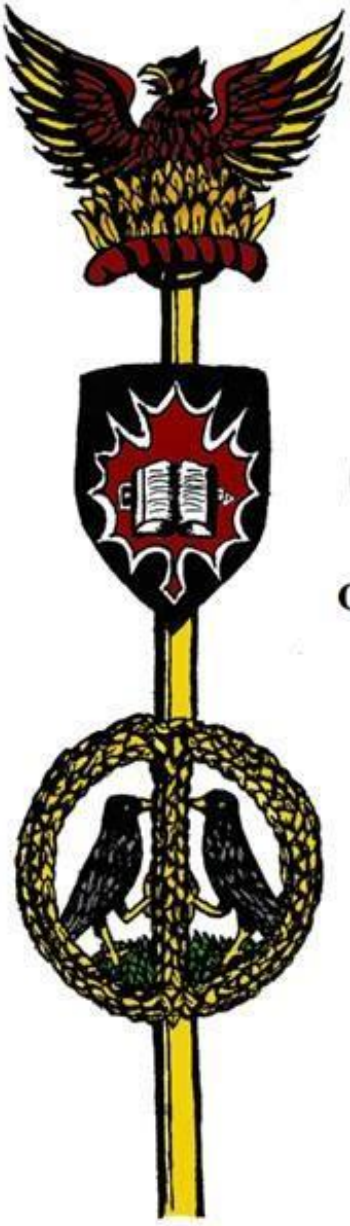

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Adam has also contributed to preserving the histories of Canadian veterans at the Canadian War Museum through his work on the exhibition In Their Own Voices, an online oral history exhibition that explores the post-war and post-service experiences of Canadian veterans and their loved ones. At Carleton University, he founded an association to aid veteran students in their academic transitions. His efforts extend to raising

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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Congratulations to all authors and editors for the success of this year's *Corvus* journal! It has been an absolute pleasure working with and learning from so many talented people.

The opportunity to work on *Corvus* for the past two years– in last year's journal as an editor and in this one as Editor-in-Chief– has been a highlight of my academic career. I am continually awed by the work the editors and contributors put into sharing their passion for ancient literature, philosophy, history, religion, archaeology, and more. This compilation of academic articles highlights the richness of the classical world, as well as the breadth of our ongoing interest in and developing research of these academic fields. These topics recall an ancient past, sometimes removed from us by thousands of years, and yet they are so textured and deep that we continue to discover and learn from them. It is an honour that our work at *Corvus* keeps the passion for ancient history going and unites students from universities all over the world in our shared interest. I hope this year's journal inspires you to continue learning about ancient history and to delve into new topics. I also hope it encourages you to pursue your research interests and publish your own work.

Thank you to our amazing team of editors whose hard work is why we have this journal. Thank you also to everyone who submitted their articles to *Corvus*, and to our contributors who were willing to share their research.

I can't wait to see *Corvus* continue to grow and share new and exciting research from undergraduate students in our field!

Best,

Madeleine Egginton
Editor-in-Chief, 2024-2025

EAT IT RAW: DESIRE, HUNGER, AND SATIATION IN HOMER'S *ILIAD*

Pascale LaRivière

Abstract
The Iliad *is a poem about war, but it is also a poem about desire, not just for the claiming of one woman, but for many other things too. Inspired by the textual studies of the language of desire, such as Anne Carson's* Eros the Bittersweet *and Rachel H. Lesser's* Desire in the Iliad*, and from the study of non-normativity and queer theory's opposition to normative structures, this paper seeks to examine the notion of desire and how it is conflated with hunger in the language and narrative of the* Iliad *to reveal the queer nature of Achilleus' desires even when they are not focused on Patroklos, or any person at all. Through an in-depth study of the language of desire, hunger, and satiation, this paper discusses how these forces operate in the poem, what norms govern them, and subsequently, the ways in which Achilleus' hunger transgresses them. This will reveal how he breaks away from the norms of masculinity, humanity, and mortality in order to express his desire and sate his insatiable hunger, further demonstrating that his defiance of the norms is, in its essence, queer.*

The *Iliad* is a poem about war, but it is also a poem about desire. Desire for one woman, of course, but desire for many other things too. Maximus of Tyre found Homer and his *Iliad* to be adept at describing it "in meticulous detail, covering every act and age and form and experience, noble and base alike, chaste love, licentious love, just love, violent love, obsessive love, and gentle love."[1] Due to the influence of Sir Kenneth Dover's *Greek Homosexuality* and W.M. Clarke's "Achilles and Patroclus in Love," scholars have turned their focus with increasing frequency

[1] M.B. Trapp, "Or. 8" in *Maximus of Tyre: The Philosophical Orations* (Oxford University Press, 1997), quoted in Marco Fantuzzi, *Achilles in Love: Intertextual Studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 1.

to Achilleus' desires.[2] But the focus of this work, informed by sexuality studies and queer theory, has still largely been on specific objects of desire such as Patroklos. Inspired by the textual studies of the language of desire like Anne Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet* and Rachel H. Lesser's *Desire in the Iliad,* and from the study of non-normativity and queer theory's opposition to normative structures,[3] this paper proposes that the study of desire and how it is conflated with hunger in the language and narrative of the Iliad reveals the queer nature of Achilleus' desires even when not focused on Patroklos, or any person at all.

A Vocabulary of Iliadic Desire

This paper owes a debt to Anne Carson's *Eros the Bittersweet* for its articulation of the nature of desire in several Ancient Greek literary works, particularly the poetry of Sappho and Archilochus, and Plato's *Phaedrus*. Instructive to this paper are the notions of desire as paradoxical and desire as lack. Carson writes that "Whether apprehended as a dilemma of sensation, action or value, eros prints as the same contradictory fact: love and hate converge within erotic desire."[4] This is its paradoxical nature – at once pleasing and painful – which she draws from Sappho's description of *eros* as "*glukupikron*" or "sweetbitter."[5] She reads this same contradiction in Aphrodite's threat to Helen in *Il.* 3.414-15: "Damn you woman, don't provoke me—I'll get angry and let you drop! I'll come to hate you as terribly as I now love you!"[6] Hate and love are both component parts of Carson's bittersweet

[2] See K. J. (Kenneth James) Dover, *Greek Homosexuality* (London: Duckworth, 1978); W. M. Clarke, 'Achilles and Patroclus in Love,' *Hermes* 106, no. 3 (1978): 381–96.
[3] Robert L. Caserio et al., 'The Antisocial Thesis in Queer Theory', *PMLA* 121, no. 3 (2006): 819–28.
[4] Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet : An Essay* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2014), 9.
[5] Sappho, Fr. 130, *Poetarum Lesbiorum Fragmenta*, ed. E. Lobel and D. Page (Oxford, 1955) quoted in Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 3.
[6] Carson, 5.

eros, and *eros* is not more so one or the other. This brings Carson to why *eros* is contradictory, and she argues that it is because *eros* expresses a lack. Drawing primarily from Plato's dialogues, she reasons that *eros* must lack that which it desires, or else it is not desiring. "All human desire is poised on an axis of paradox, absence and presence its poles, love and hate its motive energies," as Carson sums it up rather neatly.[7]

While Carson is primarily focused on *eros*, her favoured subject, Sappho, can point readers towards a vocabulary of desire suitable for Archaic poetry, especially with her poetry's frequent dips into Homeric allusion and epic language.[8] As such, this study is focused on the words *eros / eramai, himeros / himeirō*, and *pothē / potheō*, with each having a meaning that would fall within the range of "desire" in English. Though Carson focuses primarily on *eros*, her description of its nature also applies to *himeros* and *pothē*. *Himeros* is used to describe both sexual passion and the desire for mourning or grieving, adding to its sense of mingled sweetness and bitterness.[9] *Eros* is also used for the desire to mourn, sexual desire, as well as the desire for food and drink. The desire for food and drink provides a visceral example of desire as lack. Even in Sappho, *eros* is conceptualised in terms of taste – both sweet and bitter.[10] Meanwhile, *pothē* tends to describe a longing or desire for something which is gone or lost, like that of the Achaians for

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[7] Carson, 11.

[8] See L. Rissman, *Love as War : Homeric Allusion in the Poetry of Sappho* (Königstein/Ts: A. Hain, 1983), P. A. Rosenmeyer, 'Her Master's Voice: Sappho's Dialogue with Homer', *Materiali e Discussioni per l'analisi Dei Testi Classici*, no. 39 (1997): 123–49.

[9] *Himeros* used to describe sexual passion: *Il.* 3.446, 14.216, 14.328; *h.* used to describe the desire for mourning or grieving: 23.14, 23.108, 23.153, 24.507, 24.514.

[10] Fabian Horn, '"BITTER-SWEET LOVE": A Cognitive Linguistic View of Sappho's ΕΡΟΣ ΓΛΥΚΥΠΙΚΡΟΣ (Frg. 130 Voigt)', *Poetica* 48, no. 1/2 (2016): 1–21.

Achilleus when he refuses to fight or Achilleus' for Patroklos.[11] In the case of *pothē,* lack is implied in every use of the word.

The Language of Satiation and Desire

The *Iliad* reveals a pattern in how these words are used. The lemma *eros* appears ten times, seven of these in a formulaic phrase as part of a feasting scene referring to "the desire for eating and drinking."[12] Part of this phrase "*ex eron heînai*" also appears in Menelaos' prayer to Zeus, in which he argues that the Trojans cannot be satiated in war, unlike other men who would rather "win satisfaction [*eron*]" in sleep, sex, singing, and dance.[13] This explicit parallel of these different desires – food, sex, and war – using *eros* to refer to all of them invites the reader to consider these equivalent desires. The language of fullness and satiation in Menelaos' speech also suggests a flattening of hunger and desire:

> … nor can they ever
> be glutted full [*koresasthai*] of the close encounters of deadly warfare.
> Since there is satiety [*kóros*] in all things, in sleep, and love-making,
> in the loveliness of singing and the innocent dance. In all these
> things a man will strive sooner to win satisfaction [*ex eron heînai*]
> than in war; but in this the Trojans cannot be glutted [*akorētoi*].[14]

[11] *Pothē* describing the Achaians' longing for Achilleus: 1.240, 14.368; *p.* describing Achilleus' longing for Patroklos: 19.321. All definitions of Greek words are taken from R.J. Cunliffe, *A Lexicon of the Homeric Dialect* (London: Blackie and Son Limited, 1924).
[12] "αὐτὰρ ἐπεὶ πόσιος καὶ ἐδητύος ἐξ ἔρον ἔντο" in *Il.* 1.469, 2.432, 7.323, 9.92, 9.222, 23.57, 24.628. All translations are from R. Lattimore, *The Iliad of Homer* (Chicago, 1951) unless otherwise specified; all Greek text is from Homer, *Iliad*, ed. D.B. Monro (Oxford, 1902).
[13] *Il.* 13.638.
[14] *Il.* 16.634-9.

More instructive is the conflation of the desire for food and drink, henceforth "hunger," and the desire for war specifically. The language of satiation in this passage lies in the word "*kóros*" and its derivatives *korennūmi* and *akorētos*. Cunliffe's *Lexicon* defines "*kóros*" as "satiety" or "one's fill," with the other two simply the verbal form "to sate; take one's fill" and the privative adjective "insatiable." In the *Iliad*, *korennūmi* tends to refer most often to corpses glutting carrion animals, and also satiation of the desire for war as seen in Menelaos' speech above. It can refer to hunger for food, as in the donkey simile used to refer to the Telamonian Aias, and in Patroklos' taunting of Kebriones, comparing him to an oyster-diver who "could fill the hunger [*koreseien*] of many men."[15] From these examples, and in Hektor's use of the verb to describe the "glut of being fenced in" the Trojan walls, a clear martial association is apparent.[16] The same is true for *akorētos*, used to mean "insatiate of battle" in reference to Hektor, the Aiantes, the Trojans more broadly, and Achilleus.[17]

This pattern stands when considering the language specifically describing hunger, which is notably sparse in the poem. *Peinaō* – to be hungry – appears only in three lion similes, which Helene Foley has noted are "typically reserved for heroic men," especially in the context of a battle.[18] *Limos* (hunger) and *nēstis* (fasting) appear only in book 19 once Achilleus has decided to abstain from food and drink.[19] We will return to Achilleus' abstention later. Finally, *aō*, to sate, is used to refer to sating carrion animals with corpses, sating spears, sating the desire to mourn over loved ones lost in battle, and sating the hungers of Ares and

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[15] *Il.* 11.562; 16.474.
[16] *Il.* 18.287.
[17] *Akorētos* used for Hektor: 7.117; the Aiantes: 12.335; the Trojans generally: 13.621, 639; Achilleus: 20.2.
[18] Peinaō used in lion similes: 3.25, 16.758, 18.162.
Helene P. Foley, '"REVERSE SIMILES" AND SEX ROLES IN THE ODYSSEY', *Arethusa* 11, no. 1/2 (1978): 7–26.
[19] *Limos* in *Il.* 19.166, 348, 354; *nēstis* in 19.156

Achilleus.[20] The spear is not just something that can be sated, but even "eager to glut itself with human flesh."[21] Tamara Neal notes that "Ares, the embodiment of battle frenzy, is responsible for the μἐνος [power] of this weapon."[22] Each of these things which can be sated are linked to war and battle. *Adēn* (from *aō*), to satiety, is also used exclusively in the context of animal hunger, and having one's fill of battle or war.[23] Due to the paucity of specific hunger terms (*peinaō, limos, nēstis*) in the poem, with hunger instead expressed in terms of desire or satiation (*eros*, *kóros, aō*), and the use of desire words and satiation words to express the same or similar sentiments, it is clear that desires and hungers are conflated in the poem. More specifically, hunger and the desire for war are inextricably linked.

Achilleus' Queer Hungers

Drawing from Rachel H. Lesser, who examines Achilleus' desires as "queer" because of how "Achilleus transgresses masculine norms in his withdrawal from battle, quasi-conjugal intimacy with Patroklos, and mourning over his death,"[24] this paper argues that Achilleus' desire, particularly his hunger for war, is non-normative, ergo, queer. The passages in book 19 following Achilleus' refusal to eat shed light on normative hunger in the epic. When Achilleus suggests that the Achaians fight first and feast later, Odysseus responds:

> Do not drive the sons of the Achaians on Ilion when they are hungry [*nēstias*],

[20] *Aō* used for the satiation of carrion animals: *Il.* 11.818; the satiation of spears: 21.70; sating the desire to mourn: 23.157; sating the hungers of Ares and Achilleus: 5.289, 19.307.
[21] *Il.* 21.69–70, 168 in Tamara Neal, 'Blood and Hunger in the Iliad', *Classical Philology* 101, no. 1 (2006): 29 n.51.
[22] Neal, 29.
[23] *Adēn* used for animal hunger: *Il.* 5.203; having one's fill of battle or war: 13.315, 19.423.
[24] Rachel H. Lesser, *Desire in the Iliad: The Force That Moves the Epic and Its Audience* (Oxford University Press, 2022), 11-12.

to fight against the Trojans, since not short will be the time
of battle, once the massed formations of men have encountered
together, with the god inspiring fury in both sides.
Rather tell the men of Achaia here by their swift ships,
to take food and wine, since these make fighting fury and warcraft.
For a man will not have strength to fight his way forward all day
long until the sun goes down if he is starved for food. Even
though in his heart he be very passionate for the battle,
yet without his knowing it his limbs will go heavy, and hunger [*limos*]
and thirst will catch up with him and cumber his knees as he moves on.
But when a man has been well filled [*koressamenos*] with wine and with eating
and then does battle all day long against the enemy,
why, then the heart inside him is full of cheer, nor do his limbs
get weary, until all are ready to give over the fighting.[25]

Here, Odysseus seems to state something self-evident: that warriors cannot fight on an empty stomach. He uses the language of satiation (*koressamenos*) in the context of food along with the desire for battle (*menoiaai polemizein*) in reference to a generalised man (*anēr*), establishing a normative warrior who feasts in order to fight. Lesser reads Achilleus' abstinence and Odysseus' response along with how "Homer repeatedly connects sex and the consumption of food with desire's resolution" in the formulaic phrase "*autar epei posios kai edētuos ex eron hento.*"[26] She posits that this phrase, which comes at the end of a feast "expresses how eating fulfills—or, more specifically, negates desire."[27] Achilleus, then, clearly expresses in the language of satiation, that these desires for nourishment will go unsatisfied: "I beg of you, if any dear companion will listen to me, stop urging me to satisfy [*asasthai*] the heart in me with food and drink."[28]

[25] *Il.* 19.156-70.
[26] Lesser, 193.
[27] Lesser, 193.
[28] *Il.* 19.305-7.

Odysseus' entreaties and Achilleus' denial also illuminate the norms of feasting as a social ritual. Stephen A. Nimis adds that while "Odysseus refers first to the physical necessity of food [...] this is only a pretext for engineering a public affirmation of communal bonds. The call for a meal is immediately followed by a call for a formal reconciliation."[29] This makes Achilleus' continued refusal all the more non-normative.

It is not only his refusal to eat that defies norms, but the reason why. Achilleus does express his refusal in the language of desire and hunger when he addresses the dead Patroklos: "But now you lie here torn before me, and my heart goes starved [*akmēnos*] for meat and drink, though they are here beside me, by reason of longing [*pothē*] for you."[30] In Odysseus' second entreaty, he argues that a man must curb his own sorrow over the dead so that he may continue fighting. "Since he cannot long afford to refrain from battle, the normative hero grieves only briefly before burying his companion and makes sure to eat and drink so that he is physically sustained for further combat."[31] Achilleus' refusal to eat in order to grieve Patroklos is a departure from normative behaviour, and the normative desire to mourn which must be set aside to go on fighting. But Achilleus' longing for Patroklos is not the sole reason he decides to forgo food:

> …neither drink nor food shall
> go down my very throat, since my companion has perished
> and lies inside my shelter torn about with the cutting
> bronze, and turned against the forecourt while my companions
> mourn about him. Food and drink mean nothing to my heart
> but blood does, and slaughter, and the groaning of men in the
> hard work.[32]

[29] Stephen A. Nimis, *Narrative Semiotics in the Epic Tradition : The Simile* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 34.
[30] *Il.* 19.319-21.
[31] Lesser, 196.
[32] *Il.* 19.209-14.

He abstains because of two desires, then: the desire to mourn Patroklos and the desire for blood. Returning to the language of satiation and hunger, we see that there are few characters in the poem whose hunger and satiety are described with these words. These are primarily animals, spears, the Trojans in general, Hektor, Achilleus, and Ares. *Aō* is used to describe Priam and Achilleus sating their desire for mourning, but the only people whose *hunger*, both for food and war, is sated are Ares and Achilleus. In one passage, Thetis describes how she used to feed Achilleus as a child; another is Achilleus begging the Achaian elders to stop urging him to eat.[33] Despite the use of satiation language to refer to the Trojans who cannot be glutted of war, and Hektor having "enough of hard hitting [*adēn eloōsi polemoio*]."[34] Tamara Neal notes that only Achaian warriors are represented as blood-hungry predators in the epic.[35] Indeed, only Achaians and Hektor are compared to hungry lions in the three aforementioned lion similes. Focused on the role of blood specifically, Neal writes that "Driven by an appetite for battle and figured as consuming predators, Achaeans feed on Trojan death and, more specifically, their blood."[36] Hektor as the sole Trojan outlier makes sense: Hektor and Achilleus are compared and contrasted to such an extent that in his study of the characters, Seth Bernadete declares him a "civil Achilles."[37] Though portrayed as a hungry lion, Hektor crucially does not thirst for blood, nor is he ever described as having his hunger glutted with the verbs *aō* or *korennūmi*. These are time and again associated chiefly with Ares and Achilleus, who each have hungers beyond the norms established by the poem.

Ares himself defies norms of godly hunger: "he is an exception to the convention that the gods have no desire for

[33] Thetis feeding Achilleus in *Il.* 9.486-9; Achilleus and the elders: 19.306-7.
[34] *Il.* 13.315.
[35] Neal, 26.
[36] Neal, 27.
[37] Seth Benardete, *Achilles and Hector : The Homeric Hero*, ed. Ronna Burger (South Bend: St. Augustine's Press, 2005), 121.

"nourishment." He is said, explicitly, to have an appetite; for instance, he is formulaically described as "insatiate of war" (ἀτος πολέμοιο)."[38] Not only insatiate of war, he is named in another formulaic phrase "*haimatos asai Arēa*" meaning "to glut Ares with blood."[39] Ares, and the spears whose *menos* he oversees, would glut themselves on the flesh and blood of men unlike any of the other bloodless gods.[40] This is crucial when considering Achilleus, the only other character to have the satiation of his hunger expressed with *aō*, and who Ares manifests in during his *aristeia*.[41] It is also only Achilleus who is likewise described with the exact phrase "*atos polemoio*" – insatiate of war – that is most often applied to Ares.[42] Achilleus' bloodlust and hunger for battle goes so far beyond all others expressed in the *Iliad* that he is likened to Ares, a figure whose hunger is also queer. Ares "has no need of nourishment yet is imagined to desire it; second, he is without blood, yet craves (mortal) blood."[43] Achilleus' likeness to Ares presents another boundary for the former to transgress: the dividing line between divinity and mortality. Achilleus' hunger during his fast is resolved not by eating, but by divine intervention. At Zeus' urging, Athena "dropped the delicate ambrosia and the nectar inside the breast of Achilleus softly, so no sad weakness of hunger would come on his knees."[44] Though the gods, with the exception of Ares, are not depicted either eating or drinking, "The poet does mention [nectar] or [ambrosia], primarily when the gods use them to preserve and sustain mortals, to bestow on them temporarily a characteristic that defines immortality."[45] Being untouched by hunger is this immortal characteristic, which adds to

[38] Neal, 28.
[39] In *Il.* 5.289, 20.78, 22.267.
[40] For further discussion on Ares' specific relation to the blood of mortals in the poem see Neal (2006).
[41] Neal, 27.
[42] As in *Il.* 13.746. Hektor is instead "*makhēs atos*" (22.218).
[43] Neal, 28.
[44] *Il.* 19.352-4.
[45] Neal, 27.

Achilleus' portrayal as increasingly non-human in his *aristeia*. Beyond transgressing norms of masculinity, Achilleus transgresses norms of humanity and mortality becoming "a ravening hybrid, a man-beast-god driven by an all-consuming desire for the death and blood of mortals."[46]

Like the observations on the use of *aō* and *atos polemoio,* Neal notes that the ways the poem expresses Achilleus' bloodlust are unique:

> Achilles, however, himself articulates his bloodlust. He declares his desire without the mediation of the narrator, either directly, or through the use of similes. The absence of simile, and the fact that it is his own θυμός—an "organ" frequently compelling hunger—that now compels him, renders the hero's desire more immediate and more transgressive.[47]

This lack of simile to refer to his bloodlust also distinguishes him from other warriors, whose predacious animal similes see their victims likened to prey animals. Achilleus, like Ares, "expresses a desire to feast on the death and blood of his own kind."[48] Achilleus expresses his hunger again without simile while addressing the dying Hektor: "I wish only that my spirit and fury would drive me to hack your meat away and eat it raw for the things that you have done to me."[49] This is especially compelling when reading Achilleus' hunger as queer. Lesser suggests that Achilleus is driven by "aggressive desire" to kill Hektor in order to avenge Patroklos.[50] This aggressive desire is generated through "emotional investment in the lost object and represents a transferal of libidinal energy toward a "substitute object," the rival who has perpetrated the loss."[51] Achilleus' longing and desire for the now-

[46] Neal, 33.
[47] Neal, 32.
[48] Neal, 33.
[49] *Il.* 22.346-8.
[50] Lesser, 7.
[51] Lesser, 7.

dead Patroklos have been displaced onto Hektor. The shared vocabulary of hunger, sexual desire, longing, and bloodlust are all at play. While Lesser argues that Achilleus' desires are queer in reference to Achilleus' investment in Patroklos, Achilleus' hungers *themselves* are queer. Not only has he displaced his desires for Patroklos onto Hektor, the way in which he expresses these desires as hunger and bloodlust is also singular. There is the self-articulation of his hunger and bloodlust, and the hunger for human flesh and blood, both non-normative in their own right. Yet, in Achilleus' speech to the dying Hektor, the expression of his hunger is also visceral and intimate. Not only content to glut Ares with blood, he himself wishes to consume Hektor's flesh raw after forgoing food out of longing for Patroklos. Not out of hunger, since Athena fed him with nectar and ambrosia, but out of desire. This all-consuming hunger is not even sated once Hektor dies, instead leading Achilleus to transgress the "social norms regarding the respectful treatment of corpses."[52] When even Hektor, who has been the focus of Achilleus' single-minded desire/hunger/rage since killing Patroklos, dies and Achilleus' hunger is not sated, it is the hunger itself which is queer, not its object.

