HISTORY AND PLUTARCH
DE GARRULITATE[1]

Abstract: This article examines an anecdote about the loquacity of an imaginary friend of Socrates which Plutarch tells to illustrate the vice of talkativeness at *De garrulitate* 21. It argues that the anecdote derives more meaning when read against Thucydides Book 8, as Plutarch invites the reader to do. Read thus, the talkative man's ramblings take on a complexity and menace which they would not otherwise possess. Thus, the article demonstrates the validity of recent models in thinking about historiographical intertextuality in Plutarch.

Keywords: Plutarch, Thucydides, Alcibiades, intertextuality, *De garrulitate*, *Moralia*

For Peta Fowler

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Item ninety-two in the 'Lamprias Catalogue' of Plutarch's works is a treatise which the Catalogue calls Περὶ ἀδολεσχίας ('On Talkativeness'), often known in the modern world by the Latin title *De garrulitate*. It is an engaging work, in a vein common to Plutarch's *Moralia*: erudite; genial; and possibly, by implication, self-deprecating, if we follow the attractive suggestion that the reader is invited to consider the author himself as a chatterbox in recovery.[2] It also has deep connexions to larger Plutarchan projects and preoccupations. Matthew Leigh has noted that it can be read usefully in tandem with Plutarch's other treatise *De curiositate*, with which, to some extent, it overlaps.[3] Lieve Van Hoof has read it profitably as one of Plutarch's 'psychotherapeutic' works, in which the Greek imperial elite is philosophically schooled to behave with ethics and etiquette and, in so doing, maximise their individual cultural capital.[4] Most recently, Judith Mossman has used it to illuminate Plutarch's presentation of Spartan speech.[5]

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[1] This article arises from a short conference in honour of Peta Fowler, to whom it is dedicated. The author is grateful for the feedback received at that conference (especially from Stephen Harrison, Luuk Huitink, Gregory Hutchinson, and Tim Rood), to Christopher Pelling, who commented on an early draft, to the editors of *Histos*, and to the article's referees, for numerous improvements. All translations are mine.

[2] Van Hoof (2010) 174–5.

[3] Leigh (2013) 12.

[4] Van Hoof (2010) 151–75.

[5] Mossman (2023) 139–41.

Towards the end of *De garrulitate*, Plutarch presents a cautionary example of the talkative man in action, with three possible, contrasting responses to someone asking the question 'Is Socrates at home?' (Plut. *De garr.* 21, 513A):

οἷον πυθομένου τινὸς εἰ Σωκράτης ἔνδον, ὁ μὲν ὥσπερ ἄκων καὶ ἀπροθύμως ἀποκρίνεται τὸ 'οὐκ ἔνδον'· ἐὰν δὲ βούληται λακωνίζειν, καὶ τὸ 'ἔνδον' ἀφελὼν αὐτὴν μόνην φθέγξεται τὴν ἀπόφασιν· ὡς ἐκεῖνοι, Φιλίππου γράψαντος εἰ δέξονται τῇ πόλει αὐτόν, εἰς τὴν χάρτην ΟΥ μέγα γράψαντες ἀπέστειλαν. ὁ δὲ φιλανθρωπότερον ἀποκρίνεται, 'οὐκ ἔνδον ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ταῖς τραπέζαις'· κἂν βούληται προσεπιμετρῆσαι, 'ξένους τινὰς ἐκεῖ περιμένων.' ὁ δὲ περιττὸς καὶ ἀδολέσχης, ἄν γε δὴ τύχῃ καὶ τὸν Κολοφώνιον ἀνεγνωκὼς Ἀντίμαχον, 'οὐκ ἔνδον,' φησίν, 'ἀλλ' ἐπὶ ταῖς τραπέζαις, ξένους ἀναμένων Ἴωνας, ὑπὲρ ὧν αὐτῷ γέγραφεν Ἀλκιβιάδης περὶ Μίλητον ὢν καὶ παρὰ Τισσαφέρνει διατρίβων, τῷ τοῦ μεγάλου σατράπῃ βασιλέως, ὃς πάλαι μὲν ἐβοήθει Λακεδαιμονίοις, νῦν δὲ προστίθεται δι' Ἀλκιβιάδην Ἀθηναίοις· ὁ γὰρ Ἀλκιβιάδης ἐπιθυμῶν κατελθεῖν εἰς τὴν πατρίδα τὸν Τισσαφέρνην μετατίθησι.' καὶ ὅλως τὴν ὀγδόην Θουκυδίδου κατατεινάμενος ἐρεῖ καὶ κατακλύσει τὸν ἄνθρωπον, ἕως φθάσει καὶ Μίλητος ἐκπολεμωθεῖσα καὶ φυγαδευθεὶς τὸ δεύτερον Ἀλκιβιάδης.

If, for example, someone has asked whether Socrates is at home, one man might as it were begrudgingly and unwillingly reply 'He's not in'. If the man wants to do it the Spartan way, he'll give just the 'no' and leave out the 'in', just as the Spartans, when Philip wrote asking whether they would admit him into their city, wrote a big NO on the papyrus and sent it off to him. Another might answer more diplomatically: 'He's not in; he's at the bank'. If this man wants to add fuller measure, he might add: 'He's waiting for some friends there'.

But the over-officious and garrulous man, especially if he happens to have read Antimachus of Colophon, will say: 'He's not in; he's at the bank, waiting for some Ionian friends, on whose behalf Alcibiades has written to him. Alcibiades is at Miletus and spending time with Tissaphernes, the satrap of the Great King, who was once helping the Spartans, but who is now being brought over to the cause of Athens through the influence of Alcibiades. For Alcibiades is flipping Tissapher- nes, because he longs to return from exile to his fatherland'. And, in short, he will roll out the eighth book of Thucydides and swamp the chap, until Miletus forestalls him by being drawn into war, and Alcibiades is exiled for the second time.

Presented thus, Plutarch's example of unstoppable loquacity is both amusing and true to life. Most readers—especially those who have spent time around academics—will recognise the phenomenon of a respondent who doesn't know how to *stop* answering a question. Plutarch's 'Goldilocks' strategy of presenting three possible responses—one too short, one too long, one just right—furthers the 'psychotherapeutic' cast to the treatise, which we have already identified above. Plutarch is interested not merely in presenting the psychopathology of the talkative person, but identifying ways in which such talkativeness can be self-diagnosed, and, potentially, fixed.[6]

So much is entirely true, but attention to exactly how Plutarch frames this scenario reveals deeper layers of meaning. Plutarch is not the only author to use the case-study of asking whether someone is at home to work through definitions of brevity and loquacity; we find the young Cicero doing so in *De inventione* (Cic. *Inv. rhet.* 1.28). In Cicero, however, the characters in the story remain anonymous. Why does Plutarch choose to attach this scenario to the historical person of Socrates? Why does he make it—with the reference to the eighth book of Thucydides—so self-consciously literary? Plutarch, to be sure, is a writer who wears his learning visibly, if lightly. All the same, this might seem a lot of garnish for what could easily have been a much more generic scenario.

Read in the context of the whole treatise, the talkative man's unnecessary disquisition on the business of the absent Socrates (and friends) turns out to have further implications—both for this passage of the work, and for the interpretation of *De garrulitate* itself. *De garrulitate* is, indeed, a genial work—but one that is a little darker and edgier than it has always been perceived to be. In particular, it reveals a preoccupation with the tension between speech and power, especially the power of a state, or a potentially erratic autocrat, which resonates with many recent readings of literature in general, and Greek literature in particular, under the Roman Empire.[7] This article argues that a key aspect of this preoccupation plays out in how *De garrulitate* uses 'history': both the events of the Greco-Roman world's past; the texts that have depicted those events before Plutarch; and the sometimes ambiguous relationship between the two. The choice of Socrates as the topic of conversation is not idle; rather, it allows Plutarch to suggest the perils of a loose tongue, by playing upon the informed reader's awareness of the subsequent career of a prominent historical figure whose cause would not be helped by unthinking garrulity on the part of his acquaintances.

