

ARE WOMEN COLDER OR HOTTER THAN MEN?
(*QUAEST. CONV. 3.4*)

The *Table Talks*, or *Quaestiones Convivales*, are one of Plutarch's so-called 'minor' works, though they comprise no less than nine books. In the preface the author addresses Sosius Senecio¹, a friend and associate of Trajan's. He dedicates the first three books to him (he repeats the dedication in all the six remaining books, thus extending it to the whole work) and states that, complying with Sosius' wishes, he has written down the most interesting conversations he happened to witness at the dinner table, thus following in the wake of Plato, Xenophon, Aristotle, and others. It is quite clear, then, that Plutarch is fully aware of engaging in a genre endowed with a long and illustrious tradition, whose most famous specimen is none other than Plato's *Symposion*. The extent to which the work actually reflects real conversations (at Sosius', in Rome or in Greece, or at Plutarch's, or elsewhere) is a matter of dispute, and the same is true as far as the influence of literary models is concerned. Even a cursory reading reveals the plain and almost bald character of the work's prose, which hardly contains any description or explication. For this reason E. Graf² believed it was really based on personal memories, perhaps supported by notes taken at the time. By contrast, K. Hubert³ stressed the relevance of literary sources for each of the questions discussed, which led him to uphold the work's basically literary character. Later scholars, starting with Hirzel⁴ and Ziegler⁵, tried to reconcile the two opposite views in favor of an intermediate position. Surely, the hasty and bald style suggests derivation from notes taken at earlier times, then resumed and published between 100 and 120

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¹ *Q. Sosius Senecio*, though Plutarch constantly writes Σόσσιος.

² Graf 1888, 57-70.

³ Hubert 1911, 170-187.

⁴ Hirzel 1895, 224-226.

⁵ Ziegler 1965, 295-297.

A.D. This, at least, is Ziegler's authoritative opinion (p. 297). The dedication of all the books to Sosius Senecio points indeed to this time, as he was a close friend of Trajan's and a consul in the years 99, 102, and 107 A.D.⁶

The work was well-known in antiquity. It was used by Macrobius, who in the seventh book of the *Saturnalia* literally followed some of the *Table Talks*, never acknowledging Plutarch's authorship⁷. It was also occasionally employed by Gellius, Athenaeus, Aelianus, Clemens of Alexandria, and Psellus. The title, however, does not appear in the so-called *Lamprias Catalogue*. The work has come down to us practically through a single manuscript, the *Vindobonensis Gr.* 148, usually referred to as T (10th or early 11th century), from which twelve more manuscripts have been copied, which are useful for some parts of the Vienna manuscript which were lost after the several transcriptions.

However, in view of the fact that the text offered by the *Vindobonensis* is hardly accurate, marked as it is by lacunae and mistakes, producing an edition of the work is anything but easy, witness the fact that, though today several editions are at the scholars' disposal⁸, all are hardly satisfactory at times. My inquiry concerning the fourth question of the third book may be a case in point.

Before we proceed to discuss this text, one point should be clarified. In the preface to the second book Plutarch calls *symptomikà* the talks concerning the rules and habits prevailing in the symposium, whereas *symposiakà* refers to talks of any kind occurring at the dinner table. All

⁶ Cf. Ziegler 1965, 68-69.

⁷ On Macrobius' reception of Plutarch's *Quaestiones convivales* (3.10), see Aldo Setaioli's contribution to Leuven conference (Setaioli 2015, 9-112).

⁸ Namely, the Teubner edition by Hubert 1971 (1938¹); the Loeb, by Clement - Hoffleit 1969: the former edited books 1-3, the latter books 4-6 (later on books 7-8 were edited by E. L. Minar, book 9 by F. H. Sandbach). Today the Belles Lettres edition by Fuhrmann (1972) is generally regarded as the most authoritative. Its text has been followed by Teodorsson, in his commentary (1989), whose second volume appeared in 1990, followed by the third in 1996. The edition in the series *Corpus Plutarchi Moraliū*, published at Naples, is still ongoing: so far four volumes of unequal worth have appeared (vol. I, by A. Scarcella, 1998; vol. II, by E. Caiazza, 2001; vol. IV, by A. Scarcella, 2001); vol. III, by Irene Chirico (2001), is unreliable, marked as it is by mistakes of all sort.

questions debated in the third book are *sympotikà*, though the fourth and the tenth fall almost astride the distinction established by Plutarch.

