινώνησαν οἱ βασιλεῖς καὶ πολιτεῖας τὰ γένη διὰ τὴν ἐπιγαμίαν ἑκείνην.

30 This notion is further emphasized in the marriages that Alexander promotes between Greeks and barbarians, a theme pursued both in the *Life* and in *Alex. Virt.* 329D: Alexander ordered both the Greeks and the barbarians to think the whole earth as their fatherland, all good men, as their kinsmen and all the wicked, as foreigners and not to judge them as Greek or barbarian by their attire and weaponry, “but to judge between Greekness (Ἑλληνικόν) by virtue and barbarism (βαρβαρικόν) by evil, and to think of clothes and food and marriage and a life as common (κοινὸς) to all, mixed up through blood and offspring (ἄλματος καὶ τέκνων).” Boer, 128, has suggested that “…Alexander the Great was the object of the emperor’s emulation” in the second century and that the philosophy of more than four centuries had linked the idea of *homonopia*, the unity of mankind, with Alexander. For a more recent discussion with bibliography, see Asirvatham.

31 On the Romans at Thespiai attested on inscriptions, see SEG 27.72; 31.54; 32.500; 32.499; *IG VII* 1862; Roesch 171–77; Kajava; Moretti; Hatzfeld 67–73; Müller 2002.
the 1980s, we have archaeological evidence now, that the countryside of the Thespiai exhibited a severe contraction of population from the Late Hellenistic to the Late Imperial period, and that the city of Thespiai did not escape unscathed. Alcock (1997) has proposed that the drop in the number of rural sites might suggest the presence of a small number of elite, large-scale landowners as the “villa” structures in certain areas of Thespiai show. Although the city enjoyed relative prosperity, the size of Thespiai, as was the case with other poleis in Boiotia, including Plutarch’s Chaeroneia, shrank during the Empire. The experience of a series of wars and civic staseis in the first centuries BCE and CE, as well as the famine of 51 CE, might be partially to blame.

With social status and economic power based upon landownership, one would expect to find the accumulation of landholding in the hands of women and the Roman businessmen in the area, and a change in the status and position of these two groups in the Early Empire. The provincial, Greek male aristocracy, however, would have had limited opportunities to augment its wealth (and thus its social and citizenship status) due to the economic circumstances and the limited markets of antiquity. For a Greek man “marrying upward” and into the local Roman society would create valuable cognate connections not only for himself but also for his progeny, and his community. The main ways through which one could increase his property and social status, were inheritance, dowry, and imperial commissions. Not surprisingly, in the Erotikos, these are also Plutarch’s concerns. Anthemion, Bacchon’s older cousin and a member of the local aristocracy himself, supports the marriage with Ismenodora because, as he says, it will give his cousin an estate, a wife, and greatness (750A: οἴκου καὶ γάμου καὶ προγόματων μεγάλων). Bacchon has probably already inherited the family’s patrimony after his father’s death. By marrying a woman of higher status and greater wealth, (and better yet if she is Roman, as Plutarch insinuates,) Bacchon gains more property, a wife who would produce children and, therefore, citizens, and would give him not only material but political benefits as well.

Whether the Thespians, in addition to their free and tax-immune status, also enjoyed conubium (i.e. the right to intermarry) with the Romans is difficult to establish. It is probable, since the right of intermarriage was among the