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[6] Compare Fundanus in the *De cohibenda ira*, who observes the bad effects of anger on others (*De cohibenda ira.* 6, 455F–456B), and then outlines practices to master such tendencies in himself (*De cohibenda ira* 11–16, 459B–463F); Duff (2023) 56–7.

[7] E.g., Whitmarsh (2001) 133–41.

Antimachus, or, How Not to Start a Story

The self-conscious literariness of the story about the talkative man and Socrates starts before the name-check of Thucydides. Plutarch sets the scene with the quip that the talkative man has been reading Antimachus of Colophon.[8] The implications of this joke deserve attention.

Plutarch's most significant motivation for mentioning Antimachus, and possibly his only one, is simply that Antimachus' work had become a byword for unnecessary verbosity. Antimachus' work won plaudits for several of its characteristics in antiquity. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (D.H. *Comp.* 2.98.6 = Matthews 22)—interestingly, in light of the historical text to which Plutarch's thoughts will shortly stray—says that, in terms of the austere mode of composition, Antimachus achieved in epic what Thucydides did in history and others in other genres;[9] Quintilian (Quint. 10.1.52 = Mattthews 24) thought he occupied the second place in epic after Homer (while punctiliously noting that 'second' doesn't mean the same thing as 'a *close* second').[10] But Gregory of Nazianzus, making the point that a poet can write at great length and still be admirably succinct, takes Homer as his exemplar, and Antimachus as his contrary case (Gregor. Naz. *Epist.* 54 = Matthews 27). Antimachus, like Plutarch's reprobate, was prolix.

It may be that Plutarch intends a further nuance. A single ancient source suggests that Antimachus, apart from general *logorrhoea*, was associated with one particular sort of over-talking: providing far too much background context to explain an occurrence, by pursuing a causal chain back through too many links. Horace, in his *Ars Poetica*, says of the skilful narrative poet that he 'begins neither the return of Diomedes from the death of Meleager, nor the Trojan War from the double egg' (*Nec reditum Diomedis ab interitu Meleagri,/ nec gemino bellum Troianum orditur ab ouo*). Pseudo-Acro's commentary on this passage claims that the reference to the return of Diomedes is a dig at Antimachus: 'the poet Antimachus, telling the story of the return of Diomedes, begins from the beginning of its very first cause (*ab exordio primae originis*), that is to say, from the death of Meleager' ([Acro] in Hor. *AP* 146 = Matthews 26ª).

Recent scholarship on Antimachus has been suspicious of Pseudo-Acro's claim that Antimachus erred by providing too much context for the return of Diomedes—perhaps unduly suspicious.[11] Scholars have tended to lump his

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[8] The edition and commentary on Antimachus used in the following discussion is Matthews (1995).

[9] Matthews (1995) 68.

[10] Matthews (1995) 67.

[11] Brink (1971) 220 'Porph. and ps.-Acro ad l. mention the name of Antimachus, which produces many difficulties of interpretation' (see also ibid., 442).

statement together with the other scholia on this line,[12] which claim, respectively, that Antimachus was so long-winded that he only succeeded in bringing the Seven to Thebes in Book 24 of his epic (wildly improbable); and that his epic spent twenty-four books describing the return of the Greeks from Troy 'before he brought the seven leaders to Greece' (conflating the Trojan and Theban Cycles, and making a mess of mythological chronology).[13] One may query whether the fact that the other scholiasts on this passage are so obviously garbled entails that Pseudo-Acro's much more succinct and lucid claim is so, as well; notably, Pseudo-Acro does not make the claim that Antimachus was (at least) twenty-four books long—a claim which is made by the other scholia on the line, and which Matthews regards as indicating conclusively that those scholia are not reliable.[14] At the very least, it is suggestive that at least one ancient scholar seems to have *thought* that a particularly striking manifestation of Antimachus' general long-windedness was not just a tendency to use far too many words to convey something, but also to provide far too much causal detail in illuminating a simple fact.

Certainly, Plutarch's reference to Antimachus *does* introduce a story where the talkative man's fault is clearly not using too many words to say a simple thing, or talking about things which are completely irrelevant to the question he has been asked; rather, he cannot resist the temptation to explain a fact that he has just used to explain another one. Socrates is away *because* he is waiting for some Ionian friends. Socrates is waiting for some Ionian friends *because* Alcibiades has written to him about them. We note that Plutarch's 'Goldilocks option' (i.e., the man who replies saying neither too little, nor too much) stops, even if he is feeling expansive, at the detail that Socrates is waiting for some friends, and does not mention that they are Ionian (a reticence to which we shall return below).

The talkative man, by contrast, continues to bounce merrily along the causal chain, until he reaches Alcibiades himself, and a general explanation for Alcibiades' current behaviour. There is a difference here from Theophrastus' several takes on one flavour or another of 'talkative man', in his *Characters*. Theophrastus subdivides the phenomenon of talkativeness in a way

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[12] Vessey (1971) 9; Matthews (1995) 73.

[13] These scholia are items 26B and 26C in Matthews (1995).

[14] Matthews (1995) 21–2. The best argument that Antimachus did *not* reach the Epigonoi is that Adrastus still seems to be feasting the Seven in Argos during Book 5; it would entail picking up the pace markedly to reach the Epigonoi if, as Gregory of Nazianzus' argument suggests (see above), the *Thebaid* was shorter than the *Iliad* (Matthews (1995) 22). But Vergil's *Aeneid* covers the events of one night in Book 2 and of at least five years in Book 3; calculations on the basis that ancient epics keep the same narrative pace throughout are not robust.

that Plutarch does not,[15] but both his ἀδολέσχης (Theophr. *Char.* 3) and his λάλος (Theophr. *Char.* 7) share the characteristic that, whatever the original subject, they are both prone to sound off about unrelated subjects: the former will tell a stranger about his wife, a dream he had last night, or the dinner he just ate (Theophr. *Char.* 3.2–3);[16] the latter will wander off the subject of what has happened in the assembly to talk about oratorical battles of yore (Theophr. *Char.* 7.7).[17] Plutarch's talkative man, at least in this story instantiation, is talking excessively, but *complete* randomness is not the fault of which he is culpable.

Like Pseudo-Acro's vision of Antimachus, Plutarch's talkative man does not just gabble, he *over-explains*. Antimachus, if he did indeed explain the return of Diomedes by going all the way back to the death of Meleager in the previous generation but one, probably did so the other way around: starting with that death, and then tracing its consequences down to Diomedes. Plutarch's talkative man does the reverse, moving ever further away from the fact (Socrates' absence) that he is explaining—a strategy with parallels in earlier literature.[18] All the same, it is at least possible that Plutarch's joke about Antimachus lays the ground for a scenario that brings into the foreground a particular *sort* of reprehensible talkativeness: not pleonasm, or utter irrelevance, but failing to delimit explanation in a fashion appropriate to the circumstances. As we shall see, Plutarch's invocation of Thucydides at the end of the scenario establishes a more focussed and thoroughgoing intertextuality. But the opening reference to Antimachus has already, perhaps, primed Plutarch's cultured reader to ponder appropriate, and inappropriate, extents of conveying information, through the medium of earlier literary texts.