Conclusion

Desire is a fickle thing, painful and pleasurable, pulling men to do all sorts of things. "Boundaries of body, categories of thought, are confounded. The god who melts limbs proceeds to break the lover (*damnatai*) as would a foe on the epic battlefield," Anne Carson thus reprises Archilochus.[53] When attempting to pin its nature down, desire is slippery. But, in reading the expression of desire in the *Iliad* as lack, we can begin to feel its edges. It is expressed in terms of desire recognizable from Archaic lyric – *eros, himeros, pothē* – which are used to describe desires

[52] Lesser, 212.
[53] Archilochus 196, *Iambi et Elegi Graeci*, ed. M.L. West, (Oxford, 1971-1972), quoted in Anne Carson, *Eros the Bittersweet*, 8.

including, but not limited to, sex. The desire for food and the desire for war are particularly informative because of how they are described in terms of satiation – *kóros, aō.* The similarity and sameness of the language to describe what we might consider conflicting or unrelated desires reveals a certain conflation of them. With an overall lack of words specifically denoting hunger, desire *is* hunger. Those desiring war and battle are hungry for it. No one is hungrier than Achilleus. Having a language of desire, hunger, and satiation lets us see how these forces operate in the poem and what norms govern them. Achilleus' hunger transgresses these norms in nearly every way: he alone swears off food, in turn isolating himself from a social ritual; he swears off food in mourning for Patroklos instead of limiting his grief to continue fighting; and he hungers not for food, but the blood, death, and flesh of mortals. He is likened to a divinity and his hunger is waylaid by divine interference. He transgresses norms of masculinity, humanity, and mortality to sate his insatiable hunger. His hunger itself, the way in which he expresses his desire, is queer in its defiance of norms. Longing for Patroklos is incidental.

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THE CULT OF ORTHIA AT SPARTA: ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE OF RITES OF PASSAGE, INITIATION, AND MATURATION

Jessie Nelson

Abstract

This paper will explore the archaeological and material remains of the Spartan cult of Orthia to further understand the identity of Orthia and the purpose of her cult as it existed prior to the integration of the goddess Artemis. This analysis reveals that the Archaic and Classical goddess Orthia was deeply connected with the stages of life and the rites of passage and initiation for the elite full-citizen class of Sparta: the Spartiatai. Votives dedicated to Orthia, such as horses, game animals, pederastic images, and warriors, demonstrated her association with crucial aspects of the agōgē, the Spartan education system. The large assemblage of ceramic masks, though historically difficult to contextualize, may be representations of Spartan ideals used as reminders for the youths and young adults worshiping Orthia for passage into adulthood. The nude female figurines and the marriage iconography are evidence of Orthia's importance to Spartan women as well as Spartan social institutions. While there are many limitations to the study of the Spartan cult of Orthia, this paper will utilize the archaeological evidence to demonstrate Orthia's significance to Spartan society.

1. Introduction

Despite being active for over seven hundred years, little is known with certainty about the practices and purpose of the cult of Orthia at Sparta. The unique votive assemblages, the minimal reliable contemporary literature, and the lack of similar practices elsewhere in the Greek world complicate any theories about the cult and its sanctuary. The first activity at the site can be observed as early as the eighth century BCE, but the goddess Artemis was

not integrated into the cult until the second century CE.[1] Orthia, the original local goddess who had been worshipped at the site since its founding, is often compared to Artemis, which has led to the conflation of the identity and purpose of the two goddesses. As a result, interpretations of the cult of Orthia can be somewhat limited by her relationship to Artemis. Despite these barriers to understanding the cult, the excavations of the sanctuary revealed extremely rich deposits of votives to the goddess Orthia. Therefore, a study focused on the archaeological and material evidence of the cult may provide a clearer picture of the cult and identity of the goddess Orthia. This examination of the votives to Orthia establishes the cult's concern with the completion of education for young male *Spartiatai*, the transition of boys into warriors, and the social significance of marriage for both sexes. Thus, the archaeological remains from the sanctuary of Orthia demonstrate the goddess' connection to the rites of initiation and passage, which were crucial to the social success of both male and female *Spartiatai*.

2. Historical and Literary Context of the Cult of Orthia

a. Artemis' Integration into the Cult

The earliest evidence of Artemis' integration into the cult of Artemis Orthia at Sparta is a small inscription naming "Artemis Orthia" dating to approximately 150 CE.[2] While the presence of Orthia at the sanctuary can be traced to its foundations in the eighth century BCE, there is no clear evidence of Artemis before the second century CE.[3] Many modern scholars have analyzed the cult throughout its entire lifespan, from its Archaic Spartan founding to its Romanization in the third century CE, when a Roman

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[1] John Boardman, "Artemis Orthia and Chronology," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 58, (1963): 3-4.

[2] Arthur Maurice Woodward, "Chapter X: Inscriptions," in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, ed. Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1929), 293.

[3] Boardman, "Artemis Orthia and Chronology," 3-4.

amphitheatre was built over the sanctuary and exaggerated versions of the Spartan rites were performed for a foreign audience.[4] These analyses will often conflate the purpose of the two goddesses in an attempt to better understand the cult as a whole. While this can be valuable to the study of the cult and the relationship between the goddesses, the identity of Orthia, the original goddess, tends to get lost in Artemis. Moreover, much of the primary literary evidence that describes the activities at Artemis Orthia dates to the first century CE or later. Therefore, these sources cannot be used to account for the practices that would have occurred over eight centuries prior.

b. The Challenge of Contemporary Sources

There are also significant limitations to the literature that is contemporary with Orthia because they are biased, fragmentary, or irrelevant. Xenophon, writing in approximately the fourth century BCE, describes a practice wherein young boys steal cheeses from the altar of Orthia and are flogged if they are caught in the process.[5] However, Xenophon does not indicate if the purpose of these practices was religious, educational, military, or a combination. Therefore, there is limited understanding of the connection between the practice of stealing and the goddess Orthia, if there was any connection at all. Additionally, Alkman's *Partheneion*, written in the seventh century BCE, is theorized to be a 'maiden song' performed at the sanctuary of Orthia, but is too fragmentary to be definitive.[6] Due to these limitations, modern examinations of the Archaic cult cannot rely on ancient authors, nor should they use the later cult of Artemis Orthia as evidence of the earlier cult of Orthia. Thus, this study will investigate the

[4] Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, "Chapter I: The Sanctuary," in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, ed. Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1929), 3.
[5] Xen. *Lak. Pol*. 2.
[6] Robert D. Luginbill, "The Occasion and Purpose of Alcman's Partheneion," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 92, no. 2 (2009): 27-28.

material culture of the sanctuary prior to the addition of Artemis, with a focus on artefacts from the Archaic and Classical periods. This methodology will allow an isolated study of the cult of Orthia, creating a more clear understanding of her original identity and purpose.

3. The Material Culture of Orthia's Sanctuary

a. Animal Votives and Their Signficance

Depictions of horses, lions, bulls, deer, frogs, tortoises, fish, and many other animals have been found across all mediums throughout the cult's lifespan. Rose, one of the original excavators of the site, believed the cult was one of fertility and upbringing and, therefore, the animal votives represented Orthia's concern with the health and fertility of both wild and livestock animals.[7] However, more recent analyses question the cult's connection to fertility and, as an extension, the purpose of the animal votives. Waugh notes that the lack of "iconographical indication of fecundity associated with the representations; they are not depicted as pregnant or with young" complicates the original assumption of fertility.[8] Both Rose and Waugh examine all the animal votives as within the same category, with the assumption that they may have been used for an overall similar purpose. However, analyzing these votives categorically, separating the domesticated from the wild demonstrates the potential of the votives to be aspects of the initiation practices and rites of passage for Spartan youths.

b. Horses and Their Symbolism in Spartan Society

Horses were found in the greatest abundance among the animal votives, appearing around 750 BCE and mostly

[7] Herbert Jennings Rose, "Chapter XII: The Cult of Artemis Orthia," in *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, ed. Richard MacGillivray Dawkins, (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1929), 402.
[8] Nicki Waugh, "Visualising Fertility at Artemis Orthia's Site," *British School at Athens* 16, (2009): 164.

disappearing by about 500 BCE.[9] In Sparta, horses are believed to have been a symbol of wealth and status because "Spartans were not allowed to own coins privately so […] their wealth was mainly in land and stock," and in "the ownership of horses."[10] Wealth was an important element of Spartan status as evidenced by the social class of *Mothakes*, a group of lesser Spartan citizens whose status had been reduced, likely because of a lack of wealth.[11] Therefore, the ability to be a part of the *Spartiatai* class was somewhat reliant on wealth, of which livestock and domesticated animals, such as horses, were a necessary element. Status and wealth were also interconnected with the Spartan education system, as it is hypothesized that those who did not complete the *agōgē* were demoted to lesser citizens or perhaps lost their citizenship entirely.[12] Moreover, it was common for poorer citizens, like the *Mothakes*, to receive sponsorships to participate in the *agōgē*.[13] Thus, establishing status through wealth was an important aspect of a Spartan youth's inclusion in the *agōgē* and other social institutions. The plethora of horse votives found in Orthia's sanctuary may be indicative of the Spartans' desire to protect their wealth and status so they could continue to participate in the crucial aspects of Spartan society.

c. Orthia as Potnia Hippon: Mistress of Horses

In addition to the votives that only depicted horses, there were many that depicted Orthia as a *potnia hippon*, or 'mistress of horses,' wherein the goddess is flanked by two horses (see Figure

[9] Nicki Waugh, "Contextual iconography: the horses of Artemis Orthia," in *Making Sense of Greek Art*, ed. Viccy Coltman, (Exeter, University of Exeter Press, 2012), 3.
[10] A. J. Holladay, "Spartan Austerity," *The Classical Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (1977): 118.
[11] Steven Hodkinson, "Sparta: An Exceptional Domination of State over Society?" in *A Companion to Sparta*, ed. Anton Powell, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 47-48.
[12] Hodkinson, "Sparta," 47-48.
[13] Hodkinson, "Sparta," 48-49.

1). However, there is a notable difference between depictions of Orthia and typical depictions of a *potnia hippon.* In Spartan imagery, "the emphasis on domination, found in representation where the *potnia* grabs her animal by the legs or neck, is absent. The Spartan motifs share a sense of unity between the horse and deity."[14] Therefore, there is no indication that the horse votives were to domesticate or control horses to breed them. It is more likely that the presence of the *potnia hippon* is symbolic of the protection of wealth and status. Spartans would dedicate such votives to the goddess Orthia as a *potnia hippon* so they may protect their status and continue to enjoy the social institutions which were crucial to their way of life.

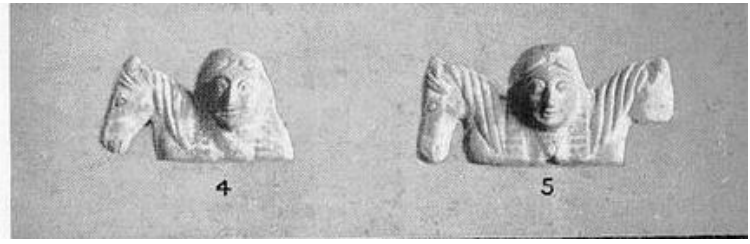

Figure 1: Terracotta votives of Orthia as a *potnia hippon* found at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; (c. 700-500 BCE). Dawkins, Richard MacGillivray. *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*. London: MacMillan and Co., Limited, 1929. Plate 32.

d. Animal Votives as Related to Military Initiation

In addition to Rose's original theory that the animal votives had to do with Orthia's concern for fertility, many scholars have also hypothesized that they may have been substitute sacrifices or associated with the hunt.[15] However, rather than for fertility or sacrifice, the animal votives may be connected with rites of initiation for young Spartan boys. It is well established that

[14] Waugh, "Contextual iconography," 16.

[15] Georgina Muskett, "Votive Offerings from the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia, Sparta, in Liverpool Collections," *British School at Athens* 109, no. 1 (2014): 166 & 169.

hunting was a crucial part of the education and upbringing processes at Sparta. Both Plato and Plutarch provide descriptions of the *krypteia*, "a training method for young warriors," wherein "Spartan youths lived away from the city for a period of time, during which they were expected to hunt and kill helots."[16] While the *krypteia* does not demonstrate any direct connection to the goddess Orthia, David argues that the stealing rituals that took place at the altar of Orthia, as described by Xenophon, are inherently connected to the hunt.[17] The purpose of the stealing ritual and the *krypteia* was to prepare young boys for the hardships of military campaigning, which would require them to be resourceful and adaptable.[18] Therefore, the ritual hunting and stealing acted as a rite of initiation into the military for the young boys who participated.[19] Moreover, the *κασσηρατόριον*, a hunting competition, was performed by Spartan male youths at the sanctuary of Orthia, demonstrating her further connection to these crucial rites of passage.[20] Therefore, votives of commonly hunted animals may have been dedicated to Orthia to ensure a youth's success in the crucial initiation rituals that were a part of the transition into adulthood.

While this hypothesis may better account for the presence of such varying animal votives, it does not fully explain the many exotic and non-local animal depictions, such as monkeys and lions, found in Orthia's sanctuary. However, the other proposed theories regarding the presence of animal votives also fail to properly address these outliers. Rose's theory of Orthia's concern for the fertility of all animals is limited because it is unlikely that the Spartans would create votives for animals that they do not rely on,

[16] Judith M. Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), 13.
[17] Ephraim David, "Hunting in Spartan Society and Consciousness," *Echos du Monde Classique/Classical Views* 37, no. 3 (1993): 404-407.
[18] David, "Hunting in Spartan Society and Consciousness," 404-407.
[19] David, "Hunting in Spartan Society and Consciousness," 404-407.
[20] Rose, "The Cult of Artemis Orthia," 406.

nor encounter in their daily lives. Additionally, it is unlikely that animals that could not be locally hunted would be dedicated to Orthia for a hunt. The most likely theory to explain these votives is that they were substitutions for sacrifices.[21] However, it is well understood that Spartans were incredibly religious and known for following all ritual practices, and, thus, it seems unlikely that they would opt for votives in place of a real sacrifice. This theory also creates questions about the nature of sacrifice, as it is unclear why exotic animals would have been chosen over those that were local. Therefore, while it is likely that animal votives to Orthia were related to the hunt and initiation practices, there are limitations to this theory.

4. The Connection Between Orthia and Pederasty

a. Pederasty as Part of Spartan Education

The cult of Orthia was deeply important to many aspects of the *agōgē*, specifically the practice of pederasty, wherein an older man (*erastes*) was a mentor and sexual partner to a younger boy (*eromenos*). This practice was not exclusive to Sparta. Strabo describes a similar practice in Crete: "After giving the boy presents, the abductor takes him away to any place in the country he wishes; and those who were present at the abduction follow after them, and after feasting and hunting with them for two months […] they return to the city."[22] This pederastic relationship was an important element of educating young men. Barringer notes the similarity between the Cretan and Spartan practices, stating that boys, "by learning the skills of citizens, by hunting and by sexual encounter, become civilized adults."[23] This is also additional evidence of the importance of a hunt in the process of initiation into adulthood. It is likely that, just like the Cretan hunt, the Spartan *κασσηρατόριον* at the sanctuary of Orthia and the

[21] Rose, "The Cult of Artemis Orthia," 402.
[22] Str. 10.4.
[23] Barringer, *The Hunt in Ancient Greece*, 13.

krypteia were important rites of initiation into adulthood and society, introducing young boys to the military and social aspects of Spartan adulthood.

b. Evidence from Artifacts: The Laconian Kylix

Further evidence of a connection between the cult of Orthia and pederastic relationships is found in the decoration of one Laconian III kylix fragment (see Figures 2a-b). The kylix depicts several figures, including a satyr, a robed man, and two men having intercourse. The man that is penetrating another man could be identified as older because he appears to be wearing a cloak which "was perhaps the most visible mark of a Spartan youth's entrance into the ranks of the *eirenes*" and was "a mark of his full-fledged status in the army."[24] The cloak worn by the man and the absence of a cloak on his partner could be a visual representation of the typical pederastic relationship that existed among members of the *agōgē* and Spartan army. This kylix may be depicting initiation rites or rituals that occurred at the sanctuary of Orthia, but it is not clear which. Luginbill hypothesizes that Alkman's *Partheneion* may be describing a ceremony in which young maidens present young adult men with the cloaks they shall wear as part of their military training.[25] It is possible that Orthia oversaw the youths' initiation into adulthood through both the dawning of the cloaks and through the social practice of pederasty. The two cloaked figures on the kylix and the satyr may indicate that the illustration depicts the dawning of the cloak ceremony. However, this cannot be confirmed because no figure on the kylix is portrayed as actively receiving or presenting a cloak. Interpretations are made somewhat more difficult by the presence of the satyr, which would usually represent excessive sexuality and fertility.[26] However, the assumption of fertility is complicated by

[24] Luginbill, "Alcman's Partheneion," 41.
[25] Luginbill, "Alcman's Partheneion," 40-42.
[26] Waugh, "Visualising Fertility," 164.

the fact that it is two men engaging in intercourse and that the satyr is not ithyphallic.[27] Furthermore, it is unlikely that these pederastic relationships were viewed as improper or evidence of excessive sexuality because they were prevalent in Spartan society and a necessary part of the initiation into society and adulthood. Despite these uncertainties, the kylix is likely evidence of connections between the cult of Orthia and initiation rites through pederastic relationships.

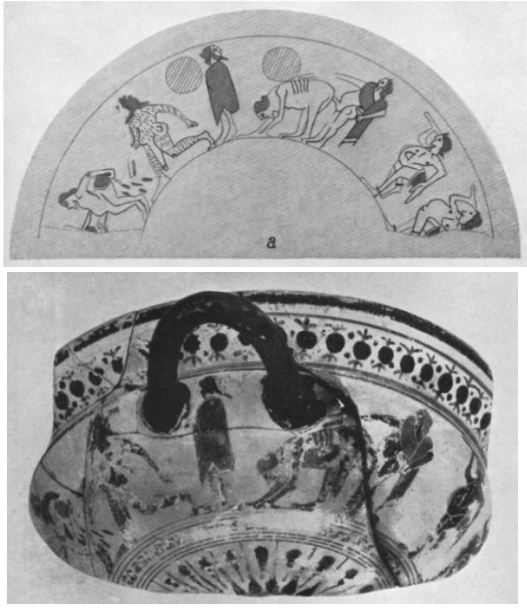

Figure 2a-b: Drawing and photograph of a painted kylix fragment found at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; (c. 600-500 BCE).
Lane, Edward Arthur. "Lakonian Vase-Painting." *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 34, (1933/1934): Plate 39-40.

c. Pederasty and Military Initiation

Orthia was an integral part of the *agōgē* because she was heavily connected to the upbringing of youths and the passage through the stages of life. The purpose of the *agōgē* was to train

[27] Waugh, "Visualising Fertility," 164.

Spartan youths to be resilient, adaptable, and competent citizen-soldiers.[28] Therefore, the cult of Orthia would have been very concerned with the military aspects of *Spartiatai* life. This can first be seen in the evidence of Orthia's connection to the hunt, which was an essential part of early military training for young boys who were perhaps not entirely prepared for the more advanced training. Further evidence is the hundreds of warrior votives found at the site. Similar votives found elsewhere in Archaic and Classical Greece are believed to have been "generic, stereotyped images considered appropriate dedications to any hero, since they represent typical aristocratic and heroic activities."[29] Furthermore, it is common to deem such votives as general dedications to a god or goddess for protection or success in battle.[30] However, it seems unlikely that the warrior votives found at Orthia's sanctuary could be considered 'generic' because they are often identified specifically as hoplite soldiers and are extremely stylized (see Figure 3).[31] Instead, these votives could have been dedicated by young Spartan men who were about to 'graduate' from the *agōgē* to take their place in the Spartan army as hoplites. The goddess Orthia would then represent the protection of the young men's passage through these stages of life.

[28] Philip Davies, "Equality and Distinction within the Spartiate Community," in *A Companion to Sparta*, ed. Anton Powell, (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons Ltd, 2018), 483.
[29] Gina Salapata, "The More the Better? Votive Offerings in Sets," *Australasian Society for Classical Studies: Selected Proceedings* 32, (2011): 5.
[30] Yngve Thomassen Flognfeldt, "Sanctuaries and votive offerings from The Early Iron Age in Greece - A comparative study of votive offerings from the eastern Peloponnese" (master's thesis, Universitas Bergensis, 2010), 66.
[31] Holladay, "Spartan Austerity," 122.

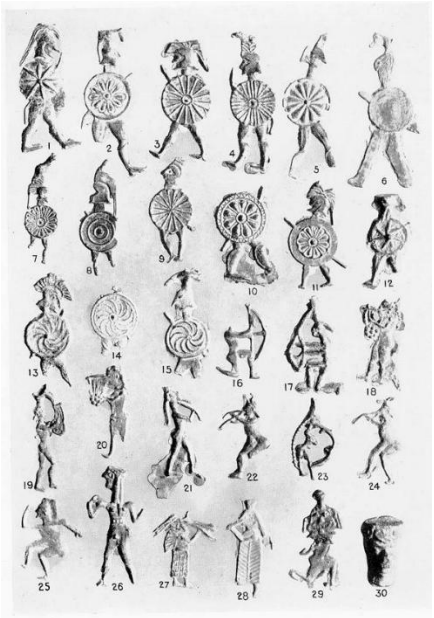

Figure 3: Stylized hoplite lead votives found at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; (c. 600-500 BCE).
Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, Plate 183.

The large deposit of ceramic masks is among some of the most difficult artefacts to contextualize. They range from grotesque humanoids with exaggerated features and deep facial ridging to realistic depictions of men with neutral expressions. Despite their variations, the majority of the masks were found in the same deposit.[32] The masks are likely recreations of wooden or fabric masks that were originally worn because the masks are ceramic and often do not have holes through which a wearer could breathe or see.[33] It is believed that the masks were "dedications that were displayed in the temple or its temenos and eventually were cleared when they became too numerous or were no longer

[32] Jonah Lloyd Rosenberg, "The Masks of Orthia: Form Function and the Origins of Theatre," *The Annual of the British School at Athens* 110, no. 1 (2015): 251.
[33] Rosenberg, "The Masks of Orthia," 250-251.

relevant to the cult."[34] Thus, it is likely that all of the masks were a part of the same function of the cult and were buried when they no longer served that function.[35] However, the uniqueness of the masks has led scholars to draw vastly different conclusions about their meaning. Carter argues that the masks are evidence that Orthia's cult had origins in Babylon and had a distant relation to the West Semitic goddess Asherah.[36] Using this theory, Carter reorganizes the masks into two main categories: grotesquely furrowed demons and idealized heroes.[37] This creates a dichotomy between the two figures representing adversary and hero. Carter then argues that the heroic masks depicted Orthia's male consort and "the grimacing masks […] represented the fiends who pursue and kill [him]."[38] Alternatively, Rosenberg suggests the masks were used in a comedic drama that centred around themes of farce and violence.[39] However, it is more plausible that a combination of these theories best explains the purpose of the masks at Orthia's sanctuary. The masks may have been used to act out a farcical battle between generic heroes and foes, possibly as an element of one of the many competitions young boys participated in at the sanctuary. The competition may have been a more comedic representation of battle, emphasizing the heroic traits aspired to by the young male *Spartiatai*. Much like how the "grimacing face of [the Babylonian] Humbaba served apotropaic purposes" and "was nailed to tombs, carved on a temple door, fastened to divine furniture, and suspended above scenes of sacrifice," so too may have been the ceramic masks at the sanctuary of Orthia.[40] In addition to serving apotropaic purposes, the masks may have

[34] Rosenberg, "The Masks of Orthia," 251.
[35] Rosenberg, "The Masks of Orthia," 251.
[36] Jane Burr Carter, "The Masks of Ortheia," *American Journal of Archaeology* 91, no. 3 (1987): 355.
[37] Carter, "The Masks of Ortheia," 355.
[38] Carter, "The Masks of Ortheia," 383.
[39] Rosenberg, "The Masks of Orthia," 256-258.
[40] Carter, "The Masks of Ortheia," 362.

served as dedications to the goddess to protect such heroic ideals in the young worshippers. Thus, the masks may have been important to the transition into adulthood, wherein youths were expected to aspire to be heroic warriors.

5. Initiation into Adulthood: Female and Male Rites

a. Female Votives and Sexual Maturation

The large assemblage of nude female figurines and the sanctuary's proximity to that of Eileithyia, a goddess of birth, led many of the excavators to conclude that the cult of Orthia was one of fertility. While this is likely true in part, it does not fully capture the nuance and specific importance of the goddess and her rituals. Rather than a goddess broadly concerned with fertility, the votives found indicate a goddess implicated in the processes of sexual maturation and marriage.

