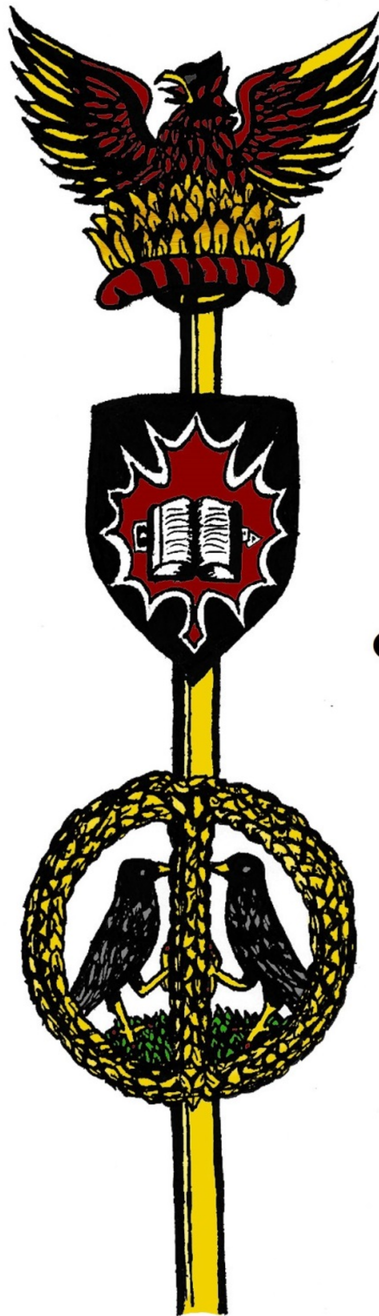

# CORVUS

## CARLETON UNIVERSITY

MMXVIII - MMXIX

# CORVUS

The Journal of the Carleton
University Classics Society

Volume 9
2018-2019

ISSN 2369-9086 (Print)
ISSN 2369-9094 (Online)

Published by the Carleton University Classics Society

Co-President: Oonagh Burns
Co-President: Shamus McCoy
Editor-in-Chief of Corvus: Zoe Burness
Treasurer: Ally Chapman
Co-Social Coordinator: Hayden Hanlon
Co-Social Coordinator: Francis Goyer-Morley
Executive-at-Large: Graeme Le
Junior Executive: Lee Swab

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

EDITORS III
CONTRIBUTORS IV
LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS VI

DIVINE ISLE 1
Colleen Dunn

THE DRAMATIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF HELLENISTIC ARCHITECTURE 2
Giulia Heinritzi

MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ONEIROMANCY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PURPOSES AND EFFECTS OF INCUBATION IN ANCIENT ASKLEPEIA 13
Clover Little

DIALECTIC AND SOPHISTRY AS SUCCESSFUL AND FAILED PATHS TO HAPPINESS IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES ON SOPHISTRY 21
Jackie Bradbury-Jost

BREATH OF ATHENA 31
Colleen Dunn

SUPER OR DIVINE: AN ANALYSIS OF GREEK GODS AND GODDESSES AS THE FIRST SUPERHEROES 32
Nick Lefebvre

INTERPRETATIONS OF WOMEN IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY 40
Emerald Leece

EURIPIDES' MESSAGE ON CHASTITY IN ATHENIAN SOCIETY 47
Danka Davidovic

GUARDIANS OF SWEET REMAINDERS 52
Colleen Dunn

A MYTHICAL COMPARISON OF HESIOD'S THEOGONY AND SNORRI'S EDDA PROSE 53
Shamus McCoy

SLICING INTO HONOUR: THE ANCIENT GREEK UNDERSTANDING OF THE PHYSICAL BODY AND DISSECTION 58
Laura Heys

A MAN'S WORLD: LITERARY TREATMENT OF ROMAN WOMEN IN THE TRIUMVERAL PERIOD 69
Ashley Carmichael

## EDITORS

*Editor-in-Chief*

**Zoe Burness** is a fourth-year student in English, with a minor in Greek and Roman Studies, and a concentration in Creative Writing. This is Zoe's first year on the executive team for the Carleton University Classics Society, and first year as an editor.

*Senior Editors*

**Samantha Albanese** is a fourth-year undergraduate student at Carleton University. She is studying History, with a minor in Archaeology. This is her fourth year as a member of the Carleton University Classics Society and her first year as an editor for Corvus.

**Hayden Hanlon** is a fourth-year undergraduate student in Greek and Roman Studies. This is her second-year editing for Corvus and her second year as an executive member for the Carleton University Classics Society.

**Brooke McArthur** is a fourth-year Carleton student working towards her double degree in English and Linguistics with Minors in History and Spanish. She hopes to someday complete an M.A. in English Literature at Carleton, a Publishing Certificate at Ryerson, and eventually her Ph.D. Brooke's ultimate goal is to become an Editor of Historical Fiction. She is a Jack of All Trades with many interests, from cars to farming and music. She hopes to travel the world with her career and listen to the stories of normal folk around the globe. "It's never too late to work to be great" are Brooke's words to live by.

**Emily McElroy** is a fourth-year student at Carleton University. She is working on an Honours Degree in Greek and Roman Studies with a minor in English and Archaeology. Her research interests include ancient funerary customs, sex work in the ancient world, and Ancient Greek religion. This is her first-year editing for Corvus and her fourth year as a member of the Carleton University Classics Society.

# CONTRIBUTORS

**Jackie Bradbury-Jost** is a fourth-year undergraduate student completing a double major in Humanities and Biology. Her primary interest in Classics is Plato's ethical thought. She intends to pursue graduate studies in bioethics and is interested in looking at how theories of the past can be applied to contemporary issues.

**Ashley Carmichael** is a fourth-year student majoring in Classics with a minor in Art History. Her interests include classical languages and ancient art, particularly how gender is portrayed in frescos, mosaics and sculptures. She is also interested in portraiture as propaganda in the Early Roman Empire.

**Danka Davidovic** is a third-year Combined Honours student studying History and Greek and Roman Studies. Her main passions are learning about classical mythology and everyday life in ancient Greece. She also enjoys studying the cultures and histories of Indigenous peoples in Canada. This is her first Corvus publication.

**Colleen Dunn** was always fascinated by ancient civilizations but was unable to pursue this interest until her sons were grown and she was retired from diagnostic pediatric imaging. As a 'mature' part time fourth-year student, she is pursuing a double major in Greek and Roman Studies and Religion and enjoying it immensely. She encourages everyone, whatever age or situation, to enroll in courses that interest you. The faculty and staff here at Carleton are knowledgeable and dedicated and her fellow students are keen and welcoming. She highly recommends Carleton University!

**Giulia Heinritzi** is a fourth-year undergraduate student at Concordia University, pursuing an Honours degree in Classics: Ancient History and Archeology and a minor in Human Environment. She is interested in combining archeology and spatial technologies in order to better understand the ways in which individuals in antiquity used, altered, and moved across the landscape. She would like to pursue this interest in her graduate studies.

**Laura Heys** graduated from the Bachelor of Humanities program in February 2019 with a combined major in Greek and Roman Studies. Her primary interests in Classics are Greek literature and archaeology, both Greek and Roman. In the future she hopes to continue her studies in one of these fields.

**Emerald Leece** is a second-year Business student with a minor in Greek and Roman Studies. Her love for ancient cultures began with Sid Meier's Civilization series of computer games and has only grown with time and every class she's taken at Carleton. Of particular interest to her studies are the experiences of ancient women and children including their representation in mythology, religion and political life.

**Nick Lefebvre** is (at the time of writing this biography) in his fourth-year of post-secondary education, and his first year at Carleton University. He is studying a double major in Law and English Literature with a minor in Business Finance at Carleton University. His academic history in Classics stems largely from the study of Greek and Renaissance theatre during his time at Bishops University, as well as an interest in seeing how the presentation and interpretation of fiction and literature has evolved alongside cultures over the last two millennia of civilization.

**Clover Little** is studying Anthropology for her major with a minor in Archaeology, and plans to pursue a Master's degree after completing her studies in June 2019. Her interest in Classics stems from a passion for archaeology and a desire to better understand past cultures and technologies. She hopes to continue in the field and teach Archaeology at the post-secondary level in the future.

**Shamus McCoy** is a fourth-year student in the Greek and Roman Studies program, with accompanying minors in Archaeology, and Medieval and Early Modern Studies. His interests rest primarily with the languages and history of the fourth through ninth centuries CE, with a current focus on the Latin literary culture of sixth century Gaul. He will be continuing his studies next year at the University of Ottawa in a master's program in Classics with a special concentration in Medieval and Renaissance Studies.

## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Salvete! Χαιρετε!

The Carleton University Classics Society has long supported the production of this peer reviewed journal, which demonstrates the thriving academic community of undergraduate Classicists at Carleton University and beyond. This ninth edition of Corvus stands as a testament to the spectacular work put forth by this community, and we applaud all of their work which has been submitted to this journal, as it affirms how our fellow students here at Carleton continue to seek a greater understanding and involvement in the discipline of Classics.

This journal would not have been possible without our Editor-In-Chief, Zoe Burness, and the incredible editorial board, all of whom have spent an enormous amount of time and energy towards this production. Furthermore, this journal would not have happened without the support of the College of the Humanities at Carleton University. Therefore, on behalf of the Carleton University Classics Society, we extend our gratitude to all of those involved in the production of Corvus.

Oonagh Burns

CUCS Co-President

&

Shamus McCoy

CUCS Co-President

# DIVINE ISLE

Resting silent in the turquoise sea, who am I?

Warm winds and frothy sea mists brush my brow.
Encircled by Cyclades sisters I became
the bright and brilliant gem reflecting great Apollo.
Far-shooting god loved and feared by all!

Lone lovely goddess Leto plump with life,
I offered her safe harbour on my crescent shores.
Clasping clinging to the date all quivering fronds and palms.
Earth, eyes open, welcomed Zeus' begotten.

I had no fertile fields of rustling grain.
Poor me I could not satiate a herd or flock,
but with Apollo's footsteps buds bloomed where'er he tread.
Gloom passed, radiant future thus foretold.

Content and smiling, Leto she rejoiced!
I sung with her, by our melody our bond was sealed.
Behold a shrine sacred to Apollo rising up,
merchants and priests, fat fragrant sacrifice!

Small dusty me I prospered,
Who am I?
Friend to Leto, I am another mother to Apollo.
I am Delos, and proud to be.

Colleen Dunn

# THE DRAMATIZATION AND STANDARDIZATION OF HELLENISTIC ARCHITECTURE

GIULIA HEINRITZI

## Abstract

*The architecture of the Hellenistic period reflects the theatrical and scholarly mentality that encapsulated the societies of this period. This interest in theatre and scholarship was expressed by a movement towards the standardization and dramatization of the exterior and interior of civic buildings such as the stoa, the agora, the bouleuterion, the theatre, and the gymnasium. Town planning and religious structures were also planned and constructed in order to imbue a sense of drama and intellectualism amongst Hellenistic Greeks. This paper, using ancient and modern sources as well as surviving material from the archaeological record, will explore the dramatization and standardization of Hellenistic architecture and how the construction of this type of architecture became an outlet for Hellenistic Greeks to attain a certain degree of control in their lives and provided an escape from the turbulent socio-political climate of this period.*

The Hellenistic period was a time rife with warfare and political instability, and this air of instability and insecurity shaped the minds of the Greeks, such that J. J. Pollitt states this period was defined by an obsession with fortune, a theatrical mentality, individualism, a cosmopolitan outlook, and a scholarly mentality.[1] These states of mind, most notably the theatrical and scholarly forms, can be seen within Hellenistic architecture. Thus, the standardization and dramatization of civic architecture's exterior and interior design, as well as a concern for town planning in the Hellenistic city, is a reflection of the theatrical and scholarly mentality. This was a way of attaining a certain degree of control and at times provide an escape from the realities of

[1]J. J Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 1-16.

this period. This paper will examine how town planning was used to further accentuate the theatrical and scholarly aspects of the Hellenistic city. It will examine the standardization and dramatization of crucial secular buildings within the city such as the *stoa*, the agora, the *bouleuterion*, the theatre, and the gymnasium. Furthermore, it will look at how religious structures –such as temples– were created to imbue a sense of drama and intellectualism.

During the Hellenistic period many cities were created by kings who were seeking to connect themselves to victory as a way of demonstrating their success and legitimizing their rule.[2] These relatively new cities could then be created on the basis of the Hippodamian grid-plan –named after Hippodamos of Miletus. According to Aristotle, Hippodamos divided the town into three areas –the private, the sacred, and the public.[3] This planning, albeit seen earlier in the 5th century B.C., introduced a rational plan to the city where streets intersected at right angles.[4] This town plan allowed a freedom of movement within the city in which the major buildings within the Hellenistic city such as the gymnasium, *bouleuterion*, and theatre were strategically located to punctuate the flow of movement within the city. Thus, they act as landmarks that individually dominate the city yet are linked together through their easy access to one another.[5] Within the Hellenistic city one no longer sees isolated structures, but a uniformity in regards to all of all the buildings needed to create a Greek city.[6] Although this plan has roots dating farther back than the Hellenistic period, its adoption and use in Hellenistic cities speaks to the scholarly mentality prevalent within this society. In this period there was a sense that rules and canons leading towards perfection should be established not only to further a quest for cultural sophistication, but also to determine what was desirable and undesirable in a field of study, and the Hippodamian grid-plan took on one such role in the planning of Hellenistic cities.[7] This type of planning can be seen at the city of Priene in which its plan demonstrates the typical grid pattern created through right angles. It has six main streets running east to west and crossed at right angles by fifteen stepped streets running north to south, and the public venues centrally located but separated from residential zones, even though these residential zones surround these open public spaces.[8] Prior to the Hippodamian grid-plan, citizens would still have had a central agora. However, the civic buildings would have been irregularly placed amongst each other and the agora would have been of irregular shape. Furthermore, the streets leading in and out of the agora were narrow and crooked as it did not follow a general system.[9]

Although these town plans demonstrated the scholarly interest of the Hellenistic society, the natural topography of the city could also be used to create a dramatic flair. The Temple of Athena at Lindos on Rhodes is an example of the use of the natural landscape to provide a sense of awe –the site projects out and over the sea.[10] This can also be seen at Pergamum where Eumenes II and his architects laid out the city along the slope of the citadel. The everyday affairs of the city took place at the bottom, the affairs associated with education in the middle of the slope, and at the top was the religious centre.[11]

---

[2] Graham Shipley, *The Greek World: After Alexander (*New York: Routledge, 2000), 5.

[3] Aristotle, *Politics,* trans. H. Rackman (Harvard University Press, 1944), 2.1267b.

[4] John Griffith Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology* (London: Laurence King Publishing, 2002), 299.

[5] James Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992), 42.

[6] R.D. Martienssen, *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture* (Great Britain: Percy Lund, Humphries & co. Ltd, 1964), 29.

[7] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age,* 242.

[8] Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture*, 46; Dinsmoor, William Bell. *The Architecture of Ancient Greece: An Account of its Historic Development.* 3rd ed. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1960. 262-63

[9] Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece*, 212.

[10] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 230.

[11] Ibid., 233.

Not only can the scholarly mentality be seen within the standardization of the placement of these buildings, but just like the Hippodamian grid-plan was used as a type of canon, or guide, sets of proportions and standardization for the construction of civic architecture, such as the standardization of the elements comprising the Ionic order, was established during this time. Continuing on this quest for achieving perfection, canons or rules, were developed which created standards in architecture, and one of the first architects in the Hellenistic period to initiate the standardization of architecture was believed to be Pytheos.[12] It is said that Pytheos, as well as other ancient architects, did not like the use of the Doric order because of the issues in its symmetry.[13] This was the Doric corner conflict, where Doric friezes would end with a half metope on the corners of the temple. Ancient architects struggled with these issues in symmetry, even devising the method of corner contraction where the architects narrowed the space between the corner columns so the frieze can end with a triglyph.[14]This issue posed a problem until ancient architects, such as Pytheos, decided to avoid this order. The best example of Pytheos' work is best seen at the Temple of Athena at Priene. It is an Ionic hexastyle temple with a pronaos, cella, and opisthodomos and it is clear that the architect used a canon of proportions.[15]The temple is 60 x 120 Ionic feet, the axial spacing between the columns is 12 Ionic feet, and the interior of the cella 50 Ionic feet.[16]Thus, Pytheos used the Ionic foot in an attempt at creating a building based on a mathematical concept.[17] Although Pytheos seems to have begun this scholarly tradition for the construction of civic architecture, it was Hermogenes who had one of the greatest influences in the Hellenistic period.[18]

Hermogenes is the architect who standardized the rules for the Ionic order, and agreed that the Doric order should not be used because of its issues with symmetry.[19] Hermogenes invented a set of five ideal proportions for the Ionic temple–*pycnostyle*, *systyle*, *diastyle*, *araeostyle*, and *eustyle*.[20] *Pycnostyle* meant that the columns are closer together. For example the intercolumniation of the columns in *pycnostyle* would be 1 ½, the interaxial distance 2 ½, while the column height is 10 column diameters.[21] Thus this scale is a relationship between the diameter and the height of the column as well as the distance between each column.[22]A temple designed by Hermogenes that closely resembles one of these ideal systems of proportions is the temple of Dionysus at Teos which resembles the *eustyle* system.[23] In the *eustyle* system, the intercolumniation is 2 ¼, the interaxial 3 ¼, and the column height 9 ¼.[24]The temple of Dionysus at Teos is a hexastyle temple with a peripteral colonnade and with the spacing of the columns being 11 Ionic feet while the lower diameter is 3 ½ Ionic feet, thus the ratio of the building is 1:3 1/7 –almost in the *eustyle* proportions.[25] Although Hermogenes created an ideal system of proportions, it seems as though these proportions were quite flexible. Another temple designed by Hermogenes is the temple of Artemis Leukophryene at Magnesia on the Maeander c.260

[12] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age,* 243.

[13] Vitruvius, *De Architectura,* trans. by Morris Hicky Morgan (Cambridge, MA.; Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1914) 4.3.

[14] Judith M. Barringer, *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 133.

[15] Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece*, 222.

[16] Ibid., 222.

[17] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 301.

[18] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 244.

[19] Dinsmoor, *Architecture in Ancient Greece*, 273; Lawrence *Greek Architecture*, 163.

[20] Vitruvius, *De Architectura* 3.3.

[21] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 244; Lawrence *Greek Architecture*, 163.

[22] A. W. Lawrence, *Greek Architecture,* (Hong Kong: World Print Ltd., 1983), 163.

[23] Dinsmoor, *Architecture of Ancient Greece*, 274.

[24] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 244.

[25] Dinsmoor, *Architecture in Ancient Greece*, 274.

B.C.[26] It is a pseudo-dipteral temple with an interaxial of 2 4/5 column diameter. It is almost diastyle, with an interaxial column diameter of 4, but not quite.[27]Thus, there seems to be a little more flexibility in this system of proportions, but this interest in rules and using mathematics as the determinant of how the building will take shape is a characteristic of this period. Not only is Hermogenes known for creating a system of proportions for temples, but he also codified the Ionic order.[28]Although in this temple he included the Attic cella with an opisthodomos, as Pytheos had previously used in his temple of Athena at Priene, he also included the Ionic column base, which was designed into three sections including a *scotia* in between two *tori,* smaller and thinner column shafts, the capital comprising of a volute scroll and echinus, as well as the use of a continuous frieze that surrounds the building, which included an architrave that is divided into fasciae.[29]

Just as was seen earlier, landscape was a method of expressing the theatrical mentality of the Greeks. However, the exterior and interior of civic buildings were also used to create an awe-inspiring view. The Hellenistic period was a time of continual warfare. However it was also a wealthy period of time, and as a result this increased wealth is reflected in the enlarged agora spaces and enlarged *stoae*, which become a standard part of the city.[30] The agora was an open space within the city where public announcements could take place, or an area where private and public transactions could be held.[31]Generally, however, it is a large open space surrounded by *stoae*, where one could also find the *bouleuterion*, *prytaneum*, public fountain houses and statues all located nearby. As mentioned earlier, prior to the Hippodamian grid-plan that became popular in the Hellenistic period, the agora was irregularly shaped, and although there were *stoae* they were more haphazardly placed. Thus they only partially enclosed the space. Whereas in the Hellenistic period, particularly in Ionia or Asia Minor where the cities could be built new rather than having to construct in an already densely built environment, the agora could have a geometric plan which was used to unify the city so that all important buildings were more interconnected or could be found within certain central areas –such as an agora.[32]

*Stoae* were not a new architectural invention in the Hellenistic city and can be traced back to the late 7th century B.C. However, it was only in the Hellenistic period, particularly in Asia Minor, when *stoae* became an architectural hallmark.[33]A *stoa* is a large rectangular unit, essentially a covered colonnaded walkway, which in the Hellenistic period was a place where shops were located.[34] *Stoae* come in many shapes such as the L-shaped *stoa*, which can be found in earlier periods such as the *Stoa of the Naxians* located on the precinct of Apollo on Delos c.550-540 B.C.[35] Although the Hellenistic period was not responsible for creating new styles of *stoae*, they are credited with using the *stoa* to frame the agora or religious sites through the use of two-storeyed *stoa*, a U-shaped *stoa* which surrounded two or more sides of an agora –and is thus an extension of the L-shaped *stoa*, and *stoae* with columns on either side to join two open areas[36]. Thus, they became used to frame the space in or around the *agorai*, the gymnasia, or

---

[26] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 246.
[27] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age,* 244 and 246.
[28] Ibid, 246
[29] Ibid., 246; Barringer *Art and Archaeology of Ancient Greece*, 85.
[30] Lawrence *Greek Architecture*, 196.
[31] Martienssen *Idea of Space in Greek Architecture*, 31.
[32] Ibid., 31-32
[33] Edwin J. Owens, "The Hellenistic City," *In A History of the Greek City*, edited by Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos, (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009), 186
[34] Theodore Fyfe, *Hellenistic Architecture: An Introductory Study*, (Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc., 1936), 157.
[35] Frederick E. Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture* (Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 56.
[36] Ibid., 245.

even sanctuaries which helped to create dramatic vistas or create uncertainty in what lies ahead and thus satisfied that theatrical mentality of this period.[37]

An example of the concern for the theatrical within *stoae* is the South Stoa at Olympia built during the 4th century B.C. It was 80 m long and provided a view to the procession that passed in front of the building from the south, as well as a view of the procession from its eastern end towards the southeastern entrance to the Atlis.[38] This provided an architectural backdrop for the last portion of the procession, while the Stoa of the Echo at Olympia within the sanctuary provided a similar role.[39] Furthermore, the *stoa* at Miletus was used to frame the agora. Around this agora on the eastern side, the *stoa* is a simple colonnade containing a row of double rooms in which one section of the rooms is only accessible from the street. On the northern and southern side of the agora, it was framed by two L-shaped *stoae* separated from the eastern *stoa* by a street. The northern *stoa* contains a double colonnade, while the southern *stoa* had rooms along the length of the southern wall.[40] Thus, the agora of Miletus was framed by these *stoae* in a geometrical fashion, according to the Hippodamian grid-plan.

Another type of *stoa* architects begin to use are multi-leveled *stoae* due to congestion, such as the two-storeyed straight *stoa* on the east side of the agora at Athens, dedicated by Attalus II of Pergamum and dated to c. 140 B.C., or the use of this *stoa* was due to the topography of the landscape.[41] Pergameme architects designed and constructed a type of *stoa* where there is an open space, or terrace, used for the agora on the top level and underneath the *stoa* are two further levels. The middle level containing storerooms and underneath that level is a row of shops which opened up to the leveled-ground below.[42] This feature can also be seen at the commercial agora in Aigai, where on the northwest side of the agora was a three-storey building with two of its levels lying below the agora due to the topography of its location.[43] Typically if the *stoa* was multi-leveled, the Ionic order would be used on the upper levels, while the Doric order would be used on the ground floor.[44] Not only is there a standardization in the use of the Doric and Ionic order being used for certain areas of a building, but there are also different forms of *stoae* used, such as the L-shaped or U-shaped, or the two-or-three-storied *stoae* that can be used within the Hellenistic city when an area is in a densely populated environment, or its used simply due to topographical limitations. However, they are typically used to frame, define, and unify a certain space such as the agora.

Another important aspect within secular architecture is the *bouleuterion*. The *bouleuterion* begins in the late archaic Athens, where the first building of this type was constructed possibly after the reforms of Kleisthenes.[45] The building for the Council of 500 was square in shape (c. 23 x 23m) with five supports for the roof, and the lower portion of the wall was built out of stone while the upper wall was constructed out of mudbrick. The seats were probably made out of wood, arranged in tiers and orators would have spoken in the middle of the structure.[46] However by the 4th century B.C.E. this old type of *bouleuterion* went out of fashion.[47]

---

[37] Martienssen, *Idea of Space in Greek Architecture*, 30.
[38] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture,* 54.
[39] Ibid., 54.
[40] Owens, “The Hellenistic City,” 187; Lawrence *Greek Architecture*, 197.
[41] Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 197.
[42] Ibid., 197.
[43] Owens, “The Hellenistic City,” 187.
[44] Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 197.
[45] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 142.
[46] Ibid., 142.
[47] Dinsmoor, *Architecture in Ancient Greece*, 242.

An example of the Hellenistic *bouleuterion* can be found at Miletus, constructed c. 170 B.C.[48] The complex of the *bouleuterion* contained a monumentalized gateway, a *peristyle* court and the chamber where the council met. The gateway and the open *peristyle* court were added features of the Hellenistic period, and a reflection of the theatrical mentality of this period as it used architectural features to create a grand and awe-inspiring scenery.[49] Within the chamber, the seats were arranged in concentric semicircles, similar to a theatre. Furthermore, the structure was roofed, and on the outside the walls were decorated with features of both the Doric and Ionic order. This is typical of Hellenistic architecture.[50] Another example of the *bouleuterion* can be found in the Thersilion of the 10,000 Arcadians at Megalopolis. The seating arrangements –in a U-shape or semicircle, is now preferred. The structure is 172 x 218 ½ feet, and encloses an area of 35,000 feet.[51] In order to provide an unobstructed view to the floor, the columns were set on a series of lines that radiated from the tribune at the centre of the square structure. Furthermore, the seats were made out of wood, and the floor sloped down towards the centre of the building.[52] Thus in the Hellenistic period the structure becomes more standardized in the way that it looks, and more grand either in size or through the use of additional structures like the gateway used at Miletus.

Another key feature within the Hellenistic city that receives a standardized form is the theatre. The basic requirements for a Greek theatre was an orchestra, a large enough area for the action to take place, and a *skene* which is a dressing room. However, the shape of the orchestra was not clearly defined until the late 6th or early 5th centuries where a large terrace was laid out for the orchestra on the southeastern foot of the Acropolis between the south slopes of the Acropolis and the temple of Dionysus.[53] Earlier, the orchestra might have been an area designated by an area cordoned off when there were performances.[54] Furthermore, prior to the late Archaic period there is no evidence of any seating arrangement, and when a clearly defined space for the orchestra in the sanctuary of Dionysus was created, the seats would have been arranged in straight rows.[55] However, during the Hellenistic period there is a change in theatre design. This might be due to the shift from Old Comedy, which dealt with issues concerned with specific communities during the classical period, such issues as peace and war, to New Comedy. However, if one was not a part of that community, such as a part of the *polis* of Athens, the topics discussed would not be applicable.

However in the Hellenistic period, there was a shift towards New Comedy which was developed by the playwright Menander. This comedy addressed situations and emotions which could be immediately relevant to anyone, and, as such, were universal. They were no longer inside jokes.[56] Thus, stock characters such as the scheming servant or stock themes such as the troubles of love can be found in New Comedy.[57] The reasons why Menander's works became so popular was because one could sense the feeling of powerlessness and the increased belief of random chance reflected in his plays. These sentiments were reflections of the sentiments people felt towards this period, a period characterized by constant warfare.[58] Thus, this new type of comedy within the Greek world required a new and standardized theatre building.

---

[48] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 348.
[49] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 348.
[50] Ibid., 348.
[51] Dinsmoor, *Architecture in Ancient Greek*, 242.
[52] Ibid., 243.
[53] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 97.
[54] Ibid., 97.
[55] Ibid., 98.
[56] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Art*, 4.
[57] Ibid., 4-5.
[58] Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 58.

The orchestra and *skene* continue to be used, but in this period there is the introduction of the *proscenium* stage. This is a raised platform so the actors could be more visibly seen, and it also became possible to use hand painted backdrops. These backdrops not only made it possible to present exotic views, but it also enabled the viewers to block out the real world, making the theatre a divorced entity from the outside world.[59] These changes not only reflect the interest in dramatic scenery, in this case through painted panels used to set the scene, but also became an escape from the Hellenistic world. An example of the typical theatre of the Hellenistic period would be the theatre at Epidaurus erected by Polykleitus the Younger c. 350 B.C.E.[60] The theatre comprises of an orchestra for the performance and the auditorium for the spectators with seats carved from limestone and two levels. The closest level for guests of honour and positioned lower to the ground than the rows above it. Next is the scene building, which provides a visual backdrop and a place to store equipment needed for the performances.[61] There is also a concern for visibility as not only is the level further back higher up, but the semi-circle formation of the auditorium provides a better view for those on the outermost sections than they would if the auditorium was rectangular.[62] There is also an example of a theatre in Syracuse which is concerned primarily with the theatrical nature of its construction. In the northern district of the city named Neapolis, a new residential zone was created through the use of the Hippodamian grid-plan, and the theatre that was constructed in the 5th century B.C. was expanded.[63] The theatre was expanded to accommodate 15,000 visitors, and it included distinct features. The semi-circular auditorium was partially framed by a *stoa* at the top, and the theatre also incorporated an artificial cave where water was brought from the highlands behind the city through a system of aqueducts, providing the water for the theatres hydraulic system. Furthermore, surrounding this cave were niches for sculptures.[64]There was a concern for a dramatic visual experience, which is promoted through the use of the *stoa* to frame the space, and the creation of the artificial cave and water system. This tendency to create an awe-inspiring view was furthered by locating the seating area on a steep slope so that it was still possible to see the panoramic views of the surrounding landscape.[65]

The *stoa* was important to frame a certain space and could be used as an architectural backdrop to create a dramatic scenery. The *bouleuterion* was similarly framed by the *stoa* and its architectural features enlarged to promote this theatrical mentality, which can also be seen in the standardization and enlargement of the theatre. This is not only a testament to the theatrical mentality but also the scholarly mentality of the time as it was deemed important to obtain rules to achieve a sort of ideal or perfection. However, there was another key secular building in all Greek cities: the gymnasium. The gymnasium served as an athletic complex, a school for philosophy, as well as an area where people could gather.[66] The social aspect of the gymnasium became more pronounced later, when an elaborate hypocaust system, a room which was heated by hot hair travelling beneath the floors, was developed in the Hellenistic period, as well as the invention of a *tepidarium,* which further encouraged longer social visits to the baths in the late Hellenistic period.[67] The initial use of the gymnasium was for practicing races, boxing, wrestling, etc. for gymnastic and athletic training which was important as the *polis* needed

[59] Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 58.
[60] Dinsmoor, *Architecture in Ancient Greee*, 244-45.
[61] Ibid., 244-45.
[62] Ibid., 245.
[63] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 349.
[64] Ibid., 349.
[65] Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 58.
[66] Ibid., 59.
[67] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 115; Steele *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 59.

physically fit and trained citizens to act as hoplites. This was otherwise known as the *gymnastike* system.[68] However, there were no specified enclosed areas to mark off where the gymnasium was until Peisistratid Athens in the 3rd quarter of the 5th century B.C.E.[69] However, the earliest detailed account of a gymnasium is found in Elis. Pausanias describes that the gymnasium consisted of three *perioboloi*, or walled enclosures, which included *dromoi* divided by tress and that there was also a *palaestra*, but there is no mention of any *loutron* –baths.[70] Initially, these early gymnasiums were located on the peripheries of towns but by the Classical period and into the Hellenistic period, cities were planned and these gymnasia not only became included into the layout of the city, but were also incorporated closer to the city centre. For example the gymnasium at Alexandria was located on the main street that ran east to west within the city.[71] By the Hellenistic period, this simple layout of the gymnasium was expanded and more thoroughly standardized. The number of rooms and facilities provided by the gymnasium were increased due to its increasing development, and because it also became associated with philosophical schools of thought and was used by travelling lecturers.[72] Therefore by the 4th century B.C.E the gymnasium formed an open space lined with *stoas* in which one of them –the *xystus*– was a covered running track. The *palaestra*, which was used for wrestling, boxing, and other activities, contained a central peristyle courtyard behind which were rooms. Some of the rooms were used for bathing, as well as troughs for washing, and at later dates c.330 B.C.E, hot water was added into these rooms.[73] One of the best examples of a *palaestra* of the late Hellenistic period comes from the Lower Gymnasium at Priene. At this site there is a *propylon* which is used as an entrance gate into the complex which leads into a courtyard. In the western room there is a *loutron* where water arrived through spouts within the walls. There was also an eastern room which may have been the *apodyterion*, a so-called dusting-room, where wrestlers would sprinkle dust onto their oiled bodies, and there were also storerooms that could be found.[74] Then the central room served as a schoolroom and an *exedra* which was the lecture hall, and then the stadium served as an area where athletes could practice.[75] Furthermore, the *palaestra* could exist independently from the gymnasium, but for a complex to be called a gymnasium there needed to be at least one *palaestra*, as such the *palaestra* was the most distinctive element within the whole complex and could be used to refer to the whole complex.[76] Therefore the gymnasium takes on a more standardized form in terms of the number of rooms there were and what the rooms were used for.

However, there was also an interest in using the *stoa* to frame the space and its shape is so flexible that it even becomes used as an indoor track. Furthermore, the gateway was used as a way of creating a more theatrical effect. The gymnasium develops from a simple open area for training to a more standardized building that becomes a symbol for education and physical well-being.[77] Thus a standardized civic building complex within the Hellenistic period comes to include *stoas* to frame the space to produce a theatrical effect, and this emphasis on standardization relates to their interest in the didactic tradition, or rather the scholarly mentality of the time as a way of controlling the built environment. However secular buildings were not

---

[68] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 115-116.

[69] Ibid., 117.

[70] Pausanias, *Description of Greece,* trans. by W.H.S Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod Cambridge, (MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1918), .6.23.1-7.

[71] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 120.

[72] Ibid., 121.

[73] Lawrence, *Greek Architecture*, 198.

[74] Winter, *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture*, 122-124.

[75] Ibid., 122-124.

[76] Ibid., 118.

[77] Owens, "The Hellenistic City," 186.

the only aspect of the city in which a concern for the theatrical and scholarly forms were demonstrated.

This concern for the theatrical also found its way to temple architecture. This theatrical concern in temple architecture manifested itself by either using buildings such as *stoae* to block the view that was to come and increase anticipation, use the natural topography of the area to heighten the dramatic nature of the site, or manipulate the interior of a temple to create unexpected views.[78] The use of the natural topography to increase this theatrical mentality can be found at temple of Athena at Lindos on Rhodes, in which the acropolis seems to be jutting out towards the sea.[79]

And just as *stoae* were used in civic architecture to frame the space or present a view, such as at the gymnasium in Priene or the theatre in Syracuse, it was also used in temple architecture for a similar purpose. The sanctuary of Asklepios at Kos is one such temple that not only incorporates the land as a means of heightening the spiritual and dramatic experience, but it also uses *stoae* to do so. This sanctuary consists of a rising set of terraces dotted with *stoae* and temples.[80]On the first terrace, and subsequently the lowest in elevation, there was a *propylon* and a U-shaped *stoa* which framed the entrance into this sanctuary which would have had the effect of enhancing the excitement and uncertainty of what lay beyond it. On the middle terrace worshippers would find a temple, with a *stoa* framing the left side of it. Then on the upper terrace the Doric temple to Asklepios was surrounded by a U-shaped portico, and surrounding the temple were sacred cypress trees which were used to create the illusion of the first woodland shrine of Asklepios. This terrace also provided a view to the sea, thus using the landscape to further the dramatic effect of the sanctuary.[81]

The inside of the temple could also be used to present unexpected and dramatic views. The temple of Apollo at Didyma, which began construction c.300 B.C.E. provides one such example.[82] This was a massive temple which measured 110 x 51m, and the Ionic columns of the *peristyle* measured 20m tall, ten columns along the façade and twenty one along the flanks.[83] Once an individual approached the outer *peristyle* columns, worshippers were faced with a forest of columns which was used to hide a massive cella and a fake door positioned six feet higher than the floor.[84] This area may have been where the messages from the oracles took place.[85] Another surprise for the visitor once they realize that the large door is in fact a false door is that the entrance into the cella is actually a hidden, sloping, barrel-vaulted tunnel, which leads into the inner court of the open-air cella enclosed by massive walls and inside was a small shrine for the cult statue of Apollo and a sacred grove.[86] From the outside, this temple looks like a regular – albeit massive– temple. However, once inside, worshippers are presented with dramatic and unexpected views. Furthermore, once on the stylobate, worshippers find themselves within a dark temple entrance and must overcome this barrier to go further into the temple until they find themselves in a peaceful, sacred grove.[87] Worshippers, when confronted with this temple, were probably taken aback by the scenery.

---

[78] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 230 & 236.
[79] Ibid., 230.
[80] Ibid., 231.
[81] Ibid., 233.
[82] Ibid., 236.
[83] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 343.
[84] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 243; Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 53.
[85] Pedley, *Greek Art and Archaeology*, 343.
[86] Ibid., 345.
[87] Steele, *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor*, 54.

Lastly, the scholarly mentality of the temple is an attempt to use a system of ideal proportions to achieve a sense of perfection.[88] Examples of temples which use an ideal set of proportions are the temples of Pytheos and Hermogenes. It seems that this interest in dramatic views and controlling how a temple or building would look based on a canon seems to be reflective of the period at hand, a period that was constantly changing and the future uncertain, thus it was through architecture that the people of this period could achieve some sense of control.

The Hellenistic period was a tumultuous period, and as a result there was a movement towards creating some sort of stability and dramatic flair to escape the chaos of their reality. This was done by creating a standard town plan through the Hippodamian grid-plan which established an agora as the central entity within the city and interconnected all the major features of a Greek city; the *bouleuterion,* theatre, and gymnasium through the main streets. There was also an attempt to create an ideal set of proportions for temples, and an interest in using the *stoa* to frame spaces as a way of creating dramatic vistas or create an anticipation for what is to come when one passes through the *stoa* to the other side. Dramatic effects were further incorporated into the city by taking into account the natural terrain of the site, or using architectural features like the Ionic columns to create a forest of columns. Architects even devised the *proscenium* stage to hang painted panels as an attempt to create an exotic landscape, or at least a landscape fitting to the play being performed. This was all done as an escape from a war-ridden period, and as an attempt to achieve a certain degree of control as this standardization in architectural features – such as adding the *proscenium* stage in the theatre, devising what rooms were incorporated into the gymnasium to make it a gymnasium –such as the incorporation of a *palaestra*, or the use of the Doric order on lower levels of the building and the Ionic order on the second level, would have provided. As such, the people of the Hellenistic period indulged in this theatrical and scholarly mentality that arose due to the socio-political climate of this period, as a method of escape and to attain a certain degree of control.

[88] Pollitt, *Art in the Hellenistic Age*, 242.

Bibliography


Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by H. Rackham. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1944.

Barringer, Judith M. *The Art and Archaeology of Ancient Greece.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Dinsmoor, William Bell. *The Architecture of Ancient Greece: An Account of its Historic Development.* 3rd ed. London: B.T. Batsford Ltd., 1960.

Fyfe, Theodore. *Hellenistic Architecture: An Introductory Study.* Chicago: Ares Publishers Inc., 1936.

Lawrence, A.W. *Greek Architecture.* 5th ed. Hong Kong: World Print Ltd., 1983.

Martienssen, R.D. *The Idea of Space in Greek Architecture.* 2nd ed. Great Britain: Percy Lund, Humphries & co. Ltd., 1964.

Owens, Edwin J. "The Hellenistic City." In *A History of the Greek City,* edited by Alexandros Ph. Lagopoulos. 183-191. Oxford: Archaeopress, 2009.

Pausanias. *Description of Greece.* Translated by W.H.S Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1918.

Pedley, John Griffiths. *Greek Art and Archaeology.* 3rd ed. London: Laurence King Publishing, 2002.

Pollitt, J.J. *Art in the Hellenistic Age.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996.

Shipley, Graham. *The Greek World: After Alexander.* New York: Routledge, 2000.

Steele, James. *Hellenistic Architecture in Asia Minor.* New York: St Martin's Press, 1992.

Vitruvius. *De Architectura.* Translated by Morris Hicky Morgan. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press; London: Oxford University Press, 1914.

Winter, Frederick E. *Studies in Hellenistic Architecture.* Canada: University of Toronto Press, 2006.

# MULTI-FUNCTIONAL ONEIROMANCY: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PURPOSES AND EFFECTS OF INCUBATION IN ANCIENT ASKLEPEIA

CLOVER LITTLE

## Abstract

*The Asklepeion of ancient Greece is known broadly as a sanctuary to Asklepios, god of healing, who would supposedly cure the ills of supplicants during their overnight stays in a process called incubation. There has been much speculation regarding both the processes and functions of incubation; this paper synthesizes these theories and takes the approach that incubation carried multiple functions. Supplicants were able to envision cures that would assist them in healing or increase their level of comfort, and indeed may have experienced visible improvement through what can now be understood as the placebo effect. On a broader scale, incubation was a process open even to those who could not afford the services of a physician or would have been refused for religious reasons. These many functions of incubation and the Asklepeion come together to benefit the individual, the religious collective, and the state.*

In classical studies, incubation is broadly defined as a process in which a supplicant arrives at a sanctuary with the intention of receiving a dream.[1] Incubation is thought to have occurred most frequently at sanctuaries of Asklepios, and in these cases supplicants would hope for the god to approach them in a dream and either cure them or advise them on what actions to undertake in order to cure their illness or other malady.[2,3] The individual intent behind

[1] H. von Ehrenheim, "Greek Incubation Rituals in Classical and Hellenistic Times," (Ph.D dissertation, Stockholm University, 2011), 11.

[2] von Ehrenheim, "Greek Incubation Rituals," 11.

participation in these rituals is unlikely to have gone beyond a desire for improved health, but taken from a structuralist perspective incubation may have had many more effects for present and future participants. Current knowledge and viewpoints suggest incubation was a complex and multi-functional experience that affected not only the individual but the sanctuary community and even the polis and the collective Greek conscience. The primary function, which applies in most or all cases, would be to foster health and hope for recovery in the individual and the general community of supplicants.[4] Supplicants would also have turned to Asklepios when human physicians were either unwilling or unable to cure (or at least address) their conditions.[5,6] Incubation may also have provided perceptible results through what would now be considered a placebo effect.[7] Finally, a maintenance and negotiation of the line between gods and mortals seemed to underlie the rituals of incubation and other interactions with the divine at Asklepeia.[8,9,10] All of these factors join together to suggest that incubation, while it may have had limited intended purposes for the individual undergoing it, also resulted in a variety of other beneficial effects.

Because life in ancient Greece tended to be shorter and more dangerous than today, it is perhaps unsurprising that so many sought the favour of the gods in the hopes that it would ensure continued good health; as Melfi writes, "Festivals and annual celebrations [at Greek Asklepeia under Roman control] evoked the presence of the gods in order to obtain their favours and help mortals overcome crucial moments either of the agricultural year or of human life."[11]. This is no less true of a common ritual like the incubation. The supplicant's primary goal during incubation was to be cured of whatever ailed them or the person they had come to represent.[12] Even when healthy, the pious devoted offerings, particularly anatomical votives,[13,14] and prayed to Asklepios for their continued good health; this is known to have been done not only by individuals but whole communities.[15] It is not at all out of the question, either, that the incubation ritual did successfully address health problems; if Asklepios did not cure them himself during the ritual but instead advised on a treatment, it was customary for the priests to follow through with what the supplicant recalled being told, which often did find success.[16] Whether or not every ritual resulted in good health, the inscriptions that began to amass at Asklepeia also served to promote a sense of hope.[17] These inscriptions (ἰάματα), written by supplicants after being miraculously

---

[3] E.J.L Edelstein & L. Edelstein, *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies,* (New York: Arno Press, 1975), 145-46.

[4] P. Martzavou, "Dream, Narrative and the Construction of Hope in the Healing Miracles of Epidauros," *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World* (2012): 178-80.

[5] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 169.

[6] O. Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives: Counter-Intuitive Concepts and Cultural Expectations," *Open Library of Humanities* vol. 2, 1 (2016): 17.

[7] O. Panagiotidou, "Religious Healing and the Asclepius Cult: A Case of Placebo Effects," *Open Theology* vol. 2, 1 (2016): 88.

[8] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 176, 181.

[9] Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives", 4-8.

[10] E.S. Poyer, "Asclepius at the Nexus of Divination and Medicine," (Ph.D dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2013), 91, 97.

[11] M. Melfi, "Ritual Spaces and Performances in the Asklepeia of Roman Greece," *The Annual of the British School at Athens,* vol. 105 (2010): 317.

[12] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 145-49.

[13] Laios, K., Tsoucalas, G., Karamanou, M. & Androutsos, G. "The Medical–Religious Practice of Votive Offerings and the Representation of a Unique Pathognomonic One Inside the Asclepieion of Corinth," *Journal of Religion and Health* vol. 54, no 2. (2015): 453.

[14] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 93.

[15] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 181.

[16] Ibid., 162-173.

[17] Martzavou, "Dream," 178-180.

cured by Asklepios,[18] likely served not only as testaments to the god's power or advertisements for the sanctuary but also to provide hope and comfort for future arrivals at the sanctuary.[19,20] Martzavou suggests the accounts in the ἰάματα are compositional representations of dreams experienced by supplicants, rather than exact accounts of the dream's content.[21] An element of composition, rather than an exact factual retelling of a dream, may mean the ἰάματα were at least partly intended to serve as positive encouragements for those who were anxious about their health problems and whether or not Asklepios could address them. Moreover, as these stories were carried out of the sanctuary walls by word of mouth, they would no doubt have encouraged those living in the area to put their faith in Asklepios and his sanctuaries if they were to fall ill at a future point; for the more famous sanctuaries like those at Epidauros,[22] Pergamon,[23] or Corinth,[24] this reputation probably spanned throughout the Greek world. While there existed physicians in this period, and they were indeed considered sons and protégés of Asklepiosm,[25,26] their services were usually restricted to those who could afford them, thus leaving the lower classes with nowhere to turn except the local Asklepeion when ill or injured. Should a non-aristocratic individual experience this misfortune, then, they would be able to find at least some small comfort in the fact that Asklepios was willing to cure them or suggest a treatment so long as they provided him an offering that was affordable in relation to their income[27] and then successfully underwent the process of incubation.

Not only could Asklepios aid those who suffered from treatable problems such as lice[28] but could not afford to pay a physician; he could also be called upon to cure, or at least ameliorate, any medical condition, and this provided hope to those whose illnesses did not fall under the purview of mortal medicine.[29] These two differences between Asklepios and human physicians would have been crucial to many: as Edelstein & Edelstein explain, "The economic threat of disease, then, to the lower and middle class was grave, graver perhaps than at any later time … one must consider the tribute which is paid by the testimonies to the god Asclepius who gave help cheaply. He was well known for being satisfied with small thank-offerings; it was one of his claims to fame and admiration that he took care of the poor."[30] This clarification is crucial in understanding the significance Asklepios (and the incubation ritual by extension) would have had to these classes. Indeed, many Asklepeia went beyond this initial generosity and also provided free lodging for the poor and ill, an extreme rarity in this period of Greek history.[31] Thus, because incubation was open to all classes, even those unable to afford the assistance of a physician, it provided both hope and the real potential for improved health to the poor and destitute of the time. This is also the case for those whose ills did not fall under the scope of the physician's expertise. If a physician felt a patient's malady was incurable, at least by mortal means, then he would not treat them, and would probably have suggested they visit an

---

[18] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 12, 93.
[19] Martzavou, "Dream," 178.
[20] von Ehrenheim, *Greek Incubation*, 14.
[21] Martzavou, "Dream," 178.
[22] von Ehrenheim, *Greek Incubation*, 174.
[23] Ibid., 29.
[24] Ibid., 177.
[25] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 140.
[26] M. Lang, *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepeion,* (Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977), 30.
[27] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 175-78.
[28] Martzavou, "Dream", 180.
[29] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 91.
[30] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 175.
[31] Ibid., 176.

Asklepeion instead.[32] This almost omnipresent alternative would have provided an average Greek citizen with the comforting knowledge that, because of Asklepios' kind nature[33,34] and ability to perform healing miracles outside of the realm of human ability,[35,36] one was never truly without hope.

This perspective is not without dissent. Poyer disputes the universality of Asklepios' healing miracles, arguing that because anatomical votives almost always represented healthy limbs with no deformation, "it must be concluded that certain types of bodily disorder were simply not practical for incubation."[37] She suggests instead that supplicants were either devoting these offerings in order to promote existing good health, suffering from conditions that were "chronic, but not immobilizing,"[38] or were not there to pray to Asklepios for health reasons at all. The suggestion that actions were undertaken to prevent ill health is attested by other sources as previously mentioned[39,40,41] and there may well be some validity in applying this logic to the dedication of anatomical votives. The second two categories, however, represent a fundamental misunderstanding of established literature and provide no valid evidence to warrant its re-examination. Edelstein & Edelstein outline in far greater and more thoughtful detail the many reasons that supplicants might have gone to incubate at an Asklepeion[42] and even Poyer admits that only three inscriptions are currently known to address topics other than health.[43] Moreover, at least one votive offering displaying a condition, possibly a tumour or animal bite, was found at Corinth and it is possible, if not almost certain, that more existed but were lost or destroyed over time; this archaeological evidence suggests the existence of "pathognomonic" anatomical offerings was not as extraordinary as Poyer makes it out to be.[44] Laios et al. suggest instead that these limbs are usually healthy and intact because supplicants hoped this would be the result of their incubation, or possibly due to the ancient Greek preference for representing the human form in perfection.[45] Poyer uses potential evidence gleaned from anatomical votive offerings to make far-reaching conclusions about the common experiences of all supplicants, when in reality the ἰάματα, as written testimony, prove a much more illuminating and reliable source and do not support the claim that certain disorders would not have been suitable for treatment by incubation. In contrast with Poyer's view that certain chronic and congenital issues were considered incurable, Edelstein & Edelstein suggest that Asklepios might instead have lessened the suffering or inconvenience caused by these conditions instead of miraculously curing them every time.[46]

As can be seen from the great faith placed in Asklepios, or indeed from any cursory study of sanctuaries, the gods were a fact of life in ancient Greece. They affected mortal life in measurable and tangible ways. As written by Edelstein & Edelstein, "it is hardly exaggerated to say that anybody who in a world in which the gods were still alive should visit a temple and wait for a divine vision would have such dreams [of Asklepios curing or advising them]. In the given

---

32 Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives," 17.
33 Martzavou, "Dream," 185.
34 Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 175-78.
35 Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 91.
36 Martzavou, "Dream," 180.
37 Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 93.
38 Ibid., 93.
39 Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 181.
40 Laios, "The Medical-Religious Practice of Votive Offerings," 453.
41 Melfi, "Ritual Spaces," 317, 334.
42 Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 76-91, 101-118, 125-131, 139-141, 169-171.
43 Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 93-95.
44 Laios, "The Medical-Religous Practice of Votive Offerings," 452.
45 Ibid., 452-453.
46 Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 169-171.

circumstances these visions were quite natural."[47] This suggests that supplicants would likely have had a preparatory mental foundation prior to arriving at the Asklepeion, and this preparedness would have increased the odds that they would dream just as they expected to.[48] Not only would they hold expectations of what mystical events might occur during incubation, but they may well enter into the incubation with an understanding of what cure was needed as well. The work of a physician in ancient Greece, Edelstein & Edelstein explain, was more understandable to the layman than the advanced medical technology of the information era would be to a present day contemporary; supplicants' knowledge of potential cures for their issues is demonstrated by the fact that Asklepios' miracle healing matched the medical knowledge of the time.[49] Furthermore, the relative regularity with which Asklepios appeared and offered a cure or advice would likely leave supplicants in a positive mental state; as mentioned earlier, one of the purposes of incubation was to promote hope and healing, and in this case a supplicant's hope or general positive outlook may have improved their physical state and promoted recovery.[50,51] In cases demonstrating visible improvement immediately following the ritual, the miracle cures of Asklepios can be interpreted as having come about through a placebo effect.

The potential benefits of the placebo effect are increasingly agreed upon by modern scientists and while to apply this exact terminology to the ancient Greeks could be taken as anachronistic, the same neurobiological benefits would likely have existed during the time of the Asklepeia. Panagiotidou explains that "humans can form certain beliefs which can further inspire hope *based on their own previous experiences*, the *rational arguments deriving from learning associations* which connect certain features of the applied treatments with recovery, and *the assurance offered by some external authority that this treatment is going to be effective.*"[52] Panagiotidou is not alone in her analysis, either; though they do not explicitly mention the placebo effect, Edelstein & Edelstein express a similar sentiment toward the potential effectiveness of incubation in curing what they call "nervous disturbances."[53] Thus, it is not unreasonable to believe that that the placebo effect could have had demonstrably positive outcomes for supplicants undergoing incubation even without the application of an effective medical cure.[54] Panagiotidou argues that if a patient believes they are undergoing a medical procedure that will cure them, and they then experience an improvement in symptoms, then in fact the placebo effect can itself be understood as a cure, albeit an imperfect and possibly temporary one.[55] Because many maladies in the Greek world would be considered out of the hands of physicians,[56] incubation and its consequent placebo effect may indeed have been the only cure available in quite a wide variety of circumstances. As previously established, the ἰάματα left by past supplicants would have provided hope to new arrivals seeking treatment from Asklepios; when considered in the context of this ritual's potential to trigger a placebo effect, incubation can be understood as a positive self-fulfilling prophecy. The more supplicants who experience an improvement in health or a reduction in chronic symptoms, the more ἰάματα are left at the sanctuary and the more famous Asklepios' healing miracles become; this propagation

[47] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 163.
[48] Ibid., 163-168.
[49] Ibid., 166.
[50] Ibid., 165-168.
[51] Panagiotidou, "Religious Healing," 84-88.
[52] Ibid., 80, emphasis original.
[53] Edelstein, *Asclepiu*s, 168.
[54] Panagiotidou, "Religious Healing," 79-80.
[55] Ibid., 80-81.
[56] Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives," 17.

of hope, in turn, increases the odds that future supplicants will experience positive results from incubation due to the placebo effect.

Beyond the application of cures to maladies, incubation was a process through which the relationship between Asklepios and his patients was explored; by extension, this had implications for the relationship between gods and mortals and even the relationship between magic and science. Perhaps paradoxically, Asklepios was the god closest to humanity, but the way in which rituals were carried out also heavily reaffirmed the separation between the divine and the mortal. Panagiotidou explains: "[o]n the one hand, Asclepius' ancestry from his mother indicates his connection with the human world … On the other hand, the origin of Asclepius from Apollo connects him with the Olympian gods and legitimates his cult and religious beliefs in his healing powers."[57] Because of this status, Asklepios interacted with mortals regularly, unlike most other gods who might only have been supposed to appear during their festivals.[58] It was much easier, then, for a mortal to commune with Asklepios; besides sacrifice,[59] supplicants could interact far more directly with Asklepios than with any other god because of the intimate nature of the incubation ritual.[60,61] The liminality of the incubation ritual is crucial because, as von Ehrenheim notes, "the basics of defining rites as liminal have much to do with the experience they generated in the worshippers."[62] While this is written in the context of a specific incubation rite, it is reasonable to believe that the experience of liminality would have existed to some degree in all incubation rituals at Asklepeia due simply to the fact that mortals were interacting directly with a god. With this in mind, then, as well as the knowledge that Asklepios was born a mortal and was thus closer to humanity than other gods,[63] incubation can be seen as a bridge between the mortal and the divine, and Asklepios the patron that facilitates it so long as the proper sacrifices and ritual purifications have taken place.[64]

Asklepios' unique position not only allows the average human to encounter the divine; it also reinforces and punctuates that very boundary. As mentioned, there were many ailments that were considered beyond the scope of a human physician's ability, but Asklepios, a god, could address and cure them. Poyer cites epilepsy and gout[65] as two examples and Panagiotidou further suggests that "Asclepius shared the same means and methods with his mortal counterparts, but he was credited in contemporary accounts with successfully applying them even to the most difficult health conditions. Where human doctors failed, Asclepius succeeded."[66] Panagiotidou even seems ready to suggest (though she deigns not to put into words) that to attempt to cure a malady beyond their means might be considered inappropriate conduct by a human physician;[67] Laios et al. and Edelstein & Edelstein also make comments to this effect.[68,69] While Asklepios and human physicians have the same ultimate goal of curing their patients and often the same means, the scenarios in which each may be of assistance will not always overlap.[70,71,72] This

---

[57] Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives," 4.
[58] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 155.
[59] Ibid., 189.
[60] Ibid., 155-159.
[61] Martzavou, "Dream," 18.
[62] von Ehrenheim, *Greek Incubation*, 127.
[63] Edelstein, *Asclepius,* 176.
[64] Ibid., 148-151.
[65] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 91.
[66] Panagiotidou, "Asclepius' Myths and Healing Narratives," 21.
[67] Ibid., 15.
[68] Laios, "The Medical-Religious Practice of Votive Offerings," 139-140.
[69] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 451.
[70] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 91.
[71] Laios, "The Medical-Religious Practice of Votive Offerings," 451.
[72] Edelstein, *Asclepius*, 175-176.

draws a strong line not only between what human and divine physicians *can* do, but what human and divine physicians *should* or *should not* do. This is further reinforced by the fact, as attested by Poyer, that human physicians could err: "[w]hat made doctors and seers potentially untrustworthy was their ability to harm their clients through misinformation. As the keepers of special knowledge—the professionals more qualified to interpret signs than those who consulted them—they could disrupt their client's life through ignorance or malice."[73] It is in such a way that the existence of the incubation ritual draws a stark line between the human and the divine physician, despite the fact that Asklepios is of mortal origin; while the two may at first seem paradoxical and irreconcilable, they are in fact entirely compatible. Rather than suggesting that incubation is only a process through which the relationship between the mortal and the divine is emphasized, then, it can be better understood as a ritual that both reminds supplicants of this difference and permits them to experience the presence of a divinity that is more accessible to them than any other.

Supplicants entered into the incubation ritual with the intention of overcoming a malady. To the modern mind this approach and its mysticism might seem unlikely to garner positive results, but incubation was a source of hope to individuals and to communities, and for those who could not afford the services of a human physician—all but the aristocratic class—it provided reassurance that all was not necessarily lost if misfortune struck in the form of illness or injury. This in and of itself was a positive effect, but it also encouraged devotees to enter into incubation with a hopeful mindset that would have primed them for a placebo effect that, whether or not a subsequent cure was offered and was successful, may have improved their mental or even physical state. Incubation also allowed supplicants to experience a liminal encounter with a divine presence, likely the only opportunity for an average layman to do so in ancient Greece; while doing so it also reinforced Asklepios' generous and dependable nature, especially in comparison to human physicians. When these factors are considered together, it can be concluded that the positive effect incubation would have had for the typical citizen of a city-state would have been unparalleled in the ancient Greek world. Social class did not matter to Asklepios, nor did the nature of the medical complaint; indeed, sometimes he even addressed non-medical pleas.[74] His assistance was always available as a last resort. Incubation was more, then, than a simple plea for good health: it was a multi-functional ritual that benefited not only the individual undergoing it, but also the vast community of potential supplicants throughout the Greek world who, when bad health befalls them, will know where to turn.

[73] Poyer, *Asclepius at the Nexus*, 82.
[74] Ibid., 91-93.

Bibliography

Edelstein, E.J.L. & Edelstein, L. *Asclepius: A Collection and Interpretation of the Testimonies*. New York: Arno Press, 1975.

von Ehrenheim, H. *Greek Incubation Rituals in Classical and Hellenistic Times*. Ph.D Dissertation, Stockholm University, 2011.

Laios, K., Tsoucalas, G., Karamanou, M. & Androutsos, G. “The Medical–Religious Practice of Votive Offerings and the Representation of a Unique Pathognomonic One Inside the Asclepieion of Corinth.” In *Journal of Religion and Health*, 54, no 2. (2015): pp. 449-454.

Lang, M. *Cure and Cult in Ancient Corinth: A Guide to the Asklepeion*. Princeton, NJ: American School of Classical Studies at Athens, 1977.

Martzavou, P. “Dream, Narrative and the Construction of Hope in the Healing Miracles of Epidauros.” In *Unveiling Emotions: Sources and Methods for the Study of Emotions in the Greek World*. Edited by A. Chaniotis. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, pp.177-204, 2012.

Melfi, M. “Ritual Spaces and Performances in the Asklepeia of Roman Greece.” In *The Annual of the British School at Athens.* 105 (2010): pp. 317-38.

Panagiotidou, O. “Asclepius’ Myths and Healing Narratives: Counter-Intuitive Concepts and Cultural Expectations.” In *Open Library of Humanities*. 2, 1 (2016): pp. 1-26.

Panagiotidou, O. “Religious Healing and the Asclepius Cult: A Case of Placebo Effects.” In *Open Theology*, 2, 1 (2016): pp. 79-91.

Poyer, E.S. *Asclepius at the Nexus of Divination and Medicine*. Ph.D Dissertation, State University of New York at Buffalo, 2013.

# DIALECTIC AND SOPHISTRY AS SUCCESSFUL AND FAILED PATHS TO HAPPINESS IN PLATO'S DIALOGUES AND SOPHISTRY

JACKIE BRADBURY-JOST

## Abstract

*One of the major themes in Plato's works is the relationship between possessing knowledge and living the good life. Plato's choice to structure his texts as dialogues reflects his (or Socrates') apparent belief that the dialectical method is one of the most effective strategies of acquiring knowledge, as displayed in* Meno. *Plato's dialogues on sophistry demonstrate that discussion can also have the opposite outcome—that is, the concealment of truth. In this paper, I discuss Plato's epistemological doctrines and his theory regarding the relationship between knowledge and happiness, as outlined throughout his works. I then turn to his dialogues on sophistry to examine the sophists' strategies for obscuring the truth from their audiences and interlocutors, which they do for personal gain. Though the sophists believe that concealing the truth through these methods will benefit them, Socrates argues that doing so will ultimately prevent them from achieving true and lasting happiness.*

In his dialogues on sophistry, Plato argues that discussion can lead you to the good, through dialectic, or corrupt your soul, through sophistry. Through an analysis of these dialogues, with an emphasis on *Meno*, *Gorgias*, and *Protagoras*, this paper will show why the sophist inevitably fails to achieve lasting happiness. I will first discuss Plato's explanation of what knowledge is, how it is acquired, and why it is good for the soul. This will involve a discussion of philosophers, who seek the truth and use dialectic to grasp it. I will then look at how and why sophists intentionally prevent the acquisition of knowledge in their students and

audiences. I will conclude by showing that, in doing this, the sophists prevent themselves and others from becoming happy.

To begin, knowledge is true belief, or opinion, supported by the reason why it is true. It must be built upon an understanding of the multiplicity and unity of the Forms, which are the absolute nature of things. Knowledge can be acquired through dialectic, which uses methods such as collection and division to understand the Forms and relationships between them.

Knowledge differs from true opinion in that it is supported by the reason why it is true. This is demonstrated in *Meno*, in which Socrates discusses with Meno, a young aristocrat involved in politics and the military, about the nature of virtue and the way in which it is acquired. Although Socrates is unable to rid Meno of his false understanding of virtue, he is able to have a fruitful discussion with Meno's slave about a geometry problem. The movement from ignorance to knowledge, as Plato understood it, is thus exemplified in Socrates' conversation with the slave.

Double ignorance refers to the state of being unaware of one's own false opinion. Through refutation, double ignorance and false opinion are both lost, and true opinion can then be acquired. Socrates' discussion with Meno demonstrates how double ignorance hinders investigations of knowledge. The young Thessalian aristocrat visits Socrates while in Athens, presumably in the hopes of defeating him in a verbal contest. Meno asks Socrates whether he thinks virtue can be taught, armed with arguments he has learned from Gorgias. Socrates suggests that they first examine what virtue is before determining whether it can be taught. Meno presents Socrates with a whole "swarm"[1] of virtues, as his interlocutor describes it, and each definition of virtue is refuted. Angry that the discussion is not going his way, Meno refuses to accept Socrates' refutations.[2] He even sabotages their discussion with the Learner's Paradox, in which he argues that one cannot ever learn anything.[3] Because of this, they are unable to carry out a proper investigation and are forced to examine whether virtue can be taught before understanding its nature.[4]

Socrates' discussion with the slave, on the other hand, shows the positive outcome of accepting refutation and letting go of double ignorance. Socrates introduces a simple geometry concept to the slave and asks him a question to develop it further. The slave gives two wrong answers to Socrates' geometry problem, and learns that both of his answers are false.[5] As Socrates points out, it is only after admitting that he does not understand the problem that the slave is able to, and desires to, acquire true opinion about it.[6] After losing his double ignorance, the slave actively follows Socrates' prompts and comes to understand the solution to the geometry problem.[7] Thus, true opinion can be acquired through discussion only after the refutation of existing false opinion.

However, true opinion can be easily replaced by another false opinion through false teachings. Knowledge is less susceptible to being lost than true opinion because it also includes the reason why something is true. Socrates explains this through the allegory of the statues of Daedalus, which are beautiful, but not worth much if they can run away.[8] Like the rope that ties

---

[1] Plato, *Meno*, 72a, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997) 872.
[2] Ibid., 873-9.
[3] Ibid., 880.
[4] Ibid., 886.
[5] Ibid., 882-3.
[6] Ibid., 883-4.
[7] Ibid., 884-5.
[8] Ibid., 895-6.

down the statues, knowledge "ties down" true opinion with an account of the reason why it is true.

The knowledge that "ties down" true opinion—that is, all knowledge—is an understanding of what Forms are in themselves and in their relation to other Forms. Plato's Forms are the absolute nature of things; they are universals rather than particulars. In the *Republic*, Socrates explains that the Forms are themselves one, but since they are manifested in actions, bodies and one another, they appear to be many.[9] An example of a Form is justice.

Forms can mix in different ways. The mixing of Forms is explored in *Sophist* through Theatetus' discussion with the visitor. The latter explains that a Form can either be a part of a whole, or it can share in many different individual things.[10] Some Forms are more comprehensive than others and have parts which are themselves other Forms. An example of this type of Form is virtue. The many different virtues, such as wisdom and justice, are all comprehended in the Form of virtue. It is important to note that this is not a sum of Forms, but rather a grouping of them. Each virtue takes on a different character when gathered together with the others. Other Forms are not comprised of parts but are instead instantiated in many different and otherwise unrelated things. For example, the Form of beauty is present in beautiful things such as flowers and art. These things are different from each other, but beauty is manifested in both.

A knowledge of Forms and the relationships between them is an understanding of the reason why something is true. For example, Meno's slave knows the Forms of square, line, triangle, equal, divided, and many others. Through his systematic discussion with Socrates, he comes to understand how these Forms relate to, or mix with, each other in determinate ways. By the end of their discussion, the slave understands the web of Forms in relation to the geometry example, and so he understands the solution to the problem.[11]

As shown in Plato's dialogues, dialectic is an effective method of acquiring knowledge without a teacher. It uses methods such as collection and division in order to understand the Forms, and to come to conclusions regarding relationships between them. Ideally, this style of discussion concludes in the discovery of some truth.

Dialecticians try to come to an understanding of Forms and the ways in which they relate to each other. One way in which they do this is through collection and division. Socrates describes the method of collection and division in *Phaedrus*. Collection consists of grouping together things that belong to one Form in order to understand what they are as a whole. Division consists of separating these things "along [their] natural joints"[12] in order to understand them individually. Combined, the three speeches in the Phaedrus are a collection and division of the Form of love.[13] Thus, the method of collection and division allows the dialectician to understand Forms that are comprehensive and have parts.

Not only do dialecticians understand comprehensive Forms, but they also have the ability to know which Forms mix. Therefore, the dialectician has a bird's-eye view of the Forms and also grasps the relationships between them. In *Sophist*, the visitor observes that Forms mix together such that one thing can share in many different Forms.[14] For example, a man can be

---

[9] Plato, *Republic*, 476a-480a, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 1102-7.

[10] Plato, *Sophist*, 253d-e trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 276.

[11] Plato, *Meno*, 881-5.

[12] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 265e, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 542.

[13] Ibid., 542.

[14] Plato, *Sophist*, 273-5.

described as both just and tall even though the Forms of justice and height are not directly related to one another. The visitor argues that the presocratics and the sophists fail to investigate things properly because they reject the idea that things can mix.[15] Additionally, it is observed that some Forms mix while others do not.[16] Dialectic is the art that allows the philosopher to understand which Forms mix with each other.[17]

We have now seen what Plato understood knowledge to be, and how it could be acquired. I will presently turn to Plato's argument as to why knowledge should be sought in the first place. It is argued in several of Plato's dialogues that knowledge should be pursued because it is good for the soul and the only thing that can provide lasting happiness. Knowledge is good for the soul because the healthy soul acts well—that is, justly and with discipline—and this makes a person happy. In *Gorgias*, Socrates argues that knowledge of natures and causes is the art required to discern the good. He does this by distinguishing between arts and knacks; while knacks can only guess at what is good, arts are supported by knowledge of it.[18] Thus, a knowledgeable soul is able to recognize what is good for it. Furthermore, knowledge orders the soul, which makes it happy. Knowledge makes things orderly as opposed to chaotic. For the soul, orderliness translates into justice and moderation. Socrates argues that a soul is in good shape if it is organized and orderly, and an ordered soul is law-abiding, just, and exercises self-control.[19]

Orderliness of the soul is what makes a person truly happy. Socrates briefly argues in *Gorgias* that a person who wants to be happy should practice self-control.[20] This concept is further developed in the *Republic*, in which Socrates argues that the happy soul is ruled by reason. In his discussion with Glaucon, Socrates says that the guardians of their theoretical city will be its rulers, and that to perform this role they must be knowledgeable.[21] The city can be read as an analogy for the soul. The rational part of the soul should be the one to rule it, and the spirited and appetitive parts of the soul should obey reason.[22] A soul governed by reason is able to have its desires—for truth, understanding, and virtue—sated, but satiation is impossible for a soul ruled by its appetite for bodily pleasures.[23]

In this discussion, Socrates also makes a distinction between opinion and knowledge. Philosophers have knowledge of the Forms, whereas "lovers of opinion" do not.[24] Since philosophers are the most knowledgeable, they should be the rulers of the city.[25] When read as an analogy for the soul, this section argues that knowledge, not opinion, should rule the soul. All people have the ability to apply their reason and discern the good,[26] particularly through dialectic, which grasps the truth and the good.[27] Philosophers, who are ruled by knowledge, are orderly and happy. In contrast, those who lack knowledge and are governed by mere opinion or appetite—such as the sophists—remain unhappy.

Knowledge not only makes a person happy, but also allows them to remain happy. Teachings affect the soul immediately, imparting onto it either true or false opinion, or knowledge. This is described in *Protagoras*. Socrates warns Hippocrates that he should be

---

[15] Plato, *Sophist*, 271-6.
[16] Ibid., 275.
[17] Ibid., 275-6.
[18] Plato, *Gorgias*, 463a-465c, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 807-9.
[19] Ibid., 848-9.
[20] Ibid., 851.
[21] Plato, *Republic*, 1048.
[22] Ibid., 1073.
[23] Ibid., 1193-4.
[24] Ibid., 1102-7.
[25] Ibid., 1107-11.
[26] Ibid., 1136.
[27] Ibid., 1147-8.

careful to whom he entrusts his soul because harmful teachings cannot be unlearned.[28] Socrates explains that knowledge of the truth protects the soul against false teachings.[29] By protecting the soul against false opinion, knowledge allows it to remain happy. This is illustrated in the myth of Er in Book X of the Republic. Most of the people in the myth choose to lead unjust lives again and again despite having learned that this will make them unhappy. The philosopher, unlike the others, chooses the good life for its own sake and is always happy.[30]

Sophistry prevents the acquisition of knowledge, and therefore the happiness of the soul. Sophists intentionally discuss in ways that are not conducive to the discovery of the truth. They use rhetoric to persuade their audience of unjustified beliefs in order to gain something that they want. Unlike philosophers, who endeavour to discover the truth, sophists aim to persuade their audience of a belief, true or not, that will allow themselves to gain power or pleasure, or to avoid pain. In other words, their souls are not ruled by reason, but rather by their passions. Therefore, philosophers and sophists discuss in very different ways. Philosophers use dialectic, which, as discussed, allows them to acquire knowledge and become happy. I will now turn to the style of discussion favoured by the sophists, which makes use of various techniques to defeat or persuade the interlocutor. I will then look at the harmful effects of sophistry on the sophists' audiences and on themselves.

Sophists persuade their audience or interlocutor with sophistical techniques. Firstly, they make unclear statements by avoiding defining terms. For example, in *Protagoras*, we see Protagoras making a speech to potential customers about his product, namely sophistical teachings. The sophist avoids clearly stating what he teaches and requires pressuring from Socrates to clarify himself.[31] Protagoras is intentionally unclear because he wants to attract as many students as possible. If he is unclear about what he teaches but makes his services seem desirable, potential customers will see in him whatever it is that they want. Gorgias also avoids defining his profession when speaking with Socrates; he simply states that it is oration. Socrates questions him to force him to explicitly state what oration is.[32]

Secondly, the sophists do not present both the multiplicity and unity of Forms. In his speech about virtue, which he claims to teach, Protagoras names many different virtues, such as justice, shame, temperance, and piety, but does not explain how each of these relate to each other.[33] Here, Protagoras is doing two things. First, he is again being unclear about what he teaches, but in a way that makes his teachings seem desirable to a wide audience. Second, he is attempting to win his argument with Socrates without showing that he does not fully know what virtue is. Socrates recognizes this sophistical technique. He asks Protagoras to clarify whether he thinks virtue is a whole with many parts or if the different virtues all refer to exactly the same thing.[34]

Likewise, Meno provides many different definitions of virtue when Socrates asks him what virtue is. Socrates points out to Meno that he is not telling him what the Form of virtue is, but rather listing many different things that he sees as virtuous.[35] This conceals the fact that Meno does not understand, or care to understand, what virtue is and is only interested in defeating Socrates with rhetoric. Similarly, Hippias repeatedly tries to equate the nature of the

---

[28] Plato, *Protagoras*, 313d-314b, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 751.

[29] Ibid., p. 751.

[30] Plato, *Republic*, 1217-23.

[31] Plato, *Protagoras*, 754-5.

[32] Plato, *Gorgias*, 794-8.

[33] Plato, *Protagoras*, 758-9.

[34] Ibid., p. 762.

[35] Plato, *Meno*, 872-7.

fine with one instantiation of it. He clearly does not realize that there is a difference between the two and is not interested in what is true, but rather in what would defeat his opponent in argument.[36]

A third sophistical technique is the use of long speeches to prevent one's audience from analyzing every step of one's argument. Protagoras uses several long speeches in his discussion with Socrates. He uses a very long speech to argue that virtue is teachable,[37] and delivers another speech when Socrates asks him to explain what is good.[38] Socrates recognizes that Protagoras and other orators use this technique to avoid clearly answering questions.[39] He asks Protagoras to reply more briefly so that he can follow his argument.[40]

It is explicitly stated in the *Gorgias* and *Greater Hippias* dialogues that these sophists give long speeches as well. Gorgias gives speeches as a teacher of oratory,[41] while Hippias works as an ambassador for the city-state of Elis and travels to other cities to give speeches there.[42] In *Phaedrus***,** Socrates implies that he could use a long speech to convince an audience that a donkey was a horse, emphasizing the recurring argument that long speeches are often used for deception.[43]

Finally, the sophists tailor their arguments to a certain conclusion. This technique is easiest to observe in *Euthydemus* because Euthydemus and Dionysodorus intentionally tailor their arguments to opposite conclusions. For example, they ask Clinias whether it is ignorant men or wise men who learn, and then refute both possible answers.[44] Sophists use this technique to win arguments and to convince their interlocutor of their claim.

Sophistical techniques are only effective when used on large groups of people who are ignorant of the truth. As Socrates explains to Hippocrates, those without knowledge are not protected against false arguments presented by the sophists.[45] Their opinions are not "tied down" like the statues of Daedalus.[46] However, even people who are ignorant of the truth could resist false teachings by questioning the steps of a sophist's argument; this is why sophistical techniques are most effective on ignorant crowds. People in large groups have less of an opportunity to question the sophist in regard to the individual steps of his argument. They are also influenced by the opinions of others in the crowd. A large audience is a sort of spatial analog of a long speech.

In *Gorgias*, Socrates argues that an orator is not a teacher because it takes time to teach someone the truth, and so it would take an extremely long time to teach something to a large gathering of people. The orator must then be simply a persuader rather than a teacher.[47] The reason why it takes a long time to learn something is because the speaker must be questioned point by point for the interlocutor or the audience to understand each step of the argument. This way, they can end with an understanding of the web of Forms surrounding the subject of the

---

[36] Plato, *Greater Hippias*, 287d-301c trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 905-18.
[37] Plato, *Protagoras*, 756-62.
[38] Ibid., p. 767.
[39] Ibid., p. 762.
[40] Ibid., pp. 767-8.
[41] Plato, *Gorgias*, 792-3.
[42] Plato, *Greater Hippias*, 903-4.
[43] Plato, *Phaedrus*, 536-7.
[44] Plato, *Euthydemus*, trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997). 712-3.
[45] Plato, *Protagoras*, 751.
[46] Plato, *Meno*, 895-6.
[47] Plato, *Gorgias*, 800.

discussion, as the slave did in *Meno*. The slave is given time to grasp each step of the argument before moving on to the next.[48]

In Socrates' dialectic-style discussions, he and his interlocutor take a long time to question each point that they make and examine the reasons why their claim is true. This is why they finish their discussion having acquired knowledge instead of simply opinion. This is explained in *Lesser Hippias*. Socrates explains to Hippias that he questions wise people to learn from them. To really understand what the speaker is saying, he must have the opportunity to question them point by point and understand how each step of the argument leads to the next.[49]

Sophists harm their audiences by instilling false opinions in them and obscuring the truth. By preventing them from acquiring knowledge, the sophists prevent these people from becoming happy. Sophists persuade their audiences of false beliefs through persuasive, but false, arguments. In doing this, sophists hinder their listeners' ability to acquire knowledge, and thus prevent them from coming to understand what is good for their souls. When people are convinced of false understandings of justice and virtue, they are unable to act truly justly and virtuously. Furthermore, because many of the sophists champion bodily pleasures as the good, their listeners allow their passions to rule over their reason. Since a soul is only happy if it is properly ordered by knowledge, these people will not become happy until their false opinions are refuted.

In addition to harming their audiences, sophists also harm their own students by teaching them how to commit injustice, which corrupts their souls. Those who are attracted to sophistry want to gain power by any means necessary. In *Protagoras*, Socrates and Hippocrates attend an event featuring three different teachers of sophistry. Protagoras, Hippias, and Prodicus each try to convince the guests that they should become their students. In his description of the event, Socrates lists the people in attendance, and all were known to be very bad people who were excessively attracted to power.[50] Callias, son of Hipponicus, was born into the richest family in Athens, and perhaps in all of Greece. He had a reputation for being controlled by his lust and greed, and he squandered his inherited wealth on flatterers and women.[51] He is mentioned in the *Apology* as the person who "has spent more money on Sophists than everybody else put together."[52] Critias, son of Callaeschrus, was the leader of the Thirty Tyrants. He was responsible for planning some of their most reprehensible acts, such as murders, banishments, and a mass execution.[53] Charmides, son of Glaucon, was one of the Ten chosen by the Thirty Tyrants to rule Piraeus. He was also accused of having illegally performed the secret Eleusinian mysteries, but his sentence was later overturned.[54] Phaedrus of Myrrhinus was also accused of profaning the Eleusinian mysteries, and consequentially went into exile.[55] Adeimantus, son of Leucolophides, was an Athenian general in the Peloponnesian war. He was taken prisoner by Lysander but unlike all the others, he avoided execution; some believed it was because he had betrayed Athens.[56] Alcibiades arrogantly displayed his wealth and was a famous traitor of Athens.[57]

---

[48] Plato, *Meno*, 881-5.
[49] Plato, *Lesser Hippias*, 929.
[50] Plato, *Protagoras*, 752-3.
[51] Nails, Debra, *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002), pp. 68-70.
[52] Plato, *Apology,* trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 20.
[53] Nails, *The People of Plato*, 110.
[54] Ibid., 91-92.
[55] Ibid., 232.
[56] Ibid., 4-5.
[57] Ibid., 13-17.

Others are also named. This long list of infamous people makes a strong statement regarding the type of people who are attracted to sophistry.

Sophistry teaches these people how to acquire power instead of trying to rid them of their harmful and wrong conception of how to become happy. As just shown, all of the guests who attend the "sophist trade show" in *Protagoras* end up as bad people. Furthermore, Meno, Polus and Callicles were all students of Gorgias, and they are all shown to have a false understanding of justice and virtue. Because of their lack of knowledge, Gorgias' students commit injustice.

We have already seen that Meno has a false understanding of virtue. Socrates refutes Meno's many definitions of virtue, and it is clear that the aristocrat does not understand the difference between the nature of virtue and instantiations of it.[58] Meno became a bad military leader and was known to act viciously.[59] Polus, another of Gorgias' students, believes that tyrants and orators live the happiest lives and refuses to accept Socrates' refutation of his argument that committing injustice is better than suffering it.[60] Finally, Callicles tries to argue that it is just for powerful people to use force over others to satisfy their appetites. He also argues that this allows them to be happy. Socrates refutes him, but he will not let go of his false understanding of justice.[61]

In committing injustice, the souls of the sophists' students are corrupted further. Socrates argues that committing injustice corrupts and mutilates the soul, causing it to behave badly.[62] He says that punishment is required to discipline a corrupt and disorderly soul and allow it to become happy.[63] Socrates illustrates this concept with a myth at the end of his discussion with Callicles. He tells a mythical account of the afterlife in which unjust and corrupt souls are disciplined so that they may be cured.[64]

Furthermore, Sophists harm their students by teaching them how to avoid being refuted, and by teaching them to view discussion as a competition. Since they refuse to have their false opinions be refuted, the sophists and their students can never learn anything. Sophists lack the "knowledge, good will, and frankness"[65] that Socrates describes in the Gorgias as being required for proper dialectic. In order to do what they do, sophists consciously commit to the belief that there is no such thing as truth, or at least that the common conception of justice and virtue is false. Otherwise, Socrates would argue, they would not be able to commit injustice or obscure the truth. Thus, they fail to recognize opportunities in which they can learn something from others. Protagoras is known to argue that there is no such thing as universal truth.[66] Additionally, Callicles tells Socrates that he should leave philosophy behind because it hinders success,[67] showing that he does not believe the search for truth to be a worthy endeavour.

Moreover, sophists and their students come to view all discussion as a form of competition, and they refuse to accept refutations of their arguments. As discussed earlier, Meno refuses to accept Socrates' refutations of his definitions of virtue, and so they are forced to continue their discussion of virtue without understanding its nature.[68] Furthermore, Polus and Callicles believe that Socrates is tricking them and refuse to accept when they have been refuted.

---

[58] Plato, *Meno*, 878-9.

[59] Nails, *The People of Plato*, 204-5.

[60] Plato, *Gorgias*, 816-25.

[61] Ibid., 826-9.

[62] Ibid., 854-6.

[63] Ibid., 849-52.

[64] Ibid., 865-9.

[65] Plato, *Gorgias*, 830.

[66] Plato, *Theaetetus*, 151e-161b trans. G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve, in *Plato, Complete Works*, ed. J.M. Cooper (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997), 168-79.

[67] Plato, *Gorgias*, 828-30.

[68] Plato, *Meno*, 879-87.

Callicles even attempts to leave the discussion, showing that he is completely uninterested in discovering the truth.[69] Socrates' attitude towards discussion and refutation starkly contrasts with those of the sophists. As discussed earlier, Socrates questions people in order to learn from them.[70] He is not ashamed to learn, and he feels relief when his ignorance is cured.[71]

To conclude, dialectic allows people to become happy, whereas sophistry makes happiness increasingly difficult to obtain. Once a person has chosen one of these two paths, they become impervious to the other, and will have guaranteed either the acquisition or forfeit of happiness. The dialectician, having grasped knowledge of the good, has no desire to act unjustly. On the other hand, the sophist consciously commits to the belief that truth does not exist, and he learns to view discussion as a competition; thus, he will never accept refutations of his false opinions and he will never come to know anything. Without knowledge, the sophist will act unjustly and allow his actions to be dictated by his passions; his soul will remain disordered and, consequentially, unhappy.

---

[69] Plato, *Gorgias*, 849-50.
[70] Plato, *Lesser Hippias*, 929.
[71] Ibid., 931-2.

## Bibliography

Plato. *Complete Works*. Translated by G.M.A. Grube and C.D.C. Reeve. Edited by J.M. Cooper. Indianapolis: Hackett, 1997.

Nails, Debra. *The People of Plato: A Prosopography of Plato and Other Socratics*. Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002.

# THE BREATH OF ATHENA

Mistress of Athens, resourceful wise Pallas Athene.
Gorgon aegis, spear clutched firm in hand,
you rise from marble shards and stinging sand.
You who sprung from Zeus will never die.
The owl with wings unfurled still soars,
your olive buds and blooms beneath a windswept sky.

Inhalation exhalation, roars and whispers heard.
Your temple stands, awesome, winsome stark.
Ridged pillars scarred by thrusts that left their mark.
Goddess Acropolis enshrined.
Panathenaia vanquished vanished
yet onward upward in procession we still climb!

Could we capture you in perfect pixels just one glimpse
of pure essence sourced from ritual deeds?
We recreate with dreams an entity.
Lingering divinity leaves its trace.
Athena breathes behind between
eternal towering Doric beams of sacred space.

Colleen Dunn

# SUPER OR DIVINE: AN ANALYSIS OF GREEK GODS AND GODDESSES AS THE FIRST SUPERHEROES

NICK LEFEBVRE

Abstract

*There are far too many similarities between the stories of the Greek gods and the modern superheroes of today for it to be coincidence. The similarities are beyond simple inspiration, and upon examination, are re-imaginings from the Classic to the Modern. Connections exist in the form of the cultures existing as a depiction of all the righteous virtues and heroic mindsets that humans strive for, despite their innate flaws. The superheroes and gods both possess superhuman abilities, whether they be innate when they are born or gained through events of their life. There are also heroes and gods that share distinct similarities between each other in terms of their character traits and arcs. Batman and Hercules both follow the hero's journey in terms of their origins of broken families and undergoing labours to ascend to something greater than the mortal world around them. Further, it is not only the male heroes and gods that are represented in modern superhero comics, super heroines and goddesses are also depicted through examples such as Wonder Woman of DC Comics and Black Widow of Marvel Comics. Finally, the villains of both Greek mythology and the super villains of comics are a parallel of each other, with similar goals, and even names inspired by the Titans of ancient Greece.*

In Ancient Greece, the gods represented the best of what humans believed to be physically possible. Olympus and its inhabitants were considered supreme beings who oversaw the goings on of the world around them, and humans were simply lucky to be able to share in the mercy of the gods. They also possessed otherworldly mythological properties and powers capable of reshaping the world around them in ways almost unthinkable to mortals. However, the gods were not perfection. There was discourse and conflict among them constantly, which

added a deeper layer of humanity to them. This is in contrast to other religions, such as Christianity, where the deity is placed on a pedestal as being perfection, and untainted by any form of mistakes that plague the mortal world. Given the way that they are each unique in their abilities and stories, and deified by culture, the Greek gods and goddesses share many similarities with the modern superhero. In fact, given all these similarities, Greek gods and goddesses are one of the earliest examples of a culture, much like our own, that glorifies and deifies superheroes.

Why compare the superhero cultures of the Greeks and modern comics in the first place? While the two cultures share similarities, the reason for their existence share far more profound similarities than the similarities in character motivations, abilities, or other details. The Greeks constructed their religion of their gods as just that: a religion. The superhero culture of the twentieth century is not a religion in the sense that it is offering an answer to questions of what comes after death. Instead, superhero culture functions far more like a cult, where it only deals in the physical world, while not trying to answer profound questions about life and death. While it may be true that there is stigma attached to the word cult when describing superhero culture, it is not needed, since modern writers and the ancient Greeks seem to share the notion of the types of characters they seek to deify. Both the gods and superheroes represent righteous virtues, the best of what humanity is capable of. This is why Zeus, the king of the gods, is the god of justice, much like Superman, who fights for truth, justice, and freedom. This shows that it is important to dissect not only why the two different sets of deified figures exist in the first place, but also that their impact on our lives, and our dependence on them has greatly reduced. Transferring from a religion which seeks to answer questions that science cannot, to a cult which depicts idealized versions of humanity in the form of superheroes.

The largest shift that occurred between the two cultures, is that there is far less emphasis on the supernatural. The Greeks contained many stories where the metaphysical, or intangible was presented as tangible and real, an example being the idea that the Titan Atlas was known for holding up the sky. With the reliance on science that is seen in the twentieth century, this is an explanation for a part of nature which we now have the scientific answer to, and the explanation of a giant man holding up the sky is no longer something that can be taken as fact, or even accepted as belief in religion, since it has so overwhelmingly been proven otherwise. As Andrew Bahlmann writes:

> it has been revealed in the comics that Superman's invincibility offers no protection from the forces of magic… The shift from mystical toward the scientific, though incomplete, was a natural growth from the emphasis on technology and the sciences in the popular culture that inspired Superman's creators.[1]

This displays why superheroes, while similar to the Greek gods, are distinctly separate from the supernatural details of those myths. This is how superhero fiction isolates itself as something unique from Greek mythology while still drawing heavy inspiration.

When talking about superheroes, the first thing that often is brought up in the early twenty-first century, given the surge in popularity of the genre, is powers. Each superhero is designed to possess a unique ability of some sort that reflects their character in some way. This is also seen in the Olympians, for example, Hermes, the messenger god, is able to travel at immense speeds and fly. This is a reflection of his role on Olympus, and also as a

---

[1] Andrew R. Bahlmann, *The Mythology of the Superhero* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2016), 7.

messenger. Given his abilities to run at superhuman speeds, The Flash from DC Comics can be seen as a modern equivalent to Hermes. As another example, Artemis, goddess of the hunt, possesses divine skills with a bow and arrow, famed for being the best shot on Olympus. The skill with a bow and arrow is seen in the two superheroes of Hawkeye from Marvel Comics, and Green Arrow from DC Comics. While it may be true that these heroes' skills are learned, rather than innate in the case of Artemis, they are still considered superhuman in each of their respective canons and stand among other superhuman as equals. As a final example, Zeus the most powerful of the Olympians, possesses control over the skies and can throw lightning bolts as weapons. While not the same power as Zeus, Superman is capable of flying through the skies, and his ability of heat vision, in the sense that it is an energy projectile, can be seen as an equivalent to Zeus' lightning. These examples are just a small selection of a wide array of modern superheroes that share the motif of the divine abilities gods and goddesses possess in the form of their superpowers.

Through the use of their superhuman abilities, the gods inserted themselves as the protectors and overseers of the mortal world. The same is true with modern superheroes. In DC Comics, the Justice League, a group composed of superhuman beings, gather at the Hall of Justice, or The Watchtower, where they oversee any potential catastrophes on Earth and beyond. Even the name Hall of Justice displays an immediate similarity to the notion of righteousness present on Olympus, with Zeus himself being the god of justice. Superman's Fortress of Solitude could also be used as an example. However, given the "solitude" part of the name, it does not represent the community, and group mentality that Mount Olympus does. Given that their gathering places are somewhere that is only accessible by members of the group, or beings that those members deem worthy, they can be interpreted as the modern equivalent to Mount Olympus, yet another parallel between the myths of Ancient Greece and the modern superheroes of the twenty-first century.

However, despite their superhuman status as deities, the gods were not omniscient or omnipotent. They were prone to making mistakes such as when Epimetheus allowed Pandora near the box resulting in the evils within being released unto the world. Alternatively, Hera consistently attacking the women her husband engaged in affairs with, rather than target her rage to Zeus. These shortcomings and lack of perfection from higher beings contrasts with other religions such as Christianity where God is portrayed as all-knowing, and all-powerful. They also display humanity in the gods, allowing for empathy from mortals when the gods suffered due to their mistakes. As Marvel's Captain America states in the Marvel Studio's film *Captain America Civil War:* "We try to save as many people as we can. But that doesn't always mean everyone."[2] This displays that these deified beings are not all-powerful, and sometimes are not capable of executing their protective duty for all mortals and are subject to failure, just like the Greek gods.

In fact, the entire plot of *Civil War* revolves around the government attempting to assert control over superheroes due to collateral damage, and the superheroes refusing. This is an allegory for the hubris displayed by mortals in Greek mythological texts in an attempt to rise above their natural place in the world. Such examples include Agamemnon's hubris with the goddess Artemis when he claimed that he was a superior hunter to the goddess of the hunt herself. Or when Tantalus of the House of Atreus fed the gods a stew containing the chopped-up pieces of his own son. Both these behaviours are examples of mortals attempting to challenge the gods in some way, rather than remain in their natural place as mortals, much in the same way

[2] *Captain America: Civil War*, Directed by Joe Russo and Anthony Russo, Performances by Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Sebastian Stan, Chadwick Boseman (2016: Marvel Studios), Film.

that the mortals in *Civil War* sought to challenge the power of their gods and were met with greater levels of destruction when this meddling resulted in conflict between the superheroes.

However, the gods of Olympus are not the only inspiration for the superhero culture of the modern age. The main inspiration for superheroes comes in the Greek stories of their heroes. Beings that were not beings of a higher existence, but rather mortals who could be killed just as easily as any other man or woman. This is a direct parallel with many modern superheroes who are usually just mortals who possess a special ability of some sort but are no more immortal than any other human. For example, Marvel's Captain America shares several similarities between the Greek hero Perseus. As Büşra Hafçi writes in his essay detailing the similarities between Greek gods and modern heroes:

> Perseus was not a god at first, but other gods empowered him with gifts and special powers. On the other hand, the most important task of Perseus was to cut off Medusa's head because everybody who looked at Medusa's head turned into stone. In order to protect all people from this danger, Medusa's head had to be cut off and this duty belonged to Perseus. Perseus succeeded decapitating Medusa using his shield. (Kozanoglu, M. 1992). When this scene in Greek mythology is assessed for Captain America, the first of the film series *The Avengers* has to face and destroy the powerful enemy Red Skull, which threatens the humanity. Otherwise humanity may disappear. It is possible to say that Red Skull represents modern Medusa by establishing a link between Red Skull and Medusa. On the other hand, Perseus and Captain America have a shield, and this shield is the most important tool they use to defeat their enemies.[3]

This shows that the two share not only status as heroes, but also similar origins for their superhuman abilities, as well as their use of a shield, a symbol of defence and protection as their main offensive weapon. These similarities depict Captain America as a modern equivalent to the Greek hero Perseus.

Another superhero who shares similarities to Greek heroes is DC Comics Batman whose origin is akin to Hercules. The similarities stem from their origins stories sharing many details, as well as the motif of the hero's journey being present in both of their character arcs. Both heroes are tragic in nature, in terms of their origin, both are stripped of their families and left with nothing. Batman through his parents being murdered in his youth, and Hercules through being rejected from rejoining his father on Olympus through Hera's anger towards Zeus' infidelity. Though the similarities do not stop there. Both characters are beings of immense physical strength, granted Batman's is earned through physical training, whereas Hercules' is granted to him through him breastfeeding from Hera, leading to divine strength. The similarities in their origins cannot be coincidence, with the modern Batman being at least partly inspired by the origin of Hercules.

Both heroes also undergo labours in the name of spreading the righteous values they stand for. In the case of Hercules, it is his famous twelve labours, where he swears to King Eurytheses that he shall perform these duties to atone for his crime of murdering his family. This

---

[3] Busra Hafci and Gul Erbay Asliturk, "Superheroes: Myths of Modern Age?," *Idil Journal of Art and Language* 6, 30 (2017).

is a case of redemption through virtue and righteousness, which the gods of Olympus stood for. Conversely, Batman's labours are seen in the idea of him as a crime fighter. His mission is to execute justice wherever he goes in a mission driven by vengeance born from his tragic origins. Much like Hercules, he is a man who loses his family, and then fuelled by that loss, goes on a journey, and emerges a hero. Finally, both heroes use their minds far more than their strength in order to solve the difficulties they encounter. Hercules received practical wisdom and advice from Athena on several occasions which allowed him to solve his problems in a logical way, rather than with brute strength. Examples of this can be seen in the twelve labours where Athena suggests to Hercules that in order to clean the Augean stables, he should divert the rivers. Or the logic of cauterizing the stumps of the decapitated Hydra in order to prevent the re-growth of its' heads. Conversely, Batman also utilizes logic as a tool far more than his strength. His title of World's Greatest Detective shows that he is more capable with his mind than with violence, emphasized by the fact that his character does not possess superpowers or other divine abilities. It is through the use of the hero's journey, and the motif of logical wisdom, that both Hercules and Batman are distinctly similar to each other. This shows that the modern hero of Batman was influenced by the classical hero of Hercules.

It is not only through the depiction of men where similarities can be found between classical Greek myth, and the modern superhero. There are also similarities in the portrayal of women in Greek gods and the super heroines of modern comics. And much like in Greek myth, these women are designed in such a way to turn the masculine powers that surround them, into a tool for their own advancement. For example, Marvel Comics' Black Widow is a female character who is expertly trained in martial arts, and she utilizes her sexuality as a tool against her male adversaries through means of distraction or seduction. Büşra Hafçi states that:

> she portrays a very strong female fighter character in The Avengers. She has had extensive training in martial arts. From this, it is possible to say that it reminds the goddess Athena in Greek mythology. Athena is Zeus's favourite child and a highly successful female character in martial arts. She is a goddess who uses her intelligence very well and is known for her just nature.[4]

Through this description, Hafçi shows that Black Widow is a woman who is not subjugated by the men around her, but rather stands as an equal among them, capable of using both her body and mind as a tool to defend herself from their tyranny.

Another super heroine, arguably the most iconic of modern female heroes, Wonder Woman, also displays many connections to Greek mythology. Not only is her origin the daughter of Zeus and Hippolyta, it is also her status as an Amazon. This origin has many similarities to Hercules, in the sense that she is a demi-goddess born from a divine father and mortal mother. However, given her status as a woman, however comparisons to the female deities of Olympus seem more fitting. Goddesses such as Athena, immediately come to mind, due to her status as a female warrior who leads an exclusively female army of Amazons. Another comparison would be Aphrodite, due to the sexualization of her outfit. However, this design, much akin to Black Widow can be seen as an intentional choice, from the perspective of both the artists, and in the context of the comics. The costume can be seen as an attempt to use the male gaze against itself by having male enemies underestimate Wonder Woman, due to the

[4] Hafci, "Superheroes", 502.

sexualization of her costume. This balance between violence and sexuality is elaborated on in Joel Gordons work about modern superheroes:

> Wonder Woman's creator, had envisioned her as an advocate for gender equality, it is not surprising to find feminist influences—and even anti-feminist reactions—playing a prominent role in the comic's development. The centrality of feminist themes are evident from the origins of Wonder Woman: the struggle between Aphrodite (love, femininity) and Ares (war, masculinity).[5]

This description shows the layered nature of the character, and how she possesses traits of not only goddesses, but also male gods like Ares. However, this argument does not reflect the nature of the character. An argument comparing Wonder Woman to Athena would have been much stronger and more in line with the character. This is because Ares is known as being "an embodiment of war and battle."[6] And this does not reflect the logical, and pacifist nature of Wonder Woman and her Amazons. Given all these connections, especially the point that Wonder Woman's comic origins are directly inspired by Greek mythology, the character can be seen as a modern interpretation of classical Greek myths.

It is not only through modern superheroes that a connection to Greek myths can be seen, there are also notable similarities to the modern super villains. As with any story whether it be from ancient Greece or modern comics an antagonistic force to counter the protagonist characters often assists in providing a stronger narrative to a story. For example, when the Titan Cronus ate all of his children who would later go on to become the first generation of Olympians, Zeus frees his siblings from their bondage and ultimately defeats Cronus. The protagonist, Zeus triumphs over the antagonistic force of Cronus, much like how comic book heroes defeat their villains and save the day.

Several comic book villains share character traits with certain Titans in Greek mythology. For example, Marvel Comics Thanos, also known as The Mad Titan, almost shares the same name as the Greek Titan of Death, Thanatos. The depiction of this particular Titan as a villainous force is fitting considering that Thanatos is the Titan of Death, an aspect of storytelling that is often synonymous with defeat. This is shown to be more than coincidence through Thanos' motivation to destroy half of all life in the universe. Though the reasoning behind this mission is different between comics and film, it still parallels the Titan he is named after seeking the death of mortals. This depiction of two antagonistic forces so obsessed with death is an important part of both Greek mythology and superhero culture because it forces mortals to acknowledge the abstract idea of death. And these two characters are used as a conduit for presenting an abstract idea of death as something tangible that can be overcome by the deities that readers see in fiction. Whether it be the ancient Greeks and their gods, or modern comic readers with superheroes. These similarities in mission, and almost identical naming of characters is far too similar to be simple inspiration, but rather a modern reimagining of a particular titan in modern comics as a villain.

Another super villain which parallels the motivations of a titan from Greek mythology is DC Comics General Zod, the arch-nemesis of Superman. As established previously, Superman can be seen as a modern interpretation of Zeus, so it is only fitting that Superman's villain be a

---

[5] Joel Gordon, "When Superman Smote Zeus: Analysing Violent Deicide in Popular Culture," *Classical Receptions Journal* 9, 2 (2017): 220-21.

[6] Barry B. Powell, *Classical Myth*, ed. Herbert M. Howe, trans. Joseph Terry et al. (Pearson, 2015), 195.

reinterpretation of Zeus' father, and primary antagonistic force, the Titan Cronus. Both Cronus and Zod are depicted as tyrannical rulers. With Cronus ruling over the Titans, and General Zod seeking to rule over the universe. And both are stopped by a younger generation of their species who defeats them and reinstates a more stable and less oppressive style of leadership. And both are banished to a prison after the conflict, Cronus being banished to Tartarus or Nyx depending on which text is being cited, and General Zod in the film *Superman II* (1980) being banished to the Phantom Zone, a dimensional prison akin to Purgatory. This is key since it displays in both classical and modern text that despite being older and wiser, each villain was not infallible against the next generation of their species whom reasserted the virtues that both the Olympians and superheroes stand for: justice and freedom.

Finally, the super villain and cosmic being Galactus from Marvel Comics, represents the most abstract of the Greek titans, Chaos. Chaos represents the void, a place outside existence devoid of all things, something even more abstract than the idea of death, which is depicted as the Underworld in Greek mythology. The mission of Galactus is to consume planets in order to sustain his cosmic power. While he himself may not be a representation of the void like Chaos, his power and seemingly endless consumption of planets and stars would leave the universe as the empty void described as what Chaos presides over in Greek mythology. Much like mentioned previously with Thanos, this depiction of such an abstract idea is meant to create a seemingly impossible to overcome antagonistic force for the deities to battle and overcome.

In conclusion, the two mythologies of superheroes and Greek gods exist for two different reasons. Greek mythology exists as a religion, meant to give answers to all the things science at the time of the ancient Greeks, could not. Comic book superheroes functions more like a cult which presents readers with an idealized version of humanity with just and righteous virtues to strive for, in the name of a more optimistic world view. And it is through the depictions of many of the characters in both Marvel and DC Comics, and the virtues they stand for, that reinterpretations or blatant reimagining of classical Greek gods, goddesses and titans can be seen.

Bibliography


Bahlmann, Andrew R. *The Mythology of the Superhero*. Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Company Inc., 2016.

*Captain America: Civil War*. Directed by Joe Russo and Anthony Russo, Performances by Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Sebastian Stan, Chadwick Boseman. 2016: Marvel Studios. Film.

Hafci, Busra, and Gul Erbay Asliturk. “Superheroes: Myths of Modern Age?” *Idil Journal of Art and Language* 6 (30)2017: 497–510.

Joel, Gordon. “When Superman Smote Zeus: Analysing Violent Deicide in Popular Culture.” *Classical Receptions Journal* 9 (2) 2017: 211–36. doi:https://doi.org/10.1093/crj/clw008.

Powell, Barry B. *Classical Myth*. Edited by Herbert M. Howe. Translated by Lawrence Rubin, review of *Superheroes and Gods: A Comparative Study from Babylonia to Batman,* by Don LoCicero, *The Journal of Popular Culture*, vol. 42, 01 October 2009.

# INTERPRETATIONS OF WOMEN IN GREEK MYTHOLOGY

EMERALD LEECE

## Abstract

*The portrayals of women in Greek mythology are used to justify, normalize, and promote the cultural expectations and social biases placed on the female gender. As these expectations and biases changed, so did Greek myth. Despite the fact that men wrote the majority of the myths we have record of, the gender dynamic in ancient Greece supports the conclusion that what men were detailing was what was acceptable at the time. Through the creation myths, we can determine the standard by which women were judged, as well as the justification as to why they could not reach these standards. The myth of the Trojan War, as described in the Iliad and Odyssey provides role models for women in order to encourage them to accept their roles as victims of violence and pawns to the whims of the men around them. It also gives negative examples of what women should have avoided both while possessing the status of virgin before marriage or wife after marriage. These myths played an important part in assisting men in the male patriarchy to assure its continuity, as well as shaping a woman's self-identity in a subconscious way from their childhood to marriage and beyond.*

Upon an initial reading of Greek myths, especially those of Hesiod's *Theogony* and *Works and Days*, it is easy to tell that Greece was not a female dominated or even equalitarian society. While women often feature prominent roles in myths as basic as the creation story and as epic as the *Iliad*, they are very rarely afforded the personality that is explicit in the stories of their male counterparts. As such, it is rare to encounter evidence of women's reactions to myths. However, as Sue Blundell points out in her book *Women in Ancient Greece*, just because there is no explicit evidence for women's reactions in Greek literature does not mean that they do not

exist.[1] While pursuing the discovery of these responses is a noble endeavor, it is important to recognize that modern reinterpretations, while useful for relating to contemporary audiences, cannot be used as the basis for determining the reactions of women in ancient Greece. What is useful is comparing the versions of a myth as it changes over time.

Over time, myths that had been recorded one way by Homer and other early writers transformed to better suit the purposes of their later authors. For example, between the time of Homer and fifth century BC, the story of the murder of Agamemnon had changed from his wife's lover committing the murder to his wife herself doing the deed.[2] This shows that as time went on and the patriarchy of Greece, along with the associated social customs, became firmly established both in the culture and each individual's mind, Greek myths became more misogynistic. Indeed, in her book *Women in Greek Myth*, Mary R. Lefkowitz asserts that "male poets should at least be given credit for allowing [women] to play important roles"[3] despite how the women mentioned are often representing male fantasy more than female reality. This does not mean that myths and their interpretations written by men should not be used to study the female condition of ancient Greece. In fact, myth affords modern scholars a basis in which to seek the symbolic value associated with the term 'woman' as it was interpreted by men of the time.[4] This symbolic value is crucial to understanding the unconscious bias that pervaded the justice system, the social structure and everyday life of both genders. It also gives a sense of the implicit teachings that were passed from parent to child in terms of the roles afforded and assigned to either a boy or a girl.

Greek society, with the support of creation myths such as the story of Pandora, set out an impossible standard for women to strive for. According to Hesiod's Theogony, women were created as a 'beautiful evil' to cause men nothing but 'grief and misery'.[5] In the second version of the Pandora story, as found in Hesiod's Works and days, Pandora was gifted to humans with a tightly sealed jar, in which all aspects of the human condition as it is considered now, were found. Once Pandora was sent to Earth and given to men, she opened the jar and released disease, death and all the other evils until all that was left in the jar was hope. Then, Pandora was forced to shut the lid and therefore trap it inside leaving the Greeks hopeless. The interesting thing to note in this telling is that not only is Pandora created with this box of evils, but she is also forced by Zeus to withhold the promise of hope from humanity by sealing it back in the jar.[6] Clearly, with this outcome, it is obvious that Pandora was not a real gift, but a way for Zeus to get back at humans for receiving the gift of fire from Prometheus.[7] In the creation of Pandora, Zeus had Hephaistos "fashion a sweet, lovely maiden shape, like to the immortal goddesses in face"[8]and Hermes give her "lies and crafty words and a deceitful nature."[9] This shows that even in the alternate version of events, Pandora was still created as a duality between divine beauty and bestial character, a duality she passed on to all her descendants.

As was seen in the tale of Pandora, women in Greek myth are portrayed as both literal and figurative monsters. Literally in terms of the fates and gorgons and figuratively in terms of the betrayers, avengers and murderers that fill their ranks. However, women do not simply murder and avenge on the battle field with sword and spear as men do. They employ trickery

---

[1] Sue Blundell, *The Origins of Civilization in Greek and Roman Thought* (Dover, NH: Croom Helm. 1968), 15.
[2] Blundell, *The Origins*, 16-18.
[3] Mary R. Lefkowitz, *Women in Greek Myth* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd.53, 1986), 53.
[4] Blundell, *The Origins*, 16.
[5] Hesiod. *Theogony,* trans. Wm. Blake Tyrrell, (2002), 570-620.
[6] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, trans. Wm. Blake Tyrrell, (2002), 59-105.
[7] Hesiod, *Theogony*, 570.
[8] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 60-68.
[9] Ibid.

and deception, both hallmarks of Pandora's creation, to dispose of their enemies.[10] This, more than the act itself, is what the Greeks see as unnatural and despicable. Furthermore, women are also portrayed as evil creatures when, according to Hesiod, "Women do nothing to alleviate men's poverty, but they are always ready to share in their wealth."[11] However, as can be seen in Carl Roebuck's The Muses at Work, women were heavily involved in the running of the Greek household, most notably in the capacity of weaving. In any case, if women were created to be trouble, to be lazy and deceptive, the harbingers of man's doom, then it is impossible to expect women to achieve the perfection set out for them by Seimonides in Stobaeus' Anthology.

In the Anthology, Seimonides describes an alternate version of the creation in which Zeus creates several different types of women from several different animals.[12] The descriptions of these women follow closely with the description of Pandora in Hesiod's work. By inverting the traits of the women created from bad animals such as cows and dogs, it is possible to determine the ridiculous standards by which Greek society judged its female members. This is necessary since the only positive example, the woman created from a bee, was given a vague, unactionable description of beloved and blameless. According to Seimonides, women should be clean[13], calm[14], incurious[15], modest in appetite[16], steady tempered,[17] eager to please,[18] chaste,[19] hardworking,[20] and graceful.[21] With this description alone, the pressure of perfection for Greek women is astounding.

Interestingly, the despicable traits attributed to women in Seimonides' work matches quite closely with Hesiod's, showing that these traits were universally held as the negatives of women. If all women come from Pandora, the woman who was created by Zeus to bring evils into the world and continuously plague the race of men, then there is no reason why women should be blamed for what they supposedly are.

This idea of women as being created in a certain negative way, and especially of women as on the same level as animals, intellectually and morally, was reflected by philosophers both in ancient Greece and almost to this day. Indeed, as Blundell states in The Origins of Civilization in Greek & Roman Thought:

> [Pandora] is a thoroughly ambiguous creature – lovely to look at, with a face like a goddess; but at the same time earthy, bestial and rapacious. By her seduction she pulls man back up to the level of the gods but at the same time she thrusts him down among the animals – and so in the end she leaves him where he was, forever balanced between the two.[22]

This allowed the Greeks to justify certain biases against women both in social and judicial contexts since by their very nature, women are seen as unfit to be considered on the same level as men. In his book Law, custom and myth, John Gould in his work declares women as

---

[10] Blundell, *The Origins*, 19.
[11] Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 592-93.
[12] Seimonides, (n.d.), *Anthology* (Stobaeus, Ed.; S. Hawkins, Trans.), 1-2.
[13] Seimonides, *Anthology*, 1-5.
[14] Ibid., 6-1.
[15] Ibid., 12-20.
[16] Ibid., 21-26.
[17] Ibid., 27-42.
[18] Ibid., 43-46.
[19] Ibid., 50-56.
[20] Ibid., 57-70.
[21] Ibid., 71-82.
[22] Blundell, *The Origins*, 10.

others who are not part of and who do not belong in male dominated civilization. He speaks of their continual threat to its stability and continuity due to their desire or penchant for breaking out of the place assigned to them by their tenuous inclusion.[23] From this, women can be owed fewer essential rights and freedoms since it is for the stability and continuity of society, lest they destroy the perfect order of Greek civilization.

Women as destructive forces is not the only depiction afforded to the female gender in mythology. An as common, if less popular, theme is women as pawns and victims in the affairs of men and deities.[24] Here, deities refers to both male gods and female goddesses, since the condition of the human female is far from shared with their divine counterparts as can be seen by the goddesses' meddling, especially that of Athena. The best examples of women as pawns come from the Trojan war, more specifically, Helen and Briseis.[25]

Helen, whose disappearance from Sparta cause the war, was married to Menelaus but later given to Paris, prince of Troy, by Aphrodite. This was in exchange for the judgement of Paris, in which Paris declared Aphrodite the most beautiful goddess. Though Helen blames herself, in the Iliad Book 3, Priam tells Helen "To me the gods are blameworthy / who drove upon me this sorrowful war against the Achaians."[26] Priam says this to comfort Helen, though we see later in Book 6 that she still blames herself, as it can be assumed that she had been taught to do based on the creation myths.

In contrast, Briseis was a slave captured by the Greek armies and awarded to Achilles as his share of the plunder. When Agamemnon, a fellow Greek commander, is forced to give up his own slave girl he seizes Briseis in exchange. The result is Achilles threatening to leave the war and sulking in his tent.[27] While at first it may seem noble that Achilles is so upset about his loss, Briseis is not valued as a person in this situation. Instead, her value lies in her position as a status symbol, and her passing about is really a symbol of the passing of glory between Agamemnon and Achilles.

Though it is little consolation, many myths that prominently feature wild and destructive women also show the men who attack and pursue them suffering from their violent behavior.[28] With such little actual relevance to the plot other than their symbolic value, it is easy to wonder what the point of including these women in myths is. The answer lies in their role as symbols for all women. Helen's bullying at the hands of Aphrodite whose threats force Helen into seeing Paris despite his shame for being saved by the goddess before dying an honorable death directly mirrors the experiences of Roman women who were forced and coerced into marriage by the male members of their family and, on a larger scale, society's expectations.[29] The moral is that if even the most beautiful woman in the world is treated this way then there is no hope for a regular woman to be treated any better.

A more direct relationship can be seen between the majority of Greek women and Briseis, who was the wife of a local King before the Greeks landed and Achilles himself killed her husband. Thus, if even a queen is not safe from being taken as captive and treated as slave, the majority of Greek women would have to accept that their lot in life was to be ruled by men and passed from hand to hand as property. In many cases, women are seen, as Penelope

---

[23]John Gould, "Law, custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in Classical Athens," *Journal of Hellenic Studies 100*, (October 2013): 213.

[24] Blundell, *The Origins,* 19.

[25] Ibid., 48.

[26] Homer, *Iliad*, 3.164-5.

[27] Blundell, *The Origins*, 48.

[28] Lefkowitz, *Women*, 26.

[29] Blundell, *The Origins*, 49.

suggests in the Odyssey, as well treated property, but property nonetheless.[30] This is why it is said that the poet Stesichorus was struck blind for writing about Helen's traveling to Troy with Paris to elope since such an act would be in direct conflict with the ideals of a Greek woman and might give ordinary women unacceptable ideas.[31] This is a key feature of Greek society, since women given in marriage are seen as gifts given from one male to another, and like slaves serve as means to an end for men's political relationships. This means that beyond the value of their labor, sexuality and childbearing, every woman had value as a political pawn maneuvered in such a way as to further the aims of the man who held dominion over her, usually her father, brother or husband.[32] This is showcased in the Iliad since despite Cassandra having the rare ability of accurate prophecy, she was still simply known as "the most beautiful of Priam's daughters"[33] and inevitably taken as a war prize by Agamemnon.[34] It is clear from this that a woman's value was determined wholeheartedly by the value ascribed to her by the men around her.

Before marriage, a girl's value lied in her prospects: who she would marry and how it would benefit her father. Of course, based on mythology, young girls had little to look forward to in marriage, especially if that of Zeus and Hera, goddess of marriage, was anything to go by.[35] Nevertheless, once married, women were expected to forget their lives before marriage and reorient themselves towards their partner and children, especially sons, wholly and completely.[36] Despite the role of the mother being the only acceptable role for an adult woman to take, the birth of Athena from Zeus' head invalidates the idea that if nothing else women are required for reproduction.[37] This further cements humanity as beneath the gods since one of the evils of Pandora's creation was men needing women to procreate and through their offspring, gain immortality.[38] The task of childrearing, in fact, was considered a woman's sole purpose and raising healthy children, especially sons, their only goal in life. Any affront to family and children was considered absolutely abominable.

The ultimate rebellion against a woman's place in society as a mother and wife was actually a common theme in Greek mythology. While men fought their enemies outright on battle fields and in contests, women were more likely to employ trickery and deception to get rid of their opponents as discussed previously. The real issue, however, is the fact that generally the people women plot against are related to them by blood or by marriage, both of which is a large affront against the Greek family-centric society.[39] In stark contrast to these ideals, female Olympians are either virgins or wholly lacking devotion to their children. While it is true that Greek girls were expected to remain virgins until marriage, and the status of virginity was given great importance in that respect, the ultimate goal of a man with daughters was to marry them off for power, prestige, money or some combination of the three. Once married, the chief concern of wives was to give birth, preferably to sons. Their ideal lifestyle, as dictated by Greek society, was modest and domestic, whether before or after marriage. It is strange, then, that four of the Olympian goddesses were known specifically for being exceptionally active outside of the prescribed female sphere. Take for example, Aphrodite's involvements in the Trojan war.[40]

---

30 Lefkowitz, *Women*, 64.
31 Lefkowitz, *Women*, 135.
32 Blundell, *The Origins*, 48.
33 Hesiod, *Iliad,* 13.36.
34 Lefkowitz, *Women*, 54.
35 Blundell, *The Origins*, 33.
36 Lefkowitz, *Women,* 53.
37 Blundell, *The Origins*, 22.
38 Hesiod, *Theogony*, 600-612.
39 Blundell, *The Origins*, 19.
40 Ibid., 25.

Aphrodite favored Paris, as can be seen when she saved him from death in Book 3 of the Iliad and later in that book coerced Helen to return to him despite Menelaus having won her back already.[41] Such participation in affairs outside the household, especially in a male-dominated domain such as war, would have been unacceptable for any mortal Greek woman to undertake.

In spite of these examples, Greek women, as implied in Penelope's remarks about Helen and her own life, were expected to be happy and faithful as long as their husbands were respectable and treated them well. In relation to Helen and Penelope, this is likely a given due to their respective husbands' wealth and position ensuring security and comfort.[42]) This attitude is actually confirmed by Helen herself, since in Book 4 of the Odyssey, Helen has no complaint about her life in Menelaus' house in Sparta after the conclusion of the Trojan war. Indeed, Helen is a model Greek wife, working in wool and arranging marriages for her daughter and Menelaus' son.[43] Not only does this show that she herself has given up on her love for Paris but this shows that despite having been the cause of so much strife and suffering, Menelaus takes her back and allows her to return to her rightful duties as wife and mother.

In her book, Lefkowitz argues that the Greeks found women appealing and dangerous not because of their beauty or sexuality but because of their intelligence.[44] Her evidence for this is the existence of respectable women in historical records that modern scholars actually accept as true. She uses these women as a cautionary tale against considering the stories of women in myth in a vacuum. However, as Lefkowitz agrees, respected women in ancient Greece were unusual.[45] In other words, women who managed to gain respect were the exception, not the rule. These women, while exceptional, cannot be used as a basis for an evaluation of Greek society's assessment of women as a whole since the fact that women were able to gain respect does not mean that they were encouraged to seek it. It also doesn't mean that the women who did establish themselves as premier citizens for one reason or another were universally respected, accepted or looked to as models for other women. Certainly, the female experience did not change drastically with the emergence of female thinkers and philosophers.

In summary, female representations in myth are wholeheartedly based on the expectations and ideals of women in Greek society. From the very beginning, in the creation stories of Pandora and Zeus' transformation of animals, through the Trojan War and its aftermath, women are presented as inherently evil creatures who must be controlled by the civilized and superior race of men. Their representation as pawns and victims urges them to accept their place as lesser beings with few to no rights, as they are in Greek society. Furthermore, women in myth are provided as contradicting ideals of virgins and mothers to reflect both the expectations of premarital and marital life.

---

[41] Homer, *Iliad*, 3.400-410.
[42] Lefkowitz, *Women,* 64.
[43] Homer, *Odyssey*, 4.3.
[44] Lefkowitz, *Women*, 136.
[45] Ibid., 29.

Bibliography

Blundell, Sue. *The Origins of Civilization in Greek and Roman Thought.* Dover, NH: Croom Helm, 1986.

Blundell, Sue*. Women in Ancient Greece.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996

Cantarella, Eva. *Pandora's Daughters: The Role and Status of Women in Greek and Roman Antiquity.* Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1981.

Gould, John. *Law, custom and myth: aspects of the social position of women in Classical Athens' Journal of Hellenic Studies 100,* pp. 38-59., 1983

Hesiod. *Theogony*. Translated by Wm. Blake Tyrrell. Retrieved from https://msu.edu/~tyrrell/theogon.pdf, 2002.

Hesiod. *Works and Days*. Translated by Wm. Blake Tyrrell. Retrieved from https://msu.edu/~tyrrell/theogon.pdf, 2005.

Hesiod. *Iliad*. Translated by Wm. Blake Tyrrell. Retrieved from https://msu.edu/~tyrrell/theogon.pdf, 2009.

Hesiod. *Odyssey*. Translated by Wm. Blake Tyrrell. Retrieved from https://msu.edu/~tyrrell/theogon.pdf, 2009.

Lefkowitz, Mary R. *Women in Greek Myth.* London: Gerald Duckworth & Co. Ltd., 1986

Meagher, Robert Emmet. *Helen: Myth, Legend, and the Culture of Misogyny.* New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company., 1995.

Roebuck, Carl. *The Muses at Work: arts, crafts and professions in ancient Greece and Rome.* Cambridge, MA: MIT Press., 1969.

Seimonides. *Anthology* (Stobaeus, Ed.; S. Hawkins, Trans.)

# EURIPIDES' MESSAGE ON CHASTITY IN ATHENIAN SOCIETY

DANKA DAVIDOVIC

## Abstract

*This essay attempts to argue that Hippolytus and Pentheus, of Euripides' "Hippolytus" and "The Bacchae", are both to blame for the violent ways in which their lives ended. Hippolytus and Pentheus value celibacy excessively, to the point where they think of themselves as purer than gods and reject the worship of certain gods, and such hubristic ideas are not tolerated by the divine. Furthermore, Hippolytus and Pentheus are also arrogant for their perception of themselves as infallible, which helps seal their fate, because they refuse to listen to people's warnings against continuing their exclusive worship. By punishing Hippolytus and Pentheus for their arrogant natures with regards to the issue of sexuality versus chastity, Euripides is commenting on the need for moderation in one's life. In particular, he is expressing his disdain for the aspect of Athenian society that degrades sexuality excessively and inconsistently and is especially advocating for moderation in the value of chastity.*

Even to this day, debate exists among prominent historians and scholars over the possible meanings behind the works of Euripides. In which, characters are often punished as a result of their personal faults. Two such tragedies are Euripides' *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchae*, through which Euripides highlights the issue of chastity versus desire in ancient Greek society. This essay argues that Hippolytus and Pentheus are both to blame for the ways in which their lives ended. Their culpability is due to their arrogant personalities. They project their arrogance in two

major ways: their sense of superiority for valuing chastity more than others, and their refusal to heed advice to honour all the gods. In addition, examining the reasons for which Euripides chose to punish the protagonists of *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchae* allows one to understand his social commentary and stance on the need for moderation regarding the value of chastity in contemporary Athenian society.

Hippolytus and Pentheus's value of celibacy is excessive to the point where it makes them hubristic. They think of themselves as morally superior to other characters in their stories for their extreme appreciation of abstinence, and this becomes a problem for them when their sense of superiority extends over the gods. They consider themselves to be too pure to honour gods who promote love and sexuality, like Aphrodite and Dionysus do, and this quality makes them hubristic. While speaking to Pentheus, Cadmus recalls the fate of his cousin Actaeon, whose "man-eating hounds he had raised himself / savaged him and tore his body limb from limb / because he boasted that his prowess in the hunt surpassed / the skill of Artemis", to demonstrate to him that hubris is a characteristic that the gods punish.[1]

Hippolytus values chaste behaviour highly, and because of that he worships the virgin goddess Artemis very intensely. However, he shows no honour to Aphrodite because her godly jurisdiction does not coincide with his values. While talking to a servant about his lack of respect for the goddess, Hippolytus, in order to end the conversation, tells him that he does worship her, "but from a long way off, / for [he is] pure".[2] This statement demonstrates his feelings of self-importance due to his obsession with celibacy. It also reveals that he thinks of himself as above the proper worship of Aphrodite due to his untainted nature contrasting with her values, which he implies to be impure. Thinking of yourself as purer than a god is blasphemous, and such hubristic ideas are not tolerated by the gods.

Pentheus also values chastity excessively, but not as personally as Hippolytus does. He is obsessed with maintaining very strict standards of purity within the society of Thebes as a whole. Pentheus assumes that the rites in which Bacchic worshippers engage include brazen sexual acts and shameful public intoxication, which is even more scandalous since it is mostly women who supposedly perform these rites.[3] While interrogating the disguised Dionysus about the workings of the Bacchic rites, Dionysus tells Pentheus that the rites are held "mostly by night. / The darkness is well suited to devotion," to which Pentheus responds that it is "better suited to lechery and seducing women."[4] His pride leads him to believe he and Thebes as a whole are above participating in such events. This becomes hubristic when it extends to refusing to honour Dionysus because of this mistaken perception of his rites. But Pentheus's hubris worsens when he mistreats the god while he is disguised as a stranger by cutting off his curls, taking his thyrsus, and imprisoning him. The stranger explicitly states several times that Pentheus is disrespecting a god by giving him warnings such as: "my hair is holy. / My curls belong to god," and "*you* take [the thyrsus]. It belongs to Dionysus."[5] Pentheus's disregard of these warnings is ultimately severely punished.

Hippolytus and Pentheus are also arrogant for their perception of themselves as infallible, and this too seals their fate. They each think that they are wiser than others and that they know best. Because of this, they refuse to consider the advice of people who warn them against continuing their exclusive worship. Consequently, their actions affect not only them, but

---

[1] Euripides, "The Bacchae," in *Euripides V*, 3rd ed., ed. Mark Griffith and Glenn W. Most, trans. William Arrowsmith (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 338-341.

[2] Euripides, "Hippolytus," in *Euripides I,* 3rd ed., ed. Mark Griffith and Glenn W. Most, trans. David Grene (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 103.

[3] Euripides, "The Bacchae," 215-225.

[4] Ibid., 485-486.

[5] Ibid., 492-496.

everyone around them as well. Hippolytus and Pentheus suffer gruesome and dishonourable deaths, their loved ones are negatively affected in various ways, and, in Pentheus's case, the whole city of Thebes is punished because, as king, he makes the whole city reject Dionysus along with him.

After Hippolytus shows honour to Artemis's statue and then ignores Aphrodite's statue, a servant attempts to convince him that he is acting foolishly. The man begins by telling Hippolytus that a common rule in all communities is that "men hate the haughty of heart who will not be / the friend of every man." Hippolytus says he agrees, "for a haughty heart breeds odium among men." The servant then continues by asking if he thinks this works the same way among the gods, and Hippolytus says he thinks it does. Having established this, the servant asks: "Then, King, how comes it / that for a venerable goddess you have not even / a word of salutation?" The man continues to prod, and Hippolytus becomes annoyed and simply says, "A god of nocturnal prowess is not my god," to which the servant replies, "The honors of the gods you must not scant, my son," prompting Hippolytus to change the subject.[6] Although the servant presents a valid argument against Hippolytus's exclusion of Aphrodite, Hippolytus refuses to even consider that he is doing anything wrong. His egotism prevents him from allowing himself to admit to any mistakes, so he stubbornly brushes off any attempts by those who care about him to stop his dangerous behaviour.

Pentheus also demonstrates his high opinion of his intelligence many times throughout *The Bacchae* by ignoring people warning him that he is acting riskily. Unlike Hippolytus, Pentheus is told multiple times by a few different people that he is making a dangerous mistake by not honouring Dionysus and welcoming the Bacchic rites to Thebes. Yet, he still conceitedly refuses to consider their cautions. He even rejects the advice of Teiresias, a man who is very well respected throughout Thebes for his wisdom. Teiresias tells him to not "be so sure that domination / is what matters in the life of man" and not to "mistake / for wisdom the fantasies of a sick mind."[7] Pentheus is obsessed with being right and with his will being respected no matter what, because he believes that his wisdom is infallible. He is acting exactly as Teiresias describes but he refuses to believe it, and had he followed the abundance of advice given to him, he could have avoided his horrible death.

By punishing Hippolytus and Pentheus for their arrogant natures with regards to the issue of sexuality versus chastity, Euripides is commenting on the need for moderation in one's life. Euripides, who lived in the 5$^{th}$ century BCE, is writing for his contemporary Athenian audience. Ancient Greeks were very conservative when it came to the subject of sexual love. In Athens, as with the larger ancient Greek world, the issue of sexuality was met with both degradation and acceptance. Prostitution was simultaneously debased and allowed into the most exclusive levels of society.

For a woman to be seen in any part of the city in which prostitutes were known to work was often an immediate degradation of her status to that of a prostitute.[8] Even to be seen in public without a veil suggested to those around them that a woman was sexually promiscuous.[9] However, there existed prostitutes called hetairas who operated in an exclusive level of society, in which they were the only women allowed into all-male events such as the symposium.[10] The position of hetaira did not degrade a woman nearly as much as that of a regular prostitute. Therefore, Athenian society fluctuated between the extremes of socially punishing any woman

---

[6] Euripides, "Hippolytus," 91-107.

[7] Euripides, "The Bacchae," 310-312.

[8] James Davidson, "Bodymaps: Sexing Space and Zoning Gender in Ancient Athens," *Gender and History 23*, 3 (2011): 605.

[9] Ibid., 607.

[10] Ibid., 606.

believed to be remotely promiscuous and accepting and valuing hetairas even though they performed the same services.

Taking this reality of Athenian society into consideration, Euripides is commenting on the lack of moderation in the value of chastity through his plays. As argued by John Winkler, myths are used by their authors to criticize society and social norms.[11] By punishing his protagonists in *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchae,* Euripides is expressing his disdain for the aspect of society that degrades sexuality excessively. Hippolytus is more extreme than Pentheus with his belief that complete celibacy is the optimal state, but Pentheus is also excessive in his belief that immoral behaviour, no matter how small, and especially with regards to women, should never be engaged in publicly. Their excessive opinions are cast in a very negative light by Euripides with their gruesome deaths, for the purpose of communicating to the Athenian audience that they should instead value moderation.

The protagonists of Euripides' plays *Hippolytus* and *The Bacchae* both experience violent and dishonourable deaths for which they are to blame. They are guilty because of their arrogance, which leads them directly to their downfall. They believed themselves to be superior to others because they valued chastity excessively and condemned both people and gods who promoted non-celibate activity. Their actions against gods turned their arrogance into hubris, and their hubris was met with harsh divine punishment. In addition to this, their arrogance extended to them believing themselves wiser than others and ignoring all advice to end their exclusive worship so that they do not risk offending the gods. Furthermore, the comparison of these plays reveals Euripides' social commentary on the value of moderation in all things, but especially in chastity, and a suggestion that this value ought to be accepted by the Athenian audience.

[11] Lisa Maurizio, *Classical Mythology in Context,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 226.

Bibliography

Davidson, James. “Bodymaps: Sexing Space and Zoning Gender in Ancient Athens.” *Gender and History* 23, 3 (2011). pp. 597-614. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-0424.2011.01659.x.

Euripides. “Hippolytus.” In *Euripides I*, 3rd ed., edited by Mark Griffith and Glenn W. Most. Translated by David Grene, 191-251. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Euripides. “The Bacchae.” In *Euripides V,* 3rd ed., edited by Mark Griffith and Glenn W. Most. Translated by William Arrowsmith, 19-81. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013.

Maurizio, Lisa. *Classical Mythology in Context*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2015.

# Guardians of Sweet Remainders

Who will realize if not us the potency of past,
who pursue the future armed with skills of looking back?
The winds of forward crushing on, ready set and go,
though we may yearn to anchor time,
she glides beyond our grasp.

Drawstring bag this shimmering ship of murmured techno sighs,
damp weaved linen wearing thin confusion glimpsed inside.
Jewels and coins are spilling forth dunk-scattered in the depths,
just useless shallow treasures if
their tales shrivel and die.

Through sun and storm we row and sweat, hoist the mast in turn,
when we drift we ponder cyclic struggle and sojourn.
Oar in hand with will of bronze we ram the restless surf,
we glance behind our trireme,
for from the aft we learn.

Nothing made of sturdy form resists relentless waves,
water rolling rinsing grinds to silt all greedy ways.
But reflections of the guardians braided with the breeze
ensure precious sweet remainders
persist for endless days.

Colleen Dunn

# A MYTHICAL COMPARISON OF HESIOD'S *THEOGONY* AND SNORRI'S *PROSE EDDA*

SHAMUS MCCOY

## Abstract

*Snorri Sturluson, a Norse Christian writing in Iceland during the twelfth century CE, documented a nearly forgotten mythology, which carried with it characteristics of its ancient heritage. The aim of this paper is to examine this Norse mythology, established by Snorri in his Prose Edda, and contrast it with the eighth century BCE epic poem, the Theogony, by the Greek writer Hesiod. This paper highlights the many similarities these two mythologies share, notably in their chronology and main actors. These similarities demonstrate how a once united Indo-European mythology has travelled and changed, in the case of these two separate regions. However, this paper is also able to exhibit the overarching themes which differ throughout the two mythologies, most notably in their conception of life and death.*

The *Prose Edda* by Snorri Sturluson and the *Theogony* by Hesiod are both crucial texts in our understanding of Norse and Greek mythology. They both explain the creation mythos of their belief systems and are both notably of Indo-European decent. It is the aim of this paper to examine and contrast the creation myth set forth by Snorri in the *Gylfaginning*, with that set forth by Hesiod in the *Theogony*. To properly examine the parallels between the two mythologies, three corresponding periods of the creation mythologies will be compared. The first is the earliest state of the universe, the second is the birth of the first beings (the Titans and Jotunn), and the third is the new generation of gods and their overthrow of the previous beings (the Olympians, Aesir).

Before the first beings came into existence, both cultures imagined that a primordial state existed prior. In Norse Mythology this is the Ginnungagap, the "yawning void", and in Greek

Mythology it is Chaos. Hesiod provides little explanation for his understanding of Chaos, leaving the primordial state up to discussion. Mondi discusses the etymology of the term Χάος, refuting the idea that it has any link to the word χάσμα, which would connect it etymologically to the Ginnungagap, both being large void areas.[12] This being said, however, I would argue that Hesiod views the two as similar if not equal, as he refers to the χάσμα seemingly as though it were the same entity as he had discussed earlier.[13] Regardless of whether or not Hesiod thought of Χάος as a χάσμα, it is important to examine the fact that Hesiod seems to personify Chaos. Hesiod states that Erebos (the night) and Aither (the day) are both born from Chaos, setting Chaos up as some sort of matron of the day and night, therefore making Erebos and Aither primordial beings as well (which we will see contrasts with the Norse belief).[14]

The Ginnungagap, in opposition to the being who is Chaos, seems to be conceptualized as a place in Norse mythology. The Ginnungagap in the beginning existed alongside two other realms, Niflheimr (the mist world) and Muspellheimr (the fire world). Caught between these two realms was believed to be the Ginnungagap. The Ginnungagap was evidently a location, and not a being, as it is not pictured performing any actions, yet is instead the setting for events (such as the birth of Ymir).[15] Therefore, it is clear that the Norse and the Greeks, although having similar ideas of a primordial entity existing prior to the creation of first beings, conceptualized these primordial forms quite differently. While the Nordic peoples believed that the Ginnungagap was the location for the beginning of the universe, the Greeks conceptualized Chaos as the starting point for the universe, as a being who bore life into existence (Erebos and Aither).

Following the beginning of the universe (be it Chaos, or within the Ginnungagap) the first beings came to be, these being Gaia in Greek mythology and Ymir in Norse mythology. Hesiod again does not give a detailed account of Gaia, but simply states that she came about after Chaos, and makes no mention of her conception.[16] This is in great contrast to the Norse mythology where a detailed description of Ymir's birth is told. Flowing from the Hvergelmir in Niflheimr, the cold crept down into the Ginnungagap, while at the same time heat rose from Muspellheimr. When the two met in the Ginnungagap, Ymir was born (along with Authumla, the cosmic cow).[17] Gaia and Ymir both produce the the first "race" or line of beings in their subsequent mythologies. Gaia bore the line of the Titans, while Ymir bore the Jotunn.

Hesiod describes how Gaia initially reproduces asexually to create Ouranos, a being equal to herself with whom she would continue to reproduce sexually to bear the rest of her children, the Titans.[18] This is different from what is said in the *Prose Edda*, that in fact Ymir conceives all of his offspring asexually, bearing the race of Jotunn by himself.[19] One may therefore say that the Titans of Greek myth and the Jotunn of Norse myth are rough parallels, both being descended from the first being to have come into existence. This idea is examined by Motz, as he also compares the physical appearance of the Jotunn and the Titans, as well as Gaia and Ouranos' other offspring, the Giants, stating them to have often had similarly terrible features in both accounts.[20]

Another comparison can be drawn between Gaia (and Ouranos) and Ymir, regarding the creation of the earth and the heavens. In both mythologies these first beings make up the physical

---

[12] Robert Mondi, "Χάος and the Hesiodic Cosmogony," *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 92 (1989), 7-8.
[13] Hesiod, *Θεογονία*, ed. M.L. West (London: Oxford University, 1966), 740.
[14] Ibid., 123-24.
[15] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, trans. Gilchrist Brodeur (New York: Oxford University Press, 1929), 17.
[16] Hesiod, *Θεογονία,* 116-17.
[17] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda,* 17-18.
[18] Hesiod, *Θεογονία,* 126-38.
[19] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, 18.
[20] Lotte Motz, "Giants in Folklore and Mythology: A New Approach," *Folklore* 93, 1 (1982): 77.

world with their own bodies. In Greek mythology the physical world is very much alive, as Gaia and Ouranos continue to live on as the physical universe. In the Norse mythology it is not until Ymir is slain that parts of his decaying body are used to construct the physical world.[21] The imagery of Ymir's body decaying is clear in the description of the dwarves as maggots in Ymir's flesh.[22] This notion of the physical universe is also reflective of the Norse idea of Ragnarok, which implies that doom is always somewhat looming (an otherwise very Christian idea, a belief to which the author Snorri subscribed). The idea of the end of the world was not clear in Greek mythology, which again is reflective of the Greek view of the physical universe being a living and healthy entity. However, the idea of the dead corpse of Ymir and Ragnarok are also indicative of the Norse idea that life can come from death- not only do we see Ymir's death used to bring forth new life, but the mythology concerning Ragnarok even states that it too will bring new life.[23]

Continuing on the topic of Ymir in comparison with Gaia and Ouranos, it would seem that Ymir in some capacity parallels them both. Ymir's name seems to derive from the Proto-Germanic **yumiyaz*, relating to the term **yemo-* in Proto Indo European, meaning "twin" (cf. Latin *geminus*).[24] This suggests that at one-point Ymir was a twin to another Jotunn, referred to as Mann. This provides interesting evidence of Ymir's connection to Gaia and Ouranos of Greek mythology. According to Hesiod, Gaia bore Ouranos equal to herself, and while not being twins per se (as in they were from the same womb), they would still act as though they were twins if Gaia had reproduced asexually to form another being that is thought to be equal to herself.[25]

The final point to be made here regarding the Titans and Jotunn is about the birth of Nott and Dagr. Snorri states that Nott (night) was born of a Jotunn (living in Jotunnheimr) named Norfi. Dagr would soon follow, as the son of Nott.[26] This is an interesting difference from Greek mythology, where Erebos and Aither were both primordial beings. What appears to remain the same though is the notion that Day follows after Night, since in both mythologies, Day is the son of Night.

Therefore, there are clear parallels between the first beings, who are the Titans in Greek mythology, and the Jotunn in Norse mythology. This is evident through the parallels of Ymir and Gaia (and Ouranos). Also, as it is discussed below, these first races of beings were both later overthrown by the first generation of what are more commonly recognized as the gods. These being the Aesir in Norse mythology and the Olympians in Greek mythology.

Finally, the Aesir of Norse mythology and the Olympians of Greek mythology are clear parallels of each other, in particular as they are highlighted in the creation mythology in the *Prose Edda* and the *Theogony*. I would start by examining the major difference between the two groups of gods, that being their relations to the first race of beings (Jotunn and Titans). In Greek mythology, it is clear that the Olympian gods are related by descendance to the Titans, as many of them are the children of Kronos, a Titan himself. The same cannot necessarily be said for Buri and his descendants. The Aesir (more specifically the sons of Borr) were related to the Jotunn, as their mother Bestla was herself descended from the Jotunn.[27] Although this does not link the Aesir to the Jotunn in the same depth as the Olympians to the Titans, it does show that indeed they were related within the mythology.

---

[21] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda,* 19-20.

[22] Ibid., 26.

[23] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda,* 19-20, 83; It is stated that a handful of the gods, as well as two humans, will survive Ragnarok allowing for the birth of a new generation.

[24] Bruce Lincoln, "The Indo-European Myth of Creation," *History of Religions* 15, 2 (1975): 129.

[25] Hesiod, *Θεογονία,* 126.

[26] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, 22.

[27] Ibid., 19.

The most evident parallel between the Aesir and the Olympians is that they both overthrow the previous race of beings to make way for their own domination. Hesiod describes the great plot and ensuing war of the Olympian gods, aided by select Titans, against the Titans.[28] The result was, for the most part, that the Titans were confined to Tartarus for eternity. The Norse account is far more straight forward as it describes how the sons of Borr killed Ymir, and the blood which came forth drowned the rest of the Jotunn, except for two who escaped.[29] Evidently there is a large difference in the outcome, notably that the sons of Borr killed the Jotunn, whereas the Olympians, for the most part, imprisoned the Titans. This difference also affirms the trends which were stated earlier regarding death and life in the two mythologies. The world and heavens in Norse mythology are made of the carcass of Ymir, whereas in Greek mythology the world and heavens are comprised of the two living beings, Gaia and Ouranos.

It is therefore clear that similarities exist between the Aesir and the Olympians, in that they were the recognized group of gods who had overthrown the lineage prior to them (the Titans and the Jotunn). However, in Norse mythology, the familial line connecting the Aesir to the Jotunn, and ultimately to Ymir whom they overthrow, is fairly weak when compared to Greek mythology, where the Olympian gods who overthrow Kronos are for the most part all his children (with the exception of the Titans who aid Zeus).

The *Prose Edda* and the *Theogony*, while showing many differences, exhibit more similarities in major overarching themes, and do often resemble each other in specific details. In the beginning, each mythology recognizes a primordial existence - be it personified or not. From this primordial existence springs forth the first being(s), who establish a primary lineage, be it the Titans or the Jotunn. Ultimately, this primary lineage is overthrown by a new line of gods, who in some way do relate back in descent. It is clear that these stories follow the same narrative; however, the difference in terms of life and death in the two mythologies is rather noteworthy. These themes of life and death seem rather overarching in both of the given accounts, as there is a narrative focus on death in the Norse mythology, while the Greek mythology seems to focus more on life.[30] In Greek mythology, the universe is alive. The beginning of the universe is Chaos, who is represented as a sexual being, as Hesiod states that Chaos reproduced with Erebos to conceive Aither. In Norse mythology, on the other hand, in the beginning there was truly no source of life or personification- just void plains of existence (the Ginnungagap, Niflheimr, and Muspellheimr). When finally beings do burst into existence, in Greek mythology it is first Gaia and Ouranos who make up the living universe. However in Norse mythology, the physical universe does not come about until the Allfather (Othinn) and his brothers slay Ymir and construct this universe out of his rotting corpse.[31] This point further illustrates the centrality of death in Norse mythology, as the climax of the Aesir overthrowing the Jotunn is in effect a genocide, where the sons of Borr seemingly sought to kill all the Jotunn as they drowned in the blood of their father, Ymir. In contrast, in Greek mythology, the Olympian gods are far tamer in that they spare most of the Titans, sending them to Tartarus. It is unclear as to why we see these mythologies differ in this way, however the overarching narrative does seem to highlight the similar nature of the two mythologies, and ultimately hints at their common origin of the Proto-Indo-European.

---

[28] Hesiod, *Θεογονία*, 466.

[29] Snorri Sturluson, *The Prose Edda*, 19, 83.

[30] As mentioned previously in this paper, the focus of death in Snorri's work might be representative of his background as a Christian- however there is little evidence of this creation mythology outside of his work with which we are able to contrast effectively. This forces us to interpret Snorri's mythology as an accurate representation.

Bibliography

Hesiod. *Θεογονία*. Edited by M. L. West. London: Oxford University Press, 1966.

Lincoln, Bruce. "The Indo-European Myth of Creation." *History of Religions* 15, 2 (1975): 121-45.

Mondi, Robert. "Χαος and the Hesiodic Cosmogony." *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 92 (1989): 1-41.

Motz, Lotte. "Giants in Folklore and Mythology: A New Approach." *Folklore* 93, 1 (1982): 70-84.

Sturluson, Snorri. *The Prose Edda*. Translated by Gilchrist Brodeur. New York: Oxford University Press, 1929.

# SLICING INTO HONOUR: THE ANCIENT GREEK UNDERSTANDING OF THE PHYSICAL BODY AND DISSECTION

LAURA HEYS

Abstract

*This essay attempts to understand the cultural beliefs of the Ancient Greeks concerning both the living and the dead body, leading up to the first human dissections performed in the Greek world by Herophilus of Chalcedon and Erasistratus of Ceos. It also attempts to understand how the practice of human dissection conflicted with those beliefs. Using examples from Homeric epic and Euripidean tragedy, this essay traces how the Greeks thought about human death and how the memory of the deceased was preserved in the Archaic and Classical periods in order to demonstrate how human dissections in the Hellenistic period were unexpected in light of the cultural context of the Greeks who came before.*

Human dissection as a method of scientific inquiry and learning has only very recently found acceptance and regular use within Western medical and biological sciences – recent if we look at when this practice was first developed. In the third century B.C. two Greek men working in Alexandria, Herophilus of Chalcedon and Erasistratus of Ceos, were the first scholars to conduct human dissections. After these men died, the practice of human dissection fell out of use for over fifteen centuries.[1] In his article "The Discovery of the Body: Human Dissection and Its Cultural Contexts in Ancient Greece" Heinrich von Staden discusses the radical work of these two scientists and attempts to answer three questions: what were the cultural constraints that

[1] Heinrich von Staden, "The Discovery of the Body: Human Dissection and Its Cultural Contexts in Ancient Greece," *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 65 (1992): 223.

prevented anyone in Greece from performing human dissection prior to Herophilus and Erasistratus, what changed so as to allow them to be so bold, and why did no other scientists take up the torch of human dissection after them?[2] With help from von Staden and others, I will attempt to answer the first question by examining pre-Hellenistic conceptions about the body and its inviolability, using examples from Homer and Classical tragedy.

There are some shortcomings in this paper which I would like to acknowledge at the outset. I have used very little secondary scholarship specific to Greek tragedy. This paper would improve greatly with more reading, but due to constraint of space I have chosen to read the tragedies in light of Homer and scholarship on him. This is because instead of tracing Greek thought backward from Herophilus and Erasistratus, I have decided to trace it forward, starting with Homer. The reason for this is that, because Homer was such a well-known and important part of Greek culture into the Hellenistic period and beyond, the ideas expressed in Homer were still influential centuries after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written down. Jean-Pierre Vernant, in attempting to explain why Homeric ideals can be found in Classical Athens and Sparta, states "[Poetry] serves to transmit, to teach, and to make manifest within each individual the alloy of knowledge, beliefs, attitudes, and values that make up a culture."[3] The cultural values found in Homer can tell us a lot about the cultural values of the Greeks centuries later because those values were transmitted along with Homer, and a direct comparison with Homer will bring light upon any changes in thinking from the Archaic to the Classical period. Having said that, I would like to move now to what the body meant to the Greeks.

The Greek concept of the body seems to be radically different from how we think of the body now. Early Greeks, including Homer, did not conceive of the living body as a single unit, but rather as a "sum total of limbs."[4] This means that the body was a series of autonomous parts, each with a distinct function, attached yet conceptually separate from one another. As Bruno Snell points out in his examination of Homeric descriptions of the body and mind, the pre-Classical Greeks did not have a word that was the direct equivalent of the English 'body' (at least to refer to someone alive). The word *σῶμα* (body) originally meant a dead body specifically and only took on the meaning of a living body as an organic whole after the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were written down. Homer himself describes the living body and actions concerning it using words for elements of the body: *δέμας* (structure, shape, frame), *γυῖα* (limbs as in ability to move), *μέλεα* (limbs as in muscularity), and *χροός* (skin as a border or limit to the body).[5] Snell argues that because the living body is described only in parts and never as a whole in Homer, that the idea of the body as a whole did not exist for Homer and the early Greeks.[6] In the early fifth century things began to change. In art, the body began to be represented as an organic whole, reflecting the *σῶμα* taking on the additional meaning of living body. Prior to this, bodies in art were always depicted as a series of parts attached together at joints.[7] From the Archaic to the Classical period, we can see that ideas of the body changed slightly to place more emphasis on the oneness of it and to indicate the importance of that oneness to the Greeks. This makes it even more intriguing that only two centuries later Herophilus and Erasistratus would cut into the body and violate that oneness.

[2] Ibid., 224.

[3] Jean-Pierre Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," in *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, ed. Froma I. Zeitlin (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991), 58.

[4] Bruno Snell, "Homer's View of Man," in *The Discovery of the Mind*, trans. T.G. Rosenmeyer (New York: Harper & Row, 1960): 7–8.

[5] Ibid., 5–6.

[6] Snell, "Homer's View of Man," 8.

[7] Ibid., 5–6.

Why then might the pre-Classical Greeks have wanted to keep the body whole and not in pieces, when the way they thought of and depicted the body was in pieces, not as a whole? Understanding the *χροός* is very important for understanding how individual body parts relate to one another and how the body parts function altogether for early Greeks. The *χροός* (skin) is the outer limit of the body and provides a frame in which each part has a proper place and function, and it protects everything that it encircles.[8] von Staden states that it is "these notions of skin as the source or guarantor of spatial and temporal unity, of solidarity, of cohesion, of integrity, and of completion that express or entail the inviolability of both individual and communal skin."[9]

The *χροός* acts as an expression of oneness for the group of limbs that constitute a human being. As a symbol of oneness, von Staden claims that no one is permitted to cut through and violate the *χροός*, regardless of whether the victim is dead or alive, human or animal, unless it is absolutely necessary.[10] To cut through the *χροός* means to violate the wholeness of the body and the community of limbs, potentially throwing the body into chaos. As the limit or border of the body, it must be respected in order for the rest of the body to retain its cohesion. von Staden says "In Greece, limits, on the whole, are not there to be overcome, but to be accepted, not to be transgressed, but to be honoured."[11] For the Greeks the skin was a sacred boundary providing order and wholeness to the body within and containing the human being as one whole entity distinct from the outside world. In the Archaic period, it symbolizes the oneness of the body, then in the Classical period it transfers its oneness onto the body entirely and the body becomes one whole, not a series of parts expressed as a whole. In the several centuries preceding Herophilus' and Erasistratus' work there are no conceptions of the body as just a series of parts that can be separated and cut into and looked at separately. Pre-Hellenistic Greeks believed at least in some way that there was a natural oneness to the body.

But why must this oneness be respected and protected? Two reasons are because of sacred pollution and because of the notion of the beautiful death for heroes found in Homer. Before Herophilus' and Erasistratus' time, cutting through the *χροός* and into the body was considered desecration and a crime under sacred laws, as well as a "violation of culturally acceptable boundaries."[12] Sacred laws across Greece, from the early sixth century B.C. laws of Solon in Athens to the third century B.C. laws on Cos, where Herophilus may have studied, and the third century B.C. laws in Athens, where Erasistratus may have studied, shared similar attitudes towards the treatment and disposal of corpses.[13] It would have been very unlikely that Herophilus and Erasistratus were unfamiliar with such long standing and unchanging attitudes towards the dead, especially since those attitudes were important even in their own time. Exposure to a corpse, and in particular touching it, conferred sacred pollution upon the living. The Greeks in the Classical period onwards had an obsession with purity and impurity, in particular concerning this polluting power of the body.[14] Sources of pollution from the body include: dying, burying or exposing a corpse, giving birth, urinating, defecating, having sex, and menstruating.[15] The natural (and mortal) processes of the body were considered dangerous, to both gods and humans alike, because of being a source of pollution. These processes, with a particular view to dying, are insurmountable and separate the mortal from the immortal. The

---

[8] von Staden, "The Discovery of the Body," 227–228.

[9] Ibid., 228.

[10] Ibid., 227.

[11] von Staden, "The Discovery of the Body," 229.

[12] Ibid., 225.

[13] Ibid., 226–227.

[14] Maria Serena Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," in *Death in the Greek World: From Homer to the Classical Age*, trans. A.M. Osborne (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012), 63.

[15] von Staden, "The Discovery of the Body," 225.

greater the contact with these elements of mortality, the further away a human being is from the gods and the less they can interact with them.[16]

In the *Iliad* we can see how this incompatibility between immortality and mortality separates Zeus from his son Sarpedon. In book sixteen Zeus wants to save Sarpedon from death, but Hera stops him, saying:

> 'Majesty, son of Kronos, what sort of thing have you spoken? Do you wish to bring back a man who is mortal, one long since doomed by his destiny, from ill-sounding death and release him? Do it, then; but not all the rest of us gods shall approve you. And put away in your thoughts this other thing I tell you; if you bring Sarpedon back to his home, still living, think how then some other one of the gods might also wish to carry his own son out of the strong encounter; since around the great city of Priam are fighting many sons of the immortals. You will waken grim resentment among them. No, but if he is dear to you, and your heart mourns for him, then let him be, and let him go down in the strong encounter underneath the hands of Patroklos, the son of Menoitios; but after the soul and the years of life have left him, then send Death to carry him away, and Sleep, who is painless, until they come with him to the countryside of broad Lykia, where his brothers and countrymen shall give him due burial with tomb and gravestone. Such is the privilege of those who have perished.'[17]

It is not that it is impossible for Zeus to prevent Sarpedon's death, but rather that it is wrong for him to interfere in the death of a mortal when other gods would want to do the same. It is improper for Zeus to save Sarpedon because it is not the realm of the gods to interfere with mortality. If the gods continuously interfered in the deaths of their favourite mortals, then those people would no longer be considered mortal – they would just be an artificially immortal being, since not their own nature, but the favour conferred upon them by the gods would make them immortal. Zeus might wish for Sarpedon to be immortal so that he may never be parted from him, but that is impossible. Sarpedon is "longed since doomed by his destiny," as Hera says in the passage above. Sarpedon's destiny need not necessarily be to die at the hands of Patroklos or to die at Troy, but rather it is to die. All the sons of gods fighting at Troy are destined to die and to be separated from their divine parents because of their human nature. Zeus cannot change that destiny, no matter how much he wants to. Even as the king of the gods he is powerless to overcome mortality in human beings because what is human and what is divine must stay separate.

This separation of mortal and immortal is even more emphasized in tragedy, as M.S. Mirto points out.[18] For example, in Euripides' *Hippolytus* Artemis enters the play at the very end to explain to the human characters what the gods have done so as to make events occur as they did and why it was necessary for Hippolytus to die. When she leaves, she tells Hippolytus "καὶ χαῖρ᾽· ἐμοὶ γὰρ οὐ θέμις φθιτοὺς ὁρᾶν / οὐδ᾽ ὄμμα χραίνειν θανασίμοισιν ἐκπνοαῖς·"[19] "Farewell: it is not lawful for me to look upon the dead or to defile my sight with the last breath of the dying."[20] Though Hippolytus is a devotee and dear to Artemis, [21] she cannot remain with

[16] Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," 63.

[17] Homer, *Iliad*, trans. Richmond Lattimore (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), 342. Refers to page number. There are no line numbers in this edition.

[18] Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," 63.

[19] Euripides, *Hippolytus*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), 1437–1438. All numbers cited from this edition refer to the line numbers in Greek.

[20] Euripides, *Hippolytus (English)*, trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995), Perseus.

him when he dies out of fear of pollution. As a god, it is improper for her to witness this polluting mortal process. This is a more severe restriction upon Artemis' relationship with Hippolytus than the one upon Zeus' relationship with Sarpedon. Zeus has the potential to save Sarpedon, but he should not. For Artemis, saving Hippolytus is not even a consideration. Zeus can watch the death of Sarpedon, but Artemis cannot watch the death of Hippolytus.

Mirto does say that the Homeric gods are more comfortable with death and more able to interact with the dying and dead than the gods of Classical tragedy, which is why there can be instances when the gods save mortals, watch their deaths, or interact with their corpses in the *Iliad*.[22] For example, Aphrodite takes Paris out of the single combat between him and Menelaus in book three, and Apollo collects and treats the corpse of Sarpedon in book sixteen.[23] However, for the most part the gods are limited in how they can react to the mortality of their favourite heroes – they cannot interfere with their mortal condition entirely. For Mirto, the difference in how Homeric and tragic gods can interact with the dead does not represent a change in thinking from the Archaic to the Classical period, but rather different ways of expressing that insurmountable divide between mortal and immortal. Mirto reads Artemis' inability to watch Hippolytus' death in the play as the reflection of the obsession with purity and impurity concerning corpses in the Classical period. Such an interest did not exist in the time of Homer, so it was still acceptable for the gods or anyone to interact with corpses without fear of religious pollution.[24]

Human beings could also be polluted by interaction with corpses, not because of the tension between mortal and immortal, but because of the distinction between living and dead – interaction with a corpse was thought to bring the living person closer to being a dead person.[25] Just as it was inappropriate for the immortal to be touched by the mortal, it was also so for the living to be touched by the dead. Thus, interaction with the dead and dying (not necessarily with the deceased as a memory) was a source of pollution for human beings, not just gods, and Herophilus and Erasistratus would have chosen to endure such religious pollution while conducting their dissections. Although pollution was a part of everyday life for a mortal (recall the natural body functions listed above which were sources of pollution) and could not be avoided, Herophilus and Erasistratus would have gone out of their way to bring this pollution upon themselves. Satisfying the natural urges to defecate, urinate, and have sexual intercourse, and at the same time acquiring this pollution is understandable. But what is the natural urge that causes one to interact with corpses? Curiosity? If this was so, then we might expect others to have dabbled in human dissection before these two.

The second reason for protecting the oneness of the body is because of the idea of the beautiful death that pervaded Greek culture from the time of Homer until at least the Classical period in Sparta and Athens.[26] A beautiful death occurs when a man in the prime of life demonstrates fully masculine qualities and dies in battle honourably and courageously. This death gives lasting renown and honour to such a man.[27] The reason why one wants to die in this way is to preserve the youthful and masculine vigour of the body. Vernant tells us that "To fall on the battlefield saves the warrior from such inexorable decay, such deterioration of all the

---

[21] "οὐ δῆτ᾽· ἀτάρ μοι προσφιλής γ᾽ἀπόλλυσαι." (Eur., *Hipp*., 1398.) "No, but though you die, I love you still." (Eur., *Hipp. (English)*) Hippolytus has not just dedicated his life to Artemis without acknowledgement from the goddess; she considers him dear to her and does care about him.

[22] Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," 63.

[23] Hom., *Il.*, 110 and 348, respectively.

[24] Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," 63.

[25] Mirto, "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell," 64.

[26] Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," 58.

[27] Ibid., 50–51.

virtues that comprise masculine *aretē*.[28] Heroic death seizes the fighter when he is at his *akmē*,[29] a fully adult man (*anēr*), completely intact in the integrity of a vital power still untouched by any decrepitude."[30] It is best to die young, when in the prime of life so as to avoid growing old and losing one's strength and beauty. However, it is not enough for a man to die heroically so that the living body never deteriorates in old age. The body must be preserved after death because any deterioration takes away from the beauty and the glory of the death. After death, "[w]hen [the warrior] has become a weak, lifeless corpse, the glow of his youth persists in the extraordinary beauty of his body."[31] It is necessary to preserve what is celebrated and admired in the hero. This is why in book twenty-three the gods preserve Hektor's body:

> [D]ogs did not deal with Hektor, for Aphrodite, daughter of Zeus, drove the dogs back from him by day and night, and anointed him with rosy immortal oil, so Achilleus, when he dragged him about, might not tear him. And Phoibos Apollo brought down a darkening mist about him from the sky to the plain, and covered with it all the space that was taken by the dead man, to keep the force of the sun from coming first, and wither his body away by limbs and sinews.[32]

Aphrodite and Apollo protect Hektor's body so that it will remain intact. Decrepitude does not just come from old age, but also from neglect. Had the gods allowed Hektor's body to remain lying in the dirt and sun without any protection, then the beauty of his death and his youthfulness would have gone to waste. A half-rotten, defiled corpse is not something to be admired and celebrated. For one's corpse to be destroyed beyond recognition is a nightmarish concept for the Greeks. Vernant says that "The reduction of the body to a formless mass, indistinguishable from the ground on which it lies not only eradicates the dead man's unique appearance; such treatment also eliminates the difference between lifeless matter and a living creature."[33] For the body to be defiled, as Hektor's would have been without the protection of the gods, would mean for the identity of the deceased to be erased into nothingness and the beautiful, heroic death to become meaningless. What is at stake in the violation of the body is the ability to recognize and honour the person that the corpse once was. Countless men die in the *Iliad*, but very few receive actual recognition and memorialization. All those others, presumably in their prime of life, fighting with masculinity, courage, and honour are unimportant because we are not left with a recognisable body, distinguishable from the other fallen warriors, which we can mourn and honour. For the Greeks, "real existence – for the living or the dead – comes from being recognized, valued, and honored."[34] It is the greatest dishonour that one can confer upon the deceased to mutilate the corpse and thus deny the deceased existence. Being already dead, a corpse is unable to react to defilement and prevent it. The dead must rely upon those still living to respect and care for the dead body and not to completely obliterate the deceased from memory and existence.

When someone violates the body in Homer or Classical tragedy, they are attempting to dishonour the victim in the worst way imaginable. It is worse to be torn apart and mutilated than to be killed. According to Vernant, "what is most important is not to kill one's enemy, but to

---

[28] Excellence.
[29] Prime.
[30] Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," 58.
[31] Ibid., 62.
[32] Hom., *Il.* 23, 455.
[33] Vernant, "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic," 70.
[34] Ibid., 52.

deprive him of a beautiful death."[35] The purpose then of harming the body is not to kill. Instead it is to enact revenge upon the chosen victim. Homeric and tragic heroes are not killing machines, bent on destroying everything in their paths in the most disgusting and disgraceful way possible. They are still human beings with emotions that can move them to act. In the *Iliad*, Achilles only wants to kill Hektor and disgrace his body because Hektor killed his dear friend, Patroklos. Just before Hektor dies, Achilles says to him: "Hektor, surely you thought as you killed Patroklos you would be safe, and since I was far away you thought nothing of me, o fool, for an avenger was left, far greater than he was, behind him and away by the hollow ships. And it was I; and I have broken your strength; on you the dogs and the vultures shall feed and foully rip you; the Achaians will bury Patroklos."[36] Achilles does more than feed Hektor to the dogs, though this is still a valid form of corpse mutilation. In book twenty-two, before going back to the Achaean camp Achilles attaches Hektor to his chariot by the feet and drags him behind in order to destroy his body. He later does this again in book twenty-four after the funeral of Patroklos.[37]

All this is done in an attempt to destroy Hektor's body and deny him funeral rites, honour, and memory. Hektor's beautiful death in which he stands alone against Achilles courageously and honourably would lose its beauty and meaning if Achilles were successful in defiling his body. Defilement would not just make him another unimportant casualty of the war but would reverse that beautiful death and all its meaning entirely. Rather than honour, Hektor's memory would bear shame. Exacting vengeance successfully gives honour to the avenger and restores honour to the avenged, if already dead, as Patroklos is, and confers shame upon the object of vengeance.[38] The Homeric warrior fears this shameful death more than a regular death because it is even further away from the ideal beautiful death.

Even for Priam, who is past his prime of life and is no longer eligible for the beautiful death, the concern is not that his death will not be beautiful, but that his death will be grotesque, and his corpse will be mutilated, bringing great shame and dishonour upon him. In book twenty-two, Priam tries to persuade Hektor to come inside the city, instead of fight Achilles on the plain, by describing the things which will happen to Priam and his family if Hektor is not there to defend Troy from the Achaeans. He predicts his death to Hektor, saying,

> And myself last of all, my dogs in front of my doorway will rip me raw, after some man with stroke of the sharp bronze spear, or with spearcast, has torn the life out of my body; those dogs I raised in my halls to be at my table, to guard my gates, who will lap my blood in the savagery of their anger and then lie down in my courts. For a young man all is decorous when he is cut down in battle and torn with the sharp bronze, and lies there dead, and though dead still all that shows about him is beautiful; but when an old man is dead and down, and the dogs mutilate the grey head and the grey beard and the parts that are secret, this, for all sad mortality, is the sight most pitiful.[39]

Priam fears that if the Achaeans sack Troy, he will be denied not a beautiful death, for he is too old for that, but a respectful death. Priam assumes here that Hektor's death will be beautiful, for he does not yet know that Achilles will try to disgrace Hektor's corpse and withhold it from the Trojans for proper burial, so he does not use the threat of Hektor's body

[35] Ibid., 67.

[36] Hom., *Il.*, 444.

[37] Ibid., 445 and 475, respectively.

[38] Cezary Kucewicz, "Mutilation of the Dead and the Homeric Gods," *The Classical Quarterly* 66, 2 (2016): 429, ProQuest.

[39] Hom., *Il.*, 437.

being violated to convince him to withdraw. Rather, Priam uses the image of his own body being violated. Because he acknowledges that the death Hektor will receive in battle is fitting for someone of his age, Priam's real fear is not for his son's death, but for his own. The sanctity and wholeness of his body after death is a concern for Priam and the use of it in his speech indicates that it should also be a concern for Hektor. Dying is not the problem, it is unavoidable and entirely natural. However, the way in which one dies and how the body is treated is important. This is why the worst death imaginable is for the corpse to be mutilated and also why harming one's opponent's body greater than is necessary in order to kill them is such an effective method of vengeance. The beautiful death for the hero or the proper death for ordinary people requires that the wholeness of the body be preserved, except for whatever wounds are absolutely necessary to kill. Any further destruction of the body is an insult to the dead.

Exaggerated, grotesque mutilation of the body is also a method of enacting revenge in tragedy. In Euripides' *Bacchae* Pentheus denies Dionysus is a real god and does not allow his worship in Thebes, so Dionysus tricks Pentheus into going into the mountains where some Theban women are practicing his worship. Dionysus then stirs the women into madness and sets them upon Pentheus to kill him as though making a sacrifice to the god to whom Pentheus denied sacrifice. Pentheus' mother is the first to wound him:

> λαβοῦσα δ᾽ ὠλέναισ᾽ ἀριστερὰν χέρα,
> πλευραῖσιν ἀντιβᾶσα τοῦ δυσδαίμονος
> ἀπεσπάραξεν ὦμον, οὐχ ὑπὸ σθένους
> ἀλλ᾽ ὁ θεὸς εὐμάρειαν ἐπεδίδου χεροῖν·
> Ἰνὼ δὲ τἀπὶ θάτερ᾽ ἐξηργάζετο,
> ῥηγνῦσα σάρκας, Αὐτονόη τ᾽ ὄχλος τε πᾶς
> ἐπεῖχε βακχῶν· ἦν δὲ πᾶσ᾽ ὁμοῦ βοή,
> ὁ μὲν στενάζων ὅσον ἐτύγχαν᾽ ἐμπνέων,
> αἱ δ᾽ὠλόλυζον. ἔφερε δ᾽ἡ μὲν ὠλένην,
> ἡ δ᾽ ἴχνος αὐταῖς ἀρβύλαις, γυμνοῦντο δὲ
> πλευραὶ σπαραγμοῖς· πᾶσα δ᾽ ἡματωμένη
> χεῖρας διεσφαίριζε σάρκα Πενθέως.
> κεῖται δὲ χωρὶς σῶμα, τὸ μὲν ὑπὸ στύφλοις
> πέτραις, τὸ δ᾽ ὕλης ἐν βαθυξύλῳ φόβῃ,
> οὐ ῥᾴδιον ζήτημα·[40]

> Seizing his left arm at the elbow and propping her foot against the unfortunate man's side, she tore out his shoulder, not by her own strength, but the god gave facility to her hands. Ino began to work on the other side, tearing his flesh, while Autonoe and the whole crowd of the Bacchae pressed on. All were making noise together, he groaning as much as he had life left in him, while they shouted in victory. One of them bore his arm, another a foot, boot and all. His ribs were stripped bare from their tearings. The whole band, hands bloodied, were playing a game of catch with Pentheus' flesh. His body lies in different places, part under the rugged rocks, part in the deep foliage of the woods, not easy to be sought.[41]

---

[40] Euripides, *Bacchae*, ed. and trans. David Kovacs (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 1125 – 1139. All numbers cited from this edition refer to the line numbers in Greek.

[41] Euripides, *Bacchae (English)*, trans. T.A. Buckley (London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850), Perseus.

Pentheus is not a hero, but this savage death is intended to bring shame to him, just as the death described by Priam would bring shame to him if it were to happen. Pentheus' body is completely torn apart, destroying any potential beauty that we might see in the corpse. Instead his body becomes this almost unrecognizable monstrosity, stripped of its humanity along with its discernable shape. The body parts are no longer bound together as one but have been torn apart and scattered in a wild and desert place.

The mutilation and the remote location make it difficult for anyone to recognize and give due honour to Pentheus. Dionysus almost completely obliterates Pentheus and almost prevents him from being found and mourned at all. Had Pentheus' mother, still in her madness, not taken his head into the city to show off her kill,[42] the Thebans might never have discovered how or why Pentheus died and may never have been able to find his body. Even though he has willed Pentheus' body to be violated in such a manner, Dionysus will not deny him funerary rites. It is enough that he has undergone this nightmarish death and mutilation at the hands of his family. Dionysus tells us the reason why he destroyed Pentheus in this way, stating, "καὶ γὰρ πρὸς ὑμῶν θεὸς γεγὼς ὑβριζόμην."[43] "Yes, for I, a god by birth, was insulted by you."[44] Dionysus is taking vengeance on the Thebans and in particular upon their leader, who not only is head of the city, but also is head of the anti-Dionysian worship movement in the play. Once his revenge has been taken, he is no longer concerned with degrading Pentheus' body further.

Even without denying Pentheus a chance to be mourned and honoured, Dionysus' mutilation of the body is still excessive in Euripides' eyes. Cadmus, while lamenting over what happened, says "ὡς ὁ θεὸς ἡμᾶς *ἐνδίκως μὲν ἀλλ' ἄγαν* / Βρόμιος ἄναξ ἀπώλεσ' οἰκεῖος γεγώς."[45] "How *justly, yet too severely*, lord Bromius the god has destroyed us, though he is a member of our own family."[46] Cadmus is not denying that what Pentheus did was wrong or that Dionysus should have taken vengeance. It is appropriate and just for Dionysus to punish Thebes by killing Pentheus, but the way in which he does so is not. Mutilation has already been established as a legitimate way to enact revenge in the *Iliad*, however by the Classical period, most writers condemned it as morally wrong.[47]

Dionysus' actions are excessive because they go beyond what is necessary to right the wrong Pentheus has done against him. Furthermore, Dionysus does not kill and maim Pentheus himself. He must use mortals to enact his revenge because of the previously mentioned limitation on the gods interacting with the dead. Dionysus puts his own safety from pollution before that of the women, allowing them to tear apart their king and relative and have this close, polluting encounter between the dead and the living which ruins them and the city. Dionysus not only completely destroys Pentheus but does so in a way that harms the women who participated in the slaughter, without bringing any of that harm upon himself. Killing the king is bad for the whole city, but now Dionysus has made things worse with the pollution incurred from killing Pentheus. That pollution is brought into the city when Pentheus' mother returns bearing the head of Pentheus,[48] bringing the dead into the city and causing further punishment for Thebes. Dionysus's actions demonstrate a complete dismissal of culturally accepted practices concerning the dead, both in terms of how the corpse should be treated and how the living should interact with it. This mutilation of Pentheus and pollution of the city and its inhabitants is the most horrific outcome possible for the Greeks.

---

[42] This scene immediately follows the one above.
[43] Eur., *Bacch*., 1347.
[44] Eur., *Bacch. (English)*.
[45] Eur., *Bacch*., 1249–1250. My italics.
[46] Eur., *Bacch. (English)*. My italics.
[47] Kucewicz, "Mutilation of the Dead and the Homeric Gods," 436.
[48] Eur., *Bacch*., 1139–1145.

What Herophilus and Erasistratus do in dissecting human bodies is a completely new type of human relationship with the dead from what we see in Homer and tragedy. Not only do they disregard the inviolable oneness of the body and the threat of sacred pollution, but they do not even do so for any reason with an established precedence. They do not cut open the body to deny it honour and to remove the deceased as far from humanity as possible (although that may be an unintentional and necessary side effect of human dissection). They are not seeking vengeance and destruction. The Greeks would understand why someone cuts into and violates the body of their enemy, but not why someone cuts into and violates the body of a stranger. There is no passion, except for maybe passion for their work, driving Herophilus and Erasistratus to do this. They do not gain or regain honour by cutting into bodies, like Achilles does by killing and shaming Hektor or Dionysus does by destroying Pentheus and the Thebans. From looking at the attitudes of the Greeks towards the body and how it should be treated, it seems almost impossible that anyone could have taken such a radical approach to scientific advancements and violate all cultural expectations as Herophilus and Erasistratus do.

Bibliography


Euripides. *Bacchae*. Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002.

——— *Bacchae (English)*. Translated by Theodore Alois Buckley. London: Henry G. Bohn, 1850. Perseus.

——— *Hippolytus*. Edited and translated by David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995.

——— *Hippolytus (English)*. Translated by David Kovacs. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995. Perseus.

Homer. *Iliad*. Translated by Richmond Lattimore. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962.

Kucewicz, Cezary. "Mutilation of the Dead and the Homeric Gods." *The Classical Quarterly* 66, 2 (2016): 425–436. ProQuest.

Mirto, Maria Serena. "Chapter 3: The Long Farewell." In *Death in the Greek World: From Homer to the Classical Age*, translated by A.M. Osborne, 62–92. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012.

Snell, Bruno. *The Discovery of the Mind*. Translated by T.G. Rosenmeyer. New York: Harper & Row, 1960.

von Staden, Heinrich. "The Discovery of the Body: Human Dissection and Its Cultural Contexts in Ancient Greece." *The Yale Journal of Biology and Medicine* 65 (1992): 223–241. PubMed Central.

Vernant, Jean-Pierre. "A 'Beautiful Death' and the Disfigured Corpse in Homeric Epic." In *Mortals and Immortals: Collected Essays*, edited by Froma I. Zeitlin, 50–74. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1991.

# A MAN'S WORLD: LITERARY TREATMENTS OF ROMAN WOMEN IN THE TRIUMVIRAL PERIOD

ASHLEY CARMICHAEL

## Abstract

*In this essay, I argue that Roman women of the Triumviral Period of the Late Republic experienced an increase in activity in public life and affairs, such as "Turia", Tanusia and Hortensia, and received praise for their actions by such male authors as Appian, Velleius Paterculus and Cassius Dio because they were able to maintain their traditional domestic roles as Roman wives and serve as a model for a "good wife". However, these authors use these Roman women as literary devices to show the negative effects of the proscriptions and to satisfy their agendas in praising the Emperor. Conversely, women like Fulvia were disparaged because she was seen to threaten men and was used as a device to make Octavian appear more masculine. Thus, men of the ancient world dictated what it means to be a Roman woman and were in full control of how Roman women were perceived.*

During the Triumviral Period of the Late Republic, Roman women experienced an increase of activity in public affairs, a sphere which was usually reserved for men. Traditionally, Roman women were expected to be passive, pure, loyal to their husbands, and most of their duties would lie within the private setting of the home where they would tend to domestic affairs. The conditions that led to this increase of activity in public affairs was due, according to Sumi in *Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period*, to the proscriptions.[1] Consequently, many of the women who actively participated in Roman public affairs were praised and immortalized in many ancient authors' accounts. For example, Appian in *The Civil Wars* gives

[1] Geoffrey Sumi, "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period," *The Ancient World* 35, 2 (2004): 196.

his readers Hortensia's full speech, describing her actions as brave and skilled in oratory as she advocated for Roman women against the taxes set against them.[2] Additionally, in the *Laudatio Turiae*, the husband of "Turia" praises her for her intelligence and sacrifices, claiming that she was his shield while he was away from Rome.[3] However, contrary to Hortensia and "Turia", Roman authors vilified and shamed Fulvia in their accounts for her participation in public affairs. Velleius Paterculus describes Fulvia, the wife of Marc Antony, as a woman in form but possessed the mind of a violent man.[4] Likewise, Cassius Dio remarks in his *Roman History* that Fulvia, "caused the death of many, both to satisfy her enmity and to gain their wealth".[5] The different literary treatments between the women mentioned above are clear and this essay will analyze what could account for the differences in the literary treatments of Hortensia, Tanusia, "Turia" and Fulvia at the time. Two points are evident: on the one hand, women like "Turia", Tanusia and Hortensia were able to maintain their traditional female roles when they engaged in public affairs- they merely extended their domestic duties and, contrary to Fulvia, they did not threaten the masculinity of men at the time. On the other hand, the ancient authors' biases and the reasons for their writing about these women affect the literary treatments of Fulvia: she was used as an archetypal villainous character, where she brought drama and dynamism to the narrative of these authors. In addition, Fulvia was, as Emily A. Hemelrijk states in *Masculinity and Femininity in the "Laudatio Turiae",* a "loser in history" because most of her enemies were the ones writing about her.[6] Likewise, the husband of "Turia" praises "Turia" not only to gain her fame, but to gain fame for himself, to flatter the Emperor and to show the effects of the proscriptions. This raises the issue that a Roman women's public image relied solely on how men interpreted her and how Roman men were the sole architects in constructing gender roles.

Beginning with "Turia" in the *Laudatio Turiae*, "Turia" is said to have begged the triumvir Lepidus to obtain her husband's pardon, he who had been previously proscribed. When she did so, Lepidus rejected her and she was dragged off and beaten. This only comprises a small section of the laudation. However, from beginning to end, the husband, the creator of the *Laudatio Turiae*, frequently praises his wife for her domestic duties: her efforts in taking care of his home, his family and his fortune. Due to her fulfilling her role as a traditional Roman wife and care-taking, he claims that "Turia" saved his life in this way. In his praise of "Turia", the husband describes his wife using words and qualities that are mixed between characteristics that a traditional Roman wife would have and words that would typically be reserved or associated with Roman men: her generosity, strength, support, devotion, tenacity, courage and her virtue. However, he does not hold back when praising his wife and comes across as excessive in his descriptions: "You extended your generosity to very many friends, and especially to the family you are devoted to,"[7] and, "Why should I mention the virtues of your private life: your sexual morality, your obedience, your considerateness, your unassuming appearance and sober attire? Why should I talk about your love and devotion to family?"[8] Clearly visible in this description is the husband's attempt to emphasize that his wife has all the qualities of a traditional Roman wife. Furthermore, he emphasizes her kind nature:

---

[2] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.32.33.

[3] *Laudatio Turiae* 2a, 6a, 9a, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil War,* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 161.

[4] Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.74.1-3.

[5] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, Ant, 47.8.2-4.

[6] Emily A. Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Laudatio Turiae,'" *The Classical Quarterly* 54, 1 (2004): 193.

[7] *Laudatio Turiae* 42, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil* War, 161.

[8] Ibid. 30, 159.

> You gave me plentiful support for my escape. You provided me with your jewelry, when you tore off your body all your gold and the pearls and handed them over to me. Then you enriched me, while I was away from Rome, with slaves, money, and supplies, cleverly deceiving the enemy guards.[9]

Here, "Turia" sacrifices her female belongings to help her husband, because she cares more for his well-being than the materials she possesses. Thus, there is a clear reversal in roles- the husband implies that "Turia", as Emily Hemelrijk states, has taken over the role of the male in the relationship, while he appears to be an emotional, helpless female recounting the marriage they shared and his grief for her passing.[10] In addition, "Turia" appears to be the one to calm him down[11] and he is the one who subsequently loses control,[12] a trait normally associated with women and he takes note of her intelligence and courage in deceiving the enemy guards[13] and states that she was his protector[14]. On a similar note, "Turia" takes on the role of protector, usually a masculine role, because not only did she protect her husband and family, she also defended their home from a gang:

> Meanwhile, a gang of the men gathered by Milo, whose house I had acquired through purchase when he was in exile, was going to take advantage of the opportunities offered by civil war, force their way in, and loot everything. Bravely you drove them back and defended our house.[15]

Thus "Turia" is made to appear with the characteristics of a Roman man. This "manliness" is further emphasized with the husband mentioning that "Turia" is virtuous.[16] This word comes from the Latin *vir* meaning "man", and the implication being that she is "man-like". This serves as a praise and a brag- his wife is the best wife a Roman man can have; he has given her a new status, one that was made possible due to her maintaining her traditional role in taking care of her husband's home. In this way, the husband is creating an image of his wife that can serve as a model for other Roman wives and his wife's behaviour is what Roman women should be praised for at the time. Thus, although she was in the public sphere, she did not stray from her traditional role as a Roman wife, nor did she abandon any of the traditional qualities. It was due to these that the husband desires his wife to be immortalized with his words of praise.[17] However, the *Laudatio Turiae* is also significant because, as Sumi states, it shows how the proscriptions forced women out of their homes into the public sphere where "[Turia] challenged the authority of the consul and put Octavian in a favourable light through reference to his edict, thus perhaps shifting the balance of power within the Triumvirate away from Lepidus and toward Antony and Octavian".[18] Thus, the proscriptions made it possible for "Turia" to come into the public sphere and she is seen to praise Octavian, making a political "alliance". So, her public affairs were merely extensions of her domestic duties as a traditional Roman wife making her public affairs acceptable.

---

[9] Ibid. 6a, 161.
[10] Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Laudatio Turiae,'" 191.
[11] *Laudatio Turiae* 4, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil* War, 163.
[12] Ibid. 40, 165.
[13] Ibid. 2a, 161.
[14] Ibid. 6a, 161.
[15] *Laudatio Turiae* 9a, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil* War, 161.
[16] Ibid. 25, 165.
[17] Ibid. 58, 167.
[18] Geoffrey Sumi, "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period," 203.

However, the husband of "Turia" has another objective in mind: based on the language he uses about Lepidus, he not only wants to immortalize his wife, but also seeks to flatter the Emperor. The husband spends time focusing on Lepidus and characterizes him as a cruel man: "and although you had to endure Lepidus' insulting words and cruel wounds, you kept on putting forward your case in the open so that the person responsible for my trials would be publicly disgraced".[19] This, as Gowing states, makes Lepidus' *crudelita* clear and puts Lepidus in direct opposition of Octavian and his *clementia.*[20] So, it is clear that, as Sumi states, "Turia"'s husband deliberately chose these words to damn Lepidus' character.[21] Gowing agrees with this, and states that Laudation was part of a propaganda campaign against Lepidus because Octavian no longer had use for him and that "there was then a tradition that sought to discredit Lepidus".[22] Examples of these traditions come from Cassius Dio and Velleius Paterculus: Cassius Dio writes that Lepidus and Antony had many enemies at the time.[23] Similarly, Velleius Paterculus writes:

> Then the vengeful resentment of Antony and Lepidus- for each of them had been declared public enemies, as has already been stated, and both preferred to hear accounts of what they had suffered, rather than of what they had deserved, at the hands of the senate- renewed the horror of the Sullan proscriptions.[24]

Furthermore, the husband even praises Augustus for his restoration as a citizen of Rome, thus making his agenda to flatter Augustus clear using the public deeds of his wife.[25] Putting it briefly in Emily Hemelrijk's words, "her husband clearly aimed at a wider public: the intended audience comprised all passers-by, then and in the future".[26] In summary of this section, the reasons why ancient authors praised "Turia" was due to her maintaining her traditional role as a Roman wife in the public sphere, to brag about her, to flatter the Emperor and to damn Lepidus' character.

It is worthwhile to make a short note on Tanusia because she shares a similar case to that of "Turia". Cassius Dio states that she concealed her proscribed husband in a chest, only to seek Caesar out at a festival, "informed him of her deed, of which he was still ignorant, brought in the chest itself and produced from it her husband. Caesar, astonished, released all of them".[27] Similar to "Turia", Sumi states that Tanusia was motivated to appear in public by causes of loyalty and politics.[28] However, instead of being in opposition, it would appear that she is merely giving Caesar a chance to display his *clementia.*[29] This seems to be Cassius Dio's motivation to exemplify Caesar's character by using Tanusia's story and he public deeds much in the same way as "Turia's" husband has done. Not only that, this particular instance of a devoted Roman wife crossing into a public sphere for her husband in Cassius Dio's account appears to show the effects the proscriptions had on Romans according to Appian: the proscriptions were so devastating that they even forced the traditional Roman women out of their private spheres and forced them to fulfill duties and actions that were typically reserved for Roman men.

---

[19] *Laudatio Turiae* 11, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil* War, 163.
[20] Alain Gowing, "Lepidus, the Proscriptions and the Laudatio Turiae," *Historia*, 41, 3 (1992): 293.
[21] Sumi, "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period," 202.
[22] Gowing, "Lepidus, the Proscriptions and the Laudatio Turiae," 290-92.
[23] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, *Ant,* 47.7.1.
[24] Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.66.1.
[25] *Laudatio Turiae* 11, quoted in Josiah Osgood, *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil* War, 163.
[26] Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Laudatio Turiae,'" 187.
[27] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 47.7.4-5.
[28] Sumi, "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period," 9.
[29] Ibid., 205.

In the case of Hortensia, she advocated for women against paying taxes during the civil war in opposition to the triumvirs, the way in which she had done this was through public oration. Appian recreates her speech in his *The Civil Wars*, where she states that should the women's property be taken from them, they would not be able to perform their domestic duties and they will no longer be feminine: "if you also take our property, you will reduce us to squalor unworthy of our family, character, and feminine nature".[30] This public oration is significant because there were no such female public orations before Hortensia's oration.[31] Roman women were the usual passive spectators during these public speeches.[32] However, going back to a point previously made, because this taxation heavily interferes with the Roman women's domestic duties, it forced women out of their private spheres into public domains. So, Hortensia, as she appears in Appian's account, is not only advocating for traditional women, she is advocating to maintain their traditional roles and femininity. Consequently, the advocacy of female traditional roles makes her a figure to be admired by ancient authors, such as Appian.

She continues to state in her speech that women did not wrong the triumvirs and should thus not be punished for crimes that they did not commit.[33]To put it in Bauman's words, "no taxation because of no representation".[34] Thus, it is clear that Appian uses Hortensia to illustrate the harsh living conditions to an aristocrat at the time under the triumvirs- they sought to punish Roman women who committed no crimes, in Appian's words: "Such were the misfortunes which engulfed the Romans as a result of the decrees of the triumvirs".[35] It is also due to her brave opposition to the triumvirs that Appian sees that Hortensia's actions were justified. To summarize, Hortensia advocated for traditional women and the traditional way of life for women because the taxation that these women were faced with interfered with their domestic duties. Appian sees Hortensia's actions as justified because she is still traditional, she is opposing the triumvirs, and he is using her to show the difficulties of living under the triumvirs at the time.

Finally, Fulvia, the wife of Mark Antony during the Triumviral period, possessed all the qualities of a devoted Roman wife: she fiercely defended her husband against his enemies and denounced them. However, Mark Antony's enemies targeted Fulvia, and the ancient authors depict her to have meddled too much within the sphere of men, abandoning her traditional role as a Roman woman. Evidence for depictions of Fulvia's meddling and masculinity comes from numerous the ancient authors: Velleius Paterculus states she was not female anymore and, "was creating general confusion by armed violence".[36] Cassius Dio makes it clear that Fulvia killed many because she wanted their wealth, even cruelly spitting on the decapitated head of Cicero.[37] Plutarch states that Fulvia did not want to be traditional, but wanted to rule men.[38] And Appian claims that Fulvia's death was a good thing because she could no longer interfere with men's affairs and cause wars due to her jealousy of Cleopatra.[39] It is clear that Fulvia, though devoted to Antony, was thought to have overstepped the boundary and interfered too much with public affairs, abandoning her traditional role. Her interference (in such domains as military affairs) was not an extension of the domestic roles but was seen as an annoying woman trying to obtain power and control over men, so much so that the ancient authors portray her as a woman who attempted to emasculated men.

---

[30] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.33.
[31] Richard Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, (London: Routledge), 1992, 78.
[32] Sumi, "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period," 196.
[33] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.33.
[34] Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, 83.
[35] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.34.
[36] Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.74.1-3.
[37] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, *Ant*, 47.8.2-4.
[38] Plutarch*, Roman Lives*, Ant, 10.3.
[39] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 5.59.

On account of her defending her husband, Marc Antony's enemies, like Octavian, deliberately targeted her. It appears that Octavian even used her character to make himself look more masculine- at the time, Octavian was accused of being effeminate, and Suetonius remarks in his book on Augustus that some made allegations against the "soft" and "woman-like" Octavian, claiming that he was able to become Caesar's heir by performing sexual favours[40]. Octavian wanted to clean up his image and used Fulvia to make himself appear more masculine, as Bauman states, "Octavian then launched a propaganda war against Fulvia, subjecting her to scurrilous attacks that may have inspired some of the canards against her".[41] Ancient authors then used Octavian's account of Fulvia, as Hallett states in *Fulvia, The Representation of an Elite Roman Woman Warrior.*[42] These ancient authors then turned Fulvia into an archetype where she is a cruel, unrestrained woman. Hallett continues her argument stating that she was an, "elite matron as similar to fictionalized female figures portrayed as exercising control over men outside the realm of marriage".[43] Going back to Cassius Dio's account, he portrays Antony and Fulvia as partners in crime to create what seems to be a more interesting narrative. Because of Fulvia's consequent label as an enemy of Octavian, her public character was ruined, and she would be known as a controlling and evil female character when she was loyal to Antony. This raises Emily Hemelrijk's point that women could only be "manly" under certain circumstances- this being that they stayed traditional, and did not come in direct opposition to men, especially Octavian.[44] However, Fulvia's image was further degraded because she was involved with the proscriptions: Appian states that her treatment of the women and Hortensia was inappropriate when they attempted to oppose taxation.[45] Again, Appian is unfairly using Fulvia to show how hard the time was for Romans and how "cruel" and "selfish" women like Fulvia further made life hard for Romans. However, Fulvia's devotion to Marc Antony is almost non-existent in the ancient author's account even though such ancient authors make note of a wife's loyalty to their husbands. One such instance is Velleius Paterculus who writes: "[o]ne thing, however, demands comment, that toward the proscribed their wives showed the greatest loyalty".[46] However, Fulvia she overstepped the boundary: she would engage in military affairs and would threat the masculinity of men, something that is unforgiveable. In summary, as a consequence of her devotion to Antony, this led her to be in direct opposition to Octavian. Octavian then used her character to make himself appear more masculine. Thus, she began to be regarded as a stereotypical wicked matron. If "Turia"'s husband in the *Laudatio Turiae* is informing his audience on how to be a good wife, then these ancient authors are informing their audience on what a bad wife or Roman woman was.

In conclusion, ancient Roman authors such as Appian, Velleius Paterculus, and Cassius Dio praised women like "Turia", Tanusia and Hortensia when they entered the public spheres due to the fact that they were able to maintain their traditional roles as Roman wives and not be seen as a threat to Roman men. They accepted their actions and saw these as a consequence of the proscriptions- that even the women suffered. But the ancient Roman authors, including Plutarch and Suetonius, disparaged Fulvia because she overstepped the boundary, meddled too much in men's affairs, and came into direct opposition to Octavian. These ancient Roman authors, however, used these women for a specific literary purpose, affecting the degree of praise

---

[40] Suetonius*, Lives of the Caesars,* 68.

[41] Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*, 87.

[42] Judith Hallett, "Fulvia: The Representation of an Elite Roman Woman Warrior," *Women and War in Antiquity*, Edited by Jacqueline Fabre-Sarris and Alison Keith. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press (2015), 262.

[43] Ibid., 249.

[44] Hemelrijk, "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Laudatio Turiae,'" 196.

[45] Appian, *The Civil Wars*, 4.33.

[46] Velleius Paterculus, *The Roman History*, 2.67.1-2.

they received: in the case of “Turia”, her husband wanted to flatter the emperor and devastate Lepidus’ character; Octavian used Fulvia as a device to make his character appear more masculine and appealing. This in turn had severe negative consequences for Fulvia causing other ancient authors to use his interpretation of her and continue to portray her as an archetypal evil woman in their histories. So, women of ancient Rome were restricted in what roles they must adopt and had to submit to what was deemed “proper” for a Roman woman, this being dictated by Roman men. Acting against this could damage their reputation forever and how they are interpreted in the modern world. The different literary treatments of these women highlight the issue that ancient written sources must be carefully analyzed; the reasons for the author’s writing, as well as the time in which they are writing before drawing conclusions about one’s character must be taken into account, especially in regards to Roman women because they did not construct their own texts and are only written about by men.

Bibliography

Appian. *The Civil Wars*. Translated by John Carter. London: Penguin Classics, 1996.

Bauman, Richard. *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome*. London: Routledge, 1992, pp. 78-90.

Cassius Dio. *Roman History*. Translated by Earnest Cary. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/e/roman/texts/cassius_dio/home.html

Gowing, Alain. "Lepidus, the Proscriptions and the Laudatio Turiae." *Historia*, 41, 3 (1992): 283-296.

Hallett, Judith. "Fulvia: The Representation of an Elite Roman Woman Warrior*." Women and War in Antiquity*. Edited by Jacqueline Fabre-Sarris and Alison Keith. Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2015.

Hemelrijk, Emily A. "Masculinity and Femininity in the 'Laudatio Turiae.'" *The Classical Quarterly* 54, 1 (2004): 185-197.

Osgood, Josiah. *Turia: A Roman Woman's Civil War.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2014, pp. 151-169.

Plutarch. *Roman Lives: A Selection of Eight Roman Lives*. Translated by Robin Waterfield. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Suetonius. *Lives of the Caesars*. Translated by Catherine Edwards. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.

Sumi, Geoffrey. "Civil War, Women and Spectacle in the Triumviral Period." *The Ancient World* 35, (2004): 196-206.

Valleius Paterculus. *The Roman History*. Translated by Fredwick W. Shipley. Cambridge: Hardvard University Press, 1924. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Velleius_Paterculus/home.html.