Historical Exemplarity in *De garrulitate*, or, Saying the Wrong Thing to the Wrong Person

Even before Plutarch's final allusion to Thucydides Book 8, the reader will already have been struck that this made-up scenario is playing with historical characters. Once again, one may contrast Theophrastus' strategy in his

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[15] Van Hoof (2010) 152–3; Nikolaidis (2011) 211–12; Mossman (2023) 141.

[16] Diggle (2004) 199: 'The ἀδολέσχης is characterised by the triviality and unconnectedness of his talk. He moves calmly from one trite subject to the next, caring little whether the second follows logically from the first.'

[17] Diggle (2004) notes that the λάλος is more connected than the ἀδολέσχης (266); even so, the latter's talk has at best a 'loose association of ideas' (271).

[18] Fraenkel (1950) 119–20, on Aesch. *Ag.* 205 is illuminating on the use of such a strategy in the *parodos* to Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*. One of the referees for this article also notes that analeptic digression is a characteristic move of historiography.

Characters. Historical figures and events are mentioned in the *Characters*; Theophrastus' λάλος sounds off about the time of Lysander (Theophr. *Char.* 7.7). The late-Fourth-Century Athenian context is keenly observed.[19] In Theophrastus, however, historical events or characters are very much in the background. Plutarch's talkative man is as anonymous as Theophrastus', but Theophrastus would not present a scenario where that talkative man is himself of sufficiently close connexion to a named historical heavyweight like Socrates that he (apparently) knows the latter's whereabouts. Making an example more vivid by attaching it to a recognisable individual—and sometimes these very ones—was an established strategy in ancient prose literature. Aristotle famously defines history in the *Poetics* as 'what Alcibiades did and what happened to him' (Arist. *Poet.* 1451b11).[20] But Plutarch's imaginary case-study of garrulous response, populated with Socrates and Alcibiades, comes near the end of a treatise where historical instances of garrulousness have a very high profile.

De garrulitate, again and again, exemplifies its warnings about undue loquacity with historical instances. Van Hoof notes the treatise's reliance on examples from mythology and history.[21] *De garrulitate* does use some instances from myth—mostly, material covered by Homer. Nestor appears as an example of the particular garrulousness characteristic of war-heroes (*De garr.* 22); Penelope, Eurycleia, Odysseus, and his companions conversely, as exemplars of the value of discretion (*De garr.* 8).[22] On the whole, though, Plutarch does little to exploit the rich vein of myths about individuals who bring ruin on themselves or others by talking too much. Ovid's *Metamorphoses* alone gives at least five examples which Plutarch does not touch: the crow, displaced from her position as the bird of Pallas because she informed on Aglauros (Ov. *Met.* 2.562–4); the raven, cursed with black plumage by Apollo because it informed on Coronis (Ov. *Met.* 2.631–2); Battus, turned to stone because he divulged Mercury's behaviour to Mercury himself in disguise (Ov. *Met.* 2.704–6); Echo, condemned only to repeat what other people say because she distracted Iuno from Iuppiter's adultery with her chatter (Ov. *Met.* 3.362–9); the barber who told the secret of Midas' donkey ears to the reeds (Ov. *Met.* 11.182–93).[23] In *De garrulitate*, Plutarch mostly prefers to draw his cautionary tales from history.

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[19] Diggle (2004) 8.

[20] Gribble (1999) 159.

[21] Van Hoof (2010) 163. Nikolaidis (2011) 207 notes reliance on history and literature as a structural similarity with *De curiositate* and *De vitioso pudore*, as well.

[22] Plutarch's other main mythological example is Ino (*De garr.* 9). On Plutarch's use of Odysseus in the *De garr.*, see Nikolaidis (2011) 213–14.

[23] For further reflections on Ovid's preoccupation with the problems of talking to/about the powerful, see also Feeney (2021).

The general tenor of Plutarch's historical instances in the *De garrulitate* confirms that the treatise's objections to talkativeness often display a very particular slant: viz, that simply droning on endlessly is not necessarily talkativeness' most troublesome manifestation. Plutarch does have some choice disparagement of pure *logorrhoea* (e.g., *De garr.* 4), but mere waffle is not his target of choice in most of the treatise. As Van Hoof rightly observes,[24] excessive talkativeness in *De garrulitate* more usually takes the form of saying the *wrong* thing, at a time when it would have been advantageous to stay silent.

Indeed, personal advantage and disadvantage have a high profile amongst the arguments that Plutarch advances against talkativeness in the *De garrulitate*—perhaps surprisingly so. It is a deeply pragmatic text, despite its author's interest in ethics and high personal standards of behaviour.[25] By and large, the talkative people of the *De garrulitate* are not liars; rather, they make the mistake of telling their truths to the wrong people.

An illustration of this is Plutarch's use, in the *De garrulitate*, of a story he deploys more famously elsewhere: the barber who is the first to bring to Athens the news about the failure of the Sicilian Expedition (*De garr.* 13). Plutarch, as one would expect, plays up the barber's loquacity rather more in the *De garrulitate* than he does at the end of his life of Nicias (Plut. *Nic.* 30), where he is more focussed on the fact that the Athenians, unlike Nicias himself, had not seen the disaster coming: the barber is eager, in both versions, to bring the news before anyone else does; in the *De garrulitate*, this desire continues even after he has seen how that news was received. A central fact, however, remains constant: the barber was telling the Athenians a truth they could not handle. Plutarch's objection to the barber's behaviour is not that he has deceived, but that he has failed to judge his audience. Plutarch, to a modern sensibility, comes close to victim-blaming in doing so.

The ill-advisedly informative barber at Athens is only one of many people in the *De garrulitate* who get into trouble because they say a true thing which percolates to a person, or a collective, more powerful than they are, which takes that truth badly. Hazardous indiscretion towards, or concerning, autocrats is a particular theme. Fulvius gossips to his wife about Augustus' desire to recall Agrippa Postumus; once this gets back to Livia, and so, again, to

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[24] Van Hoof (2010) 154 (on the anecdote about Eumenes at *De garr.* 8): 'The anecdote is clearly not about idle or excessive talk, but about what to say in specific circumstances'. For Plutarch on the positive qualities of silence, see also Xenophontos (2016) 141 and Chrysanthou (2018) 72 n. 23.

[25] Duff (2023) 61: '*On Talkativeness* and *On Being a Busybody* lay out the social dangers of talking too much, especially of gossiping about others' private misfortunes; such behaviour, Plutarch argues, is not only morally wrong, but in fact damages the perpetrator's own social standing'. Nikolaidis (2011) 208 notes how the essay brings out the 'capital dangers' of talkativeness.

Augustus, Fulvius and his wife are obliged to commit suicide (*De garr.* 11).[26] A conspirator against Nero, foolishly kind-hearted, implies to a prisoner that Nero will not be around tomorrow; the prisoner promptly informs on him to Nero, who tortures him (*De garr.* 7).[27] Another barber jests about the vulnerability of Dionysius of Syracuse; the tyrant crucifies him (*De garr.* 13). A principal objection to talkativeness in the *De garrulitate* is that it leaves one vulnerable to bad behaviour from others—especially powerful others. Even the contrary stories which illustrate the virtues of discretion are sometimes framed in terms of not making a bad situation with an autocrat worse. Instances of this would be the heroic end of Zeno, biting off his own tongue rather than betraying others under torture by the tyrant of Elea (*De garr.* 8),[28] and Leana, honoured for her refusal to sell out Harmodius and Aristogeiton and the other conspirators when questioned about their plot against the tyrants (ibid.).

