Performing Masculinity in Plutarch’s *Life of Pyrrhus*

1. *Pyrr. 8.1*

καὶ γὰρ ὅσιν ὄντο καὶ τάχος ἑοικέναι καὶ κίνημα τοῖς Ἀλεξάνδρου, καὶ τῆς φορᾶς ἐκείνου καὶ βίας παρὰ τούς ἀγώνας ἐν τούτῳ σκιάς τίνας ὀράσθαι καὶ μιμήματα, τῶν μὲν ἄλλων βασιλέων ἐν πορφύραις καὶ δορυφόροισι καὶ κλίσει τραχῆς καὶ τῷ μείζον διαλέγεσθαι, μόνον δὲ Πύρρου τοῖς ὁπλιοῖς καὶ ταῖς χεραῖς ἑπιδεικνυμένου τόν Ἀλέξανδρον.

For they thought that [Pyrrhus’] appearance and speed and movement were like those of Alexander, and that some shades and likenesses of [Alexander’s] fury and force in battle could be seen in him. Whereas the other kings resembled Alexander in their purple cloaks and their bodyguards and the tilt of their neck and their grandiose way of talking, only Pyrrhus resembled him in arms and action.

2. Aristotle, *Politics* 1269b

καίτοι τι διαφέρει γυναικάς ἀρχεῖν ἢ τοὺς ἀρχοντας ὑπὸ τῶν γυναικῶν ἀρχέσθαι;

But how is it different for women to rule than for the rulers to be ruled by the women?

3. The Spartan situation according to Plutarch

4. *Pyrr. 26.8*

机电, Άρεως ἐπιμανείσκα, μειρακίως καθ’ ὑραν ἀκμάζον, λυπηρόν ἐρώντι τῷ Κλεωνύμῳ καὶ ἄδοξον ὁμοίως παρέξει τὸν γάμον...

Being madly in love with Acrotatus the son of Areus, a young man at the peak of his youth, she made marriage painful for Cleonymus, who loved her, and at the same time shameful, for it escaped none of the Spartiates that he was held in contempt by his wife.
5. **Pyrr. 28.2**

...κατιδὼν τὸν κίνδυνον ὁ νεανίας ἀκρότατος καὶ τὴν πόλιν διαδραμὼν μετὰ τριακοσίων περιῆλθε τὸν Πτολεμαίον, οὐ συνορώμενος ὑπ’ αὐτοῦ διὰ τινας συγκλινίας, έως προσέβαλε τοὺς ἐσχάτους καὶ μεταβαλόντας ἴππακας μάχεσθαι πρὸς ἑαυτόν, ὥθουμένους ὑπ’ ἄλληλων εἰς τε τὴν τάφρον καὶ περὶ ταῖς ἀμέξας πίπτοντας, ἀχρὶ οὗ φόνῳ πολλῷ μόλις ἀνέκοψαν.

Spotting the danger the young man Acrotatus, running even through the city, came around behind Ptolemy without being seen by him on account of some hills. He then attacked the rear and compelled them to turn and fight him. They were being pushed by one another into the ditch and falling around the carts, until with difficulty and much slaughter they were driven back.

6. **Pyrr. 28.3**

ἐθεύντο δὲ οἱ τε πρεσβύτεροι καὶ τῶν γυναικῶν τὸ πλῆθος ἀριστεύοντα τὸν ἀκρότατον. ἔπει δὲ ἀσθεί τῶν διὰ τῆς πόλεως ἐπὶ τὴν αὐτοῦ τάξιν, σύματος κατάπλεως καὶ γαϊροῦ, ὑπὸ τῆς νίκης ἐπηρμένος, καὶ μείζον ἔδοξε γεγονέναι καὶ καλλίως ταῖς Λακαίναις, καὶ τὴν Χλώνιδα τοῦ ἔρωτος ἐξήλουν. τῶν δὲ πρεσβύτερων τινὸς ἐπηκολούθουν βοῶντες: “Οἶχε, ἀκρότατε, καὶ οἴοτε τὰν Χλώνιδα-μόνον παῖδας ἀγαθοῦς τῷ Σπάρτα ποίει.”

The elders and the multitude of women saw Acrotatus performing an aristea. And when he came back through the city to his station, full of blood and jubilant, buoyed by his victory, he even seemed to the Spartan women to have grown larger and more beautiful, and they envied Chilonis her love. And some of the elders followed after him shouting, “Go, Acrotatus, and have sex with Chilonis. Just make good sons for Sparta.”

7. **Pyrr. 30.5**

καὶ πρῶτος εἰσελάσας ἐνεπίμπλατο φόνου τῶν Λακεδαιμονίων, ἀεὶ μέν τις ἁρμαχός καὶ δεινὸς ἐν τοῖς ὀπλαῖς φαινόμενος, τότε δὲ ὑπερβάλλων τόλμη καὶ βία τοὺς προτέρους ἀγώνας.

And leading the charge he took his fill of Spartan slaughter, a man who had always appeared invincible and terrible in battle, but at that time surpassed his earlier contests in daring and violence.

8. **Pyrr. 31.1**

ὁ δὲ Πύρρος ὃσπερ ἐναγημόν τινα τῷ παιδὶ τελέσας καὶ λαμπρὸν ἐπιτάφιον ἀγωνισάμενος, καὶ πολύ τῆς λύπης ἐν τῷ πρὸς τοὺς πολεμίους ἀφείς θυμώ, προῆγεν ἐπὶ τὸ Ἀργος.

And Pyrrhus, after accomplishing something like a sacrifice to the dead and celebrating a brilliant funeral contest for his son by dispatching much of his grief in anger upon his enemies, led off to Argos.

Select Bibliography