Plebeian

Plebeian

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Editor's Note

The undergraduate mind, when unburdened by the pressures and constraints of classwork, is a novel and fascinating thing that I have had the unique pleasure of watching flourish over the course of the year. In this ninth edition of the *Plebeian*, the Muses are undeniably present in our talented and driven authors. Against all odds, the curious and capable minds of the University of Toronto's Classics program have borne seven remarkable papers from the blood, sweat, and tears of academic rigour. Where once such labours would remain unheard and unseen after the somewhat tear-jerking reception of marks, the *Plebeian* has the great pleasure of showcasing the fruits of our authors' Herculean labours.

Classics is an ever-evolving discipline, and not just out of necessity — undergraduates represent the future of the subject, and the innovation begins here. This year's *Plebeian* is full of firsts: showcasing first years, containing our first co-authored paper, and representing our first look into Classical reception. Revitalization and renewal are the name of the game, with each author bringing a new perspective to traditional scholarship. From Sulpicia to the Panatheneia to the death of Germanicus, this year's issue seeks to answer old questions anew, and fill in long-empty gaps.

I am proud to count myself among both the editors and authors of this publication, who thrive on their thirst for knowledge and have dedicated countless hours to making the *Plebeian* what it claims to be. I have no doubt that the passion and diligence they have exhibited will carry them on to great things, both in the field of Classics and the world at large. We are truly lucky to count them among our colleagues, and I anticipate their future contributions to be just as impressive as those we see here.

Special thanks should be afforded to my Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Teodora Mladin, and my Head Associate Editor, Izzy Friesen, without whom this publication and all its accoutrements would not have been possible. Thanks is also due to John Liao, whose guidance was vital to the success of this publication both in past years and now. And, of course, I would be remiss in neglecting to thank our loyal readers, without whom the *Plebeian* would be lost to the annals of scholarship. So thank you, dear reader, for your own little part in *Plebeian*'s success.

As they often say in the world of academics, publish or perish. I am truly delighted to note that nine fewer talented undergraduates will be perishing today.

Piper Hays, *Editor-in-Chief*

Saturday Night Fever: Violence and Catharsis in the *Bacchae* and *American Psycho*

Michelle Yoonseo Lee

Abstract
Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* might not be the first example that springs to mind when one thinks of receptions of the *Bacchae* of Euripides, but it is worth looking at these works together, especially with the resurgent popularity of *American Psycho* in popular media. Through Friedrich Nietszchse's aesthetic theory and his definitions of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, we can compare the bacchantes more readily with Patrick Bateman to investigate how they move through the reconciliation — or lack thereof — of the Apollonian and the Dionysian, especially treating violence as a rite towards an attempt at catharsis. Both receptions serve as cautionary tales for two different generations. For the bacchantes, violence is both a product of intoxication but also a way to achieve catharsis, especially as they move from the city to the mountain and back — a physical translocation from law and order to untamed nature, and back. However, the Apollonian for Bateman has possessed the hyper-stratified and bias-driven '80's yuppie society as depicted by Ellis. Bateman attempts to balance this with Dionysian explosions of violence, intoxication, and obsession with music and oneness — however, there is no catharsis for him.

The bacchantes have taken Mount Cithaeron, but Patrick Bateman stalks New York City: what could they possibly have in common? The answer is a spectrum that encompasses violence and catharsis, the process of acceptance or realization. In both works, violence is a rite towards catharsis, but it has very different results for both casts of characters, resulting in the illustration of either end of this catharsis-via-violence spectrum by two works that are more similar than meets the eye. Although separated by thousands of years, Brett Easton Ellis' *American Psycho* and *The Bacchae* of Euripides are connected by age-old emotions that transcend time and space: the desire to withdraw from strict social mores and to give in to your darkest urges in an attempt at escape. Nietzsche's definitions of the Apollonian and the Dionysian also play a role in clearly identifying elements in the two works, and this collaboration gives rise to the purpose of their receptions: to ex-

plore these very dark and primal urges, and lean more into the realm of cautionary tales than simple entertainment.

Friedrich Nietzsche's definitions of the Apollonian and the Dionysian stem from his thoughts and theory of aesthetics. He defines the Apollonian as representing law and order, rationality, logic, beauty, all of which are concentrated in the Olympian gods, Greek epic, and Homer in particular. At the same time, these rigid, structured elements also give way to a sense of illusion and dream-like torpor that are deeply entwined — and not opposed — to the concept of the Dionysian, which represented a much more emotional and irrational state. Dionysus represented intoxication, a natural and immediate relation to nature, and the loss of individuality and a return to oneness with the group. Compared to the Apollonian Olympians and the Epic form, the Dionysian was found in the form of the Titans and the satyrs: the former chthonic gods and the latter always being found in a group, tied to nature, and frequently sexualized. These two categories are not meant to stand in opposition to each other. For Nietzsche and the ancient Greeks, it was the fusion of the two that gave rise to powerful works of art and performance. Nietzsche claims that the *Kunsttriebe* ("artistic impulse") of both categories in balance gives rise to the form of Greek tragedy. In *American Psycho* the cycle of violence motivated by the imbalance of the Dionysian and Apollonian is explored, in stark contrast to the *Bacchae*, where balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian is only possible at the end of the play, when the characters have passed through the Dionysian gauntlet.

Ellis might not state explicitly that his work is a reception of *The Bacchae*, but with the cultural significance of the tragedy, it seems unlikely that he did not cross paths with it and internalize some aspects to present later in his book. Even if he were exposed to the play via receptions, several themes stay constant. Although the characters, setting, and premise might have changed drastically, and almost rendered the play unrecognizable on the surface, some foundational aspects of *American Psycho* eerily echo the bacchantes' songs on Mount Cithaeron. Violence, the role of music, madness and intoxication, escape, and undeniable gods like Dionysus take on a new form in 1980s New York City as the irresistible forces of capitalism and its partners, hyper-consumerism and social stratification. Both authors explore violence as bridges toward catharsis, which means different things in both works, but neither are simple pieces for entertainment; they are certainly cautionary tales, meant to advise and warn the audience. Both works implicitly warn about the balance of the Apollonian and the Dionysian through the acceptance of gods; where Euripides is concerned with the acknowledgement and integration of the purely Dionysian for overall balance, Ellis explores the

cycle of violence that the purely Apollonian — without proper balance from the Dionysian — can drive people towards, and how the overly Apollonian can be the breeding ground for those repressed explosions of Dionysiac urges, especially violence.

All of Greece's skeptics are concentrated into the figure of Pentheus in *The Bacchae* of Euripides; a figure who is at once rigid and unwavering, xenophobic, and unwilling to accept Dionysus, a new Eastern god from foreign lands. Declared as Cadmus' successor to the throne, Pentheus has some large sandals to fill. The staunchly militaristic, sternly patriarchal Pentheus cuts an interesting figure: though he is obstinate in his desire to keep order, he is almost voyeuristic in his curiosity of the Dionysian rituals. This internal conflict perhaps makes him even more puritanical in an effort to compensate. He decries Dionysus and his effect on the women of Thebes, describing him as an "effeminate stranger, the man who infects our women / with his new disease and pollutes their beds", but in the end cannot stand against the power of the god and the violence it inspires.[1] Pentheus cuts the archetypal Nietzschean Apollonian figure — order, civility, rationality — but faces off against the paragon of the Dionysian, Dionysus. His natural and immediate relation to nature, music, the loss of individuality, intoxication, and ecstasy infect the women of Thebes, who disappear into the depths of Mount Cithaeron until Dionysus is accepted by the Thebans: the role of violence then is the byproduct of this Dionysiac frenzy, and part of the circle of intoxication. The bacchantes are intoxicated and slip into violence, which is intoxicating, which inspires more violence. The imagery of parts of oxen strewn across the trees, lowing bulls pulled easily apart by the women of Thebes: the fire feeds itself, and the "Bacchic violence spreads."[2] But violence is not only a byproduct; it is one of the ways that the final catharsis, or the acceptance of Dionysus and the releasing of the enchantment, is achieved. They must pass through it to enter this cathartic state, where they are released from this oneness with the group and the hive-minded frenzy that dominates this stage. It is the most violent act of all — the regicide-filicide at Agave's hands — that releases them all from this intoxicated state and into a new state of acceptance and realization.

For Euripides, catharsis is achieved partly through violence. The realization aspect of Euripedean catharsis is filled through the acceptance of Dionysus as an Olympian god, and violence is an unavoidable state that leads to the eventual release and final acceptance. Even the physical location of the play is a portrayal of

1 Euripides, *The Bacchae*, ed. D Greene and R Lattimore, trans. W. Arrowsmith, The Complete Greek Tragedies: *Euripides V* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 353-4.

2 Eur., *Bacch.* 778.

this journey into Dionysian urges and back. The bacchantes move physically onto the mountain, where they are closer to nature, and when they return to the polis they regain their senses. The polis is a lonely island of human civility and order at the foot of the mountains, surrounded by this wild chaos, the only bastion against the oneness of nature that threatens to swallow up the net of social constraints, laws, and rationality that Thebes fights to be. The reader of the play can imagine the women returning from the mountain, streaked with blood, back to the neatly laid out streets of Thebes, and reason returning to their eyes. This is emblematic of their moving through the Apollonian and the Dionysian, before returning and being able to reconcile the two. They understand that they must accept Dionysus — and not just out of fear or influence, but because he must be there to balance out the overly rigid, the hyperbolically Apollonian. The latter is exemplified in the figure of Pentheus, who rejects the arrival of a new god, despite the fact that he is a son of Zeus. His rigid attitude towards change — in other words, his overcommitment to law and order — is what brings about his downfall. Ironically, the god explicitly describes the balanced, dual nature of his identity as "Dionysus, son of Zeus, consummate god, / most terrible, and yet most gentle, to humankind", just as Pentheus leaves, the man who is in need of hearing this lesson the most.[3] For Euripides and his Thebans, violence — and through this, Dionysus — is a route to balance. To reject and repress the Dionysian is to demand disaster; ritual violence and intoxication must exist to bleed those urges out for another year and to start afresh.

The cast of characters narrows extensively when we are brought to 1980s New York City, where we follow Patrick Bateman, who is the titular character of Bret Easton Ellis' *American Psycho.* He has internalized what Ellis portrays as '80s yuppie culture: an incredibly vapid and destructive system of capitalism and hyperconsumerism, one that is focused on outward appearances only, and bristles with shallow narcissism. He is the distilled, essential, and ultimate stereotype of the yuppie: he is wealthy to the point of carelessness but greedy and envious, shallow and steeped in self-exaltation, and addicted to sex, drugs, and conspicuous consumption. Bateman stalks a hypocritical landscape that encourages a hive mind in the form of trends and endless Zagat consultations, which recalls a bastardized version of the Dionysian 'oneness' that is superimposed on an even more warped and rigid Apollonian society that has been amplified beyond recognition. Ellis portrays this overtly stratified society as divided by class, race, and gender, and these delineations are wholeheartedly accepted by Bateman and his contemporaries as the status quo. Bateman and his faceless posse move through this

3 Eur., *Bacch*. 860-861.

system that thrives off of a hyper-imposition of order at the detriment of others, where the top 1% exist only because of the bottom 99%: a warping of the order and civility preached by Nietzsche's descriptions of the Apollonian. His violence explodes out of him at intervals, as an expression of his thrashing against the jaws of this situation. The reader almost pities him for being aware of the shallowness and inherent emptiness of his situation. When the mania reaches a peak — often triggered by feelings of inadequacy, extreme rage, panic, or grief — Bateman explodes into violence. There is a steady climb towards this peak, studded with moments of overindulgence in an effort to distract: taking hard drugs and drinking, working out obsessively and getting one deep-tissue massage after another, and having increasingly more violent sex with the sex workers he lures home. Bateman very clearly communicates his pain and suffocation, but the audience cannot completely sympathize with an animal in its death throes; we simply watch on in silence as he walks through this hypocritical and endlessly shallow landscape that "at once torments [him] and is mirrored in [him]."[4] There are very Dionysian aspects to the patterns leading to his explosions of violence: overindulgence, intoxication through sex, drugs, alcohol, and especially a mounting, feverish mania that no amount of bicep curls and deep tissue massages can curb. He wants an exit, to purge himself of the pain stemming from his stiflingly Apollonian situation and surroundings, but this violence, also an attempt at reaching catharsis, delivers markedly different results.[5]

For him, there is no relief or escape from his circumstances, no matter how many violent rampages he indulges. Compared to the Theban bacchantes, there is no real physical translocation for Bateman either. The only place he visits is the Hamptons, which is still rife with the shallow pettiness that defines Ellis' '80's yuppie culture. The overindulgence of sex, drugs, and alcohol, the sneering, conceited vanity that extends not only to the self, but also to conspicuous consumption: Bateman lives and breathes it all, with relish. He has internalized the system and there is nowhere to turn, and by the end of the book he is bleakly aware of his position, and how he is doomed to live the same days forever stuck in his cycle of pain — which is in an ironic way a kind of catharsis of its own. Even after his acts of graphic violence that sometimes drag on for pages on end, Bateman is only rewarded with a few muffled, fluttering moments of clarity before he must go to work again and re-enter the cycle.[6] Eventually, towards the end of the novel, Bateman realizes coolly that:

4 B.E. Ellis, *American Psycho* (New York, Penguin Random House, 1991): 56.

5 Ellis, *American Psycho,* 134.

6 Ellis, 134.

> "there are no more barriers to cross. All I have in common with the un controllable and the insane, the vicious and the evil, all the mayhem I have caused and my utter indifference toward it I have now surpassed. My pain is constant and sharp (...) I want no one to escape, but even after admitting this there is no catharsis (...) and I gain no deeper knowledge of myself'."[7]

There was a weak promise of catharsis, a release from this shallow cycle that is the source of most of his pain, but Bateman is an entirely willing participant in his own torture.[8] He is torn between his vanity and his need to tirelessly seek the approval of others, is entrenched in divisions of race, sex, class like the rest of his circle, and convinced of his own superiority. He can never escape.

TikTok is rife with edits of *American Psycho,* passages from the novel playing over scenes of Bateman stalking New York, wielding an axe, dressed in his iconic raincoat. What might explain this recent resurgence in the popularity of *American Psycho* with people in their 20s? It may be that younger people are feeling the weight of the world pressing in; a very real uncertainty that is only underlined by war, climate change, and fiscal insecurity. As the overwhelmingly Apollonian departs from the Euripidean Bacchic landscape and spreads to settle more and more firmly into the more modern and familiar vessel of capitalism and social stratification, the narratives of *The Bacchae* and *American Psycho* resonate more and more with the demographic poised to step fully into this seemingly bleak social landscape as its inheritors. These same desires to escape or to achieve catharsis are themes and questions that stay consistent across generations, as demonstrated by Ellis and Euripides. Euripides illustrates a cautionary tale of the violence that begets catharsis, or acceptance of a god, in favour of the ultimate balance between the Apollonian and the Dionysian, while Ellis demonstrates the failure to reach catharsis even through violence and other elements of the Dionysian while thrashing in the jaws of the bastardized, hyper-Apollonian. While *American Psycho* might not be the first work to come to mind when one thinks of *The Bacchae,* there are undeniable shared elements and underlying themes that connect the works over two very different time periods, from two very different authors. These connections attest to the enduring popularity of the two works — and could inspire us to turn the landscape away from the overly Apollonian into a gentler, more balanced one.