The insistence on the pragmatic detriment of talkativeness where the powerful are concerned is such that it even turns out to be the point of stories which do not, at first, seem to be heading in that direction. Plutarch, unlike his talkative butts, knows how to conceal information, in order to spring a surprise. When he starts to tell how Seleucus II Callinicus, after his defeat against the Gauls, fled the field of battle incognito (*De garr.* 12),[29] the reader may suspect (in light of the defeat, and Plutarch's emphasis on Seleucus' secrecy) that the victim of indiscretion in this tale will be Seleucus—the more so, because stories of how powerful men in hiding were given away were numerous in the political histories of antiquity.[30] Almost immediately, however, the story resolves into a different, though equally familiar pattern: that of the individual who fatally mishandles his dealings with an autocrat, after initially impressing him, for whom the ultimate prototype is perhaps Pythios the Lydian in Herodotus (Hdt. 7.39). The farmer who acts as Seleucus' host betrays awareness of his

[26] On this sequence, see Ash (2008) 562–4, especially 564: 'failure to keep the secrets of the powerful can be a deadly mistake'.

[27] Jones (1966) 70 notes this as a *terminus post quem* for the treatise of 68 CE. Nikolaidis (2008a) 230 thinks Jones 'seems to imply' that *De garr.* was written not long thereafter; in fact, Jones explains his methodology earlier on the page, and there is no such implication (see also n. 65 below). Dumortier (1975) 224 and Pettine (1992) 28–9 favour a Trajanic date. For references to Nero throughout Plutarch, see Ash (2008) 573.

[28] On the sources for Zeno's end, see Zaccaria (2021) 292–3.

[29] 'The defeated general fleeing the field of battle and hiding' is a trope in its own right, but does not necessarily lead to destruction: in Herodian, it is applied both to Niger, who does end up dead very quickly thereafter (Hdn. 3.4.6) and (in one version) Septimius Severus (Hdn. 3.7.3), who does not.

[30] Cf. Minucius (accidentally betrayed by his lictors, App. *BC* 4.17.68); Ligarius (betrayed by a slave, App. *BC* 4.23.93); Cicero (betrayed by a shoemaker, App. *BC* 4.19.75, with Keeline (2018) 144).

guest's identity. Seleucus therefore has him beheaded by one of his travelling companions (whom Plutarch mentions for the first time at that point—we may note that the earlier part of the story, where it looks as though Seleucus might be the designated victim, rather gives the impression that the king is travelling solo).

De garrulitate and Thucydides Book 8

The reader of *De garrulitate*, then, comes to the scenario of Socrates' overly talkative acquaintance primed on the one hand by a glance at the narrative practices of a poet who was (definitely) associated with saying too much and (possibly) with not being able to call an appropriate limit to explanation, and on the other hand by a series of historical instances in which revealing information inappropriately (rather than simply blathering) brings ruin to the garrulous individual—or those close to him. As we have already seen, Plutarch then adds another lens to direct the reader's interpretation of the scenario. This is the assertion that the garrulous answerer 'will roll out the eighth book of Thucydides and swamp the chap, until Miletus forestalls him by being drawn into war, and Alcibiades is exiled for the second time'.

What exactly does Plutarch mean by saying that the garrulous man will 'roll out the eighth book of Thucydides'? He certainly does not mean, as P. A. Brunt seems to have thought,[31] in an uncharacteristic misreading, that the garrulous man will recite the *text* of Thucydides, which Brunt takes him as knowing by heart (Brunt's interest here is in examples of pulling up historical texts from memory in antiquity).[32] Plutarch's scenario is part of the world *described* by Thucydides Book 8; the garrulous man could not recite it, because Thucydides Book 8 has not been written yet. Plutarch may intend a sly contrast here with a different instantiation of the garrulous man, discussed immediately afterwards, who *does* bore his listeners by constantly revisiting a historical text which he has (very partially) read—in this case, the treatment of the Battle of Leuctra in the thirty-book history by Ephorus of Cyme (*De garr.*

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[31] Brunt (1980) 479: 'Plutarch tells of a man who loved to recite the seventh [*sic*] book, in and out of season (*Mor.* 513b)'. Brunt gets the book number wrong, which is possibly a nice example of how Plutarch's reference earlier in the treatise to the catastrophe of the Sicilian Expedition (*De garr.* 13) keeps a reader subconsciously thinking about that context when a different story about Alcibiades emerges at 21 (see below). For another case in the *De garr.* where a story from earlier in the work perhaps tinges the reader's response to a later one, see Mossman (2023) 140.

[32] A better example, from Brunt's point of view, would be Cassius Severus, who asserted that he knew the historical work of his enemy Labienus by heart (Sen. *contr.* 10 *praef.* 8 = *FRHist* 62 T 2).

22 = *BNJ* 70 F 213), which Plutarch interestingly specifies,[33] rather than Xenophon.[34] The bore, however, is explicitly a contemporary of Plutarch's; he is looking back on a historical moment rather than (like the individual talking about Socrates) inhabiting that historical moment.

If Plutarch is not just saying that the talkative answerer is going to recite Thucydides, what is the point of the assertion? Part of it is simple humour. The hapless individual who wants to know where Socrates is will not (for reasons we have just explored) have read Thucydides. Many amongst Plutarch's readership, however, will have done so. They will therefore have a good sense of quite how much bulk there might end up being to the explanation.

There is possibly also play, again, with the notion of passing beyond limits. Plutarch envisages the garrulous man as talking 'until Miletus forestalls him by being drawn into war, and Alcibiades is exiled for the second time'. We shall examine below what Plutarch means by Miletus being 'drawn into war'.[35] For the moment, it is more pertinent to note that Alcibiades' second 'exile' happens so far down the line that Thucydides himself never reaches it. The principal near-contemporary account is in Xenophon's *Hellenica* instead (Xen. *Hell.* 1.5.17; cf. Plut. *Alc.* 35–6). In other words, the garrulous man, while spouting Thucydidean material, will go on for so long that he will be overtaken by the events of the *Hellenica* while he does so.

However, there may also be something more subtle going on here. The garrulous man does not know that he is spouting Thucydides Book 8. The educated reader of *De garrulitate*, however, alerted by Plutarch's studied cross-reference, is primed to consider the relationship between what the garrulous man says and the depiction of those events in the last book of Thucydides— and to ponder, perhaps, the light which that narrative throws on the wisdom, or otherwise, of the garrulous man sounding off at such length about them.

Alcibiades in Thucydides Book 8

Plutarch's relationship to and use of Thucydides is a well-studied topic, though more usually in the case of the *Parallel Lives* (especially *Nicias* and *Alcibiades*) than

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[33] This may be because the gibe that the bore has only read 'two or three books' becomes sharper; two books would be a much larger proportion of the seven-book *Hellenica* than of the thirty-book Ephorus. Also, the joke that the bore is dubbed 'Epaminondas' would not work with Xenophon, who does not mention Epaminondas in his account of Leuctra at all. Of course, Plutarch may just have known that that was what the bore had read.

[34] Xenophon covers Leuctra at Xen. *Hell.* 6.4.6–15. On Plutarch and Ephorus, see also Verdegem (2010) 68–9.