32 Bintliff and Snodgrass 1989: this article (esp. 288 ff) examines the sites of Thespiai, Haliartos, and neighboring Askra; idem 1985 and 1988.
34 Cognate connections, based on kin relationships, with a Roman family would be even more beneficial to a Greek, to his progeny and country than relationships based on φιλία/amicitia as described in Plutarch’s advice to Menemachus again in Pae. ger. reip. 814D.
35 Panagopoulos, 197.
earliest citizen rights non-Romans could receive, because its function was to assure that the union formed between a Roman and a non-Roman would be legally recognized in Rome, so that the children would be recognized as legitimate, and all Roman laws governing inheritance might apply.\(^{36}\) An illegitimate marriage could be contracted, of course, in defiance of (Roman or Greek) law but such marriage would carry certain disadvantages such as the illegitimacy of the children born to that marriage and their consequent lack of claim on the parental estate.\(^{37}\) Under the Minician law, which was established sometime before 90 BCE, children would follow the status of the “inferior” parent.\(^{38}\) In this case, if Ismenodora is a Roman citizen and if Bacchon is considered by Roman law as a \textit{peregrinus} with \textit{conubium}, the children would follow the status of the father (i.e. they would acquire Thespian citizenship under the Minician law). If, however, Bacchon does not have \textit{conubium} and marries a Roman woman, the children would be considered by \textit{ius gentium} Roman citizens.\(^{39}\) Finally, if Thespiai had not been granted \textit{conubium}, the marriage between Bacchon and Ismenodora would still be considered legal under general Greek practice and law, since a Thespian–male citizen would be marrying a Roman–female citizen; their children would be follow the status of the father and recognized as Thespian citizens.

Plutarch’s conjugal ideology is concerned with marriage as a civic institution that aims at both personal and social harmony and which can bridge the diversity of peoples within the Empire. \textit{Homonoia} and the unity of the people were regarded as ideals in the second century CE.\(^{40}\) Plutarch promotes

\(^{36}\) It is well known that the extension of citizenship rights, especially through \textit{conubium}, \textit{commercium}, and \textit{migratio} played a crucial role in the Roman assimilation of Italy (Sherwin-White 32–7 and 108–16). Notice the importance Plutarch places on the granting of citizenship to the Sabines in \textit{Rom.} 16.4–5, as discussed above.

\(^{37}\) Treggiari, 47.

\(^{38}\) The hypotheses that follow assume that Bacchon has Greek/Thespian citizenship only, since there is no secure evidence that he might have enjoyed Roman citizenship as well. One cannot preclude, however, that Bacchon could be both a Greek and a Roman citizen since dual citizenship was common among the Greek elites of the late first and early second centuries CE. If Bacchon has Roman citizenship, of course, there would be no contestation about the citizenship of the children since they would come under his \textit{potestas} and, therefore, be Roman (and Thespian) citizens.

\(^{39}\) \textit{Tit. Ulp.} 5.3–5 and 5.8–10; Treggiari, 45–46; Frier and McGinn, 32.

\(^{40}\) The theme of \textit{homonoia} is present also, for example, in Pliny’s \textit{Panegyricus} and in Dio Chrysostom’s \textit{Peri Basileias}. Boer, 129 and Bremer, 64–7 on the fear of \textit{stasis} and the tensions between aristocrats and the \textit{demos} in the second and first centuries BCE; De Ste Croix 344 on the Greek aristocracy’s positive attitude toward Roman rule, which they perceived as insurance against popular movements from below; Jones 1971, 18 and note 28 on the aftermath of Nero’s grant of liberty to the Greek \textit{poleis}, which
conjugal love and marriage in the *Life of Romulus* and the *Erotikos* because he perceived marriage as the institution that can create a fusion between peoples, and the institution that can create *homononia*—and therefore peace—across the Empire.\(^{41}\) “Wedding ceremonies mixed with ties of blood and children” is the main reason for Alexander’s success in creating *homononia*, peace and *koinônia* in the East, bringing together Greeks and barbarians, Plutarch posits in *Alex. Virt.* 309A–F.\(^{42}\) Xerxes was a fool trying to bridge Asia and Europe with rafts and beams, with bonds that do not hold life and affection (Δψύχοις καὶ ἀσυμπαθέσι δεσμοῖς). The bridging and joining of nations is done through lawful love, moderate marriages, and the joint ownership of children (ἐρωτὶ νομίμῳ καὶ γάμῳ σῶφροσι καὶ κοινωνίᾳ παῖδων τὰ γένη συνάπτοντες).