The first and the second question are discussed during one and the same symposium, which takes place at Athens, in the house of the musician Eraton, at an undisclosed time. The discussion is led by Ammonius, and Tryphon, Plutarch, and “other youths” also take part in it: it can be safely dated to the years between 66 and 70 A.D. The first questions debated are: (1) whether the use of flower wreaths, rather than laurel wreaths, is appropriate during the symposium (the question is posed by Ammonius, and the answer is offered by the physician Tryphon); this gives rise to a further question (2): whether the nature of ivy is cold or hot (it is solved by Tryphon: ivy is cold. Its cooling effect explains why it is worn around the temples by drinkers).

Questions 3, 4, and 5 belong in another symposium, which took place “among friends”, at an unspecified place and time. The participants include Apollonides Tacticus, Athryitus, Florus, Sulla, and Plutarch. None of these characters is presented to the reader, so to speak: this suggests that these questions may be based on the author’s personal memories; and of course Plutarch relates the discussion in the first person.

Question 3 is raised by Florus (very probably the Lucius Mestrius Florus who was Plutarch’s friend and protector, and was instrumental in his acquisition of Roman citizenship, with the name of *Mestrius Plutarchus*)⁹: why women scarcely get drunk, whereas old men do so very quickly?¹⁰ The answer is provided by Sulla¹¹.

Question 4 is closely connected with the preceding one: are women, by nature, colder or hotter than men? It is raised by Apollonides; Athryitus offers a solution, but is sternly refuted by Florus. The latter, however, leaves it to Plutarch to establish whether wine is by nature cold or

⁹ Cf. Ziegler 1965, 66-67; Teodorsson 1989, 32-33.

¹⁰ In the title of πρόβλημα γ’ Fuhrmann accepts Defradas’ correction μάλιστα in lieu of the transmitted τάχιστα. This is a way to ‘improve’ the title-writer’s formulation as though the latter were a present-day schoolboy. True, in the second line of Plutarch’s text we do find μάλιστα, but this is hardly a reason why the title-writer should have repeated the word. His text deserves respect too.

¹¹ This Sulla has obviously nothing to do with the Roman dictator. Sextius Sulla, of Carthage, is an endowed with sound culture, who also appears at *Quaest. Conv.* 2.3 and 7.7 and 8, and also in the *De facie in orbe lunae*. For a general survey of Plutarch’s friends see Ziegler 1965, 41-77.

hot – the point debated in question 5 (raised, then, by Florus, but solved by Plutarch himself).

It should be remarked that Macrobius changes the order of the questions: question 5 is debated first (*Sat.* 7.6.1-13), followed by question 3 (*Sat.* 7.6.14-21), and then by question 4 (*Sat.* 7.7.1-12).

Question 4 of the third book, then (like question 10), is not strictly ‘symptotic’, though it is closely related to the symposium: surely it is hardly foreign to it. The point debated, in fact, is *not* whether women are hotter or colder than men from the sexual point of view – a question that might appear intriguing and was sometimes raised in the Greek poetical tradition (Hesiod, Alcaeus, Aristophanes, etc.). Rather, the point at stake is both more general and more connected with the symposium. Question 3 explains that women scarcely get drunk because their temperament is humid by nature (τὴν κρᾶσιν ὑγρὰν ἔχουσιν: so the text at 650B4): for this reason, when wine gets into a body rich in moisture, it loses its strength by slowly becoming diluted and watered down. There’s more: Aristotle himself reportedly explained that those who drink at one draft, gulping down the wine without breathing¹², do not get drunk, since they absorb and directly excrete it: and – so Sulla explains – this is how women usually drink; most of all, they expel wine more rapidly, since they have more channels leading out of the body and excrete more liquids¹³. Their body is more porous, and is more apt to expel liquids: it is cleaved by more “cuts”. At 650C5 the verb τετραῖσθαι is employed in reference to the female body: Teodorsson (p. 329) contemplates the possibility that Naber’s old correction τετραῖσθαι may be right¹⁴; but this correction is hardly necessary, nor, in all probability, is it appropriate. As it is, the text refers to grooves, ducts, or channels through which wine quickly flows out, and therefore does not cause drunkenness. Chirico’s explanation (p. 234) is wrong: the female body is not “spongy”, it is “porous”. What is “spongy” is rather the body of old men. They are both dry and spongy, and so they become drenched

¹² Not “tracannando” (“quaffing”), as translated by I. Chirico, but “gulping down without savoring”. This is an ancient technical expression, recorded even in the *Suda* s.v. ἀμυστί (lit. “without closing one’s mouth”).