Some of the nude female votives appeared to be in the pose of the Knidean Aphrodite, which was taken as further evidence by Rose that Orthia was a fertility goddess (see Figure 4).[41] However, Waugh notes that "as these figurines predate the Knidean Aphrodite by roughly 300 years, any direct association is somewhat unlikely, and furthermore, Praxiteles' statue is usually remembered for the sexuality of the image rather than fertility."[42] While it seems unlikely, then, that the nude female votives are the predecessors of the Knidean Aphrodite, perhaps they are related to other similar votives found at the Syme sanctuary on Crete, which date to approximately the tenth and ninth centuries BCE.[43] Figurines found at Syme "demonstrate that Cretan youths celebrated the transition from adolescence to adulthood at the sanctuary, with Hermes Kedrites as their patron god."[44] Among these are three female votives that specifically indicate the female

[41] Rose, "The Cult of Artemis Orthia," 402.
[42] Waugh, "Visualising Fertility," 160-161.
[43] Angeliki Lebessi, "The Erotic Goddess of the Syme Sanctuary, Crete," *American Journal of Archaeology* 113, no. 4 (2009): 524.
[44] Lebessi, "The Erotic Goddess," 524.

transition into adulthood through sexual maturation.[45] Each votive draws specific attention to the pubic triangle, either through the placement of the hands framing the pudenda or through exaggerated artistic emphasis.[46] Rather than demonstrating modesty through covering themselves, the similarly posed nude female figurines at Orthia may be drawing attention to their sexual maturity. Lebessi argues that Cretan girls would pray for their maturity at the Syme sanctuary and that the sexually mature female votives were "a thanksgiving offering by a female votary, after she had reached maturity and after her request had been fulfilled."[47] Therefore, girls at the sanctuary of Orthia may have been participating in a similar ritual, hoping for their successful passage into womanhood.

Figure 4: Nude female terracotta votives found at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; (c. 700 BCE).
Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, Plate 36.

[45] Lebessi, "The Erotic Goddess," 524.
[46] Lebessi, "The Erotic Goddess," 525-526.
[47] Lebessi, "The Erotic Goddess," 532.

b. Hieros Gamos: Marriage and Social Initiation

Beyond sexual maturity, Orthia may have also been crucial to the process of social maturity through marriage. Many plaque votives depict the goddess and a male consort holding a wreath between them, which Carter argues was a form of *hieros gamos*, a practice wherein the goddess was ritually married (see Figure 5).[48] Perhaps these votives are evidence of the performance of Alkan's *Partheneion* at the sanctuary of Orthia. Luginbill argues that the *Partheneion* may be a performance of young women who are preparing to be married to newly of-age men.[49] Miller notes that "the collective nature of the girls is stressed, as is their unique age-group, the liminal stage between asexual children and the contained sexuality of a married woman."[50] Thus, the importance of the performance was not in marriage in a broad sense but in the process of passing from childhood into adulthood through marriage. Moreover, the performance was likely not only significant to girls becoming women. Luginbill notes that the *Partheneion* may have been performed by girls as an introduction to rites of initiation for young men.[51] Luginbill states that "the focus [of the performance shifted] to acceptance of post-initiation societal requirements. […] For the young men, this means taking a wife and thereby avoiding the society's displeasure."[52] Accordingly, the significance of the performance for both males and females was the passage from childhood to adulthood and the initiation into society. Therefore, the votive plaques, which appear to represent a *hieros gamos*, may be a part of these rites and an acknowledgement of Orthia's oversight of the transition into sexual and social maturity through marriage.

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[48] Carter, "The Masks of Ortheia," 382.
[49] Luginbill, "Alcman's Partheneion," 28.
[50] Peter John Miller, "Alcman's Partheneion and the Near East" (Master's thesis, University of Victoria, 2009), 84.
[51] Luginbill, "Alcman's Partheneion," 27-28.
[52] Luginbill, "Alcman's Partheneion," 48.

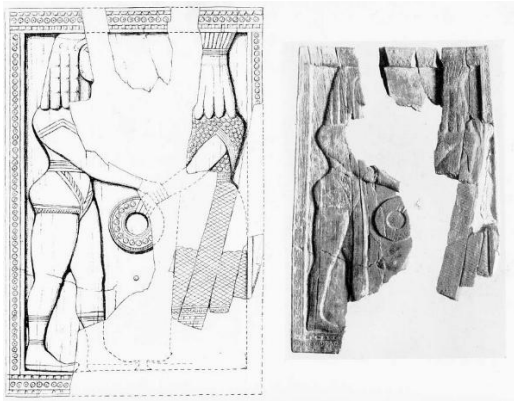

Figure 5: Drawing and photograph of an ivory fibula-plaque found at the Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia; (c. 600-500 BCE).
Dawkins, *The Sanctuary of Artemis Orthia*, Plate 94.

6. Conclusion: The Cult of Orthia and Its Role in Spartan Society

The archaeological and material evidence from the sanctuary of Orthia demonstrates the cult and the goddess' concern with the rites and rituals of initiation, upbringing, and passage through the stages of life. At the beginning stages of a male *Spartiatai*'s life, Orthia would oversee many of the crucial ritual aspects of the *agōgē*. The abundance of horse votives and votives depicting Orthia as a *potnia hippon* indicates the importance of wealth and status for young male *Spartiatai* hoping to continue their passage through the varying Spartan social institutions. Moreover, the many wild animal votives likely relate to the ritual hunt, which was observed in Sparta in the form of the *krypteia* and in Crete as the pederastic abduction of male youths. Much like the Cretan ritual, pederasty was an important part of Spartan education and initiation into adulthood. The kylix fragment illustrating a pederastic relationship at Orthia's sanctuary determines that the rites of the cult of Orthia may have included pederasty as a method of initiation. As the young boys 'graduated' from the *agōgē*, votive offerings of hoplite warriors indicate Orthia's oversight of this transition from student to warrior. This transition may also be seen

in the many ceramic masks that were dedicated to Orthia to promote heroic ideals in the young male worshippers. In addition to the transition from student to warrior, Orthia oversaw the transition from childhood to adulthood. Votives emphasizing female sexual maturation and a *hieros gamos* demonstrate the cult's involvement in social initiation through marriage. Therefore, despite the limitations of literature and the lack of similar practices elsewhere in the Greek world, the archaeological evidence from the site of the sanctuary of Orthia provides a clear image of the cult. Orthia was a goddess of initiation, rites of passage, and the stages of life, and she would have been an important religious figure in the lives of all *Spartiatai*.

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Xenophon, *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians*, 2.

THE CENTAUROMACHY: USING MYTH AND THE "OTHER" TO REFERENCE HISTORY

Léo Beaudoin

Abstract
Scenes of centauromachy are often associated with themes of Disorder against Order or of Civilization against the Wild, and thought to be a way for the Greeks, especially Athenians, to refer to historical events in art, as they almost never depicted real historical scenes in sculptures. More specifically, they are often linked with the Persians Wars, fought between the united Greeks against the Persians in the 5th century BCE. After presenting the depiction and representations of centaurs and of the Centauromachy, this paper will argue that the Centauromachy can be associated with Persians through their similar nature and behaviour. Then, it will show that the Persians Wars and the Centauromachy also shared similar themes, and that this association helped the Greeks to commemorate their victory and as a way to respond to the threat they faced against Persia.

Historical scenes were rarely directly depicted in Classical Greek art.[1] Although not all scholars agree, some suggest that mythological scenes, especially battles, could serve as a reference to historical events. Those battles, often concerned with the conflict of Order against Disorder, include the Amazonomachy, the Gigantomachy, and the Centauromachy. These battles are often thought, especially in the 5th and 4th century BCE, to have referenced the Persian Wars, where united Greeks fought the Persians. After providing context on the Centauromachy and centaurs in general, this paper will argue that the association between Persians and the Centauromachy is achieved through the shared nature of Persians and centaurs, and through depicted

[1] Page duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons: Women and the Pre-History of the Great Chain of Being* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1982), 54.

similar behaviour. More specifically, it will show that there are similar themes and concerns between the Centauromachy and the Persian Wars. Finally, this paper will present how this association exists to commemorate the Greek victory, establishing their superiority over the Persians, as well as acknowledging and diminishing the threat Persia posed to the Greeks.

Background

Centaurs

Centaurs were a popular aspect of many peoples of the ancient world. For example, they appear in Near Eastern texts and in art, such as on Kassite boundary stones. Greek centaurs were also present in Bronze Age culture and appear in early Greek texts of the Early Iron Age, such as Homer, who describes them as half-man half beast.[2] The writer Pindar continues this idea as he describes the father of the centaurs as monstrous and unlawful.[3] The Greek centaur is present in multiple myths, but all illustrate them as hybrid creatures, depicting them artistically and textually as half-men and half-horses.[4]

This dual nature between animal and human also serves to depict them as hyper-masculine. This hyper-masculinity is often tied to them being largely muscular, bearded with long hair, and almost exclusively male.[5] This iconography is also present in art, where sculptural evidence, such as the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, present them as bearded, and almost grotesque, hybrids. They are also depicted as bestial, which is represented at Olympia by the centaur to the viewer's right as he bites one of the Lapith man's arm (Fig. 1).

The Centaurs are also, by nature, dualistic in many ways. They are associated with the mythical and the real world because

[2] Homer, *Iliad* 2.274.
[3] Pindar, *Pythian Odes* 2.40-45.
[4] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 27.
[5] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 31-32.

of their hybrid nature and as they belong to both the organized and wild world. Thus, they are the threshold between the organized urban world, and the wild, restless, natural world.[6] Their origin, as dictated by Pindar, first emphasizes their duality, as does their appearance. Pindar accounts that they were created because of the relations between Centaurus, a divine being and the son of Ixion, and a cloud shaped as Hera, and a horse, from the natural world, and that the children they conceived resembled both mother and father.[7]

Figure 1: Centaurs and Lapiths from the West pediment of the Temple of Zeus, Olympia. Photo by author, 2024

Their duality is also present in their behaviour as despite their half-human appearance, most centaurs are also depicted as uncivilized. They embody *hubris* and the rejection of Greek social order. They have no self-control, being driven by lust and excessive alcohol consumption, and they have no respect for marriage. Their behaviour is suggested in myths, such as during

[6] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 31-40.
[7] Pind. *Pyth.* 2.45-50.

the wedding of Peirithos and Hippodamia, or the altercation between Herakles and Nessos.[8] One exception to this uncivilized nature exists with Chiron, the good and civilized centaur and trainer of multiple Greek heroes. By not fitting that representation of the wild and immoral centaur in myths, Chiron thus highlights the human aspects of centaurs, and subsequently emphasizes their duality.[9]

The Centauromachy in the Classical Period

To consider the Centauromachy and the Persian Wars, it is important to first examine their representations in art, especially in temple sculptures of the Classical Period. It is during this period that scenes of Centauromachy in sculptures grew in popularity. Centauromachies start to appear in major building programs such as the west pediment of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia, the southern metopes of the Parthenon in Athens, and the frieze of the Temple of Apollo at Bassae.

The earliest of those three examples is at Olympia, where the construction of the pediments occurred between 472-462 BCE.[10] This puts the construction during the Persian Wars (which ended in 449 BCE), and around the crucial battles of the war, such as the battle of Plataea.[11] The memory of the Persian Wars was thus still very fresh in the minds of the Greeks. The metopes of the Parthenon was built between 447-444 BCE, thus relatively close to the end of the Persian Wars.[12] Nonetheless, the Persian Wars was still the last major battle fought by the Greeks at that time. In

[8] David Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality: Official Art in Fifth-Century B.C. Athens* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 34-40; duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 27-40.
[9] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 29-30.
[10] John G. Younger and Paul Rehak, "Technical Observations on the Sculptures from the Temple of Zeus at Olympia," *Hesperia* 78, no. 1 (2009): 46.
[11] Jack Martin Balcer, "The Persian Wars against Greece: A Reassessment," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 38, no. 2 (1989): 140-143.
[12] Younger and Rehak, "Technical Observations," 47.

contrast, the situation of the temple of Apollo at Bassae is different. Built around 430-425 BCE, the temple was constructed during the Peloponnesian Wars.[13] This new major battle, now between Athens and Sparta, and their respective allies which were made of most *poleis* of the Greek world, has an impact in the sculptural style, making the depiction of the enemy, thus the centaurs, more empathetic.

Despite the vast chronology, similar ways of depicting humans and centaurs remain. Although it might not be clearly dictated, the myth itself implies that the Lapiths almost always win against the Centaurs. The men are heroized. They are nude, or barely covered in drapery with faces void of emotion, in spite of their struggles. For example, despite the precarious position of the male figure in one of the metopes at Athens, his face does not convey any emotions, as he stares forward. As the centaur holds his head, in the dominant position, the Lapith appears undisturbed by the situation (Fig. 2). Despite stylistic differences, the male figures at Olympia also share similar facial traits. Even as they fight the centaurs, the facial expressions are still void of strong emotions (Fig. 1). When gods are present, such as Apollo at Olympia, who stands in the centre of the scene, they too, share similar facial traits as the Lapiths, which help heroize the men, and put them on a similar level as the gods (Fig. 1 [Lapiths]; Fig. 3 [Apollo]). Although this is typical of the Severe style of sculpture, it nonetheless highlights the differences between the centaurs and the humans.

[13] Mary Emerson, "The Sanctuary of Apollo Epikourios at Bassae," in *Greek Sanctuaries and Temple Architecture: An Introduction* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2018), 185.

Figure 2: Plaster cast of Parthenon South metope 30, c. 19th century. Image courtesy of the Acropolis Museum https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/parthenon-south-metope-30-replica

Figure 3: Apollo from the West pediment of the Temple of Zeus, Olympia. Photo by author, 2024.

Especially in Early Classical style, the women present similar emotionless facial traits, even as they are assaulted by centaurs. For example, one centaur holds her and grabs her breast in Olympia, but she still appears calm, and almost unbothered (Fig. 4). The same also appears at Bassae, despite it being much later in the 5th century BCE (Fig. 5). In this scene, the women appear to be running away, placed to the left of the battle itself. Despite the lack of emotions in the humans' facial expressions, the scene at Bassae is much more emotionally charged.. In this scene, the women appear hopeless and panicked as one grabs a cult statue, and as another stands with her arms wide open, fleeing (Fig. 5). Nonetheless, there are still clear distinctions between humans and centaurs.

Figure 4: Centaur and Lapith woman from the West pediment of the Temple of Zeus, Olympia. Photo by author, 2024.

Figure 5: Carved marble block depicting centauromachy on West side of the frieze at the Temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassae.

The centaurs, in comparison, are bestial. They are all bearded, they appear wild, and, unlike the Lapiths, they express pain. This expression is conveyed by their open mouths and their wide eyes, present in almost all scenes depicting centaurs (Figs. 1, 4). When they are in a similar precarious position as some Lapith men are in, the centaurs express some emotions, as presented on theParthenon. In some scenes, it is the Lapith's turn to adopt the dominant position as he holds the centaur's head. The centaur, however, appears to be in pain, as his mouth is wide open (Figs. 2, 6). At Bassae, this contrast is also present, especially with the physical appearance of the centaurs, who are again bearded and highly muscular as they fight the Lapiths (Fig. 5). This frieze also presents one of the centaurs biting one of the Lapith men, showing its bestial nature (Fig. 7). Thus, throughout the Classical Period, humans and centaurs remain clearly identifiable and separated in battle scenes.

Figure 6: Marble sculpture from Parthenon South metope 2, 445-440 BCE.
Image courtesy of the Acropolis Museum
https://www.theacropolismuseum.gr/en/parthenon-south-metope-2

Figure 7: Carved marble block depicting centauromachy on the frieze at the Temple of Apollo Epikourios at Bassae.
© The Trustees of the British Museum

The myth itself is also important to consider when looking at scenes of Centauromachy and Persians. This is exemplified by the changes in the story before and after the Persian Wars. Before the Persian Wars, the story starts at the wedding of Peirithos and Hippodamia. One centaur, Eurytion, misbehaves while drunk and is escorted out of the wedding. It is later, in an outdoor setting, that the battle between the Lapiths and the Centaurs occurs.[14] This is reflected in art with, for example, side B of the François Vase, which depicts, among many other themes, the Centauromachy, with no visible clues pertaining to weddings. Instead, the centaurs use branches as weapons, implying that the fight is happening outside. The outdoor setting, and the lack of women, thus point to this first version, happening after the wedding (Fig. 8).[15]

After the Persian Wars, the centaurs are also invited to the wedding of Peirithos and Hippodamia, where they start drinking too much and assaulting women, which turns into a battle between the Lapiths and Theseus against the Centaurs.[16] This is also reflected in vase painting; for instance, the Volute Krater includes both a table and women in its depiction of the battle, referencing the indoor setting (Fig. 9).[17] The setting of the battle switches to be directly during the marriage where the Centaurs commit an offence.[18] This increases the link between the battle and the offence. Thus, it shows that the battle is now entirely connected to the immorality and transgression of the Centaurs. The battle is a reaction, and retribution, for the actions of the Centaurs.[19]

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[14] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 34.
[15] Beth Cohen, "The Non-Greek in Greek Art," in Tyler. Jo. Smith and Dimitri Plantzos (eds.) *A Companion to Greek Art* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2012), 476.
[16] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 34-35.
[17] Cohen, "Non-Greek in Greek Art," 476.
[18] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 34-35.
[19] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 34-35.

Figure 8: Side B of the François Vase, depicting the Centauromachy, ca. 650 BCE. Photo by Ilya Shurygin, 2019.
https://ancientrome.ru/art/artworken/img.htm?id=9372

Figure 9: Terracotta volute krater attributed to the Painter of the Woolly Satyrs ca. 450 BCE. Image courtesy of the Met
https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/247964

Depiction of Persians

To understand the themes present in both scenes of centauromachy and the Persian Wars, one must also observe the way Persians are depicted in the art and literature of the Classical Period. As with the Centauromachy, the depiction of Persians in art

also changed before and after the Persian Wars. In vase painting, Persians in the Archaic Period are at first often depicted in battle scenes as equal to the Greeks. Their clothes are distinct but accurate, and reminiscent of the Persians' own way of depicting themselves. They appear to be equal in fighting ability to their Greek opponents, as seen in the Cup by the Painter of the Oxford Byrgos (Fig. 10). All the Persians' clothes are intricately detailed, they are armed with spears and shields. The Greeks fighting them are also heavily armed and clothed and they seem to fight on equal terms. Although set at the beginning of the Persian Wars, after the victory of Athens at Marathon, they still contrast to the depiction of Persians post-wars.[20]

Over time, and especially after the wars, the Persians come to be depicted as inferior to the Greeks. They are effeminized and their fighting abilities are no longer equal to those of the Greeks.[21] This change is also aligned with a broader theme in vase painting, where most peoples from the east, including Trojans, are treated as foreigners and are depicted as different from the Greeks.[22] In Attic vase painting, Persians adopt positions originally by women, their fighting and abilities are diminished, and even their clothes are now stylized and generic.[23] The Eurymedon Vase, dated to around 460 BCE, presents this change (Fig. 11). On one side, the vase depicts a Greek hoplite. He stands nude, holding his genitals as he advances towards the Persian. The Persian on the other side is afraid, and slightly bent forward. The clothes he wears are very simple, and a bow hangs from his left arm. He is not in a position to fight, nor does he appear willing to do so. The scene is clear: the Greek hoplite is on his way to assert his dominance over the

[20] Margaret Miller, "Persians in the Greek Imagination," M*editerranean Archaeology* 19/20 (2006): 113-114.
[21] Cohen, "Non-Greek in Greek Art," 463, 470-471; Margaret Miller, "Persians in the Greek Imagination," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 19/20 (2006): 114–115, 120–121.
[22] Miller, "Persians in Greek Imagination," 114-115.
[23] Miller, "Persians in Greek Imagination," 114-122.

Persian by assaulting him, making the Persian adopt the "passive" or submissive position (i.e. the one a woman would normally assume in sexual intercourse). Similar to the changes in depictions of the Centauromachy, there is also a clear ideological change happening after the Persian Wars, which shows how both are ultimately connected.

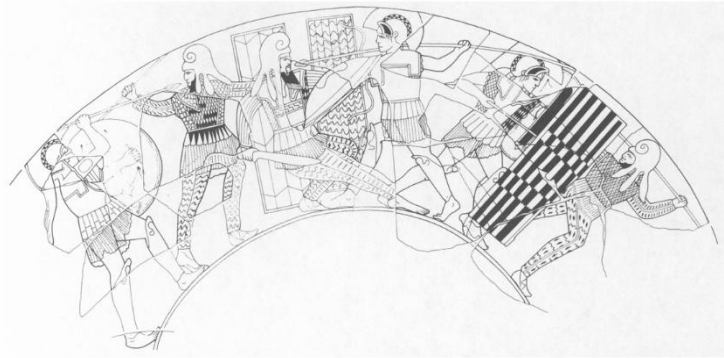

Figure 10: Cup by the Painter of the Oxford Brygos, ca. 490-480 BCE. Restored drawing by Nick Griffiths. Accessed through Miller "Persians in the Greek Imagination" (2006), fig.1

Figure 11: Eurymedon Vase, attributed to Triptolemus the Painter, ca. 460 BCE. Image courtesy of Museum for Kunst and Gewerbe Hamburg https://www.mkg-hamburg.de/en/sammlung/objekt/oinochoe-eurymedon-kanne-oder-perser-kanne/1981.173/dc00126657

Persians and the Centauromachy

When it comes to actual connections between the Centauromachy and the Persian Wars, not all scholars agree that they exist. Frank B. Tarbell, for example, does not see anything historical behind the Centauromachy. He argues instead that the reason behind the growing use of the Centauromachy in the Classical Period is that they were powerful and intense scenes, which made for impressive and grand sculptural scenes. They were also popular, making them easily recognizable.[24] Among his arguments, he also adds that Pausanias does not make the connection as he describes the scene at Olympia, and that Theseus is too specific to Athens to be associated with the Persian Wars. Nonetheless, the bulk of his argument lies with the idea that the Centauromachy was just a great scene fit for temple sculptures, and that modern scholars try to find connections where there is not and should not be.[25] Tarbell does raise an interesting point when he remarks that they were worthy of sculptures. As the remaining evidence shows, the story allowed sculptors to convey action, drama, and intensity. Nonetheless, this argument does not erase the numerous themes that are present in both representations of the Centauromachy and beliefs about the Persian Wars.

Hubris

One of the key themes which links the Centauromachy and the Persian Wars is the presence of *hubris* in Centaurs and Persians. The Greeks valued self-control, or *sophrosyne*. This is also embodied in society, for example, with the tradition of drinking mixed wine.[26] The centaurs, by nature, lacked self-control. As the myth itself suggests, the centaurs abuse wine, and start

[24] Frank B. Tarbell, "Centauromachy and Amazonomachy in Greek Art: The Reasons for Their Popularity," *AJA* 24, no. 3 (1920): 227.
[25] Tarbell, "Centauromachy and Amazonomachy," 227-230.
[26] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 24-25.

misbehaving, which shows their lack of *sophrosyne*, and thus shows their *hubris*.[27]

Similarly, Persians too are depicted as lacking self-control. For example, they are depicted as being driven by wealth.[28] In the play *Persae*, by Aeschylus, Xerxes is depicted as being dominated by his wealth and the vastness of his territory.[29] Similarly, Herodotus alludes to the *hubris* of the Persians through his description of the battle, suggesting that the Greeks were supported by the goddess Dike (Justice), fighting Excess and Hubris, who were at the Persians' side.[30] Herodotus also writes in Book 5 that the Persians, acting as guests, abused wine in a similar manner like the centaurs, which eventually led to the Centauromachy.[31]

Their lack of self-control is also embodied in the lack of balance of masculinity. As presented before, the centaurs were considered to be hyper-masculine.[32] The Persians, in contrast, are depicted as effeminized, thus as not masculine enough. Aside from the Eurymedon Vase, they are also effeminized by being depicted while sitting on a *klismos*, a chair usually reserved for women. In some instances, they are also depicted while dancing the *okklasma*, an activity usually performed by women.[33] Consequently, this suggests that, unlike the Greeks, their masculinity is not balanced, showing the lack of control they have, which is even present in their nature.

The hubris of both centaurs and Persians is also present in their lust, and in stories where both sexually assault women. Centaurs are often associated with stories of sexual assault. Nessos, for example, assaults Herakles' bride as he offers to help

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[27] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 35.
[28] Eleni Krikona, "The Memory of the Persian Wars through the Eyes of Aeschylus: Commemorating the Victory of the Power of Democracy," *Akropolis* 2 (2018): 91.
[29] Aeschylus, *Persae* 753–786.
[30] Herodotus 4.42; Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 17-18.
[31] Hdt. 5.18-20.
[32] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 31-32.
[33] Miller, "Persians in Greek Imagination," 114-115, 120-121.

carry her over a river. The Classical version of the Centauromachy itself is dominated by the centaurs misbehaving by assaulting the women at the wedding, including the bride.[34] Stories of Persians during the Persian Wars also highlight that they assault women when they sack Greek cities.[35] Herodotus writes, for instance, that during the sack of Phocis, the women were also brutally assaulted, to the point that some died because of the number of Persian men attacking them.[36] These accounts thus show the similar way Persians and centaurs were depicted as being unable to control themselves.