7 Ellis, 377.

8 Ellis, 134.

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Scholars Hate Her! Sulpicia the Satirist and the Question of Authorship in the *Conquestia Sulpiciae*

Behina Doroodgar, Madeleine Schmuckler, and Ben Pennell

Abstract

The *Conquestio Sulpiciae* (or Sulpicia's Complaint) has been plagued by questions of authorship since its discovery in 1493. The poem was initially attributed to the 1st-century poet Sulpicia, but since its discovery scholars have argued that the *Conquestio* is a 4th-century CE pseudo-Sulpicia or even a Renaissance era forgery. This paper will explore the controversies around the text, authorship and date of the *Conquestio* in existing scholarship and argue that the text was most likely written in the 1st century CE. Much of the previous scholarship surrounding this poem was clouded by non-critical, misogynistic biases which further obscured the already limited scholarship. Based on this answer to the authorship question, we offer initial thoughts on the interpretation of the poem as a satire by sketching out the historical context of Domitian's reign and his expulsion of the philosophers. Finally, we provide a new reading of the first and last lines of the poem in light of the author being Sulpicia, a first century woman. Based on these assumptions, the gendered language of the poem is brought to the fore, and the *Conquestio* offers a unique perspective on Romans' gendered assumptions about poetic production.[1]

The *Conquestio Sulpiciae* (or Sulpicia's Complaint) has been plagued by questions of authorship since its discovery in 1493. The 70-line poem follows the poet's lament for the treatment of philosophers and other intellectuals in Rome. She begins the poem by invoking the Muse Calliope to complain about the current Emperor's expulsion of intellectuals. The bulk of the poem follows with various cultural, mythological, and historical references which are used to lament the anti-intellectual atmosphere in Rome and berate the unnamed 'king'. The poem ends with Sulpicia asking Calliope whether she should remain in Rome or flee, and concludes with a response from the Muse. The Muse comforts Sulpicia with

1 This paper arose from discussions in the DETEXTUS reading group in Academic Year 2021-22 run by Postdoctoral fellow Niek Janssen, and we are grateful for the stimulating discussions of the poem with our fellow students. We would like to extend a special thank you to Cecilia Xie, who helped with the notes for the Scholarship Tradition section.

news that the tyrant's death will come soon, whereas Sulpicia will live forever in her work. The poem includes several adjectives describing the narrator in the first person, as well as a reference to Calenus, and as a result it has been attributed to the 1st-century poet Sulpicia. Other scholars, however, have argued that the *Conquestio* is a 4th-century CE pseudo-Sulpicia or even a Renaissance era forgery. This issue of authorship has often clouded any further discussion regarding the text's content, resulting in limited scholarship being done on this poem. Much of the previous scholarship surrounding this poem was clouded by non-critical, misogynistic biases which further obscured the already limited scholarship.This paper will explore the controversies around the text, authorship and date of the *Conquestio* in existing scholarship and argue that we consider a 1st-century date to be the most likely theory. Based on this answer to the authorship question, we offer initial thoughts on the interpretation of the poem as a satire by sketching out the historical context of Domitian's reign and his expulsion of the philosophers. Finally, we provide a new reading of the first and last lines of the poem in light of the author being Sulpicia, a first century woman. Based on these assumptions, the gendered language of the poem is brought to the fore, and the *Conquestio* offers a unique perspective on Romans' gendered assumptions about poetic production.

Historical Context

Domitian, the Emperor often designated as the king referenced in the poem, is an undoubtedly cruel Emperor, and the historical context for his reign is instructive for understanding the inception of this poem and highlighting why it is likely written around his time. The first slander against the Emperor is subtle, as it comes in the form of referring to him as king. Ever since the expulsion of the kings, the Romans were allergic to the idea of a monarch since their expulsion in 509 BCE. When Augustus took up all relevant magistracies and offices when he created the Empire, Rome may as well have had a king again. Augustus controlled the treasury, the army, and religion as chief priest; in essence, he controlled every aspect of Roman life.[2] Augustus was a monarch in all but name, and he and the emperors that succeeded him would feign democracy by taking on republican titles instead of regal ones.[3] The 'official' position of the Emperor was that they were simply the first man in the senate, the *Princeps*, a title usually given to the oldest living senator during the Republic.[4]

2 Suetonius, *Divus Augustus*, 31, 35, 36; Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae,* 53.16.

3 Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 53.17.

4 This can actually be seen in line 10 of the poem, when Sulpicia refers to herself as *Princeps.*

Domitian was the eleventh emperor of Rome and reigned from 81 to 96 CE, ascending to the Emperorship after the reigns of his father and elder brother, both beloved by their contemporaries.[5] Unlike them, Domitian is nearly universally hated by the ancient sources. Suetonius writes that he was randomly and excessively cruel, describing several brutal (and likely fictitious) murders and tortures that he is said to have ordered without much motive. Dio tells us that Domitian was short-tempered, closed off, and arrogant, to the point of requesting to be referred to by the senate the same way a slave would address their master. Tacitus describes how Domitian specifically enjoyed watching people suffer, where even Nero would have looked away.[6] In his letters to the Emperor twenty years later, Pliny describes Domitian's reign as terrible.[7] These sources paint a colourful portrait of Domitian, describing him as a vindictive, indiscriminate, borderline sociopath. A very negative reputation can be created for an emperor who executed roughly a dozen men of Senatorial rank. An excellent summation of the view of Domitian comes from Suetonius as he describes the Flavian dynasty: "We have no cause to be ashamed of the Flavian record, though it is generally admitted that Domitian's cruelty and greed justified his assassination."[8]

There must be a certain caution taken while reading these ancient sources, as it is important to consider the inherent biases and date of authorship in these works. Dio describes how upon Nerva's ascension, depictions of Domitian were all destroyed.[9] Coins were melted and statues were toppled. Nerva requested that no statues of gold or silver be made of him in stark contrast to Domitian, who infamously did. Ancient sources describe Nerva as frugal, pious, reasonable and approachable, if maybe a bit naive. The successors of Nerva would follow in this tradition which opposed Domitian's style of reign. This meant that the imperial regime explicitly presented itself as the opposite of Domitian.

It is in this world that many of our best histories are written. Suetonius, the most contemporary biographer, likely published his work around 119 CE. Tacitus' ex-

5 Despite reigning only two years, Titus, Domitian's brother, is beloved by the ancient sources: Suetonius *Titus* 1 describes him as a delight to all with the ability to win over anyone; Cassius Dio *Historiae Romanae* 66.18 describes him as upright, responsible, and that he wielded his power in a proper manner; Tacitus *Histories* 5.1 describes him as affable and energetic, and that the armies of Rome enthusiastically supported him; he was deified immediately following his death; the *Historia Augusta Aurelian* 42.4 includes him in their list of best Emperors; Consecration coins portraying the deified Titus were issued by three Emperors: Domitian, Trajan and Decius: RIC 131 Domitian, RIC 833 Trajan, RIC 82b Decius.

6 Tacitus, *Agricola,* 45.

7 Pliny, *Epistulae*, 10.2.

8 Suetonius, *Vespasian,* 1.

9 Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae*, 68.1

tremely anti-Domitian *Agricola* was published only two years after his assassination. This means that these authors cultivated their readings for an anti-Domitian audience while also trying to distance themselves from his reign of terror. Tacitus was Consul under Nerva, only a year after Domitian's assassination. This suggests that he was near the height of his career under Domitian, something that would have been impossible without at least the tacit approval of the Emperor. Finally, almost all the ancient writers were aristocratic men of senatorial rank, and most worked in proximity with the Emperor. Suetonius worked in imperial administration; Tacitus was a consul, as was Cassius Dio. Beyond simply a consulship, Cassius Dio was on the advisory council of the Emperor Severus Alexander (r. 222-235 CE). We must also consider the fact that we simply do not have the perspective of ordinary citizens, slaves, or perhaps more topically, women. Furthermore, it can be determined from several letters exchanged between the Emperor Trajan and one of his governors, Pliny, that Domitian's actions as Emperor were more often reasonable than not. In these letters, Trajan advised the use of Domitian's letters as precedent in several cases, to uphold Domitian's decisions, and to give Domitian's mistakes the benefit of the doubt.[10] One must surely question how hated an Emperor like Domitian could have been if his rulings were never perceived by Pliny, who otherwise disliked Domitian, as anything but reasonable. [11]

As for the possible event being discussed in the poem, scholarly consensus is that the author is discussing a certain event in Domitian's reign: the expulsion of the philosophers and astrologers from Italy in 93 CE. This would have been of great interest to Sulpicia and her colleagues, since this suggests that the emperor did not accept criticism and will leave the arts, the source for many criticisms, at the curb. Suetonius tells us that this occurred as a result of Domitian executing a senator for writing very positive eulogies of important men.[12] Dio corroborates this narrative with a similar story.[13] For whatever reason, Domitian had decided to expel the philosophers and astrologers from Italy entirely. This, in part, would surely explain Tacitus' disapproval of Domitian in his *Agricola* since at the same time that executions were ordered for writing eulogies of important men, Tacitus

10 Pliny *Epistulae* 10.66 features Trajan deciding that Domitian's letters should be used as precedents, and advises Pliny to follow a different course of action only because Domitian's letters do not apply directly to this case, and does not discuss the quality or preeminence of the letters, only their applicability to the case at hand. Pliny *Epistulae* 10.58 mentions that Nerva decided to uphold all the letters of his predecessor as precedents. Pliny *Epistulae* 10.59 contains Trajan's ruling on a case pertaining to a letter of Domitian and he gives Domitian the benefit of the doubt for making a mistake in this initial ruling, and makes no statement about its validity or the quality of the decision-making.

11 See, again, Pliny, *Epistulae,* 10.2 for his opinion of Domitian's rule.

12 Suetonius, *Domitian,* 11.3.

13 Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae,* 67.13

was writing a biography of the late governor of Britain.[14]

The question is, what would have caused the expulsion of philosophers, what would Domitian have gained from it, and how offensive of an act would it have been? To start, this act was not unprecedented. The affable father of Domitian, Vespasian, banished the philosophers from Rome not long after his ascension.[15] The reason why philosophers were being exiled from Rome is simple: some philosophers opposed the one-man rule of Rome. They called for the removal of the Principate, which meant the removal of the emperor, and this was by definition treasonous. One could argue that exiling instead of outright executing for what might be described as treason could be perceived as granting some amount of clemency. Another group often exiled along with these philosophers were the astrologers. Astrologers were oracles and prophets, and the predictions they made held legitimate scientific and political weight. For example, Predicting the health of the emperor was forbidden and punishable by death. This may seem extraordinary and cruel, but it was good political manoeuvring for the emperors of old. If the Emperor did not crack down on the respectable astrologers, then a prediction of his death could be used as a rallying point for revolt. It should not come as a surprise that 93 CE was likely the tenth expulsion of the astrologers from Rome.[16] The expulsion of philosophers is more accurately described as simply one of the most extreme features of typical imperial administration.

Despite the fact that the expulsion of philosophers is not a sign of an exceptionally tyrannical rule, it still would have certainly been a big event for the citizens of Rome. This impact would be felt the strongest for those who had connections with the philosophers, such as authors and senators. Certainly, this moment would not have been lost on a poet such as Sulpicia. One can also wonder if this event may have been considered by Sulpicia to be a decline in the Roman Empire. 93 CE, the date associated with the expulsion, is also associated with a certain decline in the Emperor. This year marked an increase in seemingly baseless senatorial executions.[17] It is one thing to expel those who challenge your rule; it is another thing entirely to execute men for simply eulogising the late governors and senators of the empire. And with this we come to the crux of the issue: Suetonius brings

14 Tacitus published the *Agricola* in 98 CE, and presumably was either working on it while Domitian was alive, or planning to write it

15 Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae,* 65.13

16 Expulsion of philosophers, among other groups, was a precedented if infrequent occurrence, especially during the imperial period. Cassius Dio *Historiae Romanae* 49.43.5 shows Agrippa expelling Astrologers in 33 BCE, Tacitus *Annales* 2.32 has Tiberius expelling them in 17 CE, Cassius Dio *Historiae Romanae* 65.11.12 has Vespasian doing it in 71 or 72 CE.

17 Suetonius, *Domitian,* 10.2-4

up the expulsion of philosophers only in passing. What is given more emphasis in Suetonius' complaints are the unnecessary executions.[18] The greater passage explains various unjust executions ordered by the Emperor, and the expulsion of the philosophers is only mentioned as it relates to one of those executions. These executions, and not the expulsion of philosophers, was also the main issue weighing on Tacitus' mind in his complaints woven into the narrative of his *Agricola.* Tacitus' complaint specifically mentions four people unjustly executed by the Emperor. Among these are the son and the biographer of Helvidius Priscus, whose executions prompted Domitian to expel the philosophers from Rome, according to Suetonius. Even to Tacitus, a contemporary, the expulsion of philosophers is not the most offensive action taken by the Emperor at that moment. One has to wonder how impactful this event was if contemporary historians put such little focus on it.

The Manuscript Tradition

Ancient texts such as the *Conquestio Sulpiciae* do not necessarily reach us as they were at the time of their composition. This is because there are no surviving autographs (original texts) from antiquity. The way these texts survive is through a process of copying and recopying known as the manuscript tradition. Constructed from the Latin words *manus* (hand) and *scriptus* (written), a manuscript is a text written by hand, and was the most common form of text duplication before the invention of printing. Beginning in the 10th-century and continued throughout the mediaeval period, monks would copy these ancient manuscripts into a new codex form and share these books between monasteries.[19] As one would imagine, these hand-written editions accumulate errors as this process continues. Throughout hundreds of years, this continual copying and recopying resulted in extant versions of a text having differences from one another, as well as from the lost original.[20] These manuscripts went through further bottlenecks, including the editorial preferences of the copyists themselves as well as the inevitable decay and loss of these copies as time passes.

Philological practices that emerged in the 18th-century refer to the earliest common ancestor of a text as the archetype, which is the version of the text considered the most accurate to the original. By mapping the discrepancies between

18 Tacitus, *Agricola,* 45

19 Edward Grant, *Foundations of Modern Science in the Middle Ages* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996): 51-53.

20 Michael P. Weitzman, "The Evolution of Manuscript Traditions." *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society.* Series A (General) 150, no. 4 (1987): 287.

the extant copies of a text, common ancestors and a "family tree" of the text's history can be drawn up. This is because common errors between editions suggest a common ancestor. Through this map, known as a stemma, the editor employs a selection process on the discrepancies in texts made around the same time. The most frequently appearing discrepancies are given priority and considered the dominant reading at the editor's discretion. This process is repeated to reconstruct the archetype as closely as possible.[21]

The *Conquestio* itself has a considerably spotted textual history. A single copy survived antiquity and was found in 1493 in a monastery in Bobbio, Italy.[22] This copy was found in a collection of poetry which is known as the *Epigrammata Bobiensia*.[23] This Bobbio manuscript (the archetype of *Conquestio* textual criticism) is now lost. However, two transcripts were made, and of these two transcripts, one survived and was rediscovered in the Vatican library by Augusto Campana in the 20th-century.[24] This lost transcript, however, was the source of three editions printed in the 15th-century, which were included in three poetry books of Ausonius.[25] This brings the total number of known copies of *Conquestio* to six, and extant copies to four.[26] The extant editions have extensive errors and discrepancies that are not only single words or entire clauses, but also in the order of the lines, suggesting that the source was in bad condition. This makes reconstructing the Bobbio archetype difficult due to the unique solutions and corrections editors employ to fix these discrepancies, such as inserting words or replacing problematic words with ones that make more logical sense to them.

Due to these textual inconsistencies, this text survives in a chaotic state. Several words in critical editions are contested, resulting in editions varying significantly between one another.[27] These discrepancies even require the order of certain lines to be moved in order to fix logical issues, and sentences to be completely reconstructed to be understandable (lines 39-40 and 59-63 being the most egregious examples).[28]

21 Weitzman, "The Evolution of Manuscript Traditions." 278-288.

22 J. L. Butrica, "Sulpicia's Complaint: On the State of the Nation and the Age of Domitian" (2000).

23 Wolfgang Speyer, "Epigrammata Bobiensia" In Brill's New Pauly (Boston: Brill 2006).

24 *Vaticanus latinus* 2836.

25 Venice 1496; Parma 1499; Venice 1507

26 Butrica, "Sulpicia's Complaint", (2000). The extant manuscripts are *Vaticanus latinus* 2836, and the Ausonius copies Venice 1496; Parma 1499; Venice 1507

27 Examples include line 65 having readings of *caecos* by Hertz, and *aegros* by Peiper, and line 55 having *laborum* by Heinsius and furorum by Peiper. For a further analysis of these discrepancies see Butrica 2000.