[35] Pettine (1992) has no comment.

the *Moralia*.[36] It poses, in the keenest form, a key question about the nature of *historiographical* intertextuality, and whether it really functions in the same way as the other literary modes of that phenomenon with which scholars are by and large more comfortable. As Pelling puts it, 'if there is an echo of Thucydides, is that more a point about "Thucydides" or about "the Peloponnesian War", about the text or about the events described? Particularly after centuries had passed, it becomes more and more difficult to distinguish the two: for Plutarch and his audience, and (sometimes to the irritation of ancient historians) often for us too, the "Peloponnesian War" pretty much was "Thucydides' Peloponnesian War".'[37]

In the case of the *De garrulitate*, Plutarch, one can argue, engages both with the events which Thucydides describes in Book 8 of his history, and with Thucydides' particular treatment of those events. At the beginning of Book 8, we have not heard much from Alcibiades in Thucydides for quite some time: his last intervention in the narrative (since joining the Peloponnesian cause in Book 6) was to urge the Spartans to fortify Decelea and not let up on the war early in Book 7 (Thuc. 7.18.1, where the use of the imperfect may indicate a dalliance of some duration).[38] Book 8 is a complex stretch of the work, but the material relating to Alcibiades in about the first half of it, which is the part relevant to the *De garrulitate*, might be summarised as follows:

8.6.3: Alcibiades, when the Peloponnesians consider strategy, supports the idea of sending a fleet and army to Ionia and Chios as a priority (which the emissary of Tissaphernes has suggested), exploiting his guest-friendship with the Spartan ephor Endius to do so.

8.12.1: Alcibiades persuades Endius and the other Spartan ephors to persevere with the Ionian War, despite initial setbacks. He has a private meeting with Endius to do so, noting that it would be a coup for Endius to make the Ionians revolt and so win the favour of the Persian King, rather than letting that glory fall to the Spartan king Agis (a personal enemy of Alcibiades, as Thucydides notes). Alcibiades persuades the ephors, and puts to sea with five ships and the Spartan Chalcideus.

8.14.1–2: Alcibiades and Chalcideus meet with 'some Chian accomplices' (τῶν ξυμπρασσόντων Χίων τισὶ) at Corycus. They go on to Chios, where they persuade the city to revolt from Athens.

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[36] On the *Alcibiades*, see Gribble (1999) 276–8 and Verdegem (2010) 64–8; on Thucydides and the *Lives* in general, de Romilly (1988), with 28–30 on *Alcibiades* and 30–2 on *Nicias*, and Pelling (1992), with 10–17 on *Nicias*. On Thucydides in the *Moralia*, see Titchener (1995).

[37] Pelling (2020) 16.

[38] So Pelling (2022a) 122.

8.17.1–2: Alcibiades and Chalcideus chase the Athenian Strombichides and his forces into Samos; leave Samos; and sail to Miletus to make it revolt. Alcibiades, being 'on good terms with the leading men of the Milesians' (ὢν ἐπιτήδειος τοῖς προεστῶσι τῶν Μιλησίων), wants to bring as many towns as possible over to the Peloponnesian cause as possible before a fleet arrives, to secure the glory of this for himself, Chalcideus, Endius, and the Chians. They bring about the revolt of Miletus.

[I argue below that the 'dramatic date' of the garrulous man's conversation about Socrates in the *De garrulitate* must fall somewhere between these two passages in Thucydides.]

8.25: Athenian counterattack on Miletus. Alcibiades is not mentioned, but see below.

8.26.3: Alcibiades arrives at Teichiussa on horseback, and reports the Athenian counterattack on Miletus 'for he was present at it, and fought alongside the Milesians and Tissaphernes' to the newly arrived Peloponnesian ships. He advises relieving Miletus as quickly as possible.

8.45–6: [noted as happening a little before and at the same time as the immediately preceding chapters]: Alcibiades has become suspect to the Peloponnesians 'after the death of Chalcideus [at 24.1] and the battle in Miletus' (μετὰ τὸν Χαλκιδέως θάνατον καὶ τὴν ἐν Μιλήτῳ μάχην); Astyochus receives an order to put him to death. Alcibiades withdraws in fear to Tissaphernes, and starts weakening the cause of the Peloponnesians to the best of his ability. He becomes Tissaphernes' 'constant advisor' and tells the satrap that he should give the Peloponnesian navy less and irregular pay. He further advises that Tissaphernes should not be in a hurry for the war to end, and that he should let the two sides wear each other out.

8.47: Alcibiades does this, according to Thucydides, not merely because he thinks that it is the best policy, but because he is seeking means to effect his restoration at Athens, 'knowing that, if he did not destroy it, it would be possible for him to return thither, if he persuaded them' (εἰ μὴ διαφθερεῖ αὐτήν, ὅτι ἔσται ποτὲ αὐτῷ πείσαντι κατελθεῖν), and that he would be persuasive on that score if Tissaphernes were seen to be his friend. This actually happens. Alcibiades sends word to 'the most capable men' (τοὺς δυνατωτάτους) amongst the Athenians at Samos to tell the 'best men' (τοὺς βελτίστους) in the army that he would return to Athens and make Tissaphernes their friend, if there were an oligarchy in place rather than the 'villainous democracy' (οὐ πονηρίᾳ οὐδὲ δημοκρατίᾳ) which had cast

him out. The soldiers at Samos perceive him to have great influence with Tissaphernes; the trierarchs and 'most capable men' rush to overthrow the democracy.

8.48: Some of the Athenians in Samos go to talk to Alcibiades, who offers to make Tissaphernes first, and then the Great King, their friend, if they abolish the democracy. The 'most capable men' like the idea of this; the lower classes, at least initially, do not. Phrynichus objects, thinking (rightly) that Alcibiades cares no more for an oligarchy than a democracy, and only wants to be recalled by 'his companions' (ὑπὸ τῶν ἑταίρων).

8.49: Despite Phrynichus' objections, the principal conspirators at Samos send ambassadors to Athens, proposing that the democracy be abolished; Alcibiades be recalled; and Tissaphernes made a friend of Athens.

8.50–1: Alcibiades and Phrynichus engage in a campaign of secret briefings and letters against each other, conducted by letter.

8.52.1: 'After this' (μετὰ δὲ τοῦτο), Alcibiades sets out to make Tissaphernes the friend of the Athenians.

It is easy to recognise elements from this narrative in what the garrulous man tells the individual who is curious about the location of Socrates. Pettine, in his commentary on *De garrulitate*, notes that the garrulous man's gloss that Tissaphernes 'is now being brought over to the cause of Athens through the influence of Alcibiades' accords with what Alcibiades sets out to do at 8.52.1, and that Alcibiades' desire to return to his fatherland, and the fact that this is a motivation for him advertising his influence with Tissaphernes, is attested (with a nuance on which Pettine does not comment—see below) at 8.47.1.[39] There is a temptation simply to observe these clever glances at what Thucydides has to say on Alcibiades, and leave the matter there.

However, as the summary above shows, what Alcibiades does, and how Thucydides assesses what he does, in this stretch of Book 8, is considerably more complicated than simply bringing Tissaphernes over to the Athenian cause to effect a return to his fatherland. By advertising Book 8 as an intertext, Plutarch reminds his reader of a larger context to the garrulous man's precis of Alcibiades' doings, which modifies the reader's reaction to what he is saying. Moreover, the reader who knows their Thucydides is also in a position to see not just what the garrulous man is echoing from Book 8, but what he changes, minimises, or leaves out.

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[39] Pettine (1992) 160 n. 193.

Waiting for Alcibiades

Since Plutarch seems so keen to advertise a relationship between his anecdote of the garrulous man and the behaviour of Alcibiades in Thucydides Book 8, as set out in the timeline above, it will be expedient to work out where on that timeline Plutarch's anecdote is imagined as happening. Plutarch's garrulous man avers that Alcibiades is 'around Miletus', περὶ Μίλητον. The preposition is, perhaps designedly, vague, but would seem to indicate that the events of Thucydides 8.17.1–2 (the arrival of Alcibiades and Chalcideus at Miletus, and their successful incitement of revolt) have just happened. On the other hand, it seems that the Athenian counterattack which Thucydides describes at 8.25 has not yet taken place, since this counterattack is by far the most likely candidate for the event to which Plutarch alludes when he says that the garrulous man will talk *until* 'Miletus forestalls him by being drawn into war' (ἕως φθάσει καὶ Μίλητος ἐκπολεμωθεῖσα). The passive participle ἐκπολεμωθεῖσα supports the idea that Plutarch means something which is *done to* Miletus.[40] This suits the context of the Athenian military response at 8.25.