¹³ The reference is apparently to urine, but sweat, menstruation, lactation, and tears may also be intended.

¹⁴ Obviously from τετραίω, “to pierce”, “to drill”.

with wine and easily get drunk (as explained on section D). By contrast, women have more ducts and channels, and so they hardly ever get drunk¹⁵.

Let us now finally come to the text of question 4.

So, then, spoke Sulla: he explained that women are moist and porous, whereas old men are dry and spongy (and therefore get drunk).

Apollonides Tacticus (that is ‘ephebe trainer’)¹⁶ declares himself persuaded by Sulla’s explanation, but asks for further clarifications as to why women are cold by nature, so cold, in fact, to nullify even the effect of wine, which is hot (or “even of the hottest wine”), and to expel and excrete (ἀποβάλλειν, 650F) the part of wine which affects or strikes the head, thus setting it afire.

At this point reading is slowed down by a small textual problem: whereas ἄκρατον is not preceded by the article, πλῆττον is (τὸ πλῆττον). Bernardakis and Fuhrmann corrected to θερμὸν ὄντα τὸν ἄκρατον, that is “wine, which is hot”¹⁷. But, it should be asked, is wine hot or cold? The problem will be dealt with later on (in question 5), but it has already been hinted that wine is probably cold by nature, even though it warms people up. For this reason I do not believe that a premature, and basically wrong, statement should be introduced into the text. It is surely better to take it as it is, stressing the meaning given by the absence of the article: women are able to render ineffective, or rather to dull or to deaden even “a very hot wine” (and maybe καὶ before θερμότατον, as proposed by Hubert in the apparatus, would be in place too). And, most of all, it is necessary to render ἀποβάλλειν with “expel” or “excrete”: it is an obvious allusion to micturition (and similar excretions) as more abundant in women than in men.

Thus, the question seems to have found its solution and to be completely answered.

But the physician Athryitus of Thasos – the name may be questionable, but it is found only here, and should not be distorted, as in the

¹⁵ The idea that women may drink less, or that the ἐταῖραι, or *entraineuses*, may only pretend to drink, is not taken into consideration.

¹⁶ It should be noted that Plutarch does not say anything about this character. For the attempts at identification, a reference to Teodorsson 1989, 331 may suffice.

¹⁷ Cf. also Teodorsson 1989, 332.

Belles Lettres edition¹⁸ – introduces new elements providing the cue for further discussion. He remarks that, according to some, women are not colder, but hotter than men; and that according to others (like Plutarch himself) wine is not hot, but cold. The argument is thus turned upside down. We know nothing about this Athryitus – obviously not a fictitious character, but rather an occasional guest –, but certainly his words function as the motivation for a decisive turn meant to state and define the traditional view supported by Plutarch.

There is hardly any doubt, in fact, that the questions at stake were well known in the Greek literary and philosophical tradition: the commentaries to the work (Teodorsson's, but also Fuhrmann's and Chirico's notes, though the latter's are often defective) have already amply discussed Plutarch's statement that Aristotle (fr. 108 Rose) had studied the reasons why old men get drunk rapidly (τάχιστα) in a lost work entitled *περὶ μέθης*¹⁹. They also pointed out that this work by Aristotle is repeatedly quoted in Athenaeus (who remarks that young people get drunk rather soon), while in *Gp.* 7.34.2 the comparison is between women and old men.

In view of this, we may limit ourselves to a short reference to Aristotle's remark (*PA* 648a = DK 28 Parmenides A52) according to which "Parmenides states that women are hotter than men (...), Empedocles says the opposite". At *GA* 765b Aristotle argues that male animals are hotter than females – an opinion on which he had also dwelt shortly before (*GA* 765a) to stress the fact that in human beings the difference between males and females is to be sought precisely in their natural

¹⁸ I can hardly understand Fuhrmann's choice to give credit to Reiske's old suggestion by correcting the name to Ἀουῖτος. This results in attributing a Roman name to a physician from Thasos and unnecessarily distorts the transmitted text. The corruption (or banalization) of Ἀθρύιτος to Ἀουῖτος might be understood, but the opposite is hardly envisageable. Actually the reading Ἀθρύιτος given by T is perfectly acceptable, and was rightly defended by both Hubert and Clement: the river Ἄθρυς flows through Thrace according to Herodotus (4.49), and it might have given rise to a personal name. The fact that at 651E the name is corrupted to λούιτε in T is hardly meaningful: it only shows that the copyist was not able to recognize this uncommon name (an exotic, certainly not Roman, one). Irene Chirico gives the name the Italianized form "Atrito" – an excessive adaptation.