On par with *hubris*, both Persians and centaurs were also depicted as not respecting the value of *xenia*, one of the oldest traditions in Greece. *Xenia* can be dated in literature as far back as Homer's *Iliad*, with Glaucus and Diomedes stopping their duel to exchange gifts, refusing to continue the fight because of the guest-host relationship they shared through their ancestors.[37] *Xenia* thus implied the right, respectful behaviour that guests and hosts should adopt.[38] The centaurs are, by nature, known in myths to reject the notion of *xenia*, as the myth of the wedding of Peirithos and Hippodamia shows.[39] The Persians also disrespect their hosts in some stories, such as during the embassy to Macedon, where they get drunk and start assaulting women (almost exactly like the centaurs' behaviour which led to their fight with the Lapiths).[40]

Justice

Another key similarity between the Centauromachy and the Persian Wars is the concern for justice, present through an interest in social order, enforced through the will of Zeus and

[34] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 41-42.
[35] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 41-42.
[36] Hdt. 8.22-23.
[37] Hom. *Il.* 6.157-313.
[38] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 159-161.
[39] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 28-29.
[40] Hdt. 5.18-20.

Apollo.[41] In the Centauromachy, this concern for justice is seen through the fight itself as retribution for the transgressions of the centaurs, thus as justice acquired with revenge. The presence of Apollo, especially in the west pediment of the temple of Zeus at Olympia, further shows the presence of justice in centauromachy scenes. Apollo himself is a figure associated with justice. He is the carrier of justice (through violence) when he and his sister Artemis kill all of Niobe's children as retribution for her insults directed at their mother. He is also the voice of the oracle, which ultimately represents the will of Zeus, another god associated with justice.[42] At Olympia especially, this connection between Apollo and Zeus is important, because it is impossible to forget that the pediment is tied to Zeus' temple, in a sanctuary to the god himself.[43] The other sculptural scenes, such as the east pediment, depicts Zeus in the centre during the contest between Pelops and Oinomaos, further serving to connect the west pediment with the sanctuary, and subsequently to the concept of justice as a whole.[44]

In the centauromachy scene itself, the presence of Apollo is not the only connection to Justice as his gesture further emphasizes. As he stands, his right arm is extended (Fig. 3). Tersini, through an observation of his hand, explains that the index figure is smooth, and detached from the rest, which shows that he was pointing. As she argues, pointing is a command. So, Apollo can be observed to order the Lapiths to fight, and thus to get retribution.[45] This association with Apollo, justice, and pointing is also later suggested by Plutarch, as he asserts that Herakleitos said that "[t]he lord whose oracle is at Delphi neither speaks nor

[41] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 24.
[42] Nancy D. Tersini, "Unifying Themes in the Sculpture of the Temple of Zeus at Olympia," *Classical Antiquity* 6, no. 1 (1987): 147-148.
[43] Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 147.
[44] Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 139–40, 142, 147.
[45] Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 145-146.

conceals; he points."[46] This thus further links Apollo, the act of pointing, and his will for retribution.

As with the Centauromachy, the Persian Wars became a concept of justice, where the Persians needed to be repelled because of their transgressions.[47] They sacked cities, killed many Greeks, and thus threatened to disrespect the social order established by the Greeks. This concern is even present in Herodotus, although implicitly, as he associates Dike and Zeus with the side of the Greeks.[48] This link is also reinforced by the actions of the Persians as they sack Miletus, one of Athens' old colonies. In Book 6, Herodotus implies that Athens is deeply affected by the treatment of Miletus, where the women were enslaved and the city destroyed.[49] This concern can thus be connected with Athens' will for retribution, and subsequently also help connect the Persian Wars to Justice, in a similar manner than with the Centauromachy.

Freedom

Especially in democratic states such as Athens, freedom, or at least Greek independence, is central to Panhellenism.[50] The conflict of the Centauromachy, although mostly concerned with justice, is also a battle between order and disorder, emulating the value of the free, civilized and independent Greeks compared to the disorderliness and wildness of the centaurs.[51] Thus, the Centauromachy also embodied the freedom of the Greeks to live as they wanted, and as their gods wanted.

Similarly, the Persians were seen as a threat to the freedom of the Greeks, especially for the city of Athens, because of their

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[46] Plutarch, *Moralia* 404D in Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 151.
[47] Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 145-151.
[48] Hdt. 4.42.
[49] Hdt. 6.19, 21.
[50] S. Perlman, "Panhellenism, the Polis and Imperialism," *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 25, no. 1 (1976): 26-29.
[51] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 66-67.

non-democratic system. Their depiction as despots highlights similar concern as with the Centauromachy: the civilized Greeks battling the uncivilized Persians.[52] The triumph of the Greeks thus came to be seen as a triumph of democracy (for Athens) and autonomy over despotism and absolutism.[53] For example, the play *Persae* by Aeschylus presents the differences between the "free" Greek system and the "enslaved" Persians. Although never really comparing both systems directly, Aeschylus does make some allusions to the differences, which resonated with the people of Athens when it was presented around 472 BCE (especially this close to the sack of Athens in 479 BCE).[54] During the play, Atossa's questions to the leader reveal to her that the Greeks are free as they are not slaves to anyone, they "bow [their heads] before no man's word".[55] This difference between the free Greek and enslaved Persian is also discernible through Atossa's account of another dream, where two women, dressed as a "Dorian", thus a Greek, broke free, whereas the other woman, a Persian, stayed calm.[56]

Other Associations

The Centauromachy can be traced back to Athens and Theseus, an Athenian hero who fought in this war. Theseus' connection to the centauromachy can be associated with other artistic reference to the Persian Wars such as the Marathon painting at Athens, which depicts some characters very similarly to Theseus. Theseus was the heroic king of Athens, so his association with the Centauromachy and the city's role in the Persian Wars

[52] David M. Johnson, "Persians as Centaurs in Xenophon's 'Cyropaedia,'" Transactions of the American Philological Association (1974-) 135, no.1 (2005): 189; 197-202.
[53] Krikona, "Memory of Persian Wars," 88.
[54] Krikona, "Memory of Persian Wars," 85, 91-92.
[55] Aesch. *Pers.* 226–242.
[56] Aesch. *Pers.* 174–209.

help to connect both.[57] Even more directly, the author Xenophon also associates the Persians with centaurs. In his *Cyropaedia*, a scene is presented where a Persian directly alludes to becoming and wanting to become a centaur.[58]

These clear transgressions of order for the Greeks through the lack of self-control, of justice, and of freedom thus served to depict the Persians as immoral, continuously defying the Greeks' core values. Similarly, the centaurs are also depicted as transgressing Greek values.[59] Consequently, the similarities in the themes presented in both serve to show that the Centauromachy did stand as reference to the Persians and the Persian Wars. These parallels subsequently allowed the Greeks to frame the Persian Wars as a battle fought between order and disorder.

Reasons for Using the Centauromachy to Reference Persians

Aside from the lack of historical scenes in sculptures, the Centauromachy was used for various reasons. First, it was a way to remember the Greeks' victory and keep it in their minds. As presented through Olympia, Athens, and Bassae, the artistic depictions of the Centauromachy were all placed on temples, thus meant to last for a long period of time. The image thus stayed in the minds of the people, contributing to the collective history of the Persian Wars. The decision to place these scenes outside in highly public places, such as Panhellenic sanctuaries and prominent urban sanctuaries, contribute to immortalizing the scenes and to making them accessible for all. Whenever visitors, including foreigners, came to these sites, they were able to see them, and thus subsequently remember what they represented.

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[57] John P Barron, "Alkamenes at Olympia," *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 31 (1984): 201-203; Evelyn B. Harrison, "The South Frieze of the Nike Temple and the Marathon Painting in the Painted Stoa," *American Journal of Archaeology* 76, no.4 (1972): 353, 356, 370.
[58] Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 4.3.19-23; Johnson, "Persians as Centaurs," 177–179, 196.
[59] Castriota, *Myth, Ethos, and Actuality*, 159-163.

At Bassae, however, the placement of the scene was on the inside of the temple. This was not easily visible to all, but it is still significant, as the location of the scene also highlights how central the theme is to the values of the Greeks. By being inside the temple, it shows how the scene transgresses the religious boundary and thus directly interferes with the concern for justice (as does the presence of the god Apollo).[60]

The Centauromachy was also a way for the Greeks to present their superiority over the Persians. By equating the Persians and the centaurs, such as through their shared *hubris* and immorality, the Greeks were thus able to present how their own behaviour was better, and thus assert their superiority by highlighting what they consider is better. This superiority is also embodied by the divine support offered to the Lapiths in the Centauromachy, which echoes the potential divine support in the Persian Wars as well. This shows that, if both the myth and the historical event are aligned, the gods are thus also supporting the Greeks' fight against the Persians.[61] Subsequently, having the approval of the gods also serves to place the Greeks above the Persians.

Finally, the Centauromachy was a way for the Greeks to reassure themselves over the threat of Persia. One of the proposed reasons for the change in Persian depiction in vase-painting is linked to how Greeks wanted to diminish the threat of Persians by showing them as nothing to fear.[62] Similarly, by associating them with Centaurs and the Centauromachy, it acknowledges the threat of Persians, but also suggests that the Greeks will prevail, as did the Lapiths against the Centaurs.

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[60] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 64-67.
[61] duBois, *Centaurs and Amazons*, 64-66; Tersini, "Unifying Themes," 145-151.
[62] Miller, "Persians in Greek Imagination," 122.

Conclusion

Centaurs have always been depicted as hybrid creatures whose dual nature contrasted to the good nature of the Greeks. After the Classical Period, changes were brought to the way of depicting the Centauromachy and Persians, which highlight the start of a new ideology. The Centauromachy was thus a way for the Greeks to reference history and, more specifically, the Persian Wars. They did so by presenting similar themes which are present in both depictions of centaurs and the Centauromachy, and in their own depiction of Persians. They achieved this association by highlighting the *hubris* of Persians and centaurs and the concern of Justice and Freedom in both scenes. This treatment of the Persians by the Greeks following the Persian Wars became a forefront example of the dichotomy between the East and the West, which lasted throughout antiquity, and even later history.

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DIVINITY DECONSTRUCTED: AN ANALYSIS OF DEPICTION OF GODS IN ATHENIAN DRAMA

Sean Proctor

Abstract

A key characteristic of Greek gods is their multiplicity, the fact that they cannot be defined in simple terms, and that they can only be understood by considering the sum of their depictions. This paper uses Derrida's concept of deconstruction to analyze the depiction of gods in The Bacchae and Eumenides, attempting to uncover what these characterizations tell us about the gods. By analyzing these plays, this paper aims to discover how they reacted to and participated in the wider discourse of Greek religion. Furthermore, it will illuminate how the characterization of Greek gods problematizes their multiplicity. It concludes by considering how its analysis of these plays can further our understanding of the Greek gods.

The gods of Greece were, in a word, complicated. As J.P. Vernant explains, the gods did not exist in an unreachable supernatural world, but rather inhabited the physical world.[1] They did not create the world; they were born in it. He illustrates this point by describing the different aspects of Zeus which were worshipped by the Greeks: Zeus is the sky, which shines brightly in the day and is dark and star-studded at night; he could be found atop mountains, or even tall trees; he was present in the rain, and thus in the fertility of the earth; he was even underground in the form of precious metals such as gold; he was king of the gods, and thus represented earthly kings, the law, and justice, governing the rules of hospitality and deciding the outcome of battles.[2] He argues that, to the Greeks, these different, contradictory aspects of Zeus

[1] J.P. Vernant, *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Lloyd (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980) 101.
[2] Vernant, *Myth and Society*, 95-99.

were not separate, but were all aspects of his being.[3] The gods each represented a different type of cosmic power or authority which could be expressed in many ways. We can understand the gods as a union of the sum of their domains, rather than as a well-defined character.

This way of understanding the Greek gods, however, is problematized by the Greek plays. The gods played a central role in Athenian drama, appearing as characters in many of the surviving plays. The fact that they are characters is particularly important; in Athenian drama, the gods become visible, depicted by actors delivering lines in costume, and this act of characterization solidifies their essence into a single, immutable form. Characterization is an inherently destructive process, one which eliminates all other potential versions of the god and leaves behind a single, unified character. The question which arises, then, is whether or not we can find evidence of this synthesizing process in the text. Does a trace of this multiplicity survive in the union?

To answer this question, this paper will borrow the technique of deconstruction from Derrida.[4] Beginning with an overview of the intellectual and historical context which allowed Athenian drama to be produced and a discussion of how Derrida interacted with it, this paper will then closely analyze how the gods are depicted in *The Bacchae* and *Eumenides*, focusing on the tension between unity and multiplicity in their characterizations. The conclusion will identify the key aspects of Greek religion which are expressed by the plays and what they demonstrate about the Greek gods.

[3] Vernant, *Myth and Society*, 95-99.

[4] The use of the word 'borrow' here is in reference to Carrette's insight regarding how the techniques of post-structuralism tend to be used in the study of religion. Jeremy Carrette, "Post-structuralism and the study of religion," in *The Routledge Companion to the Study of Religion,* 2nd edition, ed. John Hinnels (London: Routledge 2009), 275.

Vernant calls the period of Athenian drama a historical moment, and this is an apt description.[5] The tragedians who formed the backbone of the genre — Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides — produced their works within a span of about a hundred years, and all three were dead by the dawn of the fourth century. A key component of tragedy is tension, specifically the intersection of several overlapping tensions.[6] These tensions are expressed in a number of ways: through the contrast between natural and civic law, the agency of the mortal characters to make decisions while the outcomes of their actions are left up to the gods, and through the use of ambiguous language and double-meanings which only reveal themselves when it is too late. At the heart of tragedy, then, is a sense of self-contradiction, of ambiguity. Tragedy emerged in a historical moment of self-reflection: it questioned the laws of men and gods, and it interrogated the agency of man in a world ultimately controlled by the divine.

The inherent religiosity of Greek drama also bears mentioning. Asad, in a critique of Geertz, argues that "religious symbols are intimately linked to social life," and that the variety of religious discourses in a particular historical context are essential to the production of religious meaning and authority.[7] In this light, Greek drama can best be understood as an expression of civic religion, the public expression of religion in Greek city-states, which was influenced by its historical context and contributed to a broader world of religious discourses. Theatre entered the realm of Dionysus, god of wine and madness, in the late fifth century, when plays began to be performed at his annual ceremony, the Dionysia.[8]

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[5] J.P. Vernant, *Tragedy and Myth in Ancient Greece*, trans. Janet Loyd (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1981) 1-5.
[6] Vernant, *Tragedy and Myth*, 6-23.
[7] Talal Asad, *Genealogies of Religion: Discipline and Reasons of Power in Christianity and Islam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993) 53-54.
[8] Charles Segal, "Spectator and Listener," in *The Greeks*, ed. J.P. Vernant, trans. Charles Lambert and Teresa Lavender Fagan (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), 201-202.

It was not just religious by proxy, by virtue of being performed in a religious context, however. As Lefkowitz argues, the gods played a pivotal role in tragedy, just as they did in Homeric epic.[9] In both, the gods held power over the outcomes of human actions, and they ensured justice was meted out, but the way that they did this often seemed cruel or irrational to the mortals involved. The gods did not treat humans with respect or sympathy, instead demanding respect from humanity in the form of worship and sacrifice. The natural law upheld by the gods did not care for morality, right and wrong, guilt and innocence; the Greek gods reinforced their own superiority, their divinity, by punishing those who opposed it, intentionally or otherwise. Greek drama participated in religious discourse by perpetuating this view of the gods - that they were powerful beings with a great deal of influence over human lives, who were easily offended and quick to punish those who had wronged them.

When we view Greek drama through this lens, as a type of religious discourse essentially founded on tension and ambiguity, it becomes immediately obvious why we should consider Derrida's ideas. His approach, as explained by Carrette, "is to provide close readings of parts of texts to reveal their incoherence and hidden tensions."[10] Religious scholars use these methods to find meaning in texts based on the relationship between terms, how they differ from each other, and how they have drawn on concepts external to the text.[11] Derrida's method is referred to by the term 'deconstruction,' but it bears mentioning that Derrida did not view deconstruction as "*analysis*" or "*method.*"[12] He would be more comfortable, perhaps, with a term such as 'framework' or

[9] Mary Lefkowitz, *Greek Gods, Human Lives: What We Can Learn from Myths* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 113-114.
[10] Carrette, 281.
[11] Carrette, 282.
[12] Jacques Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," in *Deconstruction: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. Jonathon Culler (London: Routledge, 2003) 25.

'mindset:' deconstruction is a way of entering a text, a mode of thought. To deconstruct is to closely interrogate a text, to search for tensions, contradictions, and ambiguity.[13] It should also be noted that these tensions, contradictions, and ambiguities are present in the text from the beginning, and thus, in a way, the text deconstructs itself.[14] When employing deconstruction, the scholar is identifying relationships rather than doing critical work. The critical work which follows deconstruction, although it may be the ultimate purpose of scholarship, is not an aspect of deconstruction in and of itself.

Derrida himself was fascinated by the Greeks, and it is worth examining how he studied them. A major theme that Derrida focused on was the concept of hospitality, and how it could introduce questions regarding definitions of 'foreign' and 'other' in the Greek context. One aspect of hospitality which Derrida identifies is a tension between the laws of hospitality and hospitality itself.[15] Hospitality is offered to foreigners, but only if they can provide their name to their host. It is the duty of the host to offer hospitality to foreigners, but also to reject hospitality to those who Derrida calls 'the other,' who are seen as fully separate from the Greeks. In order to establish the laws of hospitality, complete hospitality cannot exist; by defining who deserves hospitality, the Greeks simultaneously define who does not. The Greek host, before engaging in hospitality, must first commit the violent act of rejecting those who are undeserving of it.[16] The foreigner, on the other hand, is defined not just by his relationship

[13] Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend." Derrida does not give such a clear definition of deconstruction in any of his writings. This letter seems to be among his better efforts to do so, but he still does not put the pieces together for us, even if he provides some of them. This is an attempt to collect the essence of the term in a single sentence, which is a necessary but futile exercise.
[14] Derrida, "Letter to a Japanese Friend," 25-27.
[15] Jacques Derrida, "Foreigner Question," in *Of Hospitality: Anne Dufourmantelle Invites Jaques Derrida To Respond*, trans. Rachel Bowlby (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000) 23-27.
[16] Derrida, "Foreigner Question," 55.

to the host, as arriving from somewhere else, but also by his relationship to the other, the barbarian, who is outside the law and does not have the right to hospitality.[17] It is precisely this interplay which is central to Derrida, this complex relationship between the Greek, the foreigner, and the other, which can be uncovered through the lens of hospitality. Furthermore, it is through this web of relationships by which Derrida engages with the Greeks at all, as he elaborates on in "We Other Greeks."[18] By his determination, in engaging with Greek philosophy, modern philosophers do not occupy the space of 'Greeks' or of 'wholly other' to the Greeks, but can only be understood in their relationship to each of these categories separately.[19] Derrida's focus on this opposition between the Greek and the other, in which the foreigner must be defined by their relationship with each in turn, is essential to his work, and it will prove useful when analyzing the Greek plays.

Let us begin with Euripides' *Bacchae*. The central god of the play is Dionysus, who has returned to Thebes to establish his rites in Greece. Dionysus was a strange god, and it is hard to define exactly what he meant to the Greeks. The conventional myth, and the one supported by *The Bacchae*, presents the story that Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Semele, whom Zeus saved by sewing him into his thigh.[20] According to the more esoteric Orphic traditions, however, Dionysus was the son of Zeus and Persephone, called Zagreus, and his death and rebirth led to the creation of humanity.[21] In general, Dionysus defies the typical relationships between gods, blurs the lines between himself and other members of the Greek pantheon, and sometimes supplants

[17] Derrida, "Foreigner Question," 73.
[18] Jacques Derrida, "We Other Greeks," in *Derrida and Antiquity*, ed. Miriam Leonard, trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
[19] Derrida, "We Other Greeks," 20-28.
[20] Walter Burkert, *Greek Religion*, trans. John Raffan (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1985) 161-167.
[21] Burkert, 297-298.

them.[22] In particular, he opposed Apollo; on one side stands Dionysus, god of wine, revelry, and madness, and on the other Apollo, god of prophecy, music, sickness and health. Despite this, Dionysus was tied to Delphi, one of Apollo's most sacred shrines.[23] The essential aspect of Dionysus might be best explained by the least controversial aspect of his character; Dionysus has an association with Phrygia, and carries a sense of foreignness, having been raised in the east before making his return to Greece. Putting together these disparate pieces paints a picture of a god whose very character can be defined by his strangeness. At the core of this strangeness is change and transformation, from mortality to immortality, from sanity to madness, from rational sobriety to drunken revelry. Dionysus, then, can be found perched atop the barrier between opposing concepts, blurring the line which divides them and allowing them to be mistaken for each other, even to become each other. In this confusion, Dionysus reigns supreme.

The Bacchae puts the opposition of gods and mortals on full display, but this opposition contradicts and opposes itself even as it is established. One way that Dionysus expresses his divinity in the play is by controlling knowledge. In the first exchange between Dionysus and Pentheus, the god refuses to reveal specific information about his rites, the boons that he grants to his followers, or even his appearance.[24] When Pentheus accuses him of side-stepping his questions, Dionysus replies, "It looks like folly to talk sense to fools."[25] Coupling this exchange with the fact that Dionysus is hiding his divinity during this conversation, opting to appear as one of his priests, we can see the relationship between knowledge and divinity. This provides one aspect of what separates gods from mortals; gods not only *have* knowledge, but

[22] Burkert, 222-223.
[23] Burkert, 224.
[24] Euripides, "Bacchae," in *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, eds. Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016) 470-478.
[25] Euripides, 479-480.

also choose to *reveal* knowledge to mortals, and therefore constantly *conceal* knowledge from them. The power of revelation is, in actuality, the refusal of revelation, the withholding of information from the impious. The reward of piety is revelation, but the punishment for impiety is its refusal.

The divine power of revelation, however, is opposed by the human power of defiance. Near the end of the first exchange between Dionysus and Pentheus, the king asks the god, still in human form, where his god is, exclaiming, "I certainly can't see him!"[26] Dionysus replies that the god is with him, but, "Impiety has made you blind."[27] This statement shifts the agency from Dionysus to Pentheus; Pentheus cannot see the god for what he is, not just because Dionysus conceals himself, perhaps not even because of this, but rather because Pentheus is impious.[28] Pentheus only has himself to blame for his inability to see the god. In this moment, then, the power of the gods reaches its limit. Dionysus may be able to reveal knowledge to humans, but even he cannot reveal knowledge to the impious, those who defy the will of the gods. In defying divine knowledge, Pentheus expresses his agency, but he also obfuscates and inverts the power relationship between the mortal and the divine.

The ability to deny revelation is simultaneously unique and derivative of divine power. On the one hand, it is a power mortals hold over gods, one that even the gods cannot wield. The keepers of knowledge cannot refuse their own knowledge. On the other hand, the denial of knowledge is implicitly a reflection of the granting of knowledge. It would not be possible for humanity to have this power over the divine if the divine did not have the power of revelation, as without revelation there would be no knowledge to refuse. In the relationship between men and gods, each holds

[26] Euripides, 501.
[27] Euripides, 502.
[28] The shift in blame is even more clear in the Greek text, as the statement begins with 'σὺ,' the second person personal pronoun, which is typically left out and only added for emphasis.

power over the other, but also relies on the other for their own power. The gods may be greater in every respect, but they still rely on the piety of humanity to express their power.

Another ability of Dionysus is the power of change. This is expressed first in his control over his own physical form, as seen in his choice to appear to Pentheus as a priest rather than as a god. His control over change extends beyond himself, however. The Chorus, Dionysus' maenads, describe aspects of their worship during which they are changed by the god: they clothe themselves in fawn skins and ivy, wield the thyrsus, draw milk, honey, and wine from the earth, hunt wild animals with their bare hands and eat them raw.[29] In their worship of Dionysus, the maenads take on aspects of him, going so far as to say, "Any leader of the dance is god."[30] Through his rites, Dionysus does more than just create madness and embolden his worshippers; he changes them, briefly, into himself. This relationship, however, is reciprocal, as his followers in turn grant him the capacity to enter the physical world. The line between human and divine has once again been blurred by Dionysus. This interpretation, that Dionysus is physically present in his worshippers, is strengthened by considering his human disguise. Dionysus is disguised not just as a stranger, but as his own priest, and as such he further obfuscates the difference between himself and his followers. Do the maenads of the chorus know that this priest is truly their god? Perhaps a better question is whether or not that would even matter to them. It is not a coincidence that the worshippers of Dionysus dress as the god and act as the god; in doing so, and in participating in the Bacchic rites, the followers of Dionysus become Dionysus. Just as he has become his own worshipper, his worshippers have become their own god.