There are other possibilities for what event Plutarch means by Miletus 'being drawn into war', but they are, for different reasons, much less likely. The Athenians try to provoke a decisive sea-battle at Miletus with one hundred and eight ships at Thuc. 8.79.6, but no one takes the bait. The Milesians eject Tissaphernes' garrison at Thuc. 8.84.4;[41] this is not really an instance of warfare. From outside Thucydides, we know about a messy attempt at an oligarchic coup in the summer of 405 in which Lysander involved himself.[42] Plutarch was certainly aware of this, as it constitutes a prime example of Lysander's untrustworthiness in his eponymous *Life*,[43] but this, again, was essentially internal discontent and *stasis* rather than warfare. Thereafter, Tissaphernes seems to have gained control of the city via a stratagem;[44] and

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[40] Alternatively, as one of the anonymous readers for this article suggests, the force of the passive may be that Miletus was forced to enter the war against Athens *by* Alcibiades, the Spartans and some of its own politicians, since, at this stage in the conflict, entering the war might emerge not only from a battle but simply by revolting from Athens (cf. Thuc. 8.2.2). This would not affect the chronology proposed below significantly, however.

[41] Hyland (2017) 81–6.

[42] Hyland (2017) 117.

[43] Plut. *Lys.* 8.1–3 and 19.2, with Stadter (1992a) 46. See also D.S. 13.104.5–6, with Andrewes (1971) 213–14.

[44] Polyaenus, *Strat.* 7.18.2, with Andrewes (1971) 214. No date is attached to the trick. From the sequence of events described above, it happened between the summer of 405 (Tissaphernes is absent from accounts of the oligarchic coup) and 402, when Tissaphernes was holding Miletus against Cyrus (see next note).

was holding it when Cyrus the Younger besieged it in 402.[45] These would be genuine cases of Miletus 'being drawn into war', but it would be odd for Plutarch to mention either of them *before* Alcibiades' second 'exile' from Athens (which happened after his failure at Notium in 406), as Plutarch goes on to do at the end of the sentence.

To sum up, Plutarch seems to be suggesting a particular and quite narrow timeframe within the action of Thucydides Book 8 as bounding the point at which the conversation with the garrulous acquaintance of Socrates takes place. Alcibiades being περὶ Μίλητον suggests that his arrival at Miletus and successful subversion of that polity at Thucydides 8.17.1–2 has just occurred at the time of Plutarch's imagined conversation. On the other hand, the fact that Miletus being 'drawn into war' is presented as a *future* event that will overtake the garrulous man if he is given the opportunity to drone on for long enough suggests that the dramatic date of the anecdote is *before* the Athenian counter-attack on Miletus which Thucydides describes at 8.25.

This timeframe for Plutarch's conversation—between Thucydides 8.17.1–2 and 8.25—generates a temporal conundrum. Plutarch's garrulous man, on this reading, is speaking *before* the Athenian action at Miletus at Thucydides 8.25. Yet the garrulous man already knows about Alcibiades' disaffection from the Peloponnesian cause and that he is 'spending time with Tissaphernes'.

Thucydides, as we saw in the summary above, only starts to comment explicitly on general problems in the relationship between Alcibiades and the Peloponnesians (as opposed to his private enmity with King Agis) at 8.45.1. This is also the point at which Thucydides represents Alcibiades as definitively withdrawing to be with Tissaphernes. Thucydides' comments do come at the beginning of what he announces as a partial flashback from what he has just been discussing: ἐν δὲ τούτῳ καὶ ἔτι πρότερον ('at this time and somewhat before'). The nature and extent of this flashback has generated considerable scholarly debate.[46] For our present purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that Thucydides here characterises the Peloponnesian suspicion of Alcibiades, and his flight to Tissaphernes, as happening '*after* the death of Chalcideus and the battle at Miletus' (μετὰ τὸν Χαλκιδέως θάνατον καὶ τὴν ἐν Μιλήτῳ μάχην), which, in this case, definitely means the Athenian counterattack at 8.25. Plutarch's garrulous man, then, seems to know about the cooling of relations between Alcibiades and the Peloponnesians before the point at which Thucydides directly adverts to it.

This may be a simple lapse on Plutarch's part,[47] or a slight forcing of sequence in the interests of a humorous pay-off; on the other hand, scholarship

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[45] Xen. *An.* 1.2.6–7, with Hyland (2017) 125–6.

[46] Rood (1998) 262–8; Hornblower (2008) 883–6.

[47] The fact that the garrulous man thinks that Alcibiades has been 'spending a lot of time' with Tissaphernes, might be evidence for this. Thucydides' Alcibiades only withdraws to be

on Plutarch's relationship with Thucydides in other texts has noted how Plutarch sometimes likes to *expand* upon the predecessor text, a 'desire', as Gribble puts it, 'to fill in the gaps left by Thucydides'.[48] By bringing forward the point at which someone knows, or thinks he knows, that Alcibiades definitively wants to explore the option of going back to Athens, Plutarch provides, perhaps, an implicit commentary on questions which Thucydides leaves cryptic at 8.45.1: *why* were the Peloponnesians suspicious of Alcibiades at this point, and were those suspicions at all justified (before they became a self-fulfilling prophecy through the decision to have him put to death)?[49]

As we have seen, Thucydides says only that the suspicions arose 'after the death of Chalcideus and the battle at Miletus'. Hornblower on the passage rightly notes that μετά ('after') does not entail a causal relation between the events mentioned and the suspicion in the way that διά (for example) would. We might compare a (perhaps similarly evasive) usage at 5.26.5, where Thucydides (despite the more definite line taken by most subsequent responses to the passage) commits himself only to the statement that he was exiled *after* his generalship against Amphipolis.[50] All the same, as Hornblower also puts it, 'this seems to be a hint that he [sc. Alcibiades] was thought to have fought half-heartedly at Miletos'.[51]

Plutarch's garrulous man, speaking, in terms of dramatic date, *before* the Athenian action at Miletus, suggests that the Peloponnesian suspicions of Alcibiades may have been well founded. The garrulous man is not necessarily reliable in his analysis, as we shall see below. But the idea that even somebody at Athens already suspects Alcibiades of wanting to switch sides makes the Peloponnesian paranoia on that front which Thucydides alleges at 8.45.1 much more explicable.

If Plutarch presents his garrulous man as, in one way, clearing up an issue which Thucydides leaves opaque, there is another point at which the garrulous man's account is notably *less* clear than Thucydides—or, at least, less complex,

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with Tissaphernes at 8.45.1. On the other hand, merely 'spending time' with Tissaphernes might well happen before 8.45.1, during a period when Thucydides leaves Alcibiades' exact comings and goings rather mysterious; Thucydides has Alcibiades acting in Tissaphernes' interests as early as 8.6.3. Hyland (2017) 73 maps Tissaphernes' movements during this interval.

[48] Gribble (1999) 276.