¹⁹ Plutarch and Athenaeus often quote Aristotle's *Symposium* with this title: see Aristotle, frs. 99-110 Rose. Cf. Laurenti 1987, 58-642.

heat. In particular, Ps.-Aristotle, *Pr.* 4.25, 879a opposes men, as dry and hot, to women, as moist and cold.

We might say, then, that in this discussion Plutarch and his friends take the opportunity to clarify the correct interpretation of some teachings of Aristotle's. Actually, he carefully separates from the question at hand the tricky problem concerning wine, which will be treated later by itself, also resorting, in part, to Epicurus' opinion. In this discussion, instead, he opposes the wrong interpretation of Aristotle's views, upheld by Athryitus, to the correct one, lively defended by Florus²⁰.

As a matter of fact, in ch. 2 Athryitus argues that "they think" (*scil.* "some", the same subject as with the preceding ἡγοῦνται, rather than an indefinite impersonal) that women are hot for five different reasons:

1. Because of the softness of their skin. They argue that in women heat consumes the residual part of nourishment (and therefore they are not hairy).

2. Women have so much (hot) blood that, if they did not have their period, it would burn and consume them.

3. Reportedly, the burners of corpses usually place one woman every ten men, in order to favour combustion.

4. The hotter the body, the readier to give life; consequently, women are hotter than men, since girls are ready to give life before boys.

5. Usually women withstand winter cold better than men, even with scant clothing.

As easily noticeable, this is a heap of hackneyed and partly far-fetched observations, at the center of which stands a case – perhaps taken from mythical 'geography' or supposedly handed down from antiquity – which seems to be meant to impart ethnological or traditional 'authority' to the whole. These are basically groundless arguments or false interpretations of the Aristotelian tradition²¹, which Florus will

²⁰ Cf. Sandbach 1982, 244, who thinks that Plutarch is drawing from a lost collection of *Problemata* put together in an Aristotelian milieu (which is to say that he favors a literary source). Teodorsson 1989, 339 refers to Aristotle, fr. 221 Rose (and to Athenaeus 434F, who also seems to go back to Peripatetic circles).

²¹ It is not by chance that Teodorsson 1989, 333-334 is able to find Aristotelian parallels for each of Athryitus' arguments. By contrast, his comments on Florus' 'corrections' appear to be surprisingly hasty.

easily reverse and refute. In chapter 3 he makes it absolutely clear that Athryitus' opinion may be totally reversed by means of his very arguments. He then proceeds to take up each one, but in a reversed order:

5. Women withstand the cold better than men, because the similar can bear the similar (cf. Aristotle, *GC* 323a–324a).

4. Florus' answer is twofold:

4a. It is not true that women acquire fertile seed (σπέρμα) before men: all they do is to provide matter and nourishment to man's seed (cf. Aristotle, *GA* 729a: men provide εἶδος and ἀρχὴ τῆς κινήσεως, women σῶμα and ὕλη). Here Fuhrmann has greatly improved the text, which is corrupt in T (the verb is missing), by supplying <δοκεῖ>, already suggested by Paton. I rather think the negative μή would become more understandable by writing μή <νόμιζε>²² προγεγονέναι: “do not think that women acquire fertile seed *before* men, due to their cold nature, but that they only offer nourishing matter to men's seed”. Aristotle never openly uses the term σπέρμα in reference to women, and neither does Plutarch, *pace* Teodorsson (and Chirico too)²³.

4b. Women stop being fertile before men.

3. Women's bodies burn better because they have more fat, which is the coldest component. This is perhaps the weakest argument: possibly it is Athryitus' personal idea. Aristotle, *PA* 672a and Ps.-Aristotle, *Pr.* 8.4, 887b seem to hold a different opinion: τὸ γὰρ λιπαρὸν θερμόν.

²² Florus addresses Athryitus with an imperative at the end of the chapter too (πυθοῦ).