The line between human god has been sufficiently blurred, but it has not been removed; it can be found again by examining madness. A loss of sanity is the price that mortals must pay in order

[29] Euripides, 105-169.
[30] Euripides, 116.

to become Dionysus, and this is best illustrated by Pentheus and his mother, Agave. After the second discussion between Dionysus and Pentheus, the king decides to spy on the maenads, and he accepts Dionysus' help to disguise himself as one of them.[31] After Pentheus emerges, dressed as a woman, he seems to be drunk, seeing double.[32] In addition to this, he is able to see the divine aspects of Dionysus' appearance for the first time when he notices the god's bull horns.[33] In this moment, Pentheus has given himself in part to the god, and in exchange, he has received two things: the ability to see part of the divine essence of Dionysus, as well as a taste of madness. Contrast this with Agave, who has given herself fully to the god and is worshipping on Mount Cithaeron. When Pentheus is revealed to the maenads, Agave leads them against him as they tear him limb from limb with divine strength, and she carries his head back to Thebes on a stake, all the while thinking she has killed a beast rather than her own son.[34] In achieving divinity, she has lost all sanity, and this has rendered her unable to see the world as it really is. This example illustrates the real difference between gods and humans, which is that humans cannot attain divinity while retaining their sanity. When Dionysus bestows knowledge on mortals, or when he allows them to become him, they must pay a hefty price; in order to operate on the level of the divine, mortals must lose their ability to understand the physical world. The gods, on the other hand, can possess divine abilities and divine knowledge while remaining sane. In this way, the gods remain unattainable.

Vernant argues that the gods can be understood as possessing the same "positive forces" as a human body, but "in a

[31] Euripides, 800-846.
[32] Euripides, 918-919.
[33] Euripides, 920-922.
[34] Euripides, 1106-1152.

pure and unlimited state."[35] I would argue that the gods are also necessarily unknowable; they defy understanding, not for any reason in particular, but rather as an essential part of their nature. Following from this, depictions of Greek gods are multiple and varied because it is not possible to depict the full force of a god in a single work. A depiction contains an aspect of the god, some part of its essence, but is categorically unable to express the full meaning of the god. The gods may be approximated by assessing the complete collection of their depictions, but these are still always approximations. They are inexpressible.

Aeschylus' *Eumenides* provides a different angle with which to analyze the gods. *Eumenides* was the culmination of Aeschylus' *Oresteia*, a trilogy of plays concerning the murder of Agamemnon by his wife, Clytemnestra. By the final play, Orestes has avenged his father by killing his mother and must now suffer the consequences, leading to the establishment of trial by jury in Athens. There are several divinities present in the play: Apollo, Athena, and the three Furies who comprise the chorus. The interactions between the Furies and the Olympians are representative of the tension between the old gods and the Olympians who now rule the world.

There is a sort of jurisdictional tension which permeates the exchanges between the Furies and the Olympians. The Furies are ancient, far older than Apollo or Athena, and claim Night as their mother, sharing their lineage with primordial deities such as Death and Sleep. Their domain is that of Justice; the Furies punish those who have killed their blood relatives, pursuing them relentlessly, never ceasing in their torment, not even when the murderer has died.[36] Their duty is an ancient one, one which seeks

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[35] J.P. Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals: The Body of the Divine," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlen (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991) 35.

[36] Aeschylus, "Eumenides," in *The Greek Plays: Sixteen Plays by Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides*, eds. Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016) 244-396.

to uphold the laws of nature. Just as certainly as night follows the day, or as death comes for all who live, the Furies avenge those killed by their own blood. These ancient gods stand in stark contrast to the Olympians. Consider Zeus, for example: ruler of the heavens, king of the gods, protector of suppliants. Rather than upholding natural law, Zeus establishes the institution of kingship. As Vernant says, "he is royalty itself. A monarch who does not derive his power from Zeus does not exist."[37] Royalty, however, is not a physical part of the world; it is a human institution. The Olympian gods, then, are wholly separate from the old gods, because their domains are in many ways divorced from the physical world. The Furies, however, are perhaps less 'natural' than the other old gods; justice is a product of culture in a way that the night or death is not. This is the backbone of the play - the fact that justice is not derived just from natural order but is also not derived wholly from institutions. Instead, it must draw from both aspects, the old gods as well as the new. Athena, although she is an Olympian, mediates the debate between Apollo and the furies, between the old gods and the new gods, between natural law and civic institutions.

Athena treats the Furies with a level of respect which stands in stark contrast to Apollo's obvious disdain for them. Consider how each god greets the Furies; Apollo commands them to leave his shrine as he issues a flurry of insults: "It's a disgrace that you come near my temple… the gods abhor the celebrations you're so attached to… You should share a cave with a blood-guzzling lion… You strays, you feral goats, move off!"[38] Athena, on the other hand, treats them with respect: "Seeing this troop the land has never seen, I'm not afraid, but wonder fills my eyes. Who are you?"[39] The Furies tell her of their birthright, and Athena

[37] Vernant, "Mortals and Immortals," 49.
[38] Aeschylus, 179-197.
[39] Aeschylus, 406-408.

replies: "I know your clan, its titles, and their meanings."[40] From the very beginning, Athena shows respect to the Furies by allowing them to introduce themselves and state their case, and they reciprocate by allowing Athena to preside over the trial of Orestes.[41] There is a complication to their mutual respect, however; by establishing the court of law, Athena is shifting justice, the domain of the Furies, from natural law to institutional law. In order to respect the Furies and their ways, Athena must bind them to a civic institution, denying them their old rights and freedoms. She may not degrade them as Apollo does, but she oppresses the Furies just the same. In her attempt to treat them with impartiality and respect, Athena cuts the Furies off from the natural world, she institutionalizes them, and she dominates them, taking their authority for her own. This is essentially the same paradox Derrida described in relation to hospitality, that the laws of hospitality cannot extend limitless hospitality; their codification limits their applicability.[42]

This line of thinking can be extended to the conclusion of the play. The Furies lose their case, as the jury is tied, which acquits Orestes of his crime. They threaten to bring ruin to Athens, but Athena appeases them by establishing a new cult in the city which will honour the Furies, transforming them into the titular Eumenides, 'kindly-ones,' who bring prosperity to Athens.[43] This is the climactic culmination of the Furies' metamorphosis from old gods to new gods, newly enshrined in the civic religion of Athens. Athena has left her mark on the city by codifying new laws, but also on the Furies by redefining them in the mold of the Olympic gods.

Apollo's contempt for the Furies, on the other hand, is obvious throughout the play. The source of this contempt is

[40] Aeschylus, 418.
[41] Aeschylus, 434-435.
[42] Derrida, *On Hospitality*
[43] Aeschylus, 778-1047.

exemplified in lines 213-224, where Apollo denounces the Furies for their disrespect of marriage.[44] To Apollo, it is essential that a husband and wife uphold the sanctity of their marriage: "A husband and wife's bed… is stronger than an oath."[45] To murder one's husband is irredeemable. The Furies, of course, do not care about marriage. To them, the only irredeemable act is to murder one's blood relative. The contrast of blood and marriage lays out the conflict between natural law and civic institutions; all people are born, and share a genetic bond to their parents and siblings, whereas marriage has not always been defined the same way, and in fact had recently undergone a shift in meaning at the time this play was written.[46] What is noteworthy here is that although Apollo and the Furies have a mutual hatred of each other, and take opposite sides of the argument, they use very similar logic. Both parties wish to see a murderer punished for breaking a sacred bond, and both believe its transgression necessitates violent retribution. The only difference is which bond is upheld, and which is broken. Perhaps this is why the jury is split; humanity sees the value in natural law as well as institutions and cannot decide between the two when they are pitted against each other. In the end, Orestes is acquitted, but there is a lack of finality to the sentence. The reader should not conclude that the new institutions of the Olympians are superior to natural law, but rather that the two forms of law are deeply intertwined. It is necessary for both to be respected, despite Apollo's and the Furies' hope that the other might be destroyed.

If *The Bacchae* tells us that the gods are inexpressible, *Eumenides* tells us that they are also tied deeply to humanity. The Olympians provided humanity with their social, cultural, and political institutions, but they also cannot be separated from them. In this sense, the Olympic gods are reliant on the Greeks for their continued survival. If the Greeks chose to abandon their gods, to

[44] Aeschylus, 213-224.
[45] Aeschylus, 217-218.
[46] Vernant, *Myth and Society*, 45-66.

abandon their civic lives and live as nomads, to return to the rhythm of the natural world, the Olympians would lose their authority. The power of the gods reflects back upon them; they created the institutions that govern the Greeks, but they also rely on the Greeks to perpetuate them. Zeus could not exist in a world without kings.

There are several conclusions to be drawn from this analysis. First of all, the characterization of the gods in drama does not seem to diminish their multiplicity. On the contrary, the multifaceted nature of Greek gods is uncovered by considering the sum of their depictions. The gods are inexpressible, and any attempt to depict them is by definition incomplete. This is true of drama, of epic poetry, of art, of ritual, and of every other way the gods have ever been depicted. Drama contributed to a religious discourse, one which had already been developed for hundreds of years and continued to be developed for hundreds more thereafter. Drama was never expected to perfectly capture the essence of a god because that would not be possible.

It should also be stressed just how personal the gods were to the Greeks. Despite their strangeness, despite their power, they were intertwined in the everyday world of the Greeks. Every thought, every ideal, every institution was a product of the divine, evidence of their power, and a reminder of their relationship with the Greeks. In return, the gods derived their power from the Greeks; being tied to Greek culture, they were reliant on the continuation of that culture in order to keep existing. The relationship between the Greeks and their gods was mutually beneficial.

Finally, drama reminds us of the agency of humanity. No matter how powerful the gods were thought to be, humans have always ultimately been in control of their actions. Pentheus agrees to go unwittingly to his doom. Agave kills him in a god-induced madness, but she was only driven insane by choosing to accept Dionysus. Athena establishes the court, the Furies prosecute

Orestes, and Apollo defends him, but it is the human jury who is given the final say on his fate. Athena's single vote may have determined the outcome, but it was not worth any more than any other vote. The tragic lens reminds us of our agency; even though we cannot see the outcome of our decisions until after we have made them, despite the fact that the outcomes are just as much decided by powers outside of our control as by our choices, in spite of our inability to perceive any of these greater powers until after we have acted, our choices are still ultimately ours to make.

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(IN)JUSTICE, (DIS)ORDER, AND THE FURY: REVENGE AND POLITICS IN THE PRE-AREOPAGUS WORLD OF AESCHYLUS' *AGAMEMNON*

Harry Kohos

Abstract

Aeschylus' Oresteia *narrates, in a three-play sequence, the founding of the Areopagus, Athens' judicial council and trial-based justice system. In the trilogy's first play, Agamemnon, Aeschylus integrates a vivid political crisis into the mythic tale of the returning Mycenaean king's murder by his wife Clytemnestra and her lover Aegisthus, who are then murdered in revenge by his son Orestes, to recognize the significance of Athens' own justice system. By examining the* Agamemnon's *treatment of lex talionis (the retributive justice of pre-legal Athens) and the ideas it raises about the treatment of women and the struggle with tyranny of Aeschylus' own day, this paper argues that the playwright posits the development of judicial institutions as a necessary step to prevent society from deteriorating into violent turmoil and political upheaval. By capturing the misery and chaos of a political and moral tragedy in a world that has neither mechanisms in place to render justice, nor even so much as to empower the language of moral and legal values, Aeschylus uses myth to reflect on the key role of institutional justice in Athens' efforts toward progress and social development.*

The *Oresteia* of Aeschylus celebrates the founding of the Athenian murder court, the Areopagus, through the story of the first murder trial: the prosecution of Orestes for the murder of his mother Clytemnestra and her co-conspirator, Aegisthus. This narrative begins in the *Agamemnon* with Clytemnestra's murder of her husband, the eponymous Mycenaean war hero. Aeschylus' play problematizes the *lex talionis* of pre-Areopagus Greece– retributive justice, the principle of retaliating against a transgression with punishment in kind– and in the process raises questions of the nature of justice, the condition of women and the

threat of tyranny. The play faces an Athenian public concerned with civil progress and citizen participation with the devastating consequences of violence, political strife and civil plight in a society without a justice system to check individual actions.

Aeschylus' main issue with *lex talionis* is that it, by nature, can only proliferate violence, which perpetuates crises in a pre-judicial society. When the chorus beholds Clytemnestra standing over the bloody bodies of Agamemnon and his slave-girl Cassandra, the queen justifies her action by framing it as an act of vengeance for Agamemnon's killing of their daughter, Iphigenia. To the shocked chorus she raises the inevitability of killing him: "How else would someone, paying evil back / to those disguised as friends, raise suffering's net / around them to a height they can't leap over?"[1] Without courts in which to prosecute him, *lex talionis* is the only principle Clytemnestra can appeal to. The proliferation of violence through this retaliatory structure is made clear by the chorus' response that in return for her crime, "[a]ll those [Clytemnestra] love[s] must be taken in revenge / and a wound pay back each wound that [she has] given."[2] This perfectly encapsulates the paradox of a society without an Areopagus: although what Clytemnestra has done is a wretched, harmful act, the fitting punishment is the same thing that she has just done, and for the same reason. Likewise, the cycle only continues, with the capital punishment prescribed by the chorus being delivered ultimately by Orestes, thus calling the wrath of the Furies– the spirits who avenge parenticide– upon himself.[3]

The orientation of the characters towards their own versions of justice and the right (and wrong) ways of doing things indicate a desire for clear means to justice. When Clytemnestra

[1] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," trans. Sarah Ruden, *The Greek Plays*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), ll.1374-6.
[2] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1429-30.
[3] Aeschylus, "Libation Bearers," trans. Sarah Ruden, *The Greek Plays*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 869; 930; 1046, respectively.

kills Agamemnon for killing Iphigenia and thereby puts herself in the line of fire, she exposes a double-standard: that not all killing is considered wrong or punished, but can be justified and even celebrated. She makes this point explicitly about the asymmetry in response to her action and to her husband's: when the chorus first declares her "exiled from the city," Clytemnestra retorts that:

> Back then you offered *him* no opposition
> when he, as casual as at one death
> among the crowding and luxuriant flocks,
> sacrificed his own child, my dearest birth-pangs,
> to conjure up some blasts of air from Thrace.
> Wasn't it that polluted criminal
> you should have driven out?[4]

This is clear in the manner in which other killing and pillaging is described, with characters going so far as to appeal to justice by framing their actions with legalistic language. Upon hearing, for example, that the signal of Troy's fall has come, the chorus rejoices at the return of Agamemnon and Menelaus, "the great plaintiffs."[5] The taking of Helen which prompts the war is framed by the Herald as a property dispute for which Paris is held accountable, euphemistically referring to the killed Trojan prince as "convicted, / his plunder forfeit."[6] Even during Iphigenia's brutal sacrifice, Agamemnon and Menelaus are not killers, but "lovers of battle, her judges."[7] When Agamemnon arrives home to his palace, even he attributes the genesis of the raping and pillaging of Troy to divine agreement. "In the gods' court," the king tells his people, "the case stood on the facts. / Every vote went one way, into the blood-urn, / and told me, Kill the men and sack the city."[8] This last example is particularly striking for its depiction of a democratic

[4] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1410; 1416-20, emphasis in translation.
[5] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 39.
[6] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 534-535.
[7] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 230.
[8] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 813-815.

assembly, with votes being cast to decide what should be done. The caveat to the play's legalistic and democratic terminology is that there is no structure in the mythical world to give them authority as there are in Athens in 458 BC when the *Oresteia* is first performed; that is to say, there is no Areopagus to apply these judicial roles.[9] To the men in the audience, likely once-participants in the Athenian courts as jurors and magistrates, Aeschylus creates cause for appreciation of the benefits of Athens' judicial process by devising a crisis to which the institutions of their contemporary *polis*, for their salience, serve as an obvious solution.[10]

Without such a solution yet invented, however, Clytemnestra's attempt at justice misses any checks, creating another issue unaddressed without courts: that of the limits and legitimacy of motives, and subsequent potentially unjustified killings. Clytemnestra justifies the murder of Agamemnon as revenge for the sacrifice of their daughter, which she also calls an "oath … sanctified / by Justice … and Ruin, / And the Fury".[11]

In addition, Aegisthus justifies his part in the plotting of Agamemnon's murder as retribution for the murder of Aegisthus' siblings by Agamemnon's father, Atreus.[12] While his motive is far less direct than Clytemnestra's, the chorus' phrasing that she ought to be punished by losing "all those [she] love[s]" suggests that a vengeance-killing carried out against the relative of the wrongdoer is still justified.[13]

The murder of Cassandra, on the other hand, may not be susceptible to the same justification. The slave-girl is brought back by Agamemnon, who urges that she be "brought in with kindness,"

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[9] Suzanne Saïd, "Aeschylean Tragedy," in *A Companion to Greek Tragedy*, ed. Justina Gregory (New Jersey: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 215.
[10] F. S. Naiden, "Aeschylus and Athenian Law," in *A Companion to Aeschylus*, ed. Jacques A. Bromberg and Peter Burian (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2023) 361.
[11] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1431-1433.
[12] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1590-1600.
[13] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1429.

as "a god's gaze falls / propitiously on gentle use of power."[14] This courteous gesture clashes tensely with the brutal murder for which he and Cassandra unknowingly walk into their own slaughter. His awareness of the power dynamic between them confirms that she has not come to him of her own volition. Clytemnestra, having killed them both, refers to her as "the seer of the signs, his captive".[15] Her murder, then, appears to be a killing out of jealousy, which therefore does not have any basis in *lex talionis*, as Cassandra, unlike Aegisthus, has had no exercise of her agency. The fate of the poor girl, taken from her native land and enslaved, ultimately slaughtered, is salient to the Athenians, who held an increasing number of slaves to compensate for the lost labour of increasingly free citizens after the 508 BCE adoption of the Cleisthenian constitution.[16] Therefore, the killing of Cassandra infuses slavery present in the mythical world and rampant in the present with a particularly tragic element by situating the familiar Athenian institution in a context without Athens' judicial infrastructure.

The larger social crisis in the absence of the legal system, however, is the wartime experience of women overall. The anger which Clytemnestra feels against Agamemnon for killing their daughter compounds all the time alone and afraid of the outcome of the war. On the subject of Agamemnon's homecoming, and the countless rumours that precede it, she remarks that "[i]t's not from second hand / that [she] report[s] a miserable life / endured the whole time [he] was in Ilium."[17] The murder of Agamemnon, as retaliation both for his murder of their daughter and out of jealousy for his "soothing every Chryseis at Troy" represents the sense of loss and sorrow that mark the women, both those caught in the

[14] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 950-952.
[15] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1400.
[16] Robert W. Wallace, "Democracy's Age of Bronze: Aeschylus's Plays and Athenian History, 508/7–454 BCE," in *A Companion to Aeschylus*, ed. Jacques A. Bromberg and Peter Burian (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2023), 20.
[17] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 858-860.

pillaging of the losing city, and those spending years waiting for their loved ones to come home.[18] Such depiction of the sorrow of women in wartime parallels various others made in later Greek drama. Euripides in his *Trojan Women* depicts the agony of besieged women: Hecuba, furious with Helen, whom she blames for the war, still begs Menelaus to let her speak before she is taken away, for the men "know nothing / of what [the women ha]ve borne in Troy."[19] Hecuba parallels Clytemnestra, who reprimands the chorus for "turn[ing their] rage away toward Helen, / calling her the one murderer of many".[20] Similarly, Aristophanes' *Lysistrata* points out the prevalence and widespread neglect of women's suffering at home, when Lysistrata tells the Commissioner that "the quota [women] bear is double" that of the men, having to send both their children and husbands off to war while they sit home alone.[21]

Aeschylus, familiar with the grief of war from his military service in the Persian Wars, brings attention to the mistreatment of women in the early generations of Greek democracy– the very period, as the archaeological record reflects, that women's conditions in Athens begin to improve.[22] The plight of women in warfaring society is dramatized by compounding with Clytemnestra's maternal rage and indignation to show how far such a social plight, one familiar to the Athenians, can go in an environment without law and order.

Perhaps the greatest cause for alarm, and therefore the greatest cause for celebration of the development of the democratic legal system, is the relationship between violence and political

[18] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1439.
[19] Euripides, "Trojan Women," trans. Emily Wilson, *The Greek Plays*, ed. Mary Lefkowitz and James Romm (New York: Modern Library, 2016), 908-909.
[20] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1463-1464.
[21] Aristophanes, "From *Lysistrata*," translated by Douglass Parker, in *The Norton Book of Classical Literature*, ed. Bernard Knox (New York: W. W. Norton, 1993), 471-476.
[22] Saïd, "Aeschylean Tragedy," 217; Wallace, "Democracy's Age of Bronze," 24.

turmoil in the absence of citizen-involved state justice, and the movement towards tyranny. While the Argives are away at war, Clytemnestra is seen as in charge, and rightfully so: the chorus remarks that they "know respect is due the chieftain's wife / as long as there's a desolate, unmanned throne."[23] As a result, her competence is continuously in question, as the chorus fluctuates in opinion between Clytemnestra being diligent with "the sense of a discreet man," and reversing their opinion at her quick belief that the signal from Troy has truly come, declaring that "[t]his is a woman in command, conceding / her thanks before she sees."[24] However, with Agamemnon returned, Clytemnestra's sole reign is over, and any attempt to retain power over the king is unjustified. Indeed, when the chorus manages to decipher Cassandra's prophecy of the impending murders, they confer unsuccessfully about how to stop Clytemnestra, with one lamenting that "this is the prelude / that signals despotism for the city."[25] Upon confessing and being declared exiled, Clytemnestra tells the chorus that she is willing to concede power to anyone who can oust her, but that "if god wills otherwise, / [they]'ll learn restraint, and well, however late."[26] Similarly, when co-conspirator Aegisthus enters scene, the chorus calls him a tyrant, to which he responds that:

> it was a woman's job to trick [Agamemnon],
> while I, the clan's old enemy, was suspect.
> Now I'll deploy his property to rule
> the citizens, and set a heavy yoke
> on those who won't obey.[27]

Aegisthus embraces tyranny against a chorus of citizens who are powerless to do anything to stop him, just as they are previously when Clytemnestra tells them what she has done: they say she must

[23] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 259.
[24] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 351; 483-434.
[25] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1354-1355.
[26] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1421-1425.
[27] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1636-1640.

leave the city, and then that her loved ones must die, and ultimately nothing happens.[28]

In this moment of Aegisthus' shameless claim to despotic rule over the people, the nightmare of the democratic Athenian public is fully realized: with the horrors of regicide, prompted in part by the impossibility of legal recourse, and suffered by an impotent public, a tyranny has now been instituted against which nothing can be done. For Aeschylus, these shifting political realities were not simply theoretical: the playwright was a teenager when the Peisistratid Dynasty was ended with the murder of Hipparchos and Cleisthenes' driving out of Hippias with the help of the Spartans, before the institution of Athens' constitution and the shift to democratic government.[29] With these political changes came the development of citizen-manned courts to decide most matters.[30] This period also brought Ephialtes' reforms of the Areopagus, which essentially made its sole job the prosecution of murder cases.[31] Such a judicial change would have been all the more significant– even a possible motivating factor for Aeschylus' choice of theme– when Ephialtes was murdered around the same time and Pericles rose to power.[32] Pericles' ascent in turn would have been significant because of Aeschylus' having known him, if under no other circumstances than in the latter's role as *choregos* in the staging of the *Persae* a decade prior, based on the playwright's own military service in the Persian Wars.[33] The political shifts the poet saw in his youth and the confluence of

[28] Aeschylus, "Agamemnon," 1429-1430.
[29] Wallace, "Democracy's Age of Bronze," 15; Anton Bierl, "Klytaimestra Tyrannos: Fear and Tyranny in Aeschylus's 'Oresteia' (with a Brief Comparison with 'Macbeth')," *Comparative Drama* 51, no. 4 (2017): 530.
[30] Wallace, "Democracy's Age of Bronze," 15.
[31] Saïd, "Aeschylean Tragedy," 217.
[32] David H. Porter, "Disorder, Resolution and Language: The *Oresteia*," in *A Companion to Aeschylus*, ed. Jacques A. Bromberg and Peter Burian (New Jersey: Wiley Blackwell, 2023), 115.
[33] Malcolm Bell III, "Aeschylus in Sicily between Tyranny and Democracy," in *A Companion to Aeschylus*, ed. Jacques A. Bromberg and Peter Burian (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 2023), 61.

judicial reforms and assassination of his adulthood were experiences shared with the audience, watching a play in which the institutions they relied on and gladly participated in are nowhere to be found.

Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is a celebration of the foundation of the Athenian Areopagus and corresponding legal process as a means to civic justice and political stability. The *Agamemnon* initiates the action by framing the murder of Agamemnon within a world which has not yet developed such legal tools, thus engendering a cycle of violence and destruction. This violent turmoil simultaneously weaves in contemporary Athenian concerns such as the feminine condition and the threat of political despotism, issues which Aeschylus saw fluctuate and develop over the course of his own life. In the epic movement from the catastrophic *lex talionis* to the establishment of the popular murder court, Aeschylus established a link between the mythic past and Athenian present through the etiology of the judicial process which was now in practice; at the *Oresteia*'s 458 BCE presentation, Aeschylus expanded a popular myth to convey an ethical dilemma whose conclusion bridged the heroic past and the city just beyond the bounds of the stage.

