

Perspectives on Gender and Genre in Plutarch's *Moralia*

This panel explores new ways of approaching constructions of gender in the *Moralia*, particularly in relation to ideals of virtue, motherhood, and marriage. It also proposes new understandings of our generic classification of works from the *Moralia*, including Plutarch's *Mulierum Virtutes*, and strives to situate Plutarch's writing in relation to the literary trends evident in the works of his contemporaries. Overall, this panel aims to advance our understanding of works that remain relatively understudied, such as the *Mulierum Virtutes* and the *Praecepta Conjugalia*, and to shed new light on Plutarch's place within the broader literary culture of the Early Empire.

The first paper, "Cloelia as a Paradigm of Virtue in Plutarch's *Mulierum Virtutes* and Livy" evaluates Plutarch's construction of male and female virtue in the *Mulierum Virtutes* through the figure of Cloelia. Specifically, this paper argues that Plutarch's characterizations of Tarquinius, Cloelia, and Lars Porsenna (*Mor.* 250A-F) create a *synkrisis* of male and female virtue like that proposed in Plutarch's preface (243B-C). This *synkrisis*, which becomes even clearer when one compares Plutarch's version of the story to Livy's (2.13), is used to substantiate Plutarch's purported aim to show that the virtues of men and women are the same (242E).

The second paper, "Illustrations of Motherhood in the *Mulierum Virtutes*," offers a much-needed study of motherhood in this treatise of female virtue. By highlighting the addressee of the *Mulierum Virtutes* and clarifying a maternal focus in several of its emphasized anecdotes, this paper proposes that there is a secondary, but in no way lesser, moralization for mothers

embedded in the work. This approach to motherhood in the *Mulierum Virtutes* will subsequently be compared to Plutarch's treatment of the subject in the *Vitae* and the *Consolatio ad Uxorem*.

The third paper, "Disentangling Family and State: Plutarch's Reception of Plato's *Republic* on Marriage," evaluates and qualifies Plutarch's engagement with Platonic philosophy in the *Conjugalia Praecepta*, in which Plutarch corrects what he saw as an error of Platonic thought in the *Republic*: the sharing of wives and children. This paper examines closely the subtle ways in which Plutarch contradicts Plato and how Plutarch separates the entangled family and city of the *Republic*. This form of oblique correction fits into other studies of Plutarch's reception of Plato.

The fourth paper, "The *Mulierum Virtutes* as Miscellany: A Potential Classification for Plutarch's 'Unclassifiable' Work," proposes a new approach to the way we think about genre in the context of the *Mulierum Virtutes*. Unlike most other works in Plutarch's corpus, the *MV* has thus far defied a clear generic classification. Building on recent studies of miscellany in antiquity (e.g., Fitzgerald 2016), this paper argues that the *Mulierum Virtutes* is best understood if read as a miscellany and briefly considers some implications of such a classification.

The fifth and final paper of the panel, "Plutarch's Participation in Post-Domitian Trauma Literature," aims to contextualize Plutarch's writings within the broader corpus of this Domitian-inspired genre, which developed in the wake of the emperor's assassination. Elite Roman literary culture obsessed over the emperor's legacy of cruelty and excess. This paper will argue that Plutarch, like his Roman counterparts, also reflects upon this "Domitian trauma" in both his biographies and non-biographical works. Unlike his Roman counterparts, however, Plutarch revisits this trauma not explicitly, but in a reserved and oblique manner that relies on the active reader to follow cues and evoke Domitian's rule.

Together, these papers offer a broad and multidisciplinary investigation of Plutarch's engagement with the literary tradition and propose new viewpoints of genre and gender in his *Moralia*. This panel aims to highlight the nuance and complexities of some of Plutarch's underappreciated works and to contextualize his writings within the broader literary landscape of the Early Empire.

Works Cited

Fitzgerald, William. *Variety: The Life of a Roman Concept*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.