[49] In his own *Alcibiades* (where the narrative is quite compressed, and neither Miletus nor Chalcideus is explicitly mentioned), Plutarch suggests rather that the mistrust arose from envy at Alcibiades' successes (Plut. *Alc.* 24.2). It is also juxtaposed with the enmity between Alcibiades and Agis, on which he elaborates much more than Thucydides does (Plut. *Alc.* 23.7; contrast Thuc. 8.12.2).

[50] Dillery (2006) 58.

[51] Hornblower (2008) 887.

in a way that does not reflect well on the garrulous man's judgment. The garrulous man straightforwardly asserts (at, as we have seen, a comparatively early stage in the story of Alcibiades' Book 8 intrigues) that Alcibiades 'desires to return from exile to his fatherland'. This is certainly the version of Alcibiades' motivation which the man himself will supply to the conspirators at Samos later in the book (Thuc. 8.47.2), and it is fair to add that Thucydides' Alcibiades has himself already claimed in a speech at Sparta that his willingness to attack Athens should be considered rather as an attempt to reclaim it (Thuc. 6.92.4).[52]

Thucydides' authorial take on Alcibiades' motivation at the point where he represents Alcibiades as beginning his scheming is more complicated and troubling. Alcibiades does, according to Thucydides, want to create a situation where, by sufficient persuasion, he might in the future, return to Athens—so long as he hasn't destroyed Athens first (εἰ μὴ διαφθερεῖ αὐτήν, Thuc. 8.47.1). The garrulous man, as blind to this caveat as most of Alcibiades' Athenian audiences in Thucydides will later be (with the notable exception of the sagacious Phrynichus), reveals himself, perhaps, to be yet another victim of Alcibiades' PR machine.

Friends Like These…

Awareness of the Thucydides Book 8 background to what Plutarch has his garrulous man say warns the alert reader that the garrulous man's faults go some way beyond failing to apprehend the complexity of Alcibiades' motivation. We have already seen that historical cautionary tales in the *De garrulitate* return again and again to the damage done when a garrulous individual says too much to the wrong, or unreceptive, audience. One of those instances, we may recall, was of an incident that would have been very nearly contemporary with the scenario about the absent Socrates. The foolishly loquacious barber tells the Athenian people something they really do not want to hear in the wake of the Sicilian Expedition, and pays a steep price for it (*De garr.* 13).

In light of the pragmatic dangers of saying too much to the wrong person, a reader conversant with Thucydides Book 8 will find the garrulous man's insistence on Socrates' relations with Alcibiades' 'Ionian friends' misjudged. We saw above that the more restrained response to the question of where Socrates is, even in its more expansive form, reveals that Socrates is waiting for friends. It does not specify that those friends are Ionian.

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[52] As one of the anonymous referees for this article points out.

Alcibiades' (often unnamed) friends and other associates are a recurring theme in Thucydides Book 8.[53] His first appearance in the book sees him exploiting his guest-friendship with the Spartan ephor Endius to advance the cause of Tissaphernes (Thuc. 8.6.3). 'Some Chian accomplices' are the ones who urge him to press the case for insurrection against Athens in their polity (Thuc. 8.14.1). He expedites the revolt of Miletus by virtue of being 'on good terms with the leading men of the Milesians' (Thuc. 8.17.2).[54] Phrynichus, the one amongst the conspirators on Samos who holds out against Alcibiades' charm offensive, believes—accurately, in the view of Thucydides—that Alcibiades has no ideological investment in either oligarchy or democracy, and only desires the system which will bring it about that he is recalled from exile 'by his companions' (Thuc. 8.48.4).

Against this backdrop, the garrulous man's disposition to talk at length about Alcibiades' 'Ionian friends', and their connexion with Socrates to an (apparently) random interlocutor at Athens at a dramatic date when some of those 'Ionian friends' have recently assisted Alcibiades in securing the revolt from Athens of one of the key contributors to the Delian League is potentially a very serious indiscretion.[55] This is true for all the garrulous man's assurances that Alcibiades has, in fact, changed sides again (an issue on which, as we have just seen, his view of Alcibiades' motivation at this point is incomplete). In both the last books of Thucydides and the opening books of Xenophon, the issue of Alcibiades' popularity amongst Athenians turns up a great deal. At best, it fluctuates, and can play differently to different constituencies; the *locus classicus* here is Xenophon's depiction of the response of onlookers to his return from exile in 407 (Xen. *Hell.* 1.4.13–17), which is sharply divided (Xenophon also notes (*Hell.* 1.4.18) that Alcibiades is initially reluctant to disembark 'fearing his enemies'). Plutarch's depiction of attitudes at an earlier stage in Alcibiades' career in the eponymous *Life* shows a like complexity: at an earlier stage, the 'reputable men' (οἱ μὲν ἔνδοξοι …) loathe him, while the people have a complex love-hate-fear relationship which Plutarch situates through quotations (Plut. *Alc.* 16.2–3);[56] at the time of his return from exile, Plutarch (unlike Xenophon) initially paints a picture of universal adoration (Plut. *Alc.* 32.4–6), but almost immediately has people disturbed by bad omens (Plut. *Alc.* 34.1–2)

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[53] Plutarch's own *Alcibiades* also makes much of them (Plut. *Alc.* 10.2, 12.2–3, 19.1, 26.1, 27.1, 32.3).

[54] On the likely importance of these contacts, see Lewis (1977) 90 n. 39.

[55] For the importance of Miletus, see Hornblower (2008) 800.

[56] On this passage, see Russell (1966) 45–6 and Gribble (1999) 277. For Pelling (2022b) 113, the Athens of the *Alcibiades* mirrors Alcibiades' 'flair and unpredictability'. On the handling of Alcibiades' reception by his contemporaries in the *Alcibiades*, see Duff (2004) 162–3.

and οἱ … δυνατώτατοι worrying that he intends a tyranny (Plut. *Alc.* 35.1).[57] The garrulous man, then, is taking a considerable risk in blurting out to a possibly very unsympathetic audience in 412 that Socrates is hobnobbing with 'Ionian friends' of Alcibiades at a point when such might very well be seen at Athens as insurrectionists.

Plutarch shows himself to be an acute reader of other elements in Thucydides Book 8 helping to generate its atmosphere of diplomatic tension and uncertainty, which he therefore allows to bleed into what the garrulous man is saying. Alcibiades, in the garrulous man's account, has been *writing* to Socrates. In one sense, of course, a transition of this sort is necessary for Plutarch to bring Alcibiades into the garrulous man's story at all. We may recall, however, that Thucydides depicts Alcibiades' covert letter-writing as a key element in the rising tension at Samos (Thuc. 8.50–1).[58] Alcibiades and Phrynichus engage in a campaign of rival briefings and intelligence leaks. Phrynichus ultimately emerges the victor, making Alcibiades look untrustworthy. Letters from Alcibiades, in Thucydides, at least, do not have a track-record of making a situation more stable. For Plutarch's garrulous man to announce blithely to an interlocutor at Athens that Socrates is plugged into one of these epistolary networks is, again, a serious lapse of judgment.

Not all of this intertextuality is necessarily geared solely towards darkening the implications of the garrulous man's chatter. Plutarch, like some contemporary scholarship on Thucydides, recognises the extent to which the Alcibiades of Book 8 is less important for what he does than for what he suggests, or for what he is perceived as being able to do.[59] We saw from the summary above that most of the action concerning Alcibiades in the book takes the form of advice he gives to others (Endius, Tissaphernes, the conspirators on Samos) or actions taken by others on the basis of a perception about him (as when the conspirators of Samos are won over by his apparent influence with Tissaphernes). What Alcibiades is actually capable of takes a back seat, and, as the book progresses, his vaunted influence with Tissaphernes looks less and less secure as well,[60] culminating in a scene where he escalates demands so that negotiations will fail, and it will not be obvious that he cannot deliver on what he has promised (Thuc. 8.56.3); on the one occasion in the book when he participates in a full-scale battle (trying to repel the Athenian counterattack on Miletus), Thucydides only reveals his presence in a parenthetical flashback after the event (Thuc. 8.26.3). *De garrulitate* deftly evokes, in the space of only a few sentences, the essence of this depiction. The

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[57] Verdegem (2010) 346.