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COMPETING HISTORIES: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LIVY AND DIONYSIUS OF HALICARNASSUS

Giordano Ravalico

Abstract

This essay compares Livy's Ab Urbe Condita (Books 1-5) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus Roman Antiquities (Books 1-4), offering insights into Roman historiography. Dionysius' narrative is notably longer and more detailed than Livy's, especially regarding the regal period. Dionysius' focus on detailed descriptions emphasize how Roman power operated and incorporated outsiders, while Livy's brevity enhances the narrative impact by summarizing events to maintain focus on critical moments. Moreover, Dionysius' history seeks to Hellenize the history of Rome, exemplified by his assertion of Rome's beginning as a Greek colony; Livy's history instead assigns the Latins' supremacy to the Greeks. The intentional differences suggest that Dionysius, who published after Livy, may have been responding to Livy's version of early Roman history, indicating deliberate historiographical choices. By examining these differences, this essay explores how Livy and Dionysius, writing in the same Augustan socio-political context, offer varied representations of Roman history which reflect their distinct methodologies.

Among Rome's greatest historians is Titus Livius (Livy), born around the year 59 BCE in Patavium (Padua). He later resided in Rome during the time of Augustus, where he published his *Ab Urbe Condita*. Livy passed away in 17 CE.[1] Contemporary with Livy was Dionysius, a historian no less prolific, born in Halicarnassus around the year 55 BCE. He moved to Rome around 30 BCE, after the conclusion of Augustus' civil war. After spending twenty-two years gathering materials for and composing his historical work, *Roman Antiquities*, written in Greek, its first part

[1] Bernard Mimeo, "Introduction: Livy," in *A Companion to Livy*, ed. Bernard Mimeo (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), xxxiii.

was published in 7 BCE.[2] Writing contemporaneously from the same sources, these historians depict the same events from Roman history, such as the abduction of the Sabine women and the subsequent war. However, they differ in their interpretations of these events and their significance in the broader context of Roman history, revealing the distinct methodologies and cultural proclivities of these two respective historians. Ultimately, the fact that Livy is writing in Latin and Dionysius in Greek is of symbolic importance.

Besides this difference of language, their histories diverge greatly in the length and pacing of their respective narratives. Dionysius is much more expansive and decompressed than that of Livy due to his penchant for extensive detail. This is especially true for their accounts of the regal period. Despite working from identical sources, Livy uses one book to narrate the regal period, while Dionysius uses four. In similarly typeset printings, Dionysius' history reaches the end of 468 BCE after 1109 pages; Livy's covers the same period in just 153 pages.[3] This difference in length is also evident in their treatment of specific events. This disparity highlights their distinct approaches to historical narrative. Livy is recognized for his succinct style, characterized by Quintilian as possessing a "milky richness".[4] Livy, favouring brevity, often focuses on the events themselves, while Dionysius, working more in the Roman annalistic tradition, provides a more comprehensive and detailed account, incorporating elements such as meticulous battle descriptions, lengthy speeches, and intricate

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[2] Richard Hunter and Casper C. de Jonge, "Introduction," in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome: Rhetoric, Criticism, and Historiography*, eds. Richard Hunter and Casper C. de Jonge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 1.

[3] S. P. Oakley, "The Expansive Scale of the *Roman Antiquities*," in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome*, eds. Richard Hunter and Casper C. de Jonge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 127-128.

[4] D. S. Levene, "Roman Historiography in the Late Republic," in *A Companion to Greek and Roman Historiography,* ed. John Marincola (Singapore: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), Volume 1: 283.

political processes. Dionysius can at times be so prolix that some translators have complained about Dionysius' "tiresome speeches" and "pathetic or gruesome details".[5]

However, Dionysius is no mere annalist, and explicates his methodology in Book 1 of his history, which is not "like the annalistic accounts which ... are monotonous and soon grow tedious to the reader."[6] Instead, his history is "forensic, speculative and narrative"; it is for both the serious reader, who "occupy themselves with political debates and to those who are devoted to philosophical speculations"; and it is also for the casual reader "who may desire mere undisturbed entertainment in their reading of history."[7] It seems that he believed that simply stating the outcome of events was insufficient; therefore, he employs programmatic commentary, addressed to his readers to justify his narrative choices, defend his methodology, or highlight the significance of the events he describes. Like Livy, it is evident that Dionysius thought history should educate and edify; it should participate in the formation of national identity, citizenship, and regulation of morals for the purpose of maintaining the body politic. Therefore, Dionysius' commentary throughout is meant to guide the reader, by a combination of rhetoric and historiography, to "become better citizens".[8]

Dionysius approaches his historical account with an unwavering belief in its veracity. Livy, in contrast, demonstrates a degree of skepticism, acknowledging the inherent unreliability of some of his sources; this is particularly evident when dealing with events from the distant past, where sources were often scarce or contradictory. Livy believed that adding extraneous details to imaginative reconstructions of the distant past was misguided, as

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[5] Hunter and de Jonge, "Introduction," in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome*, 29.
[6] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities* 1.8.3
[7] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities* 1.8.3
[8] Hunter and de Jonge, "Introduction," in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome*, 5.

it suggested a false precision that misrepresented the spirit of the material.[9] He found exact casualty figures for early battles particularly inappropriate and criticized Valerius Antias for this, declaring that in "a matter so ancient it is difficult to believe one can fix the exact number of those who fought or died."[10] In contrast, Dionysius often included implausible details, such as specifying that the most serious wound Horatius Codes received was "through one buttock above the top of the thigh bone."[11] For Livy, the essence of the stories was what mattered, not the details, many of which could never be verified.

This difference in detail between the two may be influenced by the fact that, while Dionysius conducted original research in chronology and antiquarian studies, Livy primarily relied on the works of earlier historians. Livy's criteria for inclusion remain unclear. For instance, despite harshly criticizing Licinius Macer and Valerius Antias, Livy still utilized their accounts. One significant criterion for Livy was the length and comprehensiveness of the works, as he aimed to create a detailed and thorough history of the Republic. Consequently, although he consulted the shorter works of early historians like Fabius Pictor and Calpurnius Piso when writing Books 2-5, he predominantly relied on the more extensive histories of recent writers such as Antias and Macer.[12]

Similarly, Dionysius believed that the length of a historical account bestowed upon it added significance. He argued that important and positive events should receive lengthy treatment, while negative or less important events should be addressed with brevity. This belief was informed in part by his view of history as a tool for shaping collective memory: the events of the past were to be selected or disregarded by the historian based on their

[9] Livy, *The Rise of Rome,* 1.3.2; 5.21.9
[10] Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, 3.5.
[11] T. J. Luce, "Introduction," in *The Rise of Rome*, xvii.
[12] Luce, "Introduction," xxi.

anticipated emotional impact on the reader.[13] Accordingly, the length of a given passage serves as an indicator to the reader of the relative importance of the event being described. This principle is evident in Dionysius' criticism of Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*. Dionysius criticizes Thucydides' treatment of an Athenian embassy to Sparta in 430 BCE as "indifferent and careless, as if the episode were a minor one of no importance".[14] He takes particular issue with the fact that, while Thucydides dedicated only a short passage to the Athenian embassy, he gave a much longer and more detailed account of a Spartan embassy to Athens that took place around the same time. For Dionysius, the discrepancy in length between these two accounts is a sign of Thucydides' bias in favour of the Spartans.[15]

This influences how Dionysius and Livy approach the early history of Rome. Dionysius laments that previous accounts of early Roman history had given short and cursory treatment to a subject that, in his view, was of great significance; he believed that his *Roman Antiquities*, by virtue of its sheer length and detail, would redress this imbalance and demonstrate the importance of early Roman history to his readers.[16] In this case, the medium is the message: reading plays a vital role in how readers perceive the past. Factors such as the duration spent on reading a particular scene, the ability of the account's details to evoke a vivid mental image, and the positioning of an event within the larger narrative structure all contribute to how an event, or an entire era of early Roman history, is considered more or less significant. Dionysius intended that as readers engage with the text, they would experience the importance of early Roman accomplishments firsthand.[17]

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[13] Nicolas Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism: Language, History and Identity in Dionysius of Halicarnassus* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 136
[14] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 141.
[15] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 142.
[16] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 192.
[17] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism,* 193.

Depending on whose history they read, contemporary Romans would have experienced these accomplishments at different rates. Livy's narrative expands as it progresses: Book 1 covers several centuries, starting with the fall of Troy and the flight of Aeneas and extending to the expulsion of the kings; Livy condenses the centuries from Aeneas to the city's foundation into just six chapters, while the reigns of the seven kings occupy the rest of Book 1. His narrative becomes more detailed from Book 2 onward, with the average years covered per book decreasing steadily, until by the first century BCE, he covers roughly a single year per book.[18] In Book 1, Livy's account of the monarchic period is incremental, depicting Rome's foundation as a gradual process. Each king contributed to the city's development, politically and institutionally. This notion of gradual constitutional development is articulated by Livy, who portrays the original Romans as a primitive and politically immature group, needing the guidance of paternalistic monarchs and not ready for political liberty for centuries.[19] This view contrasts sharply with that of Dionysius, who depicted the Romans as a civilized people of Greek descent, with Romulus founding a fully formed Greek polis.[20]

This is the essential difference between the two historians: Dionysius is wont to emphasize the Greek origins of Roman culture, arguing that the early Romans were Greek in their customs, institutions, and values. He states his purpose outright: to "show who the founders of the city were," and "to prove that they were Greeks."[21] Of Rome, Dionysius declares that there is "no nation that is more ancient or more Greek... But the admixtures of the barbarians with the Romans, by which the city forgot many of

[18] Luce, "Introduction," in *The Rise of Rome,* xvii.
[19] Timothy Cornell, "Livy's Narrative of the Regal Period and Historical and Archeological Facts," in *A Companion to Livy*, ed. Bernard Mimeo (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 247.
[20] Cornell, "Livy's Narrative of the Regal Period," 248.
[21] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 1.5.2.

its ancient institutions, happened at a later time."[22] For Dionysius, himself a Greek, the Greeks are not outsiders but part of the Roman legacy, deserving of respect and recognition in the narrative of Rome's rise to power. He does not view Roman power and Greek culture as opposing forces; instead, he sees them as complementary. He connects Romans and Greeks by their shared opposition to the barbarian 'other'. This framework reinforces the continuity between Greek and Roman cultural heritage.[23]

Dionysius' notion that Roman power represented Greek culture might have been appealing to Greeks, as it affirmed their cultural legacy. However, many Romans were uneasy with the dominant influence of Greek culture on their own, and Dionysius' historical interpretation might not have been well received by them. Augustus' cultural program asserted Roman supremacy over Greek culture, while Dionysius places Roman power in a subordinate role to Greek cultural and historical achievements.[24] In contrast, Livy, writing in the Augustan mould (Augustus was his patron), acknowledges Greek influences on Rome but warns of their negative impact on Roman morals, usually depicting Greeks as decadent and unstable compared to the virtuous early Romans. This moralistic Augustan view of Greeks serves to justify Roman rule over Greek territories.[25]

Dionysius' narrative of Roman history should not be seen as merely an attempt at flattery or as a conception of an "ecumenical Graeco-Roman world" where Greek and Roman elements are symbiotically integrated. Nicolas Wiater argues that Dionysius' history actually emphasizes the dependency of Roman political and cultural achievements on Greek culture from the very beginning of Roman history, thus reinforcing the distinction

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[22] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 1.89.2.
[23] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 103.
[24] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 107.
[25] Kathryn Lomas, "Rome, Magna Graecia, and Sicily in Livy from 326 to 200 BC," in *A Companion to Livy*, ed. Bernard Mimeo (West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2015), 59.

between the culturally superior Greeks and the Romans.[26] According to Dionysius, the Romans' prominence and superiority are derived from their adoption and perpetuation of Greek cultural and moral values. Roman greatness hinges on maintaining this Greek heritage; they risk losing their superiority if they fail to uphold the Greek influences that shaped their history. Consequently, Dionysius' view reduces Roman historical significance to that of successors to the Greek tradition, asserting that Roman power is justified only by its adherence to Greek virtues.[27]

Dionysius also demonstrates his Greekness by the utilization of the Olympiad dating system in addition to Roman methods of time-reckoning. For example, Dionysius dates "the First Punic War, which fell in the third year of the one hundred and twenty-eighth Olympiad."[28] In this way he is able to integrate Roman dating methods, especially consular years, to aid his Greek audience, who might be unfamiliar with Roman dating practices.[29] In another example, he places the Ides of May shortly after the vernal equinox and provides context for the *Parilia* (21 April) within the Roman calendar.[30] Although Greek historiographical influences were significant even in the earliest Roman historical writing, Livy's independence from this tradition is evident, particularly in how he structured his work, adhering to the Roman system of ordering chronology by annual consulates.

These historians differ in content as much as they do in style, with each offering contrasting accounts of early Roman history. One such episode where they diverge in their narrative is the famous 'Rape of the Sabine Women'. In Livy's narrative, the Romans, facing a shortage of women, resort to the abduction of the Sabine women as a desperate measure to secure wives and ensure

[26] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 171.
[27] Wiater, *The Ideology of Classicism*, 355.
[28] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 1.7.2.
[29] Earnest Cary, "Introduction," in *The Roman Antiquities*, Volume 1: xxx.
[30] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* Volume 1: 104-105. Translator's footnote.

the city's survival.[31] In fact, Dionysius undermines Livy's narrative when he mentions that the Romans, returning from a victorious campaign, "were met by the citizens with their wives and children".[32] This explanation suggests that the abduction was primarily a political manoeuvre aimed at forging alliances with neighbouring communities and not a simple act of 'resource-extraction' as per Livy.

Their narratives differ in explaining the method by which the Sabine women were persuaded to accept their lot. Livy presents a swift and relatively effortless process of persuasion: Romulus, in his address to the women, assures them with "honeyed words" of a promising future filled with the joys of marriage and children.[33] Dionysius, conversely, does not include any words of flattery from the Roman men, nor does he indicate that the women are immediately placated. Instead, Romulus claims that the women are "not unwilling" to stay in Rome, a statement made three years after their initial abduction and after Rome had already conquered several other cities.[34] Having been at war with the Sabines for three years, the captured women in Dionysius' narrative have had time to birth multiple children; it is the birth of children, not promises of partnership, that integrates these women into Roman society. For Dionysius, integration into the Roman policy was a gradual process of assimilation rather than an immediate change of heart. A significant detail in *Roman Antiquities* is the decree of the Senate allowing Sabine women who had a child to leave them with their husbands when going as ambassadors to their countrymen; women "who had several children" could take as many as they wished, in an effort to reconcile the two nations.[35] This indicates that the

[31]Benjamin Adam Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners into Nascent Rome's Imperium: Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Livy on Rome's First Expansion," in *Myrtia* no. 38 (2023), 89.
[32] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 2.34.2.
[33] Livy, *The Rise of Rome,* 1.9.
[34] Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners into Nascent Rome's Imperium," 93.
[35] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 2.45.4.

Romans did not fully trust the women to return; the child left behind acted as a hostage to ensure the mother's compliance. Women with multiple children were trusted, indicating their deeper integration into Roman society through their multiple births.[36]

Livy, on the other hand, mirrors other literary depictions of rape with a "happy ending," portraying the conflict as quickly resolved, leading to a productive partnership: *concordia*.[37] He emphasizes themes of marriage, mercy, alliance, and harmony, presenting an idealized view of conquest and empire building as a generous and mutually beneficial act. This idea is further expressed in Book 5, where Falerii Veteres, an Etruscan city, willingly surrenders to Rome, believing they "will do better living under [Roman] rule than [their] own laws."[38]

Another difference in their narratives is the contrasting role assigned to the character of Hersilia in the events following the initial abduction. In Livy's account, Hersilia, portrayed as Romulus' wife, emerges as a key figure in persuading Romulus to show mercy to the defeated enemy, ultimately advocating for their integration into the Roman state. However, Hersilia does not appear in this section of Dionysius' narrative, which instead emphasizes the deliberations among Romulus and the Roman senate in their decision to incorporate the defeated communities.[39]

Dionysius better captures the harsh realities and trauma of war. Unlike Livy, who portrays reconciliation as swift and harmonious, Dionysius suggests a more protracted and difficult process: sexual violence and forced childbirth serve as tools of domination, complicating and blurring the identities of conquered peoples. Assimilation is portrayed as a slow process, requiring Roman men to police conquered towns and women to bear "Roman" children before fully integrating into the community.

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[36] Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners into Nascent Rome's Imperium," 100.
[37] Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners into Nascent Rome's Imperium," 103.
[38] Livy, *The Rise of Rome,* 5.27.
[39] Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners into Nascent Rome's Imperium," 94.

Ultimately, his narrative aligns with his broader argument in Book 1 about the significant and steady influence of Greek culture on Rome. It may also have been his intention, Jerue argues, to suggest that provincials and newcomers, like Dionysius himself, had valuable contributions to make as Rome continued to expand under Augustus.[40]

These historians further differ in their contrasting accounts of the establishment of the Roman Republic. A key factor in effecting this political transition is the Lucretia episode: she, the most virtuous Roman woman, is raped by the heir of the Roman king, an Etruscan. On the essential facts, both agree; they diverge on detail. Livy's account is focussed on the machinations of a few select aristocrats, while that of Dionysius carries the sanction of the crowd. In Livy, following Lucretia's suicide, Brutus swears to "drive out Lucius Tarquinius Superbus" and never to "allow them or anyone else to be king at Rome." After assembling an armed band of aristocrats, Brutus leads them to Rome and causes "fear and confusion" from the people, but "the sight of the nation's leaders at the forefront made people think that whatever was afoot there must be a good reason for it."[41] Brutus and his plotters then rally the populace to expel the Tarquins and "two consuls were then elected, in accordance with the precepts laid down by Servius Tullius."[42] Rather than the aristocratic vanguardism of Livy, Dionysius' Rome is founded by popular consensus: after Brutus "had done speaking" to the crowd, "they all cried out, as from a single mouth, to lead them to arms."[43] Brutus formally recognizes popular sovereignty and inaugurated parliamentary procedure, declaring that for "this resolution [to] be confirmed, divide yourselves into our curiae and give your votes; and let the enjoyment of this right be the beginning of your liberty."[44]

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[40] Jerue, "Assimilating Foreigners," 105.
[41] Livy, *The Rise of Rome,* 1.59.
[42] Livy, *The Rise of Rome*, 1.60.
[43] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities,* 4.84.2.
[44] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities,* 4.84.3.

Livy's account of the Republic's founding differs from that of Dionysius not simply by its highly moralistic tone, but by its portrayal as the founding as a sort of aristocratic putsch with the aim of restoring traditional values. Dionysius also appeals to tradition, with officials appointed "according to ancestral custom."[45] However, the establishment of this new state, with its hallowed institutions seemingly fully formed *ex nihilo,* is firmly rooted in the popular resolution taken by the people, from whom there was "not a single vote being given against it."[46] This popular factor is missing from the Livy account and might be explained by the personal dispositions of these historians: Livy as the elitist Roman, Dionysius as the populist Greek.

As a Greek writing for a Greek audience, Dionysius likens the Republic, with its dual-consulship, to the Spartan system of dual-kingship.[47] Conversely, Livy, a Roman writing for Romans, aims to present an idealized and triumphalist view of Roman history; his narrative is a teleology of establishing "the world's mightiest empire, second only to the power of the gods".[48] Ultimately, Dionysius' account portrays the early Republic as a period of political experimentation and compromise, while Livy's account offers a more idealized vision of Roman unity and purpose during this time.

Dionysius, publishing after Livy, may have crafted his narrative as a direct response to Livy's version of early Roman history. The intentional differences between their accounts, particularly in terms of scale and detail, suggest deliberate historiographical choices on Dionysius's part. Most noticeably is the tendency of Dionysius to enlarge upon events covered only briefly by Livy, and whose history is so much more prolix, might also have been in response to Livy's history; Dionysius may have

[45] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities,* 4.84.5.
[46] Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *The Roman Antiquities,* 4.84.5.
[47] Cary, "Introduction," xiii.
[48] Livy, *The Rise of Rome,* 1.4.

sought to 'set the record straight'. Additionally, Dionysius explicitly engages with the Greek historiographical tradition, positioning his work as a "precondition" of Polybius and a challenge to his assertion that Roman power had only a short history.[49] Dionysius, writing as a Greek historian in Augustan Rome, offers a unique perspective that challenges and complements the traditional Roman narrative presented by Livy. More concretely, Dionysius states that he is drawing from previous histories, "written by the approved Roman authors... and many others of note."[50] Although Dionysius does not explicitly name Livy here, it is highly plausible that he was aware of *Ab Urbe Condita*, which had been published nearly twenty years before *Roman Antiquities*;[51] academic jealousy might explain the omission of Livian credit here.

In conclusion, the comparative analysis of Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus reveals the complexities and divergences in their historiographical approaches to early Roman history. While Livy's succinct narrative style emphasizes brevity and focuses on pivotal events, Dionysius' expansive and detailed accounts highlight the importance of context and comprehensive descriptions. These differences not only reflect their distinct methodologies but also their cultural perspectives, with Livy aiming to create a cohesive and idealized vision of Roman unity and Dionysius seeking to emphasize the Greek influences and gradual assimilation processes within Roman history. By understanding these historians' unique approaches, a deeper appreciation of how early Roman history was constructed can be gained. Ultimately, the works of Livy and Dionysius offer invaluable insights into the historiographical traditions of the

[49] Daniel Hogg, "How Roman Are the *Antiquities*? The Decemvirate according to Dionysius," in *Dionysius of Halicarnassus and Augustan Rome*, eds. Richard Hunter and Casper C. de Jonge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 228.
[50] Dionysius, *The Roman Antiquities,* 1.7.3.
[51] Luce, "Introduction," in *The Rise of Rome,* xii.

Augustan era, illustrating the enduring influence of cultural and methodological differences on the portrayal of historical events.

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HOW YOU LIKE THEM APPLES?: AN INTERPRETATION OF SEXUAL SYMBOLISM IN THE *CARMINA PRIAPEIA*[1]

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the semantics of apple symbolism in the Carmina Priapeia *by examining double entendres regarding Priapus' twofold godly domain. It argues that the use of the apple motif throughout the corpus contains a sexually charged secondary interpretation. The paper identifies three distinct categories concerning the use of apples in the corpus: offerings, stolen goods, and products of trees. Within these categories, the paper finds that different uses of apples contain separate sexually charged meanings, but all of them share an erotic connotation. Some common themes in the interpretation of apple symbolism from the paper include association with a sexually submissive partner or sexual gratification. This paper uncovers these associations by examining how the proposed symbolism of apples interacts with other symbolic objects in the corpus, such as verses and gardens, and by examining the frequent appearance of the apple motif alongside other words with secondary sexually charged meanings.*

Introduction

Throughout ancient literature, apples have been associated with erotica in several interpretations, not limited to their connection with Aphrodite.[2] As A.R. Littlewood points out, the apple motif features heavily in the *Carmina Priapeia* (CP), a series of anonymously published poems honoring the Roman god of

[1] Special thanks to my faculty mentor Dr. Luca Grillo at the University of Notre Dame for his guidance with this project as well as the University of Notre Dame Summer Research Opportunities Program (SROP) for their support.

[2] Foster, Benjamin Oliver. "Notes on the Symbolism of the Apple in Classical Antiquity." Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, vol. 10 (1899): 39.

farming, fertility, and male genitals, Priapus.[3] While the association between Priapus and apples seems initially obvious– given his status as a rustic god of farming– the surrounding context of the poems suggests a different interpretation.

Of all the produce mentioned in the *Carmina Priapeia,* apples appear most frequently, featuring in fifteen poems, or nearly a fourth of the corpus. The apple motif's pervasiveness emphasizes the fruit's significance to the understanding of the *Carmina Priapeia* and Priapus as a character. Although other fruits, primarily figs, are more commonly associated with Priapus in artistic depictions of offerings, the commonality of apples and their simultaneously recurring themes must have some significance in the corpus. This paper suggests that the apple motif in the *Carmina Priapeia* contains an implicit sexually charged connotation, and it will explore how this understanding of apple symbolism informs readings of the *Carmina Priapeia*.