²³ Teodorsson 1989 correctly quotes Aristotle, *GA* 728a (ἀδυναμία γάρ τοι τὸ θῆλύ ἐστι, τῷ μὴ δύνασθαι πέττειν ἐκ τῆς τροφῆς σπέρμα (...) διὰ ψυχρότητα τῆς φύσεως) and other Aristotelian passages from which it can be gathered that women's contribution to giving life can hardly be called σπέρμα: it can be said, at most, that ἔστι γὰρ τὰ καταμήνια σπέρμα οὐ καθαρὸν ἀλλὰ δεόμενον ἐργασίας. Quite surprisingly, though, Teodorsson adds that Plutarch unhesitatingly applies the term to women, and refers to *Quaest. conv.* 647B (where it is stated that rue (τὸ πήγανον) damages the σπέρμα “and is extremely dangerous for pregnant women”: that is to say that it is harmful both to men and to pregnant women) and to *De Is. et Os.* 374F (where the point debated is precisely whether women's seed is δύναμις and ἀρχή in the proper sense, or merely ὕλη and τροφή γενέσεως; that is, Aristotle's opinion is only made the object of discussion). In my opinion, a greater cautiousness is in order. Chirico closely follows Teodorsson, and in her comment to 647B (p. 221, n. 75) concludes that in Plutarch “il termine σπέρμα ... altrove designa l'ovulo femminile (cf. 651C)” – which is obviously wrong.

2a. Menstruation does not depend from plenty of blood, but from tainted blood, which is expelled due to its weakness and discarded for lack of heat.

2b. The shivers experienced by women during their period confirms that this blood is cold and inert (ἄπεπτον).

1a. The hot parts of the body are hairy: women have less hair, because they are colder than men. Smoothness of skin is caused by cold, which compacts surfaces, as stated by Aristotle (*GA* 783a).

1b. A further confirmation: if a man sleeps with a woman, whether he touches her or not, he gets dirty from the ointments she uses, because the male body is hotter and more dilated, and therefore more capable to draw things to itself.

This last remark seems to be somewhat tongue-in-cheek: it sounds more jocular than serious. This too confirms, in my opinion, that these are real observations made at the time; they are not answers to capital problems of human physiology, but rather particular arguments, at times facetious, which may be put forward as an addition to a serious and systematic approach. Even Florus' remarks, we may conclude, are not to be taken too seriously: they are probably nothing more than "a typical example of discussion held at drinking parties", as observed by Teodorsson in his commentary (p. 337).

Before we conclude, I would like to point out two different textual problems, the first one more serious than the second.

In Athryitus' speech, at 651B (ch. 2), his third argument is thus stated:

τρίτον τοῦτο τὸ περὶ τὰς ταφὰς αἰ<ρεῖ θερμοτέε>ρα τὰ θήγεια τῶν ἀρρέων εἶναι· λέγεται γὰρ ὑπὸ τῶν σκευωρουμένων ἴτὰ μὲν ἴ συντίθεσθαι παρὰ δέκα νεκροὺς ἀνδρῶν ἓνα γυναικὸς κτλ.

In the first line a six/seven-letter lacuna has been brilliantly filled out by Stephanus, who has been followed by all editors. In the next line the words are meaningless, and have been marked with the *crux* by Hubert, Fuhrmann, and Chirico, while Clement's Loeb text has τὰ νομιζόμενα (as proposed by Hubert in the apparatus); others tried various corrections: τάδε, ταῦτα, τὰ τοιαῦτα, and the like. None seems satisfactory, because, in all likelihood, οἱ σκευωρούμενοι simply designates those

who dispose of corpses²⁴, and is used as a noun: it seems therefore unlikely that it should govern an accusative.

However, as remarked by Fuhrmann (p. 124 and n. 4), there is a further, and worse, debasement of the text. It occurs in the third of Athryitus' arguments, which seemingly introduces in the text an element of ethnographical mold, harking back to the tradition of the *mirabilia* handed down in exotic tales, purporting to transmit geographical or antiquarian lore. The text may be translated even leaving the words aside: "they say that those in charge of the disposing of corpses place one female dead body near ten of men, and burn them together, because women's flesh has something resinous and greasy in it, and therefore makes the burning of the other corpses easier".

Syntactically, nothing is missing in the sentence. I would like to point out that, from the very first reading, it seems hardly possible for ὑπὸ τῶν σκευωρουμένων to be taken as governed by λέγεται (which should rather be understood as impersonal): given the matter described, it should probably be construed as functioning as agent governed by συντίθεσθαι. As a consequence, in my opinion, συντίθεσθαι is not a middle, as upheld by Teodorsson²⁵, but rather a passive verb, as confirmed by the presence of an agent we just pointed out.