28 *quid facimus? Graios hominumque relinquimus urbes / ut Romana foret magis his instructa magistris and Hoc fabella modo pausam facit. optima posthac, / Musa, velim moneas, sine qua mihi nulla voluptare/ vivere, uti quon-*

Scholarship Tradition

The study of the Conquestio Sulpiciae has historically centred on the question of its authorship, as J.L. Butrica shows in his overview of the scholarship. From 1585 (when the poem was published by Douza) to the 20th-century, Sulpicia was generally accepted as a female satirist, and praised for this status.[29] She was often published alongside authors such as Persius, Juvenal, and Petronius. For most of its run through the scholarship machine, the *Conquestio Sulpiciae* has been assumed to be a fake.[30] There has, however, been more scholarship arguing in favour of 1st-century authorship of this poem in recent years, with the textual errors being explained by the transmission and the diction being justified by contemporaries.[31]

In 1868, Boot argued that the work had several historical and temporal errors, and suggested the poem might be a 15th-century forgery. This was contested by his contemporaries, and later by Butrica, who argued that these errors should be understood as resulting from the transmission of the poem. This opened a scholarly debate as to the identity of Sulpicia, which would rage on for the next fifty years. Carutti in 1872 stated that nothing in the work suggested it was a 15th-century forgery, but did agree that there were several textual corruptions due to copying (which is a stance echoed by Butrica). Baehrens suggested it could be a forgery from the time of Ausonius (4th-century) to the time of Fulgentius (6th-century).[32] The muddled debate continued for another 50 years before eventually subsiding due to an absence of a single persuasive case.[33]

The *Conquestio Sulpiciae* once again became a topic of heated debate in the 20th-century, when Augusto Campana found the aforementioned Vatican Library copy of the *Conquestio.* This text validated some questions of authorship and allowed the Bobbio manuscript to be reconstructed with greater certainty. The

*dam *zmyrnalibusque peribat* / nunc itidem migrare velis. vel denique quidvis/ut dea quaere aliud: tantum Romana Caleno / moenia iucundes pariterque averte Sabinos.*

29 Butrica, "Sulpicia's Complaint," 70-3.

30 Carol U. Merriam, "The Other Sulpicia," *The Classical World* 84, no. 4 (1991): 303, https://doi.org/10.2307/4350812, 303 mentions that it is "clearly" not Domitianic; Bartolo Natoli, Angela Pitts, and Judith P. Hallett, Ancient Women Writers of Greece and Rome (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2022), 256-7 from last year describes its authorship as debated while also calling it unauthentic; Amy Richlin, "Sulpicia the Satirist," *The Classical World* 86, no. 2 (1992): 125-6 places the authorship of the *Conquestio Sulpicia* as "unlikely" by Sulpicia.

31 J.L Butricia, "The Fabella of Sulpicia ('Epigrammata Bobiensia' 37)", *Phoenix* 60, no. 1/2 (2006): 70-121.

32 Butricia, Fabella, 70-121.

33 Fabella, 70-121.

Vatican copy undermined the 15th-century claim, although suggestions of 1st, 4th and 5th-century dates for the poem's creation were still up for debate.

At this point, the idea of a 1st-century Sulpicia was once again revitalised, but this time often suffered from misogynist as opposed to academic analyses. Sulpicia was often masculinized to "Sulpicius," or the poem was instead understood as a male adopting the voice of a woman. This was shown in the first published enumeration of the Bobbio discoveries, by Raffaele Maffei in 1506, and then Giorgio Valla's edition of Juvenal masculinizes Sulpicia in response to this publication.[34] Lana (1949), who suggested a 4th or 5th-century date of authorship, suggested that she could not have written the attack on Domitian, as a woman would not dare write something that no man would risk.[35] Even the most recent commentary on the poem, published in 2022 as part of a volume dedicated to "women writers of Greece and Rome," refers to Sulpicia as *Sulpicia Caleni,* identifying her not by the content of her work, but rather the name of her husband.[36]

Despite his claims, Lana made no attempts to explain why a forger might choose to adopt the voice of Sulpicia specifically, and this, as Butrica argued, considerably weakens his argument.[37] Sulpicia is rarely mentioned by ancient authors after her death, and as a result there would be little benefit to a 4th or 5th-century author choosing to impersonate her.[38] Other prominent editions were made by Speyer (1955) and Rampioni (1982), which also sought to answer the question of authorship through grammatical and syntactic analyses. Butrica also published his own reconstruction of the *Conquestio*, which is one of the most recent editions of the poem. In the 1990s, articles in *Classical World* by Parker and Richlin resulted in a resurgence in discussions around the authorship of the poem, and once again the idea of a Domitianic Sulpicia was seriously entertained by scholars.[39]

The title of the poem is not listed in the initial manuscript, but was called the Conquestio Sulpiciae due to the name *Calenus* in the text. Calenus is a relatively uncommon name, and in Martial's *Epigrams* (10.35), Sulpicia, the wife of Calenus, is lauded as a loving wife and gifted author. This provides another strong support for 1st-century authorship: Martial lived in the time of Domitian, and speaks of Sulpicia and Calenus as his contemporaries, and good friends.

34 Fabella, 70-121.

35 Fabella, 70-121.

36 Bartolo Natoli, Angela Pitts, and Judith P. Hallett, *Ancient Women Writers of Greece and Rome* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 256.

37 Butrica, "Sulpicia's Complaint," 82-3.

38 Butrica, 88.

39 Butrica, 74.

Reading of the Poem

Given our response to the question of authorship, it is now possible to do a reading of the poem taking into context both the time and gender of the author. The narrative framing device at the beginning and end of the poem are most directly relevant to discussions of gender, primarily with regards to their references to the Muses. The body of the poem, which contains several references to current events and allusions to earlier Roman history, are very interesting, but given that they largely refer to mythology and history long past are less helpful in proving the date of publication. The framing of this poem contains several words and phrases which are traditionally associated with men in Roman culture. Rather than taking this as evidence that the author of the *Conquestio* was in fact a man, as earlier scholars such as Lana have suggested, the work can equally be read as the purposeful decision of a self-aware female poet. Traditionally gendered words which are used in this poem can be seen as a declaration that a woman is equally capable of filling a man's role, and an understanding of this dichotomy between masculine and feminine themes makes this poem much more artful than would be suggested by a man having written the work. By using traditionally masculine words, Sulpicia wishes to divorce gender from the question of poetic excellence, and claim her equal right to the use of words traditionally reserved for great men of letters.

This poem is bookended by a narrative framing device in which the speaker entreats the Muse Calliope to *fabellam permitte mihi detexere pacis* (2). Already this opening is remarkable, in that the speaker asks for permission rather than strength or guidance: she has her own voice and tale to tell. While not unheard of in classical literature, this is certainly an uncommon way to open a poem, as invocations typically address the Muses more broadly, and not one personally.[40] Immediately, this suggests a different kind of relationship between Muse and the author, one which seems to be interested in talking to Calliope rather than merely asking for favours. This unique positioning is followed by *heroas* (1) — a traditionally masculine word — as the feminine author asserts herself as an equal among her male satirist colleagues. The author continues to alternate between masculine and

40 For an extensive list of authors who invoke the muse, see: Schindler, Claudia. "The invocation of the Muses and the plea for inspiration" In S*tructures of Epic Poetry: Vol. I: Foundations. Vol. II.1/II.2: Configuration. Vol. III: Continuity* edited by Christiane Reitz and Simone Finkmann, 489-530. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020. https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110492590-015. A notable counterexample would be Ovid's direct address of Calliope, as discussed here: Barchiesi, Alessandro. "Discordant Muses." *Proceedings of the Cambridge Philological Society*, no. 37 (1991): 1–21. http://www.jstor.org/stable/44696706.

feminine imagery. She uses *facundissima* (the most eloquent) with a feminine ending in line 10, which is immediately followed by the masculine word princeps, both of which refer to the speaker. In this way, the author plays with and modifies the traditional appeal to the Muses. She adds specificity by referencing Calliope, engaging with her as an individual, and then mimics the traditional poetic opening of her male colleagues, consequently positioning herself among her peers. By naming a specific Muse, she speaks to Calliope directly, a position not often replicated in male satirists, who are reluctant to engage with the Muses directly as individuals.[41]

Based on the history of the poem, a scholar attempting to claim that the author of the *Conquestio* is male could argue that the feminine word endings are nothing but a copying mistake. This explanation is unlikely, as if anything, words would have been masculinized instead of feminized certain words. This is even seen in the history of the poem: one of the first published versions of the *Conquestio* called the author Sulpicius, as referenced in the manuscript tradition. Moreover, most of the feminine terms are endings, whereas the masculine ones are words. If there is a feminine equivalent, it tends to be a very different sounding/looking word, meaning that copying error in that way is unlikely.

The body of the poem also contains multiple phrases which change substantially in meaning by considering gendered connotations. *Inania coepta* (68), or "empty undertakings", for example, could be in reference to Domitian's futile endeavours as emperor, or could be a self-deprecating reference to the speaker's own poetry. Self-deprecation is not necessarily feminine in nature, but the dual interpretations of this phrase either in the context of the masculine subject of the poem or the feminine speaker again engage with this duality of gender. Moreover, the word *spondet* (68) has two major connotations: that of marriage and a poet's patronage. *Spondeo* was often used as a kind of "I promise" when two Romans were betrothed to be married, and affianced were said to be *sponsus*.[42] Alternatively, this could be related to the Roman patron/client relationship. Poets often had patrons who would support them financially while they made their art.[43] Patronage was traditionally a masculine relationship, as business and enterprise tended to be a male dominated field in Rome.[44] This stands in contrast with the domestic, feminine one of marriage, as management of the household generally fell to women,

41 Claudia Schindler, "The invocation of the Muses and the plea for inspiration" in *Structures of Epic Poetry: Vol. I: Foundations. Vol. II.1/II.2: Configuration. Vol. III: Continuity* edited by Christiane Reitz and Simone Finkmann (Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter, 2020) 489-530.

42 Mary Johnston, *Roman Life* (Scott Foresman & Co, 1957), 130-132.

43 M. L. Clarke, "Poets and Patrons at Rome." *Greece & Rome* 25, no. 1 (1978): 46–54.

44 M. L. Clarke, "Poets and Patrons at Rome." 46-54.

exemplified by the goddess Juno's dominion over domestic life.[45] This ultimately requires the reader to consider Sulpicia in duality: she is not confined to the female, nor is she beholden to the male interpretation of her words. As a female author working in the traditionally masculine medium of poetry — and especially satire, which is entirely male dominated — she anticipates the characterizations of her work by future critics. Her subsequent inclusion of these masculine and feminine words in contrast with each other gives her the opportunity to play with the reader's own interpretation of her gender, allowing her to also be "in on the joke".

The conclusion of the poem once again invokes the Muses, this time bringing in other historical figures related to art, history, and peace. Sulpicia offers to her readers a view of a more peaceful time, first invoking the *laureta Numae* (67), referring to the grove of Numa as referenced in Livy (I.21). Numa's reign was a time of wisdom and peace in Rome, referenced by the poem as the *sapientia pacis* (17), or wisdom of peace, of his reign. The Muse's response promises the speaker a mythical oasis, a guarantee that her feeling of being 'hunted' by Domitian's cruelty will come to an end (lines 69-70). The Muse promises a time of rest, relaxation and companionship, and references *comite Egeria* (68), the mythical wife of Numa.[46] Numa was said to have a sacred grove, inhabited by the *Camenae* (nymphs), one of whom (named Egeria) he was said to have wed. This line is referenced by Martial in his *Epigrams* (10.35), in which he states "*Tales Egeriae iocos fuisse/Udo crediderim Numae sub antro,*" while speaking about Sulpicia.[47] This provides substantial evidence for Sulpicia being a 1st-century author: Martial refers to her as one of his companions while he wrote in the time of Domitian. Calenus, who is referred to by Martial as Sulpicia's husband, has a very distinctive name, and the *Romana Caleno* (62) is a primary reason for drawing connections between the two works.[48] As a result, any individual attempting to masquerade as Sulpicia would also have had to be familiar with this specific work of Martial's, as his poem directly echoes this text.

Fundamentally, the strongest support for Sulpicia being the author of this poem in the context of the reading is that it makes the poem more interesting. The depth and poetic beauty of this work is truly unlocked with an understanding of duality between the masculine and feminine language and subtext. The author of this poem is clearly well-versed in literary conventions, mythology, and history, and her words have been chosen with intention. Feminine adjectives, especially

45 Johnston, *Roman Life*, 148-157.

46 Livy, *Ab Urbe Condita,* 1.19.

47 Martial, *Epigrams,* 10.35.

48 Other Caleni include Cicero's friend Calenus, and the Roman soldier. Other than that there were not many listings. (cf. Library of Latin Texts).

placed immediately in contrast to masculine adjectives, is an artful assertion of the gender of the author, and she lets the quality of her work assert her right to be there.

The Question of Authorship

The question of the date of authorship is crucial in our appreciation of this poem. It matters whether it was composed in the Flavian age, during the religious debates of the 4th-century onwards, or another period entirely. Additionally, it's important to understand if it's a unique insight into a feminine perspective or an elaborate fraud or homage. Sulpicia was well regarded by Roman scholars starting in the 4th-century, though nearly no other work of hers exists today. She is famously compared to Pliny, Cicero and Sappho by ancient authors up to the 6th-century, placing her in a high position within the Roman literary tradition.[49] However, one really has to wonder at the popularity of Sulpicia the Satirist in the late Empire, since she is not mentioned once between Martial's epigrams of the 1st-century and Ausonius' poem in the 4th. The arguments presented by modern scholarship in favour of a forgery suggest that it was the result of a particular Christianizing decree in the 4th-century or later (there is no consensus as to which). This led to an author taking up the mantle of Sulpicia complaining about Domitian as a way to veil their disapproval of the Christianization of their Empire. This person would have had some connection to the collection of poetry bound in northern Italy, and as a result, their fake poem was inserted alongside the other 4th-century creations. To these scholars who argue for a later date of authorship, it seemed unlikely for a single 1st-century poem to be included in a collection of otherwise exclusively 4th-century work.

While it is important to appreciate that it is possible this poem is not Domitianic in origin, there appears to be no particular reason to doubt its authenticity. The depth of the mimicry needed to make a fake of such authentic appearance is immense, considering modern scholarship is even unsure if it is original or not. The hypothetical late antique author has made no oversights, no obvious anachronisms, and somehow picked an author and a topic to write about that makes the date of authorship unprovable. Sulpicia was known, and liked, but not widely cited or referenced in this time period, referenced only three times in late antiquity.[50]

49 Martial, *Epigrams*, 10.35 compares her directly to Sappho, while Ausonius, *Cento Nuptialis*, 139-41 discusses Sulpicia alongside Cicero and Pliny.

50 There are only three references that one could possibly attribute to Sulpicia after the Domitianic period: Ausonius, *Cento Nuptialis,* 139-41 in the 4th century CE, Apollinaris, *Carmina,* 9.261 in the 5th century CE, and Fulgentius, *Mythologies,* 1.4 in the 5th-6th century CE.

Many modern scholars take these references for granted.[51] In reality, one cannot be certain if they are references to Sulpicia the Satirist. If there is no specific comparison to Martial, Domitian, or to Calenus, they could instead be referencing the elder Sulpicia, or another person entirely. Apollinaris' *Carmina*, from the late fifth century, does mention Calenus, so this reference is believable. But for Ausonius and Fulgentius, Sulpicia is referenced only in passing or as part of a list. This should demonstrate how despite being highly regarded for certain by Apollinaris, we don't otherwise know much about her reception in late antiquity. Furthermore, Appolinaris' knowledge of Sulpicia may have come only from the *Conquestio's* rebirth in the Bobbio manuscript, whether or not it is a forgery. For this reason, these late antique references are dubious at best to use to demonstrate that Sulpicia was highly regarded in late antiquity and therefore worth masquerading as. The event described in the poem, namely the expulsion of philosophers in 93 CE, appears not to be a considerable enough event to be impactful for a 4th or 5th-century author. After all, why would an author seek to complain about the loss of their religion in their state, when the expulsion of philosophers in 93 represented no long lasting effects? Nerva recalled those exiled back to Rome, and the Emperors of the Romans would embrace philosophy from Hadrian to the famous meditations of Marcus Aurelius.[52] By the 4th-century, Domitian is not even necessarily remembered as the worst of the Emperors, as is clear by the Historia Augusta's discussion of bad Emperors which highlights Caligula, Nero and Vitellius but rarely mentions Domitian.[53]

Conquestio Sulpiciae, in its 70 short lines, raises questions of gender, authorship, genre and identity, and interrogates the author, speaker, and listener in turn. Based on this analysis of the poem, there are strong indications that the author was a 1st-century woman living in the time of Domitian and his expulsion of the philosophers from Rome. Furthermore, it is clear that the author is also aware of the dichotomy in her work, and plays with these assumptions through literary allusion and traditionally gendered vocabulary. What makes the argument of a late imitation seem unlikely is what is required for it to be true. This hypothetical satirist, who would have been aware of Sulpicia and a reader of Martial, wrote a poem that could not be temporally located, about an event and an Emperor long since forgotten and irrelevant. Perhaps, however, that is the genius of it.

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51 A prominent example occurs in the most recent exploration of Sulpicia's work, Bartolo Natoli, Angela Pitts, and Judith P. Hallett, *Ancient Women Writers of Greece and Rome* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2022), 256-7.