Throughout the corpus, apples appear in one of three contexts:

a. Apples as Offerings to Priapus: 16, 21, 42, 53, 60
b. Stolen and Plucked Apples: 23, 38, 51, 58, 68, 73
c. Apple trees/Orchards: 61, 90

From these contexts, different symbolic interpretations of the apple motif arise. However, all of them can be understood as sexually charged symbols, though the actual meaning of the symbol might vary between categories. The first category, apples as offerings, connects apples to the idea of sexual desire and submission as an inherent trait of apples. These connections continue into the second category, stolen and plucked apples, in which themes of sexual desire and submission remain while adding in the concepts of theft, violence, and punishment. Finally, the idea of apples as inherently sexual objects appears again in the final category– Apple Trees– in a manner of offering, not to Priapus, but

[3] A.R. Littlewood "The Symbolism of the Apple in Greek and Roman Literature." Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, vol. 72, (1968): 147.

to the tree's owner. The interpretation of apples varies based on their context, but some commonalities arise in their symbolic meaning. Most broadly and importantly, their association with sexual desire or intercourse is ubiquitous in the eighty main poems of the *Carmina Priapeia*.

Apples as Offerings

Of the three categories, poems in which apples act as offerings to Priapus contain the most blatant identification of apples as sexual symbolism. In this poem category, apples often appear alongside themes of sexual desire and submission. This connection is particularly apparent in CP 16, where the motif compares various mythological women in sexually charged scenarios to a youth offering apples to Priapus. The poem begins with:

> Qualibus Hippomenes rapuit Schoeneida pomis,
> qualibus Hesperidum nobilis hortus erat,
> qualia credibile est spatiantem rure paterno
> Nausicaam pleno saepe tulisse sinu,
> quale fuit malum quod littera pinxit Aconti,
> qua lecta cupido pacta puella viro est:[4]

All of the women in the poem exist in a sexual context. The poem's opening begins with a reference to Hippomenes having intercourse with Atalanta after using the golden apples of the Hesperides to entice her. Immediately, the poem draws a connection between apples and sexual gratification. Note that the word *pomis* has an emphatic position at the end of the first line which underscores the relevance of apples in this comparison. Throughout the poem, the repetition of *qualibus*, a word that signals comparisons ("such"), in lines 1, 2, 3, and 5 repeatedly recalls the notion of the apples and the comparison at hand.

[4] *Carmina Priapeia*, 16.1-6

In the break from the repetition of *qualibus*, the next reference involves Nausicaa holding an apple in her *pleno sinu*– a bodily description associated with sexual desire, meaning "full curve." The image of Nausicaa indirectly recalls Odysseus meeting her with only a leafy branch covering himself, an overtly sexual moment of the *Odyssey*.[5] Notably, this is the only description of a mythological woman in this poem where she does not engage in sexual intercourse.

Finally, the apple that Acontius offers Cydippe contains an implied marriage proposal. In the myth told in Ovid's *Heroides* from Callimachus' version in his *Aetia*, Acontius carves a vow to marry him into the apple and throws the apple at Cydippe's feet. Thus, when Cydippe reads the inscription on the apple aloud, she inadvertently swears to marry Acontius and must follow through.[6] The connection between marriage and sexual intercourse is apparent. While the second line of this couplet does not start with *qualibus, qualia,* or *quale*, as those before it, it contains a similar sounding and appearing *qua le-cta,* which further differentiates Nausicaa's appearance as the only line of the first six that does not contain a similar sounding word at the start of the line. This draws attention to the sexually desirable characteristics of Nausicaa– her *sinu*, the placement of which echoes the emphatic position of *pomis* in the poem's opening line. So, while not all three engage in sexual activities directly, the poem clearly links these women to sexuality. The surrounding context of the apple motif in this poem clearly links the mythological women and the apples to their sexually desirable status.

The last two lines of the poem compare the women in the poem to a youth offering an apple to Priapus:

> taliacumque pius dominus florentis agelli

[5] Homer, *Odyssey,* 6.127-150
[6] Ovid, *Heroides, Acontinus Cydippae, 20-21*

imposuit mensae, nude Priape, tuae.[7]

The main similarities between the youth and the women are their sexually submissive status and their association with apples. The act of offering the apple seems to be associated with sexually submissive status– almost as if the apples represent the sexually submissive partner's genitals. Furthermore, the poem's final lines contain an additional double entendre from the boy's *florentis agelli,* a common innuendo in the *Priapeia* which refers to his genitals and notably appears at the end of the line in an emphatic position, similar to *pomis* and *sinu* earlier in the poem. The inclusion of apples alongside a sexual pun and women in sexual scenarios establishes a relationship between apples and sexuality that will continue to evolve throughout the corpus.

Building on this established relationship between apples and sexuality, the following poems that include apples as offerings assume a new meaning. CP 42 further emphasizes the symbolic connection between apples and sexual favors when Aristagoras offers a wax apple to Priapus to thank him for providing a good harvest of grapes. On account of the wax apple offering, Priapus allows Aristagoras to "bear genuine fruit":

Laetus Aristagoras natis bene vilicus uvis
de cera facili dat tibi poma, deus.
at tu sacrati contentus imagine pomi
fac veros fructus ille, Priape, ferat.[8]

The use of the word *fructos* from the verb *frui* implies a double meaning of "to enjoy sexually."[9] The dual interpretation of *fructos* in this poem reveals another interpretation of *pomi*. Since both words refer to fruit on the surface and *fructos* contains a secondary sexual innuendo, this double entendre suggests the existence of a

[7] *Carmina Priapeia*, 16.7-8
[8] *Carmina Priapeia*, 42
[9] Eugene Michael O'Connor *Symbolum Salacitatis: A Study of the God Priapus as a Literary Character.* (Lang, Frankfurt am Main 1989) 135

secondary, sexually charged meaning for *pomi*. In the context of Priapus, including such double meanings aligns with the god's dual purpose as a protector of fields and male genitals. Just like the dual use of gardens in other poems, such as CP 2, where the word for gardens assumes both an innocent meaning related to farming and the sexually charged meaning of buttocks, *pomi* refers to both domains of Priapus: farming and lust.

Similarly, CP 53 hints at a hidden secondary meaning regarding apples, particularly linking them to sexual favors. Initially, the poem appears as an innocent request to Priapus, but given the sexually charged symbolism, the meaning quickly shifts. First, the poem establishes that Dionysus and Ceres accept small offerings from a less fruitful harvest:

> Contentus modico Bacchus solet esse racemo,
> cum capiant alti vix cita musta lacus,
> magnaque fecundis cum messibus area desit,
> in Cereris crines una corona datur.[10]

Then, the poem suggests that Priapus, due to his lower status, should also accept fewer apples under similar circumstances:

> tu quoque, dive minor, maiorum exempla secutus,
> quamvis pauca damus, consule poma boni.[11]

The sexual innuendo here, as O'Connor points out, stems from the use of *damus* in the poem's final line. While *dare* can mean "to dedicate," it has the second meaning of "to give out sexually," revealing a secondary interpretation of this poem.[12] This dual meaning alters the poem's sense from asking Priapus to accept a few apples following a bad harvest to asking him to accept fewer sexual favors, presumably when they are limited in quantity or under poor conditions. The combined innuendo of *damus* implies

[10] *Carmina Priapeia*, 53.1-4
[11] *Carmina Priapeia*, 53.5-6
[12] O'Connor (1989), 143.

an alternate interpretation of poma that directly links the word to sexual favors for the poem to create this secondary meaning of the poem.

While the previous poems of this category stress the connection between apples and sexual favors, the following poem, CP 60, introduces a new dynamic into the interpretation of apple symbolism in the *Priapeia*. CP 60 compares apples to verses, saying that if Priapus had as many apples as he had verses, he would be richer than Alcinous:

> Si quot habes versus, tot haberes poma, Priape,
> esses antiquo ditior Alnico.[13]

This poem contains a couple of interpretations. The surface interpretation is that Priapus, as a lower, rustic deity, receives only a few offerings. However, with the interpretation of apple symbolism explored in previous poems, where apples refer to sexual favors, a lack of apple offerings and an abundance of verse offerings to Priapus imply that his followers act chastely. Since many of his followers offer Priapus verses, they likely consist primarily of poets known for attempting to uphold their chaste image. In two lines, this poem establishes a dichotomy between apples and verses: verses represent chastity, apples represent sexual actions, and these two objects naturally oppose each other. This comparison of verses to apples– especially considering their symbolic uses– further heightens the poem's irony, thus drawing more attention to the lack of apple offerings Priapus has received.

Notably, CP 60 mentions the character King Alcinous, whose daughter appeared previously in CP 16 and will appear again in the discussion of CP 68. While seemingly a simple reference to a wealthy king, Alcinous and Nausicaa's appearances in the *Priapeia* occur alongside mentions of apples. Given Nausicaa's apparent connection to sexuality and desirable traits,

[13] *Carmina Priapeia*, 60.1-2

both in and outside the *Priapeia*, her association with apples seems to imply a connection between the fruit and sexuality.

Finally, the notoriously cryptic poem CP 21 contains an apple offering to Priapus, unlike those before it. Instead of supplying homegrown apples, the speaker offers Priapus apples bought from the Sacred Way in exchange for his silence:

> Copia me perdit: tu suffragare rogatus
> indicio nec me prode, Priape, tuo,
> quaeque tibi posui tamquam vernacula poma,
> de sacra nulli dixeris esse via.[14]

However, the interpretation of the poem, even without questioning the significance of the apple motif, seems troubling for scholars. O'Connor's recount of different scholarly interpretations views the poem as a dedication of love tokens to Priapus by either a prostitute or one pursuing prostitutes.[15] The Sacred Way was a known red-light district, and O'Connor reads the specific reference to that location as a reference to sex workers. Additionally, O'Connor brings up the erotic connotation of apples, albeit as objects that a sex worker would throw at a patron.[16] While the true interpretation of this poem remains ambiguous, the association between it and sex workers is apparent. The understanding of the apple motif as a sign of sexual submission in situations of offering favors O'Connor's interpretation of the text that the apple offering originates from someone connected to sex work. Whether the apples are physical apples, metaphorical apples as the sexual acts themselves, or both remains unclear, but the poem reinforces the association between apples and sexual activity.

[14] *Carmina Priapeia,* 21.1-4
[15] O'Connor (1989), 120.
[16] O'Connor (1989,) 120.

Stolen & Plucked Apples

While the offerings of apples found in the previous category of poems tend to center on sexual submission and favors, another theme emerges in the context of stolen or plucked apples. The second major category operates more cohesively than the previous; all of the poems in this category, except for 51, involve some sort of plucking action. The sexually charged interpretation of apples continues, yet the inclusion of the "plucking action" draws attention to the violence underlying sexual gratification. Additionally, the most common verb for the "plucking motion" is *carpo* which appears in roughly half of the poems of this category, namely CP 23, 58, and 72. The use of this particular verb adds another layer of sexual undertones as *carpo* often refers to seizing someone sexually.

CP 23 is first in this category and is a threatening poem to potential thieves. However, this poem strays from the typical punishment for thieves– normally sodomy or irrumation– and instead threatens potential thieves with constant sexual desire without hope of release. The poem goes as follows:

> Quicumque hic violam rosamve carpet
> furtivumve holus aut inempta poma,
> defectus pueroque feminaque
> hac tentigine, quam videtis in me,
> rumpatur, precor, usque mentulaque
> nequiquam sibi pulset umbilicum.[17]

This poem inverts the events of CP 42 in which Aristagoras offers an apple semblance to Priapus, who causes him to "bear genuine fruit" or, as previously discussed, "enjoy sexually." Instead, CP 23 punishes apple pilferers with a lack of sexual release, which demonstrates the *do ut des*, or reciprocal, relationship with Priapus. While the exact meaning of stealing apples in this context remains unclear, these two poems demonstrate a concrete relationship

[17] *Carmina Priapeia*, 23.1-6

between apples and sexual gratification in the context of Priapic poetry.

While CP 23 punishes apple-pluckers with an absence of sexual release, CP 38 subverts this idea entirely. It offers Priapus' potential sexual partners the opportunity to pluck apples in exchange for their sexual engagement with Priapus, once again drawing a parallel between apples and sexually submissive status. However, unlike previous poems that have established that dynamic, this poem also subverts the typical power dynamic as Priapus appears to relinquish some of his power by offering a youth the choice of taking from his garden. Priapus begins the poem by describing himself through a sexual pun with the word *natura* and then offers the boy apples:[18]

> Simpliciter tibi me, quodcumque est, dicere oportet,
> natura est quoniam semper aperta mihi:
> pedicare volo, tu vis decerpere poma;
> quod peto, si dederis, quod petis, accipies.[19]

This almost seems contrary to the god's nature. Most of the other poems in this section involve Priapus threatening potential thieves, but in this poem, he offers a deal to the boy, allowing him to pluck apples as a reward for pedication. This essentially reverses the typical dynamic– since Priapus here will first pedicate the boy, then allow him to pluck apples. Likely, this results from the boy's sexually desirable status. In this case, the action of "plucking apples" may relate to sexual pleasure resulting from the pedication.

As with several poems containing apple symbolism, CP 38 plays with double entendres– here, in the word *natura,* which refers to the god's character and his mentule. O'Connor suggests that "*natura aperta* can be read as the speaker's well-known (i.e. notorious) natural impulse or as his exposed mentula."[20] This

[18] James Noel, Adams, *The Latin Sexual Vocabulary*. (Duckworth, 1999) 59-60
[19] *Carmina Priapeia*, 38
[20] O'Connor (1989), 132.

interpretation of the god's characterization through duality reflects his role on the physical and metaphorical levels, and it mirrors the dual nature of apples as simple fruits and symbols of sexual desire throughout the corpus.

Furthermore, the use of other dual meanings in poems containing apples suggests additional double entendres in that particular poem. In this instance, CP 38 creates a somewhat cohesive double meaning as the first understanding of *natura* as a characteristic of the god aligns with the understanding of *poma* as a regular apple on the physical level. The second meaning of both words relates to Priapus' other domain: sexual intercourse. Similar sexually charged dual meanings appear throughout the *Priapeia*; for instance, CP 4 contains the dual-meaning word *hortuus,* referring to both an actual garden and a boy's buttocks. Identifying and interpreting these double entendres enhances the understanding of the text by revealing new connections between how the poem was written and its subject matter. Namely, this constructs the god Priapus in a manner that demands an understanding of him on both the physical and conceptual levels.

Similarly, CP 51 emphasizes the importance and prominence of Priapus' *mentule* as a tool on the physical level, but this scenario blatantly mentions its use for the pleasure of those receiving. However, the tone of CP 51 shifts from CP 38 into more playful musings rather than the latter's sincerity. CP 51 involves an *inverse minae* in which Priapus expresses how his garden is adequate but not exceptional, yet thieves prefer his garden to his neighbor's garden. At the end of the poem, he realizes that his *mentula* allures thieves, not his produce. This poem subverts the typical *minae* poems in which Priapus threatens thieves with his *mentula* to stay away from his garden– in this case thieves desire his *mentula* and steal so that they might endure punishment. The beginning of the poem lists several fruits in Priapus' garden that are similar quality to his neighbor's fruits:

> Quid hoc negoti est quave suspicer causa

venire in hortum plurimos meum fures,
cum quisquis in nos incidit, luat poenas
et usque curvos excavetur ad lumbos?
non ficus hic est praeferenda vicinae
uvaeque, quales flava legit Arete,
non mala truncis adserenda Picenis[21]

Notably, the first two fruits in the list of Priapus' garden– *ficus uvaeque* ("figs and grapes")– have a secondary sexual meaning. Figs have a known sexual connotation, as associated with anuses.[22] Grapes are most commonly associated with Dionysus (i.e., CP 53); however, they also appear with sexual connotations in other poems throughout the corpus, including CP 42 (discussed earlier) and CP 32, in which a woman is compared as *uvis ardior passis* or "drier than dried grapes." Although the list continues, the author seems to place the most sexually suggestive fruits first, which is understandable, given that Priapus narrates this poem.

Rockets are listed later in the poem which contained a similar sexually charged meaning since the Romans believed it acted as an aphrodisiac, as mentioned towards the end of the poem: *nec ut salaces nocte tollat erucas*.[23] While rockets are connected to sexual desire in the poem, the author clearly defines the relationship between rockets and desire, unlike the first three fruits. This differentiation between rockets and the first three items likely stems from the main known purpose of rockets as an aphrodisiac. Figs, grapes, and apples all contain sexual innuendo, but rockets primarily and directly relate to increased sex drive.[24] Despite the sexual connotations surrounding figs, grapes, and apples, their functions are not solely tied to sexual desire. Including a known aphrodisiac, like rockets, at the poem's beginning could have spoiled the punchline at the end. Despite the

[21] *Carmina Priapeia*, 51.1-7
[22] Adams (1999), 113-114.
[23] *Carmina Priapeia*, 51.21
[24] Michelle Johnson "The History of Arugula: Peppery Plant, Storied Past." *Rareseeds,* 2023.

sexually charged secondary meaning of the three fruits at the poem's onset, the answer to Priapus' initial question is not immediately obvious. The initial placement of the three sexually-charged fruits foreshadows the inevitable conclusion that the thieves in fact only desired intercourse with Priapus, given the fruits' explicit sexually charged meanings.

Similarly to CP 23, CP 58 returns to the idea of lack of sexual release as punishment for stealing from Priapus' garden. However, unlike CP 23, this poem highlights apples as a stolen good, which further emphasizes their connection to sexual desire. CP 58 involves Priapus threatening to punish thieves for plucking apples with a lack of sexual release:

> Quicumque nostram fur fefellerit curam,
> effeminato verminet procul culo;
> quaeque hic proterva carpserit manu poma
> puella, nullum reperiat fututorem.[25]

In conjunction with the understanding of CP 23 and 42, this poem adds to the existing poems from the *Priapeia* in which apples contain a sexually charged meaning. In light of these poems, offering apples to Priapus typically generates a positive outcome: sexual release in CP 42. On the other hand, stealing apples leads to negative consequences: the lack of sexual release in CP 23 and 58. However, unlike CP 23, 58 only involves apples by name, whereas 23 includes *violam, rosamve, furtivumve holus aut inempta poma* "a violet, rose, hidden vegetable or unbought apples." The lack of other stolen goods in CP 58 highlights the symbolic significance of apples as a fruit with a sexual connotation.

The theme of double entendres continues in CP 68, which recalls the dichotomy between apples and verses, as explored in CP 60 previously. The pun of CP 68 from the word *lego* appears

[25] *Carmina Priapeia*, 58

immediately to establish the overarching theme of the poem as the relationship between written myths and sexual desire:

> Rusticus indocte si quid dixisse videbor,
> da veniam: libros non lego, poma lego.[26]

The remainder of the poem lists how sexual desire has inspired mythology. While this quotation follows his proclamation that he is just a farmer and his apology for saying anything unlearned, the quote precedes his list of mythological actions inspired by sexual desire, which implies that Priapus' apples relate to his list in some capacity. As with several other poems involving apples, they assume a dual meaning related to both Priapus' domains. The surface-level interpretation references Priapus as a rustic deity: he plucks apples because he is associated with the garden. However, this is the only poem in the collection where Priapus personally plucks apples, which seems counterintuitive for a protector of the fields. Instead, the second meaning of apples becomes necessary to understand the real purpose of plucking apples; in this poem, the plucking of apples represents finding sexually charged motivations in epic stories.

Additionally, CP 68 uses the word lego for both books and apples. *Lego* also assumes a dual meaning here since it uses the definition "to read" in reference to books but "to pluck" in reference to apples. The Latin word *lego* is also a cognate of the Greek λέγω ("to gather"), which becomes relevant as Priapus recounts a Homeric man using similar Greek words to Latin, but he genders them differently. Thus, CP 68 invites readers to construct alternate interpretations using different meanings of the same word, especially in close proximity to the word *poma*.

Priapus' interaction with verses is surprisingly common for his self-proclaimed status as an uneducated, rustic figure. As explored in CP 60, verses and apples are opposing forces; the

[26] *Carmina Priapeia*, 68.1-2

former represents chastity and the latter sexual activity. However, CP 68 challenges this constructed dichotomy when Priapus plucks apples by reinterpreting epic myths as motivated by sexual desire. In Roman society, the *apologia* at the beginning of a work often separates a poet from the sexual content of a work.[27] In this poem, Priapus fashions himself into a sort of "anti-poet" figure as he associates himself with the sexual connotations of his interpretations of myths.

As in CP 16 and 60, CP 68 also mentions Nausicaa directly. In CP 16, she acts as a mythological example of a desirable woman who may be associated with apples, but in CP 68 her actions have a sexually charged motive as she is recalled marveling at what was behind Odysseus' leaf. The author briefly describes her:

> huius et Alcinoi mirata est filia membrum
> frondenti ramo vix potuisse tegi.[28]

While Nausicaa in this poem has minimal relation to the mention of apples, she appears as a seeker of sexual pleasure rather than an object of desire, as in her other appearance. Although Nausicaa appears in a submissive role in both cases, given her status as a woman, the relationship between these poems could be that the action regarding apples– whether its offering or plucking– changes the perception of figures. This idea continues in the other examples of CP 68, in which all of the mythological figures seek sexual gratification.

CP 72 presents a balance between *grandia mala* and *bracchia macra*. CP 72 acts as a brief warning not to steal Priapus' large apples since he sodomizes thieves:

> Tutelam pomarii, diligens Priape, facito:

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[27] R.K. Hack, "The Law of the Hendecasyllable." Harvard Studies in Classical Philology, vol. 25, (1914,) 107, https://doi.org/10.2307/310384.
[28] *Carmina Priapeia,* 68.25-26

rubricato furibus minare mutinio.
Quod monear, non est, quia si furaberis ipse
grandia mala, tibi bracchia macra dabo.[29]

Different interpretations for *bracchia macra* exist, but most scholars agree that it refers to the *mentula Priapi* in some fashion.[30] Like many others in the *Priapeia*, the poem posits receiving Priapus' *bracchia* as an adequate punishment for stealing apples. Since *bracchia* contains a sexually charged dual meaning and mirrors *mala*, then *mala* must also assume a secondary meaning with sexual undertones. The specific word choice further supports this since *mala* and *macra* contain similar sounds and the same number of syllables as do *grandia* and *bracchia*. These words also appear in the same order: *grandia mala* mirrors *bracchia macra*.

Apple Trees

The final category concerns apple trees and only contains two poems. The content of these poems relates to previous themes regarding verses and mutual exchange and further builds on the idea of apples as an inherently sexual symbol.

In CP 61, a talking apple tree explains that it has failed to produce fruit for two seasons because a poet has placed verses on its branches. This issue of how the poet's verses harm the tree's ability to produce apples puzzles O'Connor, who states in reference to this issue, "namely that [the tree] wears on its branches the verses of a wretched poet written, presumably on small tablets. Or are these poems deliberate maledictions meant to blight the growth of the tree?"[31] O'Connor rightly points out the ambiguity of the poem and the relationship between apple trees and poets, which its Roman audience presumably understood.

The relationship between verses and apples has already been established in the preceding poem, CP 60, and in the later

[29] *Carmina Priapeia*, 72
[30] O'Connor (1989), 156.
[31] O'Connor (1989), 147.

poem, CP 68: namely, that poetry fundamentally opposes apples. In CP 61, however, the adverse effects of poetry extend even further as the poet's writings stop the apple tree from performing its main function, producing apples, as shown in the last two lines where poems placed on the branches of an apple tree stop it from producing apples:

> sed quod carmina pessimi poetae
> ramis sustineo laboriosis.[32]

Given that poets and apple trees act as producers of verses and apples respectively, this poem likely uses their associations with their products to present the two as opposing forces. With the relationship between poetry and chastity, the poet's verses oppose the function of the apple tree, namely, producing apples. This dichotomy provides the foundation for an alternate interpretation of the poem: the apple tree represents a sexually submissive partner, a woman, boy, or prostitute, and bearing apples, as previously discussed in CP 42, refers to providing sexual gratification. The poem opens with the voice of the apple tree:

> Quid frustra quereris, colone, mecum,
> quod quondam bene fructuosa malus
> autumnis sterilis duobus adstem?[33]

The use of the words *fructuosa* ("well-fruited") and *sterilis* ("sterile") work conversely in the context of the poem, and both contain secondary sexual meanings. *Fructuosa* derives from *frui* ("to enjoy") which has an additional meaning of "derive sexual pleasure" as mentioned in the discussion of CP 42. On the other hand, *sterilis* does not appear elsewhere in the *Priapeia*; however, its association with sexual infertility appears in other texts.[34] The

[32] *Carmina Priapeia*, 61.14-16
[33] *Carmina Priapeia*, 61.1-3
[34] See Catullus, *Carmina* 63

deliberate use of these words with sexual connotations implies that the entirety of the poem relates to a sexually charged topic.

The first possible reason the apple tree addresses as to why it stopped bearing fruits is old age, which precedes a list of other possible reasons for the apple tree being *sterilis*:

> non me praegravat, ut putas, senectus,
> nec sum grandine verberata dura,
> nec gemmas modo germine exeuntes
> seri frigoris ustulavit aura,
> nec venti pluviaeve siccitasve,
> quod de se quererer, malum dederunt[35]

In this metaphor, the most common and likely cause comes first– in this case, old age. In Roman society, aging makes women and prostitutes undesirable and boys unsuitable for the passive role in intercourse. Following this, the apple tree lists different weather conditions as possible causes. While these may not have as direct of a correlation in the larger metaphor of the poem, the weather could be interpreted as unfavorable conditions that affect the partner's (as represented by the apple tree) willingness or ability to perform sexual acts (produce apples).