[58] Hornblower (2008) 901: 'This story is acted out by means of letters'.

[59] Gribble (1999) 198.

[60] Rood (1998) 269.

De garrulitate's Alcibiades is a shadowy figure, whose influence and agenda invite interpretation and reinterpretation. The garrulous man is foolish to do so at such length to an Athenian audience, but he succumbs to a temptation that is in itself entirely in keeping with Thucydides.

All the same, the primary effect of the shadow that Plutarch allows Thucydides Book 8 to cast over the garrulous man's chatter is to make its implications rather more sombre than the humour of the portrayal initially suggests. *De garrulitate* has already conditioned its reader, by this point, to note the trouble that can be caused by too much candour—and not always for the chatterbox. The final key element in generating this atmosphere of potential trouble is, of course, the fact that the scenario's original object is Socrates. Socrates does not appear in Thucydides, who does not mention individual sophists, either (Antiphon may be an exception, if the orator and the philosopher were indeed the same person);[61] Plutarch, as it were, is inserting Socrates plausibly into the Thucydidean Cinematic Universe. But an important fact about Socrates, which even those without a deep and detailed acquaintance with Thucydides might know, is that a perception of Socrates' tendency to associate with glamorous aristocrats whose commitment to the Athenian democracy was suspect was plausibly a factor leading to his trial and execution.[62] This is more than a decade away in 412, and Alcibiades, too, will be gone by then. Nevertheless, Socrates would be a particularly unfortunate individual with whom casually to couple the machinations of Alcibiades in exile—even if, as the garrulous man avers, the latter does intend to return to Athens with useful aid. Plutarch was certainly aware of how the innocent could be damaged by association: witness his account in the *De capienda ex inimicis utilitate* of how Themistocles, who was doing nothing wrong, fell under suspicion of treason because of epistolary contact with Pausanias (Plut. *Mor.* 89f).

In summary, then, Plutarch signposts the relationship of his invented scenario to the last book of Thucydides in order deftly to evoke a particular historical moment. The informed reader can see that this moment is racked with potential diplomatic tensions, where the person of Alcibiades is concerned—tensions in which someone with Socrates' best interests at heart would have done well to exercise discretion. The garrulous man does not do so. Plutarch leaves the reader to draw conclusions about the possible effects of this indiscretion; the tone remains light-hearted. All the same, attention to the intertextuality shows that this scenario is potentially yet another example

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[61] Hornblower (1991) 427. For Thucydides' naming strategies, see Rood (2018) 153–9.

[62] For eloquent defensiveness on the subject of Socrates' relations with Alcibiades and Critias from a contemporary and admirer, see Xen. *Mem.* 1.2.12–26. For Plutarch's own defence of Socrates' relations with Alcibiades, see *Mor.* 69e and *Alc.* 4.1–4, 6.1, and 6.4, with Pelling (2005) 113 and 117–20.

within *De garrulitate* of how mistimed and excessive candour can bring misfortune when it is directed at the wrong audience: be that Seleucus Callinicus, Dionysius of Syracuse, Augustus, the Athenian people, or even a chance interlocutor.

Conclusion

Pelling, in a recent study of the dynamics of intertextuality in Plutarch,[63] has noted that it can potentially work in different ways, and on different levels, for different audiences. Not everyone who reads his works will necessarily have the same textual knowledge base on which to draw. Intertextuality does not necessarily have the same effect on every reader—but it can have an effect.

Our analysis of a fleeting imagined scenario at the end of the *De garrulitate* has suggested that it is profitable to see in it a deep textual engagement with Thucydides Book 8. Detailed knowledge of Thucydides, it has been suggested, establishes a context which Plutarch richly exploits. A reader who knows their Thucydides intimately can see how Plutarch has glossed the Thucydidean ambiguity over Peloponnesian suspicion about Alcibiades by presenting someone who thinks Alcibiades' endorsement of their cause has waned even before the great battle of Miletus, and has suggested the naivete of his speaker by having him present Alcibiades as whole-heartedly pro-Athenian once more at a point when the exile is (by Thucydides' account of his mental processes) conspicuously less gung-ho.

Not all will be disposed, perhaps, to see Plutarch as engaging in an intertextual play this complex; certainly, not all of Plutarch's readers would necessarily have known their Thucydides well enough to appreciate it.[64] The elaborate care with which Plutarch points us in the direction of Book 8 suggests, however, that this is a case where such a depth and precision of allusion is quite plausible. As we saw from looking at the possible implications of Plutarch's joke about Antimachus at the beginning of the scenario, this is a section of *De garrulitate* where issues of exactly what and how much to say, and how to say it, seem strongly thematised.

Even readers who may not have Thucydides at their fingertips can still appreciate, however, if they know their late Fifth-Century Athens at all, that the garrulous man's over-sharing in the imagined scenario tips over from mere gaucherie into indiscretion that could be actively harmful to Socrates'

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[63] Pelling (2020) 13–14.

[64] On the other hand, Pelling (2022c) 211 notes that Plutarch clearly expected at least some readers of his *Nicias* to know their Thucydides well enough to be able to recognise 'the lunch affair, as Thucydides described' (*Nic.* 20.8), without explaining the allusion further. See also Pelling (1992) 18–19. In a different vein, Mossman (2023) 140 argues for a close textual relationship with (and redeployment of) Pl. *Prt.* 342d–e at *De garr.* 21.

interests. Alcibiades—glamorous, gifted, devious, untrustworthy—haunts the cultural imagination beyond Thucydides. It requires no deep knowledge of the period to realise that linking Socrates' name to the turncoat's schemes would help to foster an already nascent perception at Athens that the philosopher was—at the very least—not sufficiently careful in his friends.

De garrulitate, then, may be seen as a case where Pelling's model for Plutarchan intertextuality works well in action. Close textual attention to the relationship between Plutarch and Thucydides reveals how carefully the former has read the latter, to the extent of manipulating the characteristic Book 8 themes of Alcibiades' friends, the ways in which audiences perceive his influence, and the role of letters. At the same time, however, a much more generalised sense of Athenian history still enriches a reader's response. Plutarch's less cultivated readers would not need Thucydides to know that Alcibiades was trouble.

Taking a step back, we may finally note that Plutarch's worked example of garrulousness in action, near the end of *De garrulitate*, continues, when its implications are recognised, a theme that runs throughout the work, and imparts a certain edginess to its general geniality. Again and again, *De garrulitate* returns to the idea that saying things, even true things, to temperamental individuals or collectives in a position to do you or others harm is a very bad idea: the garrulous man storing up trouble, potentially, for Socrates is an instantiation of this unpalatable fact. We are perhaps usually inclined to read other Greek imperial texts as demonstrating a wariness of temperamental power rather more blatantly than Plutarch.[65] This study has shown that the *De garrulitate* manifests it, all the same.

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[65] Jones (1966) 73–4, however, interestingly speculates that a burst of literary activity by Plutarch after 96 CE may be explained by a sense of constraint under Domitian. Scholarship has also noted Plutarch's passages on coping with the reality of Roman power, especially in the *Praecepta gerendae reipublicae* (*Mor.* 813D–F, with de Blois (2004) 50 and Desideri (2011) 90–1).

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