52 Nerva recalled the exiles according to Cassius Dio, *Historiae Romanae,* 68.2.

53 Historia Augusta, *Elagabalus*, 1.3; *Aurelian,* 42.6. Most references to Domitian in the *Historia Augusta* are in passing.

Conquestio Sulpiciae (= Epigrammata Bobiensia 37), "Sulpicia's Lament"

Text cited from: Butrica, J. L. 2005. "The *Fabella* of Sulpicia (*Epigrammata Bobiensia* 37)." *Phoenix* 60, no. 1/2: 70-121.

Musa, quibus numeris heroas et arma frequentas,
fabellam permitte mihi detexere pacis.
Nam tibi secessi, tecum penetrale retractans
consilium: quare neque carmina curo Phalaeci
nec trimetro[n] nec qui [semper] pede fractus eodem
fortiter irasci didicit duce Clazomenio,
cetera quin etiam quondam quae mollia lusi
primaque Romanas docui contendere Graiis
et salibus variare modos, constanter omitto,
teque quibus princeps et facundissima calles
aggredior: precibus descende clientis et audi.

Dic mihi, Calliope: quidnam pater ille deorum
cogitat? An terras in patria saecula mutat,
quasque dedit quondam mortalibus eripit artes,
nosque iubet tacitos et iam rationis egenos
non aliter primo quam cum surreximus aevo
glandibus et purae rursus procumbere lymphae?
An reliquas terras conservat amicus et urbes,
sed genus Ausonium Romulique extirpat alumnos?
Quid reputemus enim? Duo sunt quibus extulit ingens

Roma caput, virtus belli et sapientia pacis,
stabit et his (neque enim poterat constare sine ipsis)
aut frustra Veneri mendaxque Diespiter olim
“imperium sine fine dedi” dixisse probatur.
Sed virtus, agitata domi [et] Latialibus armis,
in freta Sicaniae et Carthaginis exilit arces,
ceteraque imperia et totum simul abstulit orbem.
Deinde, velut stadio victor qui solus Achaeo
languet et immota secum virtute fatiscit,
sic itidem Romana manus, contendere postquam
destitit et pacem lentis frenavit habenis.
Ipsa domi leges et Graia inventa retractans
omnia bellorum terra quaesita marique
praemia consilio et molli ratione regebat:
nunc igitur qui rex Romanos imperat inter,
non trabe sed tergo prolapsus et ingluvie albus,
et studia et sapiens hominum nomenque genusque
omnia abire foras atque urbe excedere iussit.
Quod facinus! Graios hominumque relinquimus urbes
ut Romana foret manus his instructa magistris?
Nunc Capitolino veluti <et> turbante Camillo
censibus et trutina Galli fugere relicta,
sic nostri palare senes adiguntur et ipsi
ut ferale suos onus exportare libellos.

Ergo Numantinus Libycusque erravit in isto
Scipio, qui Rhodio crevit formante magistro,
ceteraque illa manus bello facunda secundo!
Quos inter prisci sententia dia Catonis
.....
scire deos magni fecisset utrumne secundis
an magis adversis staret Romana propago.
Scilicet adversis: nam, cum defendier armis
suadet amor patriae et caritura penatibus uxor,
convenit ut vespis quarum domus arce movente
.....
turba ingens strictis per lutea corpora telis:
ast ubi apes secura redit, oblita suorum
.....
rex plebesque una somno moriuntur obeso:
Romuliadarum igitur longa et gravis exitium pax.
Hoc fabella modo pausam facit. Optima posthac,
Musa, velim moneas, sine qua mihi nulla voluptas,
litora uti quondam Lydus Tyrrhena petivit,
mene itidem migrare velis vel denique quidvis
ut dea quaere aliud tantum Romana Caleno
moenia iucundos pariterque averte Sabinos.

Haec ego. Tum paucis dea me dignatur et infit:

Pone metus caecos, cultrix mea summa. Tyranno
ecce instant odia, et nostro periturus honori est:
nam laureta Numae fontisque habitamus eosdem
et comite Egeria ridemus inania coepta.
Vive, vale. Manet hunc pulchrum tua fama dolorem:
Musarum spondet chorus et Romanus Apollo.

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Tacitus, *Annales.*

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Ruere Omnia Visa Repente: Earthquakes, Epic, and Environmental Trauma in Imperial-Period Literature

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Abstract
This paper explores the Imperial period literary response to devastating earthquakes in both Greek and Latin-language authors. In Imperial literature, there is a common coincidence of mentions of earthquakes and references to Homeric and Virgilian epic, most notably, the *Odyssey* and the *Aeneid.* This pattern reveals that epic is being intentionally used as a coping mechanism for authors and their communities reacting to extreme environmental trauma. Particularly, Seneca the Younger's treatment of the Campanian (63 CE) earthquake in his *Natural Questions* 6 strongly exemplifies this topos, and reveals a framework for how epic fulfills this bibliotherapeutic function in Imperial literature. This framework is then fleshed out with texts written by Pliny the Younger, Aelian, Pausanias, and Libanius. Importantly, these authors reference three major environmental disasters in addition to Seneca's Campanian exemplar: the earthquake at Helice (373 BC), seismic activity surrounding the eruption of Vesuvius (79 CE), and the earthquake at Nicomedia (358 CE). This application of epic reference, then, is not merely a coincidence or unique to any individual author, but a shared literary impulse among authors dealing with disaster in a particular temporal and cultural context. On the basis of this conclusion, we can begin to untangle the complex historical question of how communities cope with environmental disaster occurring on an unfathomably large scale.

In Greek and Latin literature dating from the Roman Imperial period, we frequently find allusions to epic (Homeric and Virgilian) accompanying descriptions of earthquakes and seismic activity. One work exemplifying this topos, through the use of several striking references to Virgil's *Aeneid*, is Seneca's *Natural Questions* 6, which investigates the causes of earthquakes and centres the devastating Campanian earthquake of ~63 CE. Seneca's *Natural Questions* provides a framework for this topos through which various later texts can be investigated. It also appears in the reception of the earthquake that devastated Helike (373 BCE), reports of seismic activity associated with Pompeii (79 CE), and an account of the destruction of Nicomedia (358 CE). Overall, this literary pattern emphasizes

the scale of environmental disasters, whether viewed through the lens of grief or the Lucretian sublime, while retaining hints of the heavy religious association between earthquakes and the Roman pantheon. In this way, epic language furnishes a collective, evocative vocabulary for traumatic natural events. It serves as a prototypical example of large-scale environmental phenomena, on such a great scale that they are uniquely "inescapable" among environmental traumas, and provides a shared societal memory through which recurrent seismic activity in the Mediterranean may be faced and addressed.[1]

Firstly, we turn to Seneca's *Natural Questions* 6 as an example of the coincidence of epic language and environmental trauma. Notably, Book 6 includes ample Virgilian allusion. In a text that is broadly a scientific and philosophical (Stoic) exploration of earthquakes, the frequent quotations of Virgil's epic *Aeneid* may seem almost jarring. For example, one of the earliest exhortations of Seneca's *Natural Questions* 6 is taken from Virgil: "Regard the following words [...] 'The only rescue for the defeated is to expect no rescue.'"[2] From the beginning, Seneca's approach to understanding earthquakes and his programme for "eradicat[ing]" the "great terror" that they arouse rests not in the world of the living, but in the world of epic.[3] Although throughout the rest of the *Natural Questions*, we find significant reference to Virgil's didactic epic work, the *Georgics,*[4] — which we might more reasonably expect to appear in a work of natural philosophy — the Virgilian presence in *Natural Questions* 6 is overwhelmingly drawn from the *Aeneid*, a heroic, national epic. The *Aeneid* is also referenced far more diffusely in other books of the *Natural Questions*. In one rare instance, a quotation is used in Book 5 to limit the possible motions of the wind,[5, 6] which reflects how the *Aeneid* is repeatedly used in Book 6's exploration of "vital air." Furthermore, in other books of the *Natural Questions*, Virgilian epic tends to appear in brief quotations as part of longer lists of poetic references compiled by Seneca, functioning as part of a broader rhetorical device instead of standing on its own.[7] Book 6 stands apart from the rest of the *Natural Questions* through its intertextuality with Virgil's *Aeneid* alongside its focus on environmental trauma, despite its scope being that of natural philosophy, necessitating a close reading of the chapter and an investi-

1 Seneca*, Quaestiones Naturales*, 6.1.8, trans. H. M. Hine (Chicago and London 2010).

2 Sen., *QNat.* 6.2.2

3Sen., *QNat.* 6.1.5.

4 Sen., *QNat.* 1.8.8, 1.12.2, 4b.4.2.

5 Sen., *QNat.* 5.16.12.

6 Gareth Williams, "Seneca on Winds," in *The Cosmic Viewpoint: A Study of Seneca's Natural Questions,* ed. Gareth D. Williams (Oxford University Press, 2012), 195, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199731589.003.0006.

7 Sen., *QNat.* 3.1.1, 4.0.19

gation of the specific function heroic epic plays here.

Quotations from Virgil repeatedly appear in Seneca's catalogue of theories of earthquakes. The *Aeneid* is integral to this documentation. Firstly, its quotation in this chapter helps to liven and personify the actions of the wind in the natural world, especially the "vital air" which appears in Seneca's preferred explanation for earthquakes.[8] This "vital air" is, essentially, the life-giving *pneuma* of Stoic physics.[9] As Seneca describes it, it is not "just the breath that makes [the earth] cohere," but "the life-giving breath that is vigorous and sustains everything."[10] Within Seneca's theory, this "breath" can get stuck in small spaces under the earth and subsequently causes earthquakes through an exertion of its "invincible natural power."[11] The activity of "vital air," upon obstruction, is compared to "Araxes, angry at the bridge," taken from the description of Aeneas' shield at the end of *Aeneid* 8.[12, 13] Explaining the earth-shaking actions of vital air not only through an epic reference, but to an ekphrastic passage specifically, stands out within Seneca's scientific presentation and intentionally decorates the description of the theory "that will perhaps get [his] vote."[14] Williams, while writing about "Earthquakes, Consolation, and the Senecan Sublime" in *Natural Questions* Book 6, suggests that the "personifying emphasis" evoked by the Shield of Aeneas is the key factor at play here.[15] Yet the citation of *Aeneid* 8 here is markedly brief, a mere three words in Latin: *pontem indignatus Araxes.*[16] A mere snippet of the grandiose cadence of the epic world provides an archetypical, evocative description of sweeping natural processes which may even excel strict natural philosophical discourse, given that the references to the *Aeneid* cluster around Seneca's own sympathies. Virgilian personification is an added benefit, but the three short words do not carry

8 Gareth Williams, "Earthquakes, Consolation and the Senecan Sublime," in *The Cosmic Viewpoint: A Study of Seneca's Natural Questions,* ed. Gareth D. Williams (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 242, https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199731589.003.0007.

9 Durand, Marion, Simon Shogry, and Dirk Baltzly. "Stoicism." In *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy,* edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Spring 2023. Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023. https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2023/entries/stoicism/.

10 Sen., *QNat.* 6.16.1.

11 Sen., *QNat*. 6.18.4.

12 Sen., *QNat.* 6.17.1.

13 Harry Hine, *Natural Questions,* Works. (Seneca Lucius Annaeus ca. 4 B.C.-65 A.D); Complete Works of Lucius Annaeus Seneca (University of Chicago Press, 2010), 427, http://gen.lib.rus.ec/book/index.php?md5=780F697FA3C5B72400E7E83CE0C91EEA.

14 Sen., *QNat.* 6.16.1.

15 Williams, "Earthquakes, Consolation and the Senecan Sublime," 244.

16 Virgil, *Aeneid* 8.728 in Sen., *QNat*. 6.16.1

this force alone. Intentional intertextuality between natural philosophy and epic creates this power of personification.

Seneca's text is palpably saturated with the *Aeneid* in chapter 18, a section wherein he comments on vital air and which begins by clearly stating that "the principle cause of earthquakes is breath."[17] Virgil is quoted twice here, once to lend further vitality to the description of breath, capturing its "ferocity" through a description of Aeolus' winds in *Aeneid* 1.[18] Even though this breath is the source of earthquakes which are "inescapable, greedy, harmful on a national scale" in the living world, their best analogy is found in epic.[19] Even when Seneca takes a framework of "gently correcting" Virgil later in this chapter, doubting the fact that any Aeolus would ever be able to restrain this kind of breath (that is, vital air) in a "prison" beneath the world, he still relates 3 full lines of the *Aeneid* in quotation.[20, 21] Moreover, when Virgil's presentation of the world markedly differs from reality, it still provides incredible descriptive force. The sheer scale of the terror that Seneca is attempting to mediate is noted to be unmatched by other natural phenomena at the very beginning of Book 6, for others are in some way escapable.[22] The only example that can serve as a universal representation of such utter destruction, then, is Virgil's epic landscape, where aspects of a distinctly Roman landscape become inextricable from the supernatural.

Reference to the *Aeneid* does sparingly appear in Seneca's descriptions of other possible explanations for earthquakes. However, they often subtly support Seneca's own favoured explanations while simultaneously exemplifying the inescapable scale of these natural disasters. For example, in describing Strato's theory on earthquakes, Seneca notes that "our Virgil" also tells that "in no other way could '[...] the mountains be shaken'" if this were not the work of the winds.[23] Even though this quotation is not directly linked to Seneca's theory of breath, it still appears to support the role of moving air more generally.

One of Posidonius' theories of earthquakes is also decorated with a line from the *Aeneid*.[24] This quotation appears at the end of a section describing "earthquakes

17 Sen., *QNat.* 6.18.1.

18 Sen., *QNat.* 6.18.2.

19 Sen., *QNat.* 6.1.7.

20 Sen., *QNat.* 6.18.4.

21 Williams, "Earthquakes, Consolation and the Senecan Sublime," 244.

22 Sen., *QNat.* 6.1.8.

23 *Aen.* 6.256 in Sen., *QNat.* 6.13.5.

24 *Aen*., 8.525.

that shake from below," which is not entirely dissimilar from the notion of the earthquake-bearing breath from below within Stoic physics.[25] The line also is taken from a section of the *Aeneid* describing the ensuing effect when the goddess Venus "[sends] a signal from the cloudless sky," once again perhaps serving as a subtle allusion to Seneca's pneumatic theory and its overwhelming environmental power.[26] Finally, Seneca quotes Virgil when he refutes a theory that Egypt and Delos do not experience earthquakes, noting that even the poet "commanded Delos to stand still."[27] The multiple possible meanings of the word *inmota* from this line, *Aeneid* 3.77, is taken out of context to support Seneca's argument. As Williams explains, "Seneca's Delos is here *inmota* in one sense ("without earthquakes"), but a very different sense prevails in the original [...], where Apollo granted that Delos should no longer wander afloat but remain fixed (*inmotam*)."[28] Virgil has been appropriated for scientific means, and his verse has once again been subtly linked to Seneca's pneumatic theory. *Aeneid* 3.77 not only "grants" Delos to be inmota, but also "to despite the winds", so Seneca's use of this quotation subtly links the state of being "without earthquakes" to also being free of Stoic breath.[29] Hence, there is also a suggestion that expanses of land that even "distinguished men record" to be earthquake-free can be shaken by the vital power of Stoic breath.[30]

Towards the end of Book 6, Seneca returns explicitly to the strange occurrences surrounding the Campanian earthquake, which specifically "require explanation."[31] He notes that he was "not surprised that a statue was split apart."[32] Statues falling due to seismic activity is a common portent in Roman literature, but Seneca disagrees that this should be "worthy of notice" given the scale of the devastation of earthquakes related in "the greatest poets."[33, 34] Since environmental destruction represents an "amazing" power that "comes from the whole universe," with the scale of this universality best encapsulated by Virgilian language, Seneca

25 Sen., *QNat.* 6.22.4

26 Virgil, *Aeneid*, 8.523, trans. S. Bartsch (New York 2021)

27 Sen., *QNat.* 6.26.2

28 Williams, "Earthquakes, Consolation and the Senecan Sublime," 250.

29 Sen., *QNat.* 6.26.2.

30 Sen., *QNat.* 6.26.1.

31 Sen., *QNat.* 6.27.1.

32 Sen., *QNat.* 6.30.1.

33 Sen., *QNat.* 6.30.5, 6.30.3.

34 Boris Kayachev, "Disastrous Earthquakes in Lucretius and the Sibylline Oracles," *Classical Quarterly* 68, no. 1 (2018): 211, https://doi.org/10.1017/S0009838818000174.

provides an extensive quotation of *Aeneid* 3 here to further this point.[35, 36]

To further understand this passage, we should note the strong Lucretian presence in *Natural Questions* 6. Particularly, Seneca has adapted the Lucretian conception of the sublime. The Lucretian sublime is "an approach that treats phenomena such as earthquakes not with a passive awe and helplessness, but with an active, controlling grasp of all phenomena as normative parts of nature's scheme."[37] Through Virgilian quotations and their capacity to vividly animate the cause of earthquakes, Seneca is able to "[divert] focus from the particular earthquake to the vast living system of which it is but a functional part and side effect."[38] Epic language, already imbued with *topoi* of nature's power, brings readers away from their fear of such powerful events and closer to understanding, a "complete grasp of nature," and hence the sublime.[39] The supernatural scale of epic evokes the "capacity [of the sublime] to arouse horror" while the well-known words simultaneously comfort and strengthen.[40]

The application of the aforementioned *Aeneid* 3 quotation allows Seneca to compound his adaptation of the Lucretian sublime towards the end of Book 6, especially with regard to traumatized Campanians.[41] With this reference, Seneca educates his audience that earthquakes are not remarkable portents when anything might be scattered by seismic activity, even the larger-than-life landscape of the *Aeneid*. Importantly, this taps into both the "liberal studies" and "contemplation of nature" through which Seneca will soon assert that "the mind gains strength."[42]

This context allows us to better understand allusions to epic in Letter 6.20 of Pliny the Younger's *Epistulae.* There is a distinctly Virgilian bent to this letter, which opens with a quotation of *Aeneid* 2.[43] That inclination is most strongly encapsulated in the interaction between Pliny and his mother facing terrifying environmental

35 Although he has slightly adapted the Latin in changing three words. Williams believes that the modifications purposefully further enhance the scale of the epic language (252).