Following this initial list, the apple tree lists different birds that did not injure it:

> non sturnus mihi graculusve raptor
> aut cornix anus aut aquosus anser
> aut corvus nocuit siticulosus[36]

The birds clearly reference the possibility of the partner being too worn out by other sexual partners to perform sexual acts. Among these birds is the *graculusve raptor,* "the plundering 'daw." *Raptor* derives from *rapto,* ("to ravage") which, while the word means "to plunder" in the sense of stealing, it also contains an explicit sexual

[35] *Carmina Priapeia*, 61.4-10
[36] *Carmina Priapeia*, 61.11-14

meaning. This establishes a parallel between the different birds and other suitors: where the ravaging birds eat the tree's apples, the suitors exhaust the submissive sexual partner.

On the other hand, the remaining poem of this category, CP 90, does not contain much blatant symbolism. Similar to the other poems by known authors– CP 86 and 88– this one treats the apple tree as just a tree representing the whole garden of Priapus. Since only the poems written by known authors have a minimal relationship between apples and sexual symbolism, the use of apples as sexual symbols becomes a stylistic hallmark of the true author of the *Carmina Priapeia*.

Conclusion

As shown, apples prominently feature in the *Carmina Priapeia*, often alongside sexually charged scenarios, whether being offered, plucked, or growing on trees. Their association with Priapus goes beyond his rustic domain, extending into his role as a god of lust and desire and thus encompassing the full scope of Priapus' attributes. Moreover, the pervasiveness of the relationship between apples and sexual desire implies a cultural understanding of the symbolism connecting apples to sex, which allows for further study of this association, in the *Carmina Priapeia* and other Roman literature. This apparent connection between apples and sex reveals how deeply embedded erotic symbolism can be in everyday, seemingly innocent objects and invites additional inquiry into the intersection of obscenity and metaphor.

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APPLYING MODERN CHANGE MANAGEMENT IN HISTORY: CONSTANTINE, THE COUNCIL OF NICAEA, AND THE NICENE CREED

Christopher Dean

Abstract

This paper uses modern principles of change management to analyze how Emperor Constantine and the early Christian church implemented the common statement of belief, the Nicene Creed, in the 4th century. The principles of change management – planning, implementation and reinforcement, communication, leadership, and conflict management – were applied to historical events from the Council of Nicaea (AD 325) to the Council of Constantinople (AD 381). Analysis shows that implementing these principles largely resolved an especially problematic controversy that originated with a cleric named Arius, and was called Arianism. This paper offers evidence that modern principles of change management are broadly applicable and relevant in historical contexts. Further, it demonstrates that Constantine and his administration were successful in implementing one of history's first large-scale change management projects to address Arianism and implement a new way of working across a vast organization.

Constantine became ruler of the Western Roman Empire in AD 312 after defeating Maxentius at the Battle of Milvian Bridge. Constantine credited the victory in part to the intervention and support of the Christian God, leading him to actively adopt Christianity.[1] Constantine's support of Christianity increased its

[1] Constantine was not a strident Christian and while his support of Christianity after AD 312 is "incontrovertible," he also had a view of "consensus and toleration" for other religions through his life even as he followed Christianity. A. D. Lee, "Traditional Religions," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 170, 176. See also Elton for Constantine's tolerance and partial adherence to traditional religions: Hugh Elton, *The Roman Empire in Late Antiquity: A Political and Military History* (Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 52-53.

presence, importance, and influence in the Roman Empire, particularly after he became emperor of both East and West in AD 324. This set the stage for an extensive and pervasive relationship between the Roman Empire and the Christian church.

As Christianity became more closely entwined with the Empire, difficulties with faith and doctrine could lead to disturbances in public order or violence among citizens.[2] One such dispute that was especially problematic originated with a cleric in Alexandria named Arius. He had preached that God and Jesus Christ could not be wholly equal in substance or in time because God had created Jesus as his son. Alexander, the bishop of Alexandria, objected to this interpretation and condemned Arius. However, Arius defied the verdict from Alexander and instead contacted bishops in other cities asking them to support his position.[3] The result was a dispute among bishops who supported or condemned Arius and a controversy called Arianism.[4] The disagreements were fierce, and this led to conflicts within the church and, by extension, the empire.

Constantine believed strongly in the benefits of unity and order. He applied these precepts to the church and the empire, and concord was a goal he was always trying to achieve.[5] As a

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[2] Constantine wanted to resolve religious controversies "to avoid public disorder." H.A. Drake, "The Impact of Constantine on Christianity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine*, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 124. See also MacMullen describing how religious differences, including creeds, could lead to violence in churches and in public, e.g., fights, stabbings, brawls. Ramsay MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church Councils* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 59.

[3] Rebecca Lyman, "Arius and Arians," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies*, eds. Susan Ashbrook Harvey and David G. Hunter (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 239.

[4] A review of evidence shows the complexities of the Arian debates and how they may extend to multiple groups and be considered "polyfocal". Rebecca Lyman, "Arius and Arianism," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 52.

[5] Drake pointed out examples that show how Constantine would "call for concord and unity" and reinforced this by paraphrasing *Life of Constantine* by Bishop Eusebius of Caesarea where he says Constantine desired a united approach to

Christian, Constantine wanted to redress the controversy and unify the church and, as emperor, he needed to end the civil disorder by finding a compromise between the sides.[6] Constantine called a council of bishops in AD 325, the Council of Nicaea, in part to settle the Arian controversy. Bishops from across the empire were asked to study and agree on a statement that would address and resolve the issues and what they agreed on has since become known as the Nicene creed. Most importantly for Constantine and the Council, the Creed needed to be accepted and used in churches across the empire. This meant one side had to accept the interpretation of the other and change their practice. In effect, Constantine, among his many other accomplishments, had just initiated one of history's first, largest, and most significant examples of organizational change management.

Change management reflects a systematic approach to help modify work and move from one process or system to another by mitigating disruption. It is based on key principles that are focused on what people need to successfully change and transition to a new way of working: planning, implementation including reinforcement, communication, leadership, and conflict management.[7] A crucial consideration before initiating large-scale

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religion among Christians all his life. H. A. Drake, "The Elephant in the Room: Constantine at the Council," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim, (Cambridge University Press, 20211), 115-116.

[6] Despite the different theological positions of various bishops, it is still reasonable to distill the dispute into pro-Nicene and anti-Nicene groups. Khaled Anatolios, "The Christ of the Creeds," in *The Blackwell Companion to Jesus*, ed. Delbert Burkett (Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 178. For the purposes of this paper a pro- and anti-Nicene interpretation is used to explain change from one condition to another.

[7] The framework of change management outlined in the Human Change Management Book of Knowledge (HCMBOK) includes modern business practices not related to this example of change, e.g., acquisition, closing. All other components of the HCMBOK framework for change (initiation and planning, execution/implementation/sustainability, stakeholder engagement/innovation, conflict management, communication, and leadership), are encapsulated in the principles outlined in this paper.

change is to consider potential risks and whether the reason for the change could instead be effectively managed at a local level. This was seen when Constantine wrote to Arius and his bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, asking them to reconcile their differences before the Council of Nicaea was initiated. However, this effort was not successful because Constantine likely approached it from a more legalistic perspective, focusing on pragmatism first and theology second.[8] The pragmatic approach was not shared by Arius or Alexander who were unlikely to reconcile their differences because they saw the issue as a religious priority and who both believed they were in the right.[9]

Planning is the first step in change management to understand the problem and how to implement change. Consistent with this, the Council of Nicaea was preceded by other gatherings that Constantine probably used when determining the participants, logistics, and operational processes. The Council of Arles in AD 314 is a relevant example, as Nicaea mirrored many of its characteristics, in particular an urgent need to address a conflict within the church.[10] At Nicaea, Constantine repeated good change management practices activities from the Council of Arles. He assembled a group of bishops to reach a theological decision on whether the relationship between God and Jesus espoused by Arius or his Bishop Alexander would be adopted by the church and he

[8] Drake, "The Elephant in the Room: Constantine at the Council," 119. See also MacMullen noting east-west differences and Constantine prioritizing practical or legal issues over the eastern focus on the minutiae of credal definitions. MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church* Councils, 28.

[9] Lyman, "Arius and Arians," 240.

[10] The Council of Arles was summoned to deal with the conflict of Donatism. Donatism was a bitter conflict between rival Christian groups in their response to persecution by Emperor Diocletian. Similar to Arianism it took many years for the conflict to expire. See Drake for a summary of the dispute, its causes, and Constantine's response. Drake, "The Impact of Constantine on Christianity," 117–119. Of note for this paper are the learnings at Arles which Constantine applied at Nicaea in line with good change management principles, e.g., who would participate, his own attendance, etc.

set a location close enough so that he could attend.[11] As part of preparing for the Council of Arles Constantine also wisely had informational documents distributed to the bishops in advance.[12] It is not known for certain if bishops coming to Nicaea were sent pre-reading documents, but given Constantine's preference for being organized it is a reasonable assumption. Constantine also offered the bishops the use of the imperial post system for their travel to Nicaea as he had done for Arles. This would have expedited their attendance, given them time to review any available preparatory materials, and predisposed them to a positive frame of mind upon arrival.

From a change management perspective, the Council of Nicaea was central to the Arian controversy. It was the source of important decisions, communications, and actions to enforce the decision (with related conflict management) intended to settle the controversy by implementing a uniform approach for all Christian churches. To that end, Constantine included bishops from across the Empire which he had just united under his rule.[13] This meant the hoped-for resolution would be broadly acceptable since it was representative of church leaders. Consistent with this, the Council sessions included opposing groups who met, discussed, debated, and tried to reach a common solution.

Constantine chose to hold the Council at Nicaea instead of Ancrya where it was originally planned. This would have made it easier for him to attend and possibly also to avoid the local bishop presiding. The local bishop, Marcellus, was ardently against

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[11] Drake, "The Elephant in the Room: Constantine at the Council," 115.

[12] Drake, "The Elephant in the Room: Constantine at the Council," 114.

[13] Since bishops from across the Empire attended the Council of Nicaea it was called the first ecumenical, or worldwide, council even though the majority were from the East. Gwynn points out the paucity of bishops from Italy, Spain, Gaul, and North Africa but still argues that it was "the most representative Christian gathering since the apostolic Council of Jerusalem." David M. Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," in The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea, ed. Young Richard Kim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 93.

Arianism, and if he had presided his strong biases could have directly influenced and prejudiced the process. In keeping with effective change management, Constantine had the Council of Nicaea chaired by bishop Ossius of Cordova, whom he was close with.[14] This was consistent with the successful leadership practice of having sessions presided over by someone who is a trusted delegate and can credibly stand in for a leader when they are not present.

At Nicaea, good change management was followed by using established processes for conducting and managing a large assembly. Instead of introducing new processes, Nicaea likely mirrored the functioning of the existing meetings Constantine and the bishops were familiar with, such as those in law courts, previous ecclesiastical synods, and the Senate.[15] As presiding bishop, Ossius would have used his experience to oversee these familiar processes, including preparing the agenda and associated documents, attending most times (unlike Constantine) and managing the flow of business during deliberations and debates.[16]

Nicaea used a familiar course for large gatherings trying to solve a dispute. To start, all bishops were invited to seek a

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[14] Modern scholarship is generally in agreement that Ossious of Cordova chaired the Council of Nicaea. Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 98; Ossius of Cordoba was Constantine's confessor, accompanied him to Nicaea, and had "the confidence of the emperor." Mark J. Edwards, "The Beginning of Christianization," in The Cambridge Companion to the Age of Constantine, ed. Noel Lenski (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 149.

[15] Before the Councils of Arles and Nicaea it was a common feature for provincial bishops to meet as part of church governance and evidence shows councils in North Africa had procedures very similar to the Roman senate, e.g., convening, setting an agenda, equality of members in voting, etc. Everett Ferguson, "Creeds, Councils, and Canons," in The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Studies Susan Ashbrook Harvey, David G. Hunter (eds), (Oxford Academic, online edn, 2 Sept. 2009), 436. See also Davis describing how meetings of church bishops mirrored the Roman Senate and adopted its procedures. Leo Donald Davis, The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology (Collegeville, Minn: Liturgical Press, 1990), 23, 57.

[16] The roles and responsibilities of council presidents were described in MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church* Councils, 98.

solution and no side was excluded. The different factions all had adherents so it was crucial for discussions to be open to their beliefs and opinions.[17] This represented a good approach for managing change because when groups with different perspectives are given an opportunity to be heard, it generally decreases the risk of complaints or non-conformance once a decision is settled. Given the large number of participants, there would have been small and large group meetings taking place and statements would have been reported back to the full assembly.[18] When he was present, Constantine probably circulated to mediate and engender amity when needed because different and repeated drafts would have generated multiple debates and occasionally heated arguments and reactions.[19]

The absence of minutes from the proceedings is a significant misstep in running the Council of Nicaea. This was especially noticeable considering that keeping a written record was standard practice for many meetings.[20] The proceedings might not have been transcribed in order to preserve confidentiality or the minutes may have been lost, but regardless of the reason, the lack of documentation was problematic. It could have contributed to uncertainty and confusion with different participants having different recollections and summaries to support their contrasting

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[17] For purposes of change management, it is essential for individuals to have an opportunity to engage. Despite the size of the assembly at Nicaea it was still possible for individual opinions to register. Gwynne, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 94. See also MacMullen on how each participant was important at events such Nicaea with "figures great and small, high and low" all contributing. MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church* Councils, viii.

[18] Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 101.

[19] Johnson referred to Eusebius' *Life of Constantine* to demonstrate the emperor's patience and goodwill when interacting and assisting the bishops. Aaron P. Johnson, "Narrating the Council: Eusebius on Nicaea," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Council of Nicaea*, ed. Young Richard Kim, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), 220; Wolfram Kinzig, "The Creed of Nicaea: Old Questions, New Answers," *The Ecumenical Review*. 75, no. 2 (2023): 220-221. Elton also described the council of Nicaea as "often spirited". Elton, *The Roman Empire in Late Antiquity: A Political and Military History*, 162.

[20] MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church Councils*, 105.

positions. This opportunity for different interpretations on what had been discussed would have made it increasingly difficult to achieve unity of understanding and practice.[21]

Eventually, a decision was reached that was approved by Constantine and which all bishops were required to sign. The decision statement included a description of the relationship between God and Jesus (the Nicene Creed), several canons or laws related to clergy and church functioning (e.g., ecclesiastical jurisdictions), and anathemas – proscriptive declarations condemning Arianism. This statement ended the deliberations and signalled that events were moving forward. From a change management perspective, there may have been an expectation that, when the results were sent out, the bishops would follow the decisions of the Council of Nicaea and be "bound to abide by the decisions."[22] However, acting against the Nicaean Creed was the fact it included text not found in church-approved scriptures. The introduction of this non-scriptural text opened the door for continued disagreement on the creed and hindered its implementation.[23]

The final portion of the Council of Nicaea that figured prominently in change management were the anathemas. The anathemas were developed to have enforcement built in by precluding the views of Arius and setting parameters for what

[21] Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 101.
[22] Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, 23.
[23] For the purposes of this paper the issues of Greek non-scriptural wording in the Nicene creed (*ousia*, *homoounsios*, *hypostasis*) is not discussed. From a change management perspective, the significance is the extensive disruption caused by the Greek wording because the creed was amended and disputed after AD 325 instead of quickly leading to unity. Scholars have written on the intricate details and discussions of the creed after Nicaea, e.g., Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004; online edn, Oxford Academic, 14 July 2005), chap. 4, section 'Ousia and Hypostasis In the Creed Of Nicaea'; Kinzig, "The Creed of Nicaea: Old Questions, New Answers," 223-230.

could be said.[24] They acted as enforcement mechanisms for the creed because dissenters risked punishment and exile.[25] The impact of the anathemas were immediate at Nicaea, with Arius and two bishops who would not sign the creed all being exiled. Shortly afterwards, Constantine also banished additional bishops who he believed had been supporting the Arian position.[26] It is worth noting however, that punishments in and of themselves have limited effectiveness in changing behaviour over the long term. Furthermore, punishment is, and was, much less successful at changing beliefs. Events after Nicaea showed these limitations because rather than being effective mechanisms to implement and monitor consistency, the anathemas were divisive and themselves became sources of conflict.[27]

In theory, communications regarding the Council of Nicaea and the creed should have been effective to formalize and publicize the conclusions. The Christian church had a precedent with synodal letters that were shared between churches and read aloud to the congregations, especially if the information was important or controversial, like a new creed.[28] In keeping with this process, Constantine composed a letter confirming the creed and copies were sent to churches so they were aware and informed.[29] This was important and in keeping with good change management practices because the "tone from the top" reinforced the intent, benefits, and expectations of change.

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[24] Mark J. Edwards, "The Creed," 149.
[25] Kinzig, "The Creed of Nicaea: Old Questions, New Answers," 231-232; T. G. Elliott, "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea.'" *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History*. 43, no. 2 (1992), 171.
[26] Elliott, "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea,'" 170.
[27] Kinzig, "The Creed of Nicaea: Old Questions, New Answers," 149.
[28] MacMullen, *Voting about God in Early Church Councils*, 35.
[29] Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 108; Eusebius in his book *Life of Constantine* included the text of a circulated letter by Constantine which described the decisions of the Council. Johnson, "Narrating the Council: Eusebius on Nicaea," 215.

One such document that was a relevant source of communication about the Council was from bishop Eusebius of Caesarea. He wrote a letter to his congregation soon after the Council. The letter may be viewed as an excellent example of managing change. He endorsed the Council's decisions and described the changes to reassure his congregants that they were acceptable to their shared beliefs.[30] Regarding the anathemas, Eusebius also took the correct approach and did not contradict them when communicating to the congregation.[31] Unfortunately, Eusebius' letter does not reflect a consistent church-wide message from each bishop to their congregants because there were disparate accounts of the Council.[32] As such, it is likely that equivalent letters sent by other bishops would have reflected their biases because there was no comprehensive and consistent vetting of what information was shared to communicate the new creed and facilitate its use.

The journey of the Nicene Creed up to this point had mostly been successful in following recommended change management principles. However, as events unfolded, the Nicene Creed was not universally adopted and used across all churches as Constantine might have hoped. Instead, the dependable uptake and use of the Nicene Creed was primarily diminished because an array of leaders who represented multiple power centres led to inconsistent implementation and enforcement.

Multiple centres of power were a feature of the church at this time which actively worked against consistency of practice, especially in the East where the controversy originated. Several

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[30] Johnson quotes from Eusebius' letter to demonstrate Eusebius was concordant with the Nicaean creed and discusses how Eusebius may have reconciled adopting the creed with his former stance in support of Arius. Johnson, "Narrating the Council: Eusebius on Nicaea," 209.

[31] Johnson, "Narrating the Council: Eusebius on Nicaea," 210.

[32] There were eyewitness accounts by Eusebius of Caesarea, Eustathius of Antioch, and Athanasius of Alexandria but they were each "highly selective" and differed "significantly in the details." Gwynn, "Reconstructing the Council of Nicaea," 91. This may not be surprising since they also differed on Arianism.

prominent bishops each considered themselves leaders (e.g., the bishops of Alexandria, Antioch, Nicomedia, Caesarea, and Constantinople) and their lack of unity on Arianism or the creed resulted in expansive disagreements and conflicts.[33] Further, modern change management often assumes a type of unitary authority that was not reflected in the way Constantine interacted with the church. Rather, church leadership was shared between Constantine and bishops across the Empire. This led to disagreements, and variation, in how consistently the creed was applied and enforced.

The myriad enforcement actions that occurred after Nicaea between Constantine, the bishops of Alexandria (Alexander and his successor Athanasius), and Arius, were examples of variation. After the Council of Nicaea, Arius had been exiled, but Constantine accepted Arius's contrition and re-admitted him in just two years. However, Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria where Arius was a congregant, suspected Arius had not accepted the creed.[34] As such, he would not re-admit Arius despite Constantine being "impatient" when asking him to do so.[35] Over the next several years, there were different enforcements imposed on Arius and the bishops of Alexandria (e.g., proscription, exile, deposition) at different times and interspersed with periods of re-admittance and restoration.[36] The variability did not help the Nicene Creed to be fully adopted but may have reflected periods where Constantine put practicality ahead of strict orthodoxy in his approach.[37] Rather

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[33] Edwards, "The Beginning of Christianization," 146.
[34] Drake, "The Impact of Constantine on Christianity," 130.
[35] Elliott, "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea,'" 179.
[36] Elliot outlines the evolving and fluid nature of acceptance and proscription among Constantine, the bishops of Alexandria, and Arius in relation to the Nicene creed over time. Elliott, "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea,'" 185-194.
[37] It has been proposed that in accepting Arius back in AD 327 Constantine was pragmatically dealing with the controversy by assuming that when Arius returned, he would not preach anything which contravened the anathemas to avoid the risk of being exiled again. This would in turn facilitate Arius moving further away

than occasional appeasement, effectively implementing change often requires the new approach to be clearly and consistently established and put into practice.

The convergence of governance and enforcement that occurred with new leadership is what was missing, and necessary, for effectively changing to the Nicene Creed. First, Ambrose of Milan was elected bishop in AD 373 and he was strongly pro-Nicene. Ambrose would prove to be extremely influential in establishing the primacy and use of the Nicene Creed.[38] He was in turn supported by the Western emperor, Gratian, who instituted laws that proscribed Arianism and led to the dismissal of several Arian bishops.[39] Ambrose also had a formidable relationship with the emperor Theodosius who was strongly pro-Nicene and became ruler of the East in AD 379.

One of the first acts Theodosius undertook was to reinforce the primacy of the Nicene Creed with an edict in AD 380. In the edict, he defined the Nicene doctrine as orthodox, disallowed any other approaches as heretical, and provided further elaboration in defining the allowed credal statements.[40] For example, the edicts had short statements describing what was considered acceptable, which would make them easy to apply and interpret. Theodosius then took steps to strengthen the Nicene position by ordering the bishop of Constantinople to accept the creed. When the bishop refused, he was removed from his post.

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from his former statements. Elliott, "Constantine and 'the Arian Reaction after Nicaea,'" 185.

[38] Danel Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the end of the Nicene-Arian conflicts* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 7.

[39] Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, 116.

[40] See Ayres for a detailed description of the edict and its contents. Lewis Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology* (Oxford, 2004; online edn, Oxford Academic, 14 July 2005), chap. 10, section 'Imperial Definition.'

Theodosius followed this by solidifying the status of the Nicene Creed with a council at Constantinople in AD 381.[41]

For the purposes of this paper and the change management model, the question of the Nicene Creed was primarily settled at the Council of Constantinople. At Constantinople, the creed was generally accepted and ratified to follow what had been decided in AD 325, and with the support of pro-Nicene bishops the language was extended to include the holy spirit.[42] While there are differences between the creeds of Nicaea and Constantinople, it may be asserted that in Constantinople the church leaders were "ratifying the Nicene faith" and restating "the basic tenets of the Nicene faith."[43]

After the Council of Constantinople, Emperor Theodosius strictly implemented the Nicene Creed in the East and applied anti-heretical legislation which had been decreed at the Council. In the West, Ambrose's vigorous pro-Nicene actions combined with Theodosius's anti-heretical legislation from the Council of Constantinople contributed to the "triumph" of the Nicene code.[44] Arianism still elicited debates and differences of opinion after Constantinople, but the anti-Nicene groups in the East ultimately declined.[45] As such, the change management journey was mostly complete by AD 381, and it was an impressive accomplishment considering the intensity and breadth of the conflict.

The Council of Nicaea was a turning point in the relationship between Christianity and the Roman Empire. It was

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[41] The Council of Constantinople in AD 381 was initially regional and not deemed 'ecumenical' because it was a council of only eastern bishops. However, it was recognized as 'ecumenical' by Pope Hormisdas in AD 523. Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, 119, 130.

[42] Anatolios, "The Christ of the Creeds," 180.

[43] Ferguson, "Creeds, Councils, and Canons," 432-433; Davis, *The First Seven Ecumenical Councils (325-787): Their History and Theology*, 123, 124.

[44] Williams, *Ambrose of Milan and the end of the Nicene-Arian conflicts*, 10.

[45] Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy: An Approach to Fourth-Century Trinitarian Theology*, chap. 10, section 'The Council Of Constantinople'.

the first time the emperor had become so closely involved in church operations and called a council of bishops from all regions to make decisions on universal church issues. It was also a forerunner of any large-scale change management project across a vast organization endeavoring to implement a new way of working. In responding to Arianism, Constantine initiated a level of consistency at the church that did not exist before the Nicene Creed.[46] Even though doctrinal differences continued after the Council of Constantinople, the changes ushered in by Constantine with the Nicene Creed were significant and were largely settled in the same century, and thus may be viewed as an example of effective change management.

[46] Mark J. Edwards, "The Creed," 135, 136.

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