In my opinion a determination of time or space of ampler or lesser compass has fallen off. Clearly, the observation does not refer to a situation contemporary with Plutarch's speakers, since at their time the dead were interred, but to a period in which they were incinerated. It may refer to the past recorded by epic poetry, in which case a single adverbial expression may be missing, such as "of old" (πρῶτα μὲν?); or it may point to foreign customs from far away lands, where incineration is practiced. The present infinitive συντίθεσθαι drives me to favor the latter alternative. One might think of the exotic customs of India, though the speaker Athryitus being from Thasos suggests an allusion to the peoples of nearby Thrace. One could then try something like κατὰ

²⁴ The terms σκευωρέω and σκευωρία are found several times in Plutarch (cf. LSJ s.v.) in the sense of "scheming" or "inspecting", and "surveillance", "constant care", "careful watch": the etymology (σκευός and ὄραω) suggests that watchmen, wardens, and, generally, people in charge of the task in question are meant here.

²⁵ Teodorsson 1989, 334 believes that "the active συνεξάπτειν shows that συντίθεσθαι is middle"; in my opinion, however, the passage from the active to the passive, implying a change of the grammatical subject, is absolutely normal in the spoken language (and in the prose intending to mirror it).

μὲν <Ἰνδοῦς or κα>τὰ μὲν <Σιντούς. A third hypothesis may be more satisfactory. The reference might be to particular moments or situations recorded in history; for example “during epidemics” (κα>τὰ μὲν <λοιμοῦς)²⁶: a clear allusion to Thucydides’ report of the plague at Athens. This would better explain the numbers: “a woman every ten men”. The *cruces* will of course remain in the text, but this hypothesis might be suggested in the apparatus²⁷.

The last, minor textual problem may follow. At the end of ch. 3, that is at the end of the question, something is surely missing after ἔλκοντος. The text as it is (651E) can hardly stand:

ἀναπίμπλονται γὰρ αὐτοὶ τοῦ χρίσματος ἐν τῷ συγκαθεύδειν, κἂν μὴ θίγωσι μηδὲ προσάψονται τῶν γυναικῶν, διὰ θερμότητα καὶ μανότητα τοῦ σώματος ἔλκοντος

“men become infected with the ointment during their sleep, even if they do not touch or get in contact with the women, because their body draws (it) to itself due to its heat and porousness”

In my opinion, the final absolute genitive actually hangs in the air, since the object of ἔλκοντος is missing: “since their body, due to its heat and porousness, draws to itself (...)”.

In T the text of the next question immediately follows (εἰ ψυχρότερος τῇ δυνάμει ὁ οἶνος), though some *recentiores* mark a lacuna. One line may have fallen off, as Wytttenbach thought. Or maybe only an accusative is missing. My hypothesis is that only τὸ ψυχρότερον has fallen off. It is based on the idea that the opposites attract each other; and this single word would reaffirm the general assumption that men are hotter than women – a word whose disappearance may be due to haplography, given the title of the next question (εἰ ψυχρότερος).

The conclusion we may draw, then, is that Plutarch has intended to record in these pages a real discussion he happened to witness, during

²⁶ I do not think that the μὲν *solitarium*, with no correlated δέ, poses any real problem. The clause with δέ may be easily supplied through the implication that now the usage has changed (*i.e.* incineration is not practiced any more). On the μὲν *solitarium* see Denniston 1954², 380-384.

²⁷ Hubert and Fuhrmann record in the apparatus Pohlenz’s conjecture τὰς ἐν <μεγάλους λοιμοῖς πυρκαϊάς> (governed by σκευωρουμένων), which is conceptually close to my proposal.

which some minor questions about women and wine had found answers and explications involving references to scientific works belonging in the Aristotelian tradition. Nevertheless, in spite of Sullas' authoritative opinion, the physician Athryitus from Thasos tried to uphold the old opinion – going as far back as Parmenides – that women's bodies are hotter than men's. The opposite view, vigorously defended by Florus, is undoubtedly the correct one.

Plutarch's expression is brisk and to the point, with hardly any literary elaboration. Unfortunately the text that came down to us is marred by several lacunae and faulty readings. At times, it is not presented in a satisfactory way in any of the editions currently used.