36 Sen., *QNat.* 6.30.1.

37 Williams, "Earthquakes, Consolation and the Senecan Sublime," 215.

38 Williams, 245.

39 Williams, 245.

40 Williams, 221.

41 Williams, 253.

42 Sen., *QNat.* 6.32.1.

43 Jacques Bromberg, "Pliny's Telemacheia: Epic and Exemplarity Under Vesuvius," accessed December 19, 2022, https://classicalstudies.org/pliny%E2%80%99s-telemacheia-epic-and-exemplarity-under-vesuvius.

conditions, including "earth-tremor[s]," due to the eruption of Vesuvius.[44] Notably, Pliny's mother exhorts her son to "flee in any way [he] could," feeling that she would otherwise become "responsible for [his] death" due to her old age and "frail physique."[45] Pliny responds bravely that he "would not seek safety without her," proceeding to grab her by the hand, while his mother, now forcibly borne along, continues "reproaching herself for delaying [him]."[46] We see similarities here to Aeneas and Anchises in *Aeneid* 2, where Anchises appeals to Aeneas' youth and strength, which he lacks, as a reason that he should be left behind.[47] When he is finally convinced to move, thanks to supernatural omens, he clings onto Aeneas' neck.[48] He is thus in the same position as Pliny's mother, "forced [...] to move faster."[49] Although the others lost in the tumult follow the response predicted by Seneca, fearing and questioning death, Pliny's heroic behaviour gives him reason to "boast."[50] For just like Aeneas (who, in *Aeneid* 2, speaks the line with which Seneca frames his scientific discussion of earthquakes) Pliny seeks a "wretched consolation for [his] mortal lot, yet a powerful one."[51] Finally, in recent scholarship, intertextuality between the "Vesuvius Letters" and the *Odyssey* has also been examined, suggesting the possibility of further epic context that frames Pliny's response to seismic activity at Misenum.[52] Clearly, earthquakes are best faced through the emulation of a heroic demigod, capable of cultivating the sublime in the face of seismic terror.

The reliance on epic allusion in framing Roman earthquakes specifically may also relate to the social dimension of a Roman religious understanding of earthquakes. In republican and early Imperial Roman thought, earthquakes were frequently classified as prodigies, "(un)natural events that gave 'an implication that something relating to the gods had gone seriously wrong.'"[53] Any prodigy, if acknowledged as such by the senate, then suggested a breakdown in the *pax deorum*, the reciprocal relationship between Rome and its deities.[54] Who better to emulate

44 Pliny, *Epistulae* 6.20.9 trans. P. G. Walsh (Oxford 2006).

45 Plin., *Ep*. 6.20.12.

46 Plin., *Ep.* 6.20.12.

47 *Aen*. 2.640.

48 *Aen.* 2.698-700.

49 Plin., *Ep.* 6.20.12.

50 Plin., *Ep.* 6.20.17.

51 Plin., *Ep.* 6.20.17.

52 Bromberg, "Pliny's Telemacheia: Epic and Exemplarity Under Vesuvius."

53 Christopher M Higgins, "Popular and Imperial Response to Earthquakes in the Roman Empire" (Ohio University, 2009), 31.

54 Higgins, 31.

when addressing circumstances that indicated a breach of religious conduct than Aeneas, defined by his *pietas*? Even when earthquakes are soundly rejected as being prodigious, as at *Natural Questions* 6.3.1, we still recall the reliance that Seneca places on the *Aeneid* specifically, especially through his evocation of the horrific environmental conditions caused by Juno's anger in *Aeneid* 1. Aeneas, by the nature of his *pietas*, is a character constructed to be able to reckon with events on a divine scale. Recall also that, as previously explored, the connection between earthquakes and the supernatural imbues Seneca's scientific explorations with vividity.

Furthermore, recall that both Seneca and Pliny the Younger appreciably allude to *Aeneid* 2 to frame an ideal reaction in the face of tragic disaster. This explicit application can be contextualized through Christopher Trinacty's thesis that Seneca uses intertextuality therapeutically to address environmental trauma.[55] A similar aim can be read into Pliny's first person account of his model behaviour in the face of the Vesuvian eruption. Particularly, Trinacty reflects that "the cultural memory of events not witnessed directly makes us all survivors and 'turn[s] history into a memory in which we can all participate.'"[56] To a Roman, Aeneas' story represents the collective, legendized memory of Rome itself. *Aeneid* 2's first-person account of the destruction of Troy, the attacking Greeks inextricable from environmental chaos, would similarly render his Roman descendants "survivors." This makes Aeneas and his eponymous epic a fitting model for coping with the trauma of an earthquake. Naturally, then, this model frames both narratives, being evoked with a direct quotation near the beginning of each text.

A further feature of Roman reportage on earthquakes that must be addressed in this examination is their varying prevalence in historical texts. For example, Suetonius and Dio fail to mention the destructive 63 CE earthquake at Campania which frames Seneca's *Natural Questions* 6.[57] Nevertheless, they take note of other seismic activity occurring in the 60s BCE. For example, the former takes note of seismic portents coinciding with Galba's arrival at Rome, while the latter supplies an intensely poignant description of an earthquake at the end of Nero's reign.[58] By this point in the empire, the typical Roman understanding of earthquakes had begun to shift from the earlier conception that they signified a violation of the *pax deorum* to an understanding that they were prodigies pertaining to

55 Christopher Trinacty, "Trauma, Earthquakes, and Bibliotherapy in Seneca's Naturales Quaestiones," in *Emotional Trauma in Greece and Rome* (Routledge, 2019).

56 Trinacty, 134.

57 R. F. Newbold, "Pliny HN 2. 199," *Classical Philology* 68, no. 3 (1973): 213.

58 Newbold, 211–12.

the lives of key political figures at Rome.[59] For a historian, then, decisions about which seismic events to report may have been keenly political, and less connected to the general public's reaction to disaster. Alternatively, in literary works situated further from the political sphere, earthquakes are mentioned for different purposes which, as described above, benefit from epic allusion. In Seneca, we see epic references coalesce in emphasizing the size of earthquakes and explaining their cause, effectively employing this Virgilian bent to ultimately craft a bibliotherapeutic approach which his audience can use to respond to disastrous seismic events. This "ideal response," informed through interaction with epic poetry, is further emphasized in Pliny's "Vesuvius letters". The frequency of this topos seems to understandably vary between texts which prepare their readers for the future, like works of natural philosophy and epistolary, and which simply recount the past like the histories discussed above.

Furthermore, the literary record reflects that, in areas where earthquakes were common, they may have been viewed as unremarkable until a true disaster struck. Seneca explains that "Campania had always been nervous of this threat, but had remained unharmed and had many times got over its fear" and Pliny the Younger states that he was initially unfazed by the days of "earth-tremors" preceding the eruption of Vesuvius "because they were frequent in Campania."[60] In the article "Poseidon's Wrath and the End of Helike," Justine Walter attributes the prominence of the temple of Posiedon at Helike to "people living [there being] used to earthquakes and [using] this sanctity as a means of reducing fear."[61] Despite the fact that earthquakes would eventually prove devastating both in Campania and at Helike, they were acknowledged as a fact of life, prompting specific patterns of social and religious behaviour.[62] Beyond the social and religious acceptance of the commonality of earthquakes, which served to reduce fear, a similar literary approach was taken to reckoning with earthquakes as a destructive natural force. The ubiquity of epic in the Roman period would allow these references to further normalize discussion of earthquakes, or at least to address the fear and trauma they might evoke in afflicted populations. Since "the transformation of the trauma into a narrative memory that allows the story to be verbalized [...] to be integrated

59 Higgins, "Popular and Imperial Response to Earthquakes in the Roman Empire," 34.

60 Sen., *QNat.* 6.1.2, Plin., *Ep.* 6.20.3.

61 Justine Walter, "Poseidon's Wrath and the End of Helike: Notions about the Anthropogenic Character of Disasters in Antiquity," in *Ecocriticism, Ecology, and the Cultures of Antiquity.*, ed. Christopher Schliephake (Lanham, Maryland: Lexington Books, 2016), 38, https://www.academia.edu/31149773/Poseidons_Wrath_and_the_End_of_Helike_Notions_about_the_Anthropogenic_Character_of_Disasters_in_Antiquity.

62 This may also relate to the varying frequency with which earthquakes are mentioned in ancient sources, as described above.

into one's own, and others', knowledge of the past, may lose [...] the event's essential incomprehensibility," allusion to epic in discussions of seismic disaster may function as a rationalizing and even soothing force just as religious ritual served the Heliconians.[63]

The mythicization of that same Helike is itself a similar example of a response to environmental trauma. When Helike is mentioned in certain texts, albeit centuries after the disaster itself, the reference often appears accompanied by a quotation from Homer. An interesting balance is struck here between allusions to the city's existence in the Homeric past and an author's reckoning with the city's present non-existence due to seismic disaster. That potential for "verbalizat[ion]" granted by epic allusion tempers the "incomprehensibility" of Helike's disappearance, resulting in this polis' transformation into quasi-legend.[64] Aelian, in his *On Animals*, discusses the fact that a few days after "all the mice and martens and snakes and centipedes and beetles and every other creature of that kind" departed from Helike in droves, "then it was that 'the gods showed forth wonders among them.'"[65] Aelian chooses a quotation from *Odyssey* 12.394, reflecting the calm before the literal storm when Odysseus' men ate the cattle of the sun, an archetypical example of impiety that results in a disaster of epic scale. While Aelian goes on to explicitly state that an "earthquake occurred in the night [...] and Helike disappeared," the scale of the earthquake and its effects on water systems is first introduced by referencing Homer.[66] Moreover, in Pausanias' *Description of Greece*, when he comes to Helike, we are told that "there are also passages in Homer referring to Helike and the Heliconian Poseidon."[67] Immediately after this sentence, Pausanias describes the Heliconians' sacrilege against suppliants and the earthquake that followed, which "struck their land and swallowed up [...] the very site on which the city stood."[68] A digression on various types of earthquakes follows. While citation of Homer is quite common in the *Description of Greece*, it is interesting how Helike and its religious sensibilities are generally described, appearing in nondescript Homeric "passages." Since Pausanias goes on to describe the "most destructive kind of earthquake," the sort that "levelled Helike to the ground," the general suggestion

63 Cathy Caruth, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (JHU Press, 1995), 153–54 in Trinacty, "Trauma, Earthquakes, and Bibliotherapy in Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*," 134.

64 Caruth, *Trauma,* 153–54 in Trinacty, "Trauma, Earthquakes, and Bibliotherapy in Seneca's *Naturales Quaestiones*," 134.

65 Ael. *NA* 11.19 trans. A. F. Schofield (London and Cambridge, 1959).

66 Ael. *NA*. 11.19.

67 Pausanias 7.24.6 trans. W.H.S. Jones (2020).

68 Paus., 7.24.6.

of Helike's prominence even in early, legendary Greece adds force to this already striking description of devastation.[69] Furthermore, since Pausanias frames the earthquake as a result of religious failure, the impetus for reference to the Homeric world is even clearer here.

Interestingly, Stathis Stiros has postulated that "the loss of Helike and Boura reached mythical dimensions," because "it was commemorated in verses and possibly in songs," with those extant having been written by Ovid, Bianor, and Philo of Alexandria.[70] In addition to what Stiros has catalogued, this disappearance is also mentioned in Lucretius' *De rerum natura* 6.585–7, a reference fossilized in the hexameters of a didactic epic that would influence later writing about earthquakes.[71, 72] The disaster at Helike is then cast as a "unique case of a seismic disaster that had become a legend."[73] Helike's status as a religious centre combined with its elevation in poetry and song centuries after this tragedy would have strengthened the force of the topos of associating earthquakes with the epic world, which was clearly solidified by the time of Aelian and Pausanias.[74] If we consider the legendary past to be the "oldest" available example of disaster on such a destructive scale, we can understand why the mythicization of Helike might occur progressively over the centuries, which would further strengthen its conflation with the epic world. Note that Stiros asserts that the 373 BCE earthquake did not occur at all and was wholly a legendary construction, which is problematic given the wealth of recent archaeological work on Helike.[75] Rightly so, literary sources alone cannot be used to determine the veracity of the 373 quake. However, the progressive legendizing of events at Helike does seem to be a traceable pattern in the extant literature, preserving the gradual transformation of trauma resulting from an almost unimaginable environmental disaster into a collective literary memory.

Finally, an interesting late antique source on earthquakes comes in the little-read monody of Libanius for Nicomedia, which was devastated by a 358 CE earth-

69 Paus,. 7.24.11-12.

70 Stathis C. Stiros, "On de Mundo and Pseudo-Aristotle, a Geoarchaeological Analysis," *Geoarchaeology* 37, no. 6 (2022): 822, https://doi.org/10.1002/gea.21929.

71 Kayachev, "Disastrous Earthquakes in Lucretius and the Sibylline Oracles," 333.

72 Including, as previously discussed, Seneca the Younger.

73 Stiros, "On de Mundo and Pseudo-Aristotle, a Geoarchaeological Analysis," 822.

74 This seems to have been established at least by the 60s CE, considering Seneca's *Natural Questions.*

75 Dora Katsonopoulou and Ioannis Koukouvelas, "Comment on 'The 373 B.C. Helike (Gulf of Corinth, Greece) Earthquake and Tsunami, Revisited' by Stiros (2022)," *Seismological Research Letters* 93, no. 4 (April 28, 2022): 2401–5, https://doi.org/10.1785/0220210301.

quake. This text is worth closely reading to analyze if tropes of epic allusion related to earthquakes remain present into Late Antiquity and how they function here.[76] For Libanius, the whole matter of Nicomedia is best described as "an Iliad of woes."[77] Just as Homer began his *Iliad* addressing the injustice of the gods, so Libanius addresses first Poseidon and the rest of the pantheon for their cruelty.[78] His proem begins immediately with an address of Homer by name, stating that he "did not pass over the destruction of a plant without expressing pity [...] he sang a kind of dirge to the shoot."[79] From this grandiose proem, the body of Libanius' monody is permeated by allusions to the action of Poseidon in the *Iliad* specifically. Overall, towards the end of the monody, Libanius' general sense of hopelessness is reflected through several indirect references to events of *Odyssey* 12. Nicomedia has not been avenged by the gods like the theft of the cattle of the sun, and its harbour is now more terrifying than "the dwelling place of Scylla."[80] Allusion to epic and to Poseidon, the earth-shaker therein, proves a fitting descriptor for destruction. At the same time, epic allusion also serves a rhetorical function in eloquently and powerfully relating Libanius' grief to the listener. Instead of tempering sadness and terror, his literary allusion elevates it. Amidst references to epic, Libanius arrives at a similar conclusion to Seneca: "nothing is safe from violence, nothing is invulnerable. Everything is liable to catastrophe."[81] Yet instead of using the uncertain enormity of the epic world to take heart against such great devastation, Libanius uses similar language to provide vocabulary for the dead and the traumatized. He has inverted what we find in Seneca's response to massive destruction in Campania four centuries prior, elevating a specific example instead of grasping for the universal sublime. Given the shape of the whole Monody, the topos in question and its relation to environmental trauma certainly seems to have persisted into late antique literature. It is Libanius' rhetorical end that differs from Seneca, that is, the emotional effect to which he uses the trope, but not the trope itself.