The *philosophical* rejection of homosexual and pederastic love and the promotion of conjugal *eros* as the only lawful *eros* by Plutarch in the *Erotikos* at this particular point in time may be understood in terms of the societal pressures and changes within Greek society during the Empire, then, as these pressures and changes are perceived by a Graeco-Roman aristocrat. The defense of the institution of marriage provides a unitary social vision and a political solution. Conjugality becomes the institution that controls uproar and rivalry in the *polis*, joins *ethnê* together, and promotes harmony at all levels of

would have given rise to ancestral feuds and *stasis* as local aristocrats would compete for political power and control.

\(^{41}\) For a negative example, see *Prac. ger. reip.* 825B–C where the bride (the unnamed daughter of Crates) was abandoned by the groom (Orsilas) during their wedding at Delphi. This private event led to the greatest insurrection in the city (ὁ μέγαστος νεοτερισμός). On private matters as the causes of public discord, see *Prac. ger. reip.* 825A.

\(^{42}\) *Alex. Virt.* 329 A–F: Καὶ μὴν ἡ πολὺ θαυμαζόμενη Πολιτεία τοῦ τῆν Στωικῶν αἵρεσιν καταβαλλόμενον τοῦ Ζήνωνος εἰς τοῦτο συντείνει κεφαλαιόν, ἵνα μὴ κἀκεῖ τάδεις μηδὲ κατὰ δῆμους οἰκῶμεν ἑδίας ἑκάστοι διωρισμένοι δικαίος, ἀλλὰ πάντας ἀνθρώπους ἡγώομεθα ὡσπέρ ἀγέλης συννόμοις νομίμῳ κοινῷ συντρεφομένης. ...ἀλλὰ κοινὸς ἦκειν [ὁ Ἀλέξανδρος] ἔκδειν ἀρμοστής καὶ διαλλακτῆς τῶν ὅλων νομίζων, οὕς τὸ λόγῳ μὴ συνήγη τοὺς ὀπλαῖς βιαζόμενος, εἰς τὸ αὐτὸ συνεγκόν τὰ πανταχόθεν, ὡσπέρ ἐν κρατήρι φιλοτησίῳ μεῖξας τοὺς βίους καὶ τὰ ἡδυ καὶ τοὺς γάμους καὶ τὰς διαίτας, πατρίδα μὲν τῇν ἐκείνην προσέταξεν ἤγεισθαι πάντας, ... συγγενεῖς δὲ τοὺς ἀγάθον, ἀλλοφύλους τοὺς πονηροὺς... ἀλλ’ ἐκεῖνης ἡδους ἢ μοι δικοῦ γενέθαι τῆς καλῆς καὶ ἱερᾶς νυμφαγωγίας δεκαῖς, ὅτε μιᾶς σκηνῆς χρυσωρόφωροι περίλοφοι, ἐφ’ ἐστίς κοινῆς καὶ τραπέζης, ἐκατόν Περιεράδος νύμφας, ἐκατόν νυμφίος Μακεδόνας καὶ τῶν ὑμάντων, ὡσπέρ φιλοτήσιον ἐπαίδευσον μέλος, εἰς κοινωνίαν συνιοῦσι τοῖς μεγίστοις καὶ δυναστῶταις γένεσι, μιᾶς νυμφίως, πασίν δὲ νυμφαγωγὸς ὅμω καὶ πατήρ καὶ ἀρμοστής κατὰ ζυγὰ συνήπτεν ἡδους γὰρ ἄν εἶπον, “ὁ βάρβαρος Ζέρξη καὶ ἀνόητη καὶ μάτην πολλὰ περί τὴν Ἐλλησπόντους πονηρὰς γέφυραν, οὕτως ἐμφρονεὶς βασιλεύς Ἀσίαν Ἐυρώπην συνάπτοσιν, οὗ ξύλος οὐδὲ σχεδίασι οὐδ’ ἀφύχοις καὶ ἀναμπαθέσι δεσμοῖς, ἀλλ’ ἔρωτι νομίμῳ καὶ γάμῳ σῶφροσι καὶ κοινωνίᾳ παῖδων τὰ γένη συνάπτοντες.”
the socially and ethnically diverse world of the Greek city and of the Empire. This diversity is explored in the wider “landscape” of the dialogue which includes references not only to the Greek mainland but also to Rome, Gaul, Egypt, and Asia Minor. At the symbolic level, therefore, the controversy regarding marriage and love in the conjugal unit can be seen in terms of the whole geography of the Empire.

In the Erotikos, discord inside and outside the polis has created stasis. It is expressed in the family between Plutarch’s parents and parents-in-law fighting with each other in the beginning of the work; in the theater among the musicians who have gathered from far and wide to participate at the Erotidia; in the gymnasium between the gymnasiarchs arguing outside Ismenodora’s doors; in the town among all the members of the community and the foreign tourists; in the quaint Valley of the Muses among the philosophers contending with each other about the function of Eros in society and about the existence of the gods. Societal norms and expectations are reversed; women act like men (manifest in the actions of Ismenodora) and men like women (seen in the passivity of Bacchon). Even the Empire does not escape from discord and stasis: special mention is made of Civilis’ revolt in Gaul, when Plutarch introduces the story of Empona’s love for her husband, Sabinus, in 770D in the final pages of the Erotikos.

At the end of the dialogue, however, all’s well that ends well. The wedding bridges all differences as the guests gather for the celebration and Eros smiles in approval. Everyone, including the fiercest opponent to the marriage, Peisias, joins the wedding ceremony and yields (συνεχώρησε) to Ismenodora. Marriage is not simply a reconciliation but a willing union of peoples blessed by the gods. Marriage can quell uproar in the polis, according to Plutarch, and

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43 It is generally admitted that Plutarch’s political views are centered on the idea of homonoia and detestation of stasis. See Prae. ger. reip. 823F–825F; Comp. Agis-Kleomenes-Grachi 4.3; Duff 89–91, 93, 196, 296–7; Ash for a study of stasis in Galba and Otho; Ingenkamp, 4336–44, for a negative paradigm of stasis in the Life of Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus; Wardman, 57–63. On homonoia as a concern in the Greek cities under the Empire, see for example, Dio Chrys. 38.22: reasons for fighting include land, sea, revenues, trade, intermarriage (ἐπιμεξίαι), religious worship, festivals, factions for primacy (οἱ γὰρ παρακαλοῦντες υἱὸς ἐπὶ τὴν στάσιν... ὑπὲρ πρωτίσθεν); c.f. Dio Chrys. 38.26–38; Burrell, 343, 351–8; Sheppard; Jones 1971, 111–19.

44 Zadorojniy, 113, discussing stasis in the Life of the Gracchi: “The stasis is presented as a reversal of the norms and expectations of civil life. Legislation and persuasion collapse...Neither gods, nor laws can be trusted anymore....”

45 The last scene of the story recalls the endings of New Comedy and Novel (eg. Chariton 8.1.4): reconciliation all around, a legitimate marriage, feasting, and laughter. The dialogue reported discord between families, couples, even philosophical styles in the very beginning. It is only appropriate that the story should end with an accent on harmony and joy accepted by the higher authority of the gods.
also join Greeks and Romans into a harmonious and peaceful *synkrasis*. The distinctions between “Greek” and “Roman” collapse in the ideology of conjugality in order that harmony and *homonoia* be maintained not only in the conjugal unit but in the greater political relationship as well.

Plutarch undoubtedly would identify himself as Greek, although he was also a Roman citizen who lived in a world dominated by Rome for centuries. His conjugal philosophy reflects a political ideology to be applied not to the *polis* of Plato but to the Graeco-Roman *oikoumenē*.

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Integrating Marriage and *Homonoia* 717


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