A literary topos of epic allusion is present through writings about four key seismic events: the 62/63 CE Campanian earthquake, the seismic activity associated with the eruption of Vesuvius, the disappearance of Helike, and lastly, the earthquake at Nicomedia. The persistence of this trope through the Roman Imperial period

76 Although keeping in mind that epic allusion is par for the course with Libanius.

77 Libanius 61.19 trans. R. Cribiore (Liverpool, 2015).

78 Raffaella Cribiore, *Between City and School: Selected Orations of Libanius / Raffaella Cribiore*., Translated Texts for Historians ; v.65 (Liverpool: University Press, 2015), 30.

79 Lib., 61.1.

80 Lib., 61.16, 21.

81 Lib., 61.19.

into Late Antiquity in Latin and Greek language texts suggests that epic not only serves as a useful vehicle for description and exaggeration of natural forces but even has a unique ability to encapsulate the trauma stemming from environmental events. While this topos appears throughout literature, it is much more prevalent in certain genres, as it is more useful in forward-looking work than backwards-facing texts like history. Namely, epic provides universal examples and furnishes a collective societal memory of seismic disaster, with the capacity to impart guidance and even bibliotherapy. It may also allow traumatic events, such as at Helike, to gain heavy association with the epic world and acquire a legendary quality as exempla in their own right. Finally, the universality of epic can also allow for the inversion of the trope in the highlighting of one specific seismic event as outstandingly tragic.[82]

82 This is beyond the scope of this paper, but this is a literary trope in the ancient reception of disasters in general, including events like plague.

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From Prefect to Patriarch: The Egyptian Chalcedonian Church as a Mirror of Roman Civic Authority

Jevan Konyar

Abstract
The Chalcedonian Church, emergent in the latter centuries of Roman rule in Egypt following a lengthy Roman tenure in the country, matured with roles and hierarchical structures similar to those of the state. It paralleled its civil predecessor on both an organizational and functional level by favoring a bi-partite model that precluded the existence of an intermediary administrative level between that of the individual community and nation-wide body, and by co-opting functions related to tax collection and census-taking. This is in stark contrast to its Monophysite counterparts that never took on the same bureaucratic character. In the following paper, I endeavor to illustrate the operational nature of the late Roman Chalcedonian Church via a comparative historical treatment of the church's bureaucratic structure and roles in relation to equivalent aspects of Roman government, both of which contrast those of the parallel Monophysite establishment. This state of affairs placed greater autonomy in the hands of officials at the village level, those who realized the new functions adopted by the Church.

In the dizzying historical expanse of Egyptian Christianity, a frustrating constant is the complexity imparted on Church institutions, wherever and whenever they exist. Christendom's first centuries along the Nile provide no exceptions, the first patriarchs of Alexandria already engrossed in a labyrinthine body of communities by this time. In every instance, Egypt's clerical landscape remained an intricate tapestry of creeds and churches that demand nuanced study. The following is an examination of the Chalcedonian Church's relationship to the state of the day, an attempt to sketch a brief inquiry into how the latter shaped the former.

From the moment of its crystallization after the reign of Patriarch Theodosius I in the sixth century, the Chalcedonian Church of Egypt was, through and through, a product of the five centuries of Roman rule that preceded its inception.[1] Like other churches that matured in the shadow of the Roman state, structural and functional aspects of the Chalcedonian institutional body reflect the apparatus

1 Ewa Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," in *Egypt in the Byzantine World 300-700,* ed. Roger S. Bagnall (Cambridge: Cambridge, 2007), 344.

of the Roman state's local manifestation; this fact is betrayed by its hierarchical organization and role within Egyptian society, both of which lend credence to an affinity with its Roman counterpart. The Chalcedonian Church's state of affairs starkly contrasts that of Monophysite churches and monastic communities, which remained both organizationally and socially rooted in an approach to local affairs that rendered them entirely alien to Roman government.

The most crucial process to recognize at play in this relationship is the increasing delegation of civil roles to literate or otherwise bureaucratically elevated members of local communities that occurred under the Romans, which I would argue provided a mechanism by which Roman structures were disseminated into the Church. That is, by the middle of the sixth century, elements of the Chalcedonian Church had become entrenched enough in de-centralized and localized Roman government structures to be able to co-opt them. The Roman re-organization of Egypt between its conquest under Augustus in 30 BCE and the reign of Theodosius that began in c. 535 CE produced the conditions necessary for the Chalcedonian Church to assume the status of a de-facto governing institution in the sixth century, one that took after its immediate predecessor.

In sketching this process fully, it is necessary first to examine the defining characteristics of Roman rule in Egypt, the Chalcedonian Church's sharing in those characteristics in late antiquity, and lastly the vast gulf in role and structure that, in addition to theological concerns, that distinguished Chalcedonian and Monophysite institutions from one another.

Sources and Method

The scope and nature of this study is such that a reliance on contemporary scholarship itself, involving a treatment of primary sources, is not only adequate, but preferable. In comparing the different *modi opperandi* of a series of polities across multiple centuries, a reliance on primary sources would be, for lack of a better word, unwieldy, especially so in a preliminary sketch like this. To add to that, the nature of Roman government in Egypt has been the subject of rigorous, serious scholarship for the better half of the modern university's existence, and recent developments in the field of Coptology have given way to a similarly thorough understanding of both Monophysite and Chalcedonian Church hierarchies, and their roles within the world of late-antique Egypt.

In particular, a series of papers produced by Ewa Wipszycka within the past decade and a half have proven invaluable in constructing a picture of the paral-

lel church institutions that emerged after the mid-sixth century. A series of other studies on primary source material, notably *Paul of Tamma and the Monastic Priesthood*, have also illuminated a set of key details concerning the Monophysite church. I have made an effort to draw upon sources from only the past 20 years in constructing a picture of the Egyptian churches in the fifth century, though I have also employed somewhat older sources dealing with Ptolemaic or Roman Egypt – this is not because the general historical narratives presented in these texts remain robust, though in most cases they do, but because the actual data presented on the structures and roles of Roman and Ptolemaic authority remains relevant. In looking at governance in the *nomoi* during the Roman period, Margaret Larson's *The Officials of Karanis*, a text from 1954, has been indispensable. Though I tend to cite this source as an authority, I would like to point out that much of what Larson describes is corroborated by Thomas J. David's *The Epistrategos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt*, and Roger S. Bagnall's *Hellenistic and Roman Egypt*, two later sources that I also consulted extensively.

The method I hope to employ, as briefly laid out in the introduction and as may be clear from the nature of the question at hand, is in accordance with a comparative historical approach wherein Roman government structures and roles that emerged following the Roman conquest of Egypt are compared with those of the Chalcedonian Church, and then those of the church subsequently compared to those of Monophysite institutions. It is important to note that when I speak of Roman authority, I refer specifically to that of Egypt, distinguished from the rest of the Roman world by elements borrowed from the preceding Ptolemaic period, itself hosting certain functions and structures contiguous with the Persian and Pharaonic periods.

The Prevailing Idiosyncrasy of Egypt

This leads naturally into a discussion of Egypt's administrative uniqueness in the wider Mediterranean world, a fact that becomes especially apparent when situated within the context of a larger polity. With Alexander's invasion in 332 BCE, Egypt was thrust into a Hellenistic world in which its model of government, predicated on highly centralized resource collection and entrenched civil offices, was unique in relation to the Antigonid or Seleucid kingdoms. A defining characteristic of Hellenistic governance — which was, beyond the core of the Greek world, conducted by a martial Hellenic aristocratic class — was an emphasis on a militant approach to governance.[2] Egypt is therefore further distinct in its em-

2 Arthur Eckstein, *Mediterranean Anarchy, Interstate War, and the Rise of Rome* (Berkley: University of California Press, 2007), 86.

ployment of pre-Hellenistic, uniquely civil roles such as that of the *nomárxai* (νομάρχαι), an office in command of crop distribution and management of royal revenues and almost certainly a holdover from the Pharaonic period.[3] From the advent of the Hellenistic era, the situation in Egypt facilitated a greater synthesis of local and foreign elements.[4]

Other offices, though not wholly preserves of the Pharaonic period, were likely necessitated by Egypt's distinct geography and consequently individual approach to land management; one such office was that of *basilikos grammateus* (βασιλικός γραμματεύς), which appears to have been that of a literate land-surveyor responsible for collecting data on a given *nomos* (νομός) that may have paralleled an earlier, pre-Ptolemaic equivalent.[5] To add to that, the civil importance later attached to the role of *strategos* (στρατηγός), which emerged concurrently with the Hellenistic invasion as a purely military office and only took on a civilian function after the death of Alexander, further testifies to the civilizing force — civilizing in the sense of initiating or catalyzing the gradual disappearance of overtly violent means of governance — that Egypt had on its Hellenistic overlords.

The continued use of *nomoi* as an administrative unit well into the Roman period also attests to the unrelenting stasis of Egyptian administration. The nature of a nomos, an administrative unit into which the land around the Nile was divided — only replaced by the smaller Roman *pagus*, under the reign of Diocletian — hints at the environmental basis underlying Egypt's administrative stability. It must be stated that in the later Roman period, there were four administrative units above the level of the *nome*, and these persisted until the end of the Byzantine period.[6] As noted by papyrologist Maria Falivene, the consistency of Egyptian bureaucracy, unknown elsewhere in western Eurasia, was largely a product of the environmental conditions of the country, which not only facilitated, but necessitated a very particular approach to economic and political management that required the presence of a robust government in even marginal areas of the country.[7]

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3 Maria Rosaria Falivene, "Government, Management, Literacy: Aspects of Ptolemaic Administration in the Early Hellenistic Period," *Ancient Society* 22 (1991): 209.

4 Christelle Fischer-Bovet, and Sitta von Reden, "Reassessing Hellenistic Settlement Policies The Seleucid Far East, Ptolemaic Red Sea Basin and Egypt," in *Comparing the Ptolemaic and Seleucid Empires: Integration, Communication, and Resistance* (Cambridge University Press, 2021): 84-85.

5 Maria Rosaria Falivene, "Government, Management, Literacy," 223.

6 Thomas J. David, *The Epistrategos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt, Part 2: The Roman Epistrategos* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982), 29.

7 Maria Rosaria Falivene, "Government, Management, Literacy," 207.

Roman Governance in Egypt: Localization and Decentralization

The need for strong governance beyond the cosmopolitan core of the Nile Delta may help explain the gradual Roman shift towards more localized forms of government, such as the *pagus,* that expropriated the responsibility for tax and information collection from a central government to members of a given community.[8] From an imperial standpoint, the delegation of these duties to locals could be rationalized as a move to improve the efficiency of what was now an export economy: with Egypt now Rome's most significant center of grain production, an impetus to instate a system that minimized the bureaucratic distance between the central imperial authority in Rome and local agricultural communities appeared.

Upon its initial absorption into the Roman empire in 30 BCE, Egypt joined a category of frontier provinces ruled directly by the emperor, a fact that may appear jarring due to its historical centrality within the eastern Mediterranean. Its status as a frontier province, however, did not imply marginality by any means — as mentioned above, Egypt's newfound criticality to Rome's grain supply meant that government in this new province demanded a special treatment and, in reality, this materialized in the creation of the office of *prefect*, which mirrored the royal viceroy of the Pharaonic period in its dual nature as both a civil and military role with unparalleled power in Egypt working directly under the sovereign.[9] The fact that Egypt was treated as a frontier territory only meant that there was no senatorial involvement in its government; in effect, it was directly subject to the emperor.

The *strategos*, who fulfilled a military function under the Ptolemies, became a purely civilian office under the Romans: *strategoi* were assigned to each *nomos* and appear to have replaced the Greco-Pharaonic *nomárxai* in their newfound role as overseers of tax collection and intermediaries between the central government and *nomoi*. Additionally, *epistrategoi* were introduced on a level above that, with an *epistrategos* likely assigned to each of Egypt's four administrative units above the level of the *nomos*.[10] The Romans kept the *nomos* as an administrative unit for the first two centuries of their rule over Egypt, each now comprising a metropolis and marginal villages, themselves smaller administrative entities. Under Diocletian in 297, the *nomoi* were further divided into smaller *pagi*.[11]

In this Roman context, the role of liturgists, village governing officials appointed by the *epistrategos* to serve annual terms within the confines of a given *nomos*,

8 Margaret Elisabeth Larson, *The Officials of Karanis (27 B.C. – 337 A.D.): A Contribution to the Study of Local Government in Egypt Under Roman Rule* (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1954), 8.

9 Larson, "The Officials of Karanis," 2.

10 David, *The Epistrategos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,* 38-39.

11 Larson, 7-8.

became integral to tax collection and census-taking.[12] Offices appointed by the *epistrategos* include the *kōmogrammateus*, a secretary given the task of calculating (but not collecting) taxes, and keeping track of village population in the censuses that occurred every 14-years. The *kōmogrammateus* was a salaried role that, by its nature, was subservient to the *strategos*.[13] The actual collection of taxes in both money and grain was carried out by *praktores*, who delivered gathered currency and goods to a bank and granary respectively.[14] In terms of surveying and providing the village officials with data on taxable land, the *censitor* played a valuable role.[15]

In the event of a *kōmogrammateus*' absence or incapacity, the role would be taken up by *presbyteroi*, a position that seems to have originated from the Ptolemaic *presbiteroi tōn georgōs* (πρεσβύτεροι τών γεωργών), meaning "representatives of the cultivators." By the first century, the *presbyteroi* were also responsible for representing not only tenant farmers on state property, but all those leasing property from the state in a given locale.[16] It is also around this time that the office was extended to the supervision of canals, collection of taxes on sheep, pasturage, and beer, and intervention in disputes related to agriculture or canals.[17]

In the third century, the office of *komarch* appears concurrently with the disappearance of the *presbyteroi* and *Kōmogrammatei* from written records. The last mention of the latter in written sources is dated to 214, and the first mention of the former appears in 274.[18] The *komarch* also appears to have replaced the less formal office of Elder in the third century, subsuming a previously less formal role into a more codified liturgy.[19] These positions are al l associated with that of *nomographos*, which is first mentioned as a kind of village scribe in sources dating to the first century.[20] Within Alexandria, there was a parallel tendency towards localization, a notable manifestation being the division of the city into *grammata*, of which there were four: Alpha, Beta, Gamma, and Delta.[21] In this, I believe a bureaucratization, or at least codification, of local administration is apparent.

12 David, *The Epistrategos in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt,* 71.

13 Larson, "The Officials of Karanis," 15.

14 Larson, 13.

15 Larson, 39.

16 Larson, 27.

17 Larson, 27-28.

18 Larson 36.

19 Larson, 38.

20 Larson, 29.

21 Christopher Haas, Alexandria in Late Antiquity: Topography and Social Conflict (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 49.

To reiterate: the general movement of Roman governance in the *chôra* in the prelude to the sixth century is the gradual dissemination of the power and obligation for tax collection and information collection to local officials, who in turn saw increasing codification and legitimization of roles that were likely unofficial in the past. Within Alexandria, there is a parallel move towards more fragmented social organization. It is developments proceeding along these lines that enable the emergence of the church as a sort of governing body in the following century. This perhaps culminates with the replacement of the *nomoi* with smaller *pagi* under Diocletian, and the consequent replacement of the *strategos* with the *pagus*.[22]

The Chalcedonian Church in the Sixth Century

Something crucial to understanding the clerical landscape of post-Chalcedonian Egypt is that, at least in the century following the Monophysite-Chalcedonian split, the two Church institutions remained essentially parallel antagonistic bodies that co-existed in every setting.[23] This parallelism manifested first in Alexandria before spreading to the *chôra*; the first evidence of these circumstances taking hold in the rest of the country comes from the patriarchship of Peter IV (r. 576-578) who ordained 70 bishops in his time, suggesting, according to Wipszycka, that he formed a new Chalcedonian network mirroring the established order, comprising many Monophysite characters.[24] This number amounts to nearly a bishop for every diocese, and since it is unlikely, if not proven impossible by other textual sources, that every bishop in the country would need to be replaced at once, it appears this was a total replication of the existing Church that placed Chalcedonians in place of Monophysites.[25] Though separate, the two elements were not always in open dispute with one another, and it would be naïve to assume there was anything resembling a persistent religious conflict in this situation, administrative disputes likely being more prevalent.[26]

These newly appointed bishops were not, like their contemporaries in other parts of the Roman Empire, metropolitan. Once again, Egypt's idiosyncrasy was demonstrated through its lack of an administrative level between the province and its constituent, rather instating a large number of local officials (bishops) reporting directly to a central national authority (the patriarch). In this sense, there were only two significant bureaucratic levels. This was all in the shadow of a monar-

22 Larson, "The Officials of Karanis," 41.

23 Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 344.

24 Wipszycka, 343-344.

25 Wipszycka, 343-344.

26 Wipszycka, 331-345.

chic episcopate that matured throughout the second century and was institutionalized under the bishop Demetrius (189-231).[27]

In terms of the clergy's hierarchy, written sources provide clarity concerning offices situated in its upper echelon, though there is ambiguity surrounding more low-ranking members. We know that throughout the second and third centuries, Christians in the *chôra* were governed by a council of presbyters, however it is unclear what the relationship between these presbyters and those of the Roman administration was.[28] What is clear is that by the third and fourth centuries, the office of presbyter within the Church, if it were ever related to the Roman office, had diverged to a point where it resembled that of the local bishop more than anything else, translators even sometimes confusing the terms when dealing with the texts of Origen.[29]

Bishops at this point were much more involved with the day-to-day life of their flock, owing to the greater number of dioceses and smaller size of each. Bishops exercised control over the entire revenue of their given diocese, although typically aided by a *kathilokos oikonomos*.[30] In the case of Alexandria, where bishops governed a larger, denser, and sometimes more well-endowed population, *katholikai ekklêisiai* — bishop-appointed clerical hierarchies operating independently — emerged in the fourth century.[31] Bishops were liable for the maintenance of infrastructure like aqueducts and walls, as well as the collection of taxes.[32]

The hierarchy, as far as we know, placed bishops at the helm, followed by presbyters, deacons, subdeacons, lectors, and chanters in that order. Widows, gravediggers, and doorkeepers may have been involved or adjacent at some level, however that much is unclear.[33] The clergy remained embedded in the civil life of their community, living at home and, with the exception of bishops and presbyters, who were salaried, sustaining themselves through the occupation they held before joining the clergy.[34] Members of the clergy were only members in their respective diocese contained within a *nomos*.[35] This, I would argue, fundamentally joins the Church institution and its composite offices to local governance, grounding it in a

27 Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 331.

28 Wipszycka, 332.

29 E. Kemp, "Bishops and Presbyters at Alexandria," in *The Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 6, no.2 (1955): 131.

30 Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 335-336.

31 Wipszycka, 333.

32 Wipszycka, 339.

33 Wipszycka, 338.

34 Wipszycka, 339.

35 Wipszycka, 335.

geographical government administration over an overarching hierarchy that transcends administrative units.

From an ethnic standpoint, both Churches comprised Greek and Coptic elements from the fifth century onwards and possibly earlier.[36] This entails that there may have been some presence of translators in the church to accommodate diglossia, however there is scant textual evidence to support the notion that they were included in the clerical hierarchy.

What should be clear from this dissection is that much like the Roman approach to administration that grew out of the first half of the imperial period, the Chalcedonian Church was a project that favored localization in governance, even at the expense of centralization. Lacking an intermediary between local bishops and the patriarch, those at the village level certainly exercised a far greater degree of freedom than in other churches of the empire.

Monophysite Monasticism in Contrast to the Chalcedonian Church

As noted in the foregoing section, the core church institution of the Monophysite creed that operated in settlements throughout Egypt in the immediate aftermath of the Monophysite-Chalcedonian split essentially paralleled the Chalcedonian Church. To add to that, the two were, as mentioned above, only fully separated as bureaucratic bodies under the reign of Peter IV who became patriarch over a century after the Council of Chalcedon.[37]

The writings of Paul of Tamma — produced by a fourth century Copic-Egyptian monk, now a saint in Oriental Orthodoxy — provide a crucial glimpse into the relationship between individual monastic elements and ecumenical authority in Egypt.[38] Where the Church institutions mirrored one another, monastic communities of the Monophysite creed provide instances of fundamentally different organizational structures and units with different civil roles. These writings, which reflect an essentially monastic view, seem to contain an inherent opposition to a central, institutional, ecumenical Church, stressing instead the necessity for monks to remain detached from the power structures and conflicts of the Church in order to best attain closeness to God.[39]

A notable role of monastic institutions in society was as lenders that operated

36 Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 432.

37 Wipszycka, 344.

38 L. S. B. Maccoull, "Paul of Tamma and the Monastic Priesthood," in *Vigiliae Christianae* 53, no. 3 (1999): 53.

39 Maccoull, "Paul of Tamma and the Monastic Priesthood," 320.

much like private citizens, not state actors.[40] In lease documents discovered at Hermopolis and Antinoopolis dating to the Islamic period, though mimicking earlier Byzantine leases, we find records of monastic institutions as property lenders. They worked under a single *oikonomos, phrontistês,* or *pronoêtês*.[41] On the topic of wealth accumulation in monasteries, it was common for monks arriving at a hermitage to donate their property, including land, livestock, houses, and currency, to their new community.[42] This practice was actively inhibited by imperial actions that sought to prevent private property falling into the hands of monastic communities, though legal efforts to prevent this were generally not enforced in cases where the fortune was not considerable.[43]

The dissonance between monastic communities and their social role in relation to the Chalcedonian Church is best clarified by an elucidation of their organizational structures. According to Wipczycka, monastic communities in Egypt were more varied in structure than anywhere else in the empire in late antiquity, and instead of being united into a single network of units, monastic communities were a dispersed milieu each operating totally independently of one another.[44]

Discussion

Before proceeding, I should clarify further that the institution of the Church, following the reign of emperor Justinian in the first half of the sixth century, grew immensely.[45] In a sense, representatives of either church became intermediaries between central political authorities and *chôra* populations, mirroring how the Egyptian Church as an institution emerged as an intermediary between the core of Roman authority and the country. This former role persisted after the Arab conquests, when the newcomers relied on entrenched institutions present in Egypt.[46] This is arguably the first way in which the Church mirrored the rural Roman institutions that preceded it: from the sixth century, the bishop took the place of the *strategos* as the overseer of a local administrative force that acted as a direct liaison between a central national authority and the community without reporting

40 Tonio Sebastian Richter, "The Cultivation of Monastic Estates in Late Antique and Early Islamic Egypt: Some Evidence from Coptic Land Leases and Related Documents," in *American Studies in Papyrology* 46 (2009): 1009.

41 Richter, "The Cultivation of Monastic Estates," 207.

42 Ewa Wipszycka, "Resources and Economic Activities of the Egyptian Monastic Communities (4th-8th Century)," in *The Journal of Juristic Papyrology* 41 (2011): 163.

43 Wipszycka, "Resources and Economic Activities," 164.

44 Wipszycka, "Resources and Economic Activities," 162.

45 Ewa Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 340.

46 Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 346.

to any intermediate bureaucratic levels.

The interaction between *chôra* bishops and the monarchic episcopate differed from that of the *epistrategoi* and *strategoi* that preceded them in that the administrative unit was smaller, not metropolitan but more local. That being said, this still mirrored the Roman system that favored localization and more direct interaction between *chôra* officials and the center. In the absence of additional bureaucratic layers between the patriarch and bishops (such as metropolitan bishops), the Chalcedonian Church mirrored the Roman localization of government. In Alexandria as well, the presence of less formal *katholikai ekklêisiai* mirrored the forms of social organization that manifested even at the lowest administrative level during the Roman period.

As for the hierarchies of these structures themselves, it is clear that the institutional Chalcedonian Church mirrored its Roman predecessor by placing an almost hegemonic power in the hands of a single authoritative figure, the bishop and strategos respectively, thus rendering other high-ranking members of either body operating at a local level somewhat auxiliary to these roles. From the evidence presented thus far, it would appear that the Chalcedonian presbyter acted much like the liturgies working under the strategos in a given *nomos*, serving to perform tasks related to tax and data collection under the direct supervision of the bishop.

Regarding the gulf between Monophysite and Chalcedonian Churches, it cannot be denied that both acted as intermediaries with a central authority. That much is clear from the fact that, well into the Arabic period, the Monophysite Church continued to act as an arbitrator between the Islamic empires and the local populace.[47] With that in mind, it should also be clear that Monastic institutions, historically closely associated with Monophysite Christianity, existed outside of any state-like apparatus, and were treated as civilian entities in the economic domain.

Conclusion: Re-examining the Antagonism Between City and *Chôra*

A model traditionally employed to capture the nature of Egyptian history from the Ptolemaic period onwards is that which opposes *chôra* to center, and this is one that closely likens Egypt to the modern nation-state. While the central role played by Alexandria across the nation in all facets of Egyptian life cannot be denied, the intimate connection between the city and the *chôra* from an administrative standpoint, underpinned by the lack of an additional bureaucratic level to mediate between the two, attests to the greater importance of the *chôra* than is often

47 Ewa Wipszycka, "The Institutional Church," 346.

believed to be the case. In the lack of a significant intermediary between first the imperial and *nomos* governments, and later patriarch and bishops, it is clear the local officials were not just burdened with greater tax collection responsibilities, but also imbued with more autonomy. In this sense, it is best to understand the Roman Imperial government in Egypt and Chalcedonian Church institution that followed as bi-partite structures with central and circumferential elements, rather than unitary bodies with central and essentially peripheral elements where the former is engaged in a one-way stream of influence unto the latter.

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Wreath Meets World: Exploring the Intersection Between Archaic Athletic Prizes and Social Values

Laura Li

Abstract
Athletic competition in the Archaic Age was both an essential part of Greek society and a cultural reflection of its time. Their selection of rewards affirm this notion, echoing the social and political values that developed and persisted throughout the ninth to fifth centuries BCE. This paper focuses on Archaic athletic rewards and evaluates them as manifestations of their contemporary social values. An investigation into Olympia and the Panathenaia, two prominent athletic festivals of the Archaic period, help testify that the variety of rewards are representative of differing social values across the Greek landscape. The prizes from the Festival of Olympia derive esteem from symbolism to emphasize the significance of religion and *aretē* in Greek culture. Contrarily, the Panathenaia boasts rewards with high financial value as a means to promote Athenian state pride and to perpetuate cultural cohesion. The final section of the essay contains a brief discussion on modern prizes to illustrate the evolution of athletic merit as a byproduct of the transitory changes in society and culture.

Athletic rewards in the Ancient Greek world cannot be reduced to mere indicators of success. As ornaments to major sporting events that have shaped Greece's social landscape throughout the years, there is reasonable justification to contend that a deeper investigation into prizes — both material and immaterial — can reveal greater insights into the socio-political context that framed sport. This assertion is particularly compelling in relation to society in the Archaic Age, seeing the popularity of athletics infiltrate an unprecedented range of the Greek population. The value of athletics bloomed in the wake of the sociopolitical and cultural transitions that the Archaic period oversaw, shifting to become a key player in defining Greek identity.[1] In this sense, athletic rewards also evolved as products and representations of these societal changes. This essay explores the function of rewards and prizes in Archaic athletic events, and how an investigation into their

1 Paul Christesen, "The Transformation of Athletics in Sixth-Century Greece," in *Onward to the Olympics: Historical Perspectives on the Olympic Games*, ed. Gerald P. Schaus and Stephen R. Wenn (Waterloo, Ontario: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 59.

relationships with athletic participants and sporting structures can, in turn, unveil further information on the nature of Archaic Greek society itself. I argue that the variety of athletic prizes in Archaic Greek sport is a reflection of the distinctive social environments co-existing within the Panhellenic world, and that each variation demonstrates a set of distinct values regarding religion, state, and cultural customs within their respective social contexts. Just like the modern world that we are familiar with, Archaic Greece was ultimately a complex, dynamic society that cannot be defined by only a few select characteristics.

I begin by contextualizing athletics within the Archaic Age and follow with an analysis of the different reward systems that manifested alongside the period's social and political evolutions. I then provide a case study on the symbolic rewards offered in the Festival of Olympia compared to the material prizes of the Panathenaia to demonstrate the unique qualities of stephanitic and chrematitic games, and how each category reflects co-existing values within the same temporal framework. Finally, I will broaden the discussion by including a brief overview on modern-day athletic prizes in the western world, and how their functions as social imitations fare differently in comparison to their ancient counterparts.

Archaic Greece

The Archaic Period (c. 800-480 BCE) was an era defined by drastic socioeconomic development.[2] Greece underwent an era of transition, displaying a host of pragmatic and attitudinal changes regarding art, culture, and politics. Urbanization, colonization, architectural advancements, and the increase of foreign trade are just a few of the aspects that oversaw the societal transformation. By the end of the 800s, the Panhellenic landscape was largely unrecognizable from its former position one hundred years earlier.[3]

Perhaps one of the most monumental transitions of its period, however, were the changes in politics and governance. The years preceding the eighth and ninth centuries BCE did not yet have the formally-established government systems that would emerge in the Archaic period, leaving social order to rely on aristocratic hierarchies to regulate some form of governance. Social elites reigned over the non-elites in both wealth and status. A clear distinction between the different social classes was therefore imperative in order to maintain their control. At the turn of

2 Donald Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle in the Ancient World* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2015), 70.

3 H.A. Shapiro, *Introduction in The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2007), 1-10, 2.

the century, Archaic Greece would oversee the gradual downfall of the aristocratic system and the rise of the city-state (*polis*) system that took its stead. Traditional monopolies over governmental control dispersed, with the authority now belonging to the city's respective states instead of the small number of elites. At the same time, a greater number of the general public — primarily the *penêtes* — began their advocacy for "an alternative set of goals and social rules that emphasized cooperation and sacrifice in the interests of the community and the importance of being an ordinary citizen of a well-ordered *polis*."[4] The conception of collective state identities had started to take shape.

Occurring at the same time was the institutionalization of athletic competitions, a development that would significantly change the dynamic between sport and Greek society. While it is apparent that the two events mirrored one another, there is uncertainty regarding whether it was politics that influenced the changes to sport, or vice versa.[5] Regardless of this causal dilemma, the institutionalization of athletics ultimately expanded the eligibility of sport participation beyond aristocrats to include a much greater portion of the Greek population. Due to its ubiquity, sport became an integral tool in helping define both the concept of 'Greekness' as well as collective city-state identities shared exclusively among locals.

By the later half of the Archaic Period, athletic festivals had branched into two distinct categories based on the type of rewards they offered. Stephanitic (crown) games were Panhellenic and awarded prizes containing high symbolic value. Contrarily, chrematitic (money) games referred to local or civic festivals that gave out monetarily-valuable material prizes.[6] The two types of rewards heavily contrast with one another; both were intended to serve varying purposes and represent different cultural themes in relation to their festivals. The following two sections will explore the nuances of both reward categories by using the Festival of Olympia and Athens' Great Panathenaia as case studies for the stephanitic and chrematitic games, respectively.

Olympia

The Festival of Olympia was renowned as the most prestigious of the four Pan-

4 Paul Christesen, *Sport and Democracy in the Ancient and Modern Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 2012), 139.

5 Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle*, 70.

6 Kyle, 72.

hellenic stephanitic games.[7] The architectural layout of the festival site, which served as a sacred sanctuary, substantiates that Olympia's esteemed reputation in part came from its major affiliations with the divine. The site was structured to emphasize the sacred structures dedicated to Zeus and other gods, showing that the festival's "hierarchy was clear: gods first, athletes second, and spectators third."[8] In other words, the primary purpose of the sporting events at Olympia was to celebrate and worship Zeus. Given its sacred prestige, participant turnout at the Olympics was extremely high and attracted competitors from city-states all across Greece.

As is customary in stephanitic games, the material rewards to be won at Olympia used symbolism to reflect the religious significance of the festival. Winners of each event received a ribbon and a palm branch, both symbolizing their victory.[9]At the end of the festival, all winners were presented with a wreath made of olive leaves plucked from the sacred tree that grows behind the Temple of Zeus. The collection of the leaves was ceremonial in practice, where boys with two living parents would cut off the leaves with a golden sickle.[10] This ritualistic procession solidified the sanctity of the crowns, signaling the favour of the gods gained by the wearer.[11] Prizes in this context rely heavily on allusions to the gods to proclaim their material value. Participants compete to obtain both symbolic accolades as well as an intangible blessing from the divine. The prizes thus send the message that participants and spectators of Olympia should first and foremost prioritize divine worship during the festival. However, the fact that sacred symbolism seems to only be the main concern for stephanitic prizes suggests that this degree of religious prioritization is only relevant within the social boundaries of the Olympics. Sacred games such as the Festival of Olympia are ultimately spaces where religion prevails as the official centrepiece that motivates event activities. As I will discuss later, non-stephanitic athletic events will instead substitute political and cultural priorities to oversee their own rewarding systems, resulting in prizes that deviated in shape from the ones showcased at Olympia.

Apart from religious honour, other prizes deriving from the Olympics boasted the overarching importance of *aretē* that is consistently prevalent in Ancient Greek culture. These rewards nevertheless still held symbolic values that were entic-

7 Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle*, 72.

8 Kyle, 108.

9 Stephen G. Miller, "The Olympic Games, 300 B.C.," in *Ancient Greek Athletics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 113-28, 123.

10 Miller, "The Olympic Games, 300 B.C.", 128.

11 Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle*, 113.

ing enough to incentivize competition. The immortalization of glory is one such demonstration, where the names of stadion race winners transcended as eponyms for that specific year's festival.[12] Additionally, while the Festival of Olympia never awarded monetary prizes, city-states would often adorn their local Olympic victors with lavish, financially-valued rewards as a way to celebrate their win. Athens, for example, welcomed their victors home with fanfare and free meals for the rest of their lives, elevating their social status within their own community. Doing so not only celebrated the victory of the athlete, but also allowed for the city-state to relish in the glory alongside their victor and claim the achievement as one of their own. Secular awards affiliated with the Olympics ultimately distinguished victors from non-victors, authenticating their excellence and superiority above all others. The value of arete permeated even into religious environments, demonstrating just how pervasive the notion of individual excellence was among the Greeks.

The Panatheneia

In many ways, the Panathenaia can act as a chrematitic foil for the Festival of Olympia, and vice versa. Both are the biggest and most well-documented events within their respective categories, allowing the two to act as prime examples of the variations in Archaic festivals and prizes. Contrasting with the Panhellenic nature of the Olympics, the Panathenaia was a civic athletic festival promoted by Athens as a sacred celebration of their patron god, Athena. Despite being local-bound, festival attendance and participation were open to all save for a select few Athenian-exclusive events. With its grandeur and colourful displays of spirit and festivity, the Panathenaia primarily served as a tool that the state used to promote Athenian pride amongst the public and to establish their political superiority over neighbouring rival states.[13]

As a means to promote the state, Athens generously rewarded high-quality material prizes to event victors, seemingly with a particular focus on competitions that welcomed non-local participants. A fourth-century BCE inscription listing the rewards for different Panathenaic events reveals that the monetary value for Athenian-exclusive competitions was significantly less than those for public events.[14] The valuation of the prizes suggests that festival organizers delegated a greater financial portion to events that would gain more attraction beyond the Athenian

12 Miller, "The Olympic Games, 300 B.C.", 126.

13 Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle*, 149.

14 IG II2 2311

population. It would make sense to invest more resources in these types of events, seeing as distributing such abundant amounts of invaluable material goods would support the reputation of Athens as an economically prosperous state.[15] The prizes ultimately attest to a specific political agenda that is a central part of Athenian values — they subsequently developed their reward system for the primary purpose to serve as devices that have the capability to progress these aspirations.

The most well-known prizes at the Panathenaia were the decorated amphoras, each of which contained large bouts of olive oil and were given away in large quantities to victors. The jars were not inexpensive, with the value of 100 amphoras — the number given to the winner of the Panathenaic men's stadion race — estimated to be equivalent to approximately $135 000 in the modern day.[16] The vast distribution of these monetarily-valuable material goods would help further the festival's goal to bolster Athens' reputation. Unlike the Olympics, these material Panathenaic rewards reveal that the festival prioritized its collective image over the religious undertones of Greek sport.

That is not to say, however, that the Panathenaia and its rewards completely disregarded the religious and traditional aspects of sport. The act of gifting olive oil — an objectively valuable prize in its contemporary age — derived from the aristocratic tradition of gifting valuable prizes.[17] In the Athenian context, olive oil amphoras would be the most suitable to represent this tradition. Olive oil was sacred to Athena and was presented as such in its obtainment ritual. Aristotle maintains that this oil comes from sacred olive trees and remains well-guarded in the Acropolis until it is time to distribute it to victors.[18] The purpose of the sacred procedures is twofold: on one hand, regulating such rituals would show respect and validate the festival's inherent intention to honour Athena; on the other hand, the act establishes an intimate connection between Athens and the widely-distributed material prizes. The olive oil becomes symbolic to the Athenian community's unified identity in the form of their religious associations with Athena. The distribution of prizes thus also becomes the distribution of Athenian culture, once again helping promote the excellence of the state.

Panathenaic rewards ultimately reformulated the traditional practices and reli-

15 I acknowledge Miller's note on IG II2 2311, which states that the inscription contains lost chunks of the original text. While it is possible that the missing material could bring forth information that contradicts my assertion, it should ultimately not invalidate attempts at interpreting the textual evidence that is presently available.

16 Kyle, *Sport and Spectacle,* 151.

17 Kyle, 151.

18 Aristotle, *Athenian Constitution,* 60.

gious symbolisms of prize-giving to help facilitate its newer political motives. In this sense, prizes exhibit the transitional nature of the Archaic age from a civic standpoint, combining old and new elements of athletic prizes to construct a collective state-based identity and popularizing their desired image throughout the Panhellenic world.

Modern Sport, Modern Prizes

The idea of sport as an institutional operation that yields reward incentives has evolved significantly in the centuries following the athletic conceptions of the Archaic world. Today, the scale of the competitions has expanded immensely, with the most prominent events now having the capacity to involve the entire global landscape. Rustin dubs this phenomenon the "globalisation of major sports, such that they operate in an international market" with the involvement of various sectors such as the economy, politics, and consumerism.[19] Seeing that such a strong presence still endures today, it can be useful to compare modern athletic competition to those belonging to ancient antiquity in order to develop new insights on the topic. An evaluation of the two reveals structural similarities between competitions from both temporal spaces. While it has ultimately broadened in both concept and geographical reach, sport remains a defining cultural feature of various existing societies and consequently continues to shape their identities and values.[20] Consequently, this also means that modern athletic rewards still have the power to mirror societal values in manners that are not dissimilar to those present in antiquity.

Symbolic prizes that are reminiscent of those in stephanitic games are still present in modern sports of all sizes. Replacing olive wreaths and palm branches are trophies and medals commonly found in all types of sporting competitions, from local elementary school soccer games to international spectacles such as the FIFA World Cups. Like stephanitic prizes, modern symbolic rewards do not usually have any inherent monetary value. Instead, they gain their prominence through the object's symbolism of the receiver's high degree of aptitude in the sport and the notion of excellence that consequently enrobes the athlete.[21] These demon-

19 Michael Rustin, "Sport, Spectacle and Society: Understanding the Olympics" in *Olympic Cities: 2012 and the Remaking of London*, ed. Gavin Poynter and Iain MacRury (London: Routledge, 2016), 15.

20 Michael Sam and Jay Scherer, *Sport and National Identity in Berkshire Encyclopedia of World Sport,* ed. Karen Christensen and David Levinson (Barrington, MA: Berkshire Publishing, 2005), 1488.

21 Stephen Hardy, John Loy, and Douglas Booth, "The Material Culture of Sport: Toward a Typology," *Journal of Sport History* 26, no. 1 (January 2009): 134.

strations of merit ultimately "enhance the social identity of both individuals and groups," furthering the sense of collective pride.[22]

Recipients of these prizes also benefit socially in ways that are not dissimilar to those in the ancient Olympics. The idolization of celebrity athletes still prevails in the modern world, with forms of praise that have notably also adapted to our technological changes: the fanfare and free meals found in Athenian traditions, for example, now take the shape of grand social media followings and complimentary products received in exchange for sponsorships and promotions. It is clear that our current perception of sport still retains a modern version of arete as a powerful motivator for sport competition.

Not all ancient values, however, have survived the inevitable progression of time. Another factor to simultaneously consider in the evaluation of modern symbolic rewards is the presence of — or lack thereof — religion. Over the centuries, the general consensus has shifted to regard sport as an inherently secular concept in the modern day.[23] As a result, modern symbolic trophies, medals, and ribbons no longer possess inherent sacred undertones. This may, in part, be indicative of the political movement that separated the church from state in the western world. More generally, however, the absence of religious affiliations in sport prizes reflects the globalization of western society, which has consequently cultivated a greater acknowledgment of multiculturalism and the plural existence of different religions. The absence of one religion in sport is ultimately also the exclusion of none.

Conclusion

The varying roles of different types of Archaic athletic rewards reveal a myriad of different societal inflections that coexist and constantly evolve within shared social borders. By painting a broad picture of various athletic rewards and their relations within their respective social environments, we can distinguish numerous unique goals and ambitions that acted upon and held influence over institutions, states, and individuals. Immaterial and material rewards are ultimately testimonies of Ancient Greek society's pursuit for athletic validation from both religious and social avenues. The role of material prizes additionally frames the rise and fall of aristocratic power relations with the general public and the desires for more

22 Hardy, Loy and Booth, "The Material Culture of Sport: Toward a Typology," 34.

23 Graham Scambler, *Sport and Society: History, Power and Culture* (Maidenhead, Berkshire: Open University Press, 2005), 25.

democratic societal structures that succeeded this ideology in the Archaic period. A final look into the stature of sport millennia after the likes of the Panathenaia unveils dramatic attitude shifts in our western contemporary, ones that are yet still interpretable through an inquiry into modern athletic rewards. While this essay has chosen to place a particular focus on ancient societal values within the Archaic time frame, a further inquiry into the role of athletic incentives in later eras would be invaluable to the discussion of athletic rewards as images of social ideals. Ancient athletics nevertheless remains a cultural emblem of its period, one that echoes societal narratives using manifestations of ultimate victory.

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Social Distancing: The Portrayal and Pollution of Death in Aeschylus' *Oresteia*

Piper Hays

Abstract
Death and its spiritually pollutive properties were foundational to Ancient Greek religious belief. In Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and for its audience, death, murder, and the *miasma* which accompanies it were seen as an infection of the soul, which had to be shunned lest it corrupt the living. This paper argues that Aeschylus uses traditional tragic stagecraft both to underscore the textual themes and elements of the *Oresteia*, and to protect his audience from the polluting bloodshed depicted in his stories. By analyzing how textual elements of the play interact with onstage actions and actors, Aeschylus builds scenes and interactions which purposefully omit key physical portrayals of death and murder which form the basis of his story and represent the most pollutive transgressions which existed in the ancient world. From the filicide of Iphigenia to the matricide of Clytemnestra, the technical and literary elements of Aeschylus' plays come together to protect the spiritual purity of the innocent audience and quarantine the Curse of Atreus to the stage.

Aeschylus' *Oresteia* is a tragedy centred around the consequences of violent death and the grim effects on those who take part. From the curse on the House of Atreus, to the slaying of Iphigenia at Agamemnon's hand, to the murder of Clytemnestra by her son Orestes, the trilogy of plays explores various instances of the worst acts of violence in the Ancient Greek world. However, while the plays are deeply invested in the ramifications of these violent retributive acts, they never actually depict them — in accordance with Greek tragic tradition, all of these deaths happen offstage despite serving as key plot points, with the audience only witnessing the preceding events and their aftermath. The plays put particular emphasis on the spiritual sickness caused by these acts, using prose and metaphors that evoke imagery of death as a complex and ever-evolving disease. Aeschylus manipulates the plays' onstage components by limiting deaths to offstage. This, alongside verbal and textual elements such as the use of funeral shrouds and the choices of when gods are physically present, compel the audience to imagine the horror of kin-killing and mariticide rather than view it. Thus, ritual and order are

used to protect the stage, actors, and audience from the *miasma* of murder that follows Orestes.

Defining Pollution: *Miasma* and the Tragic Stage

The practice of omitting the portrayal of death onstage is a fixture of Ancient Greek tragedy. Given that these tragedies were religious rituals written and performed to honour Dionysus in the City Dionysia, the portrayal of an element of religious pollution could not be permitted.[1] Death and its *miasma*, or ritual pollution, was an inherently pervasive and infectious thing — deaths were forbidden in sacred spaces such as temples, and anyone who entered or left a space where death had occurred would need to be cleansed, usually with water as if the death were a physical stain or sickness.[2] Similarly, bathing was common after funerals in order to cleanse the attendees. To limit this *miasma*, funerary duties such as bathing and dressing the body in a shroud were meant to be performed by women tied to the dead by kinship.[3] Given the importance of ritual in Greek funerary tradition, an unburied or untreated body was seen as an affront to proper ceremony and more pollutive than the death itself.[4]

This pollution of death is further exacerbated by the relationship between the victim and the perpetrator: murder is a more pollutive act than natural death, and thus commonplace ritual cleansing cannot truly wash the perpetrator of their infection.[5] The murder and kin-killing rife in the House of Atreus and trials of Orestes derive their pollutive properties not just from the spiritual affront that death is to the divine, but from a violation of the *oikos*, or household, and the natural order.[6] Given that death is contrary and therefore repugnant to the divine entities, to be stained with it in most cases is to invite the gods' apathy or disdain.[7] When it comes to social order, matricide or patricide is a crime of an upstart child against the parental authority of the household, while mariticide disrupts the divinely derived oaths and rituals of marriage. Filicide is seen as a violation of the authority figure's duty to protect those weaker and dependent, a violation of inherent trust.

1 Robert Parker, *Miasma: Pollution and Purification in Early Greek Religion* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), 35-37, 309.

2 Parker, *Miasma*, 34-5.

3 Parker, *Miasma,* 39-40.

4 Parker, *Miasma*, 40.

5 Parker, *Miasma*, 109.

6 Parker, *Miasma*, 110.

7 Parker, *Miasma*, 35.

Thus, the consequences of pollution uphold the moral and social order by imposing suffering and social quarantine on the killer, preventing them from infecting those who may otherwise interact with them.

Aeschylus uses this spiritual belief to its full extent by utilizing the concept of death, especially violent death, as a form of spiritual pollution; the absence of onstage death reinforces just how dangerous violent death is to the soul, and how it stains all those who take part. Thus, the religious practice of concealing death reinforces the taboo against the act itself. The jarring absence of onstage death is exacerbated by the metaphors and similes Aeschylus employs, equating violent death to a sickness that the innocent audience must be quarantined from. From the outset of the trilogy, the theme of spiritual sickness is prevalent: in conversation with the chorus about the *miasma* which haunts the bloodline of Agamemnon in the first play of the tragedy, Clytemnestra states, "So now your thoughts are stated correctly, you call on / the triple-gorged spirit / that plagues this family, / the one that lusts to fill its belly with blood. / And even before old wounds have healed / the infection comes again and out seeps new pus."[8] This choice of words invoking plague and infection elicits a certain revulsion and fear of the sickness where the audience must be quarantined away from the plague of violent death.

Even beyond the imagery of spiritual pollution and sickness, Aeschylus warns the audience directly about the pervasiveness of *miasma* and the risk they incur by participating in the retelling of the events. In *Agamemnon*, the chorus asks, "What man can say that he is ever free from / the spirit's grip, once he has heard this story?"[9] This clearly establishes that hearing or watching a portrayal of the events has the same pollutive properties as being present for the death itself. Thus, Aeschylus tries to protect his audience from this *miasma* as much as possible in both *Agamemnon* and the following plays, which in turn emphasize how far-reaching and invasive violent death is. The palpability of *miasma* even from second- or third-hand accounts is further exemplified — or rather notably omitted — by which victims are portrayed and which are not even mentioned.

Iphigenia as the First Casualty

The first death which occurs fully within the play is the death of Agamemnon at Clytemnestra's hand, but it is not the first death from which the audience is spared

8 Aeschylus, "Agamemnon" in *Oresteia*, trans. Peter Meineck, and ed. Helene P. Foley, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998). Lines 1475-80.

9 Aesch. *Ag.* 1341-2.

the pollution of witnessing. Clytemnestra cites the death of her daughter Iphigenia at her father's hand as the justification for her murder of Agamemnon.[10] Since no death is physically shown on the stage and only the repercussions are extensively portrayed, Iphigenia becomes the real first casualty. In the degrees of separation between violent, sacrilegious crime and the audience, Aeschylus introduces the idea that some crimes of death are more contagious and toxic than others. While the deaths of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are witnessed firsthand by actors in the play, thereby leaving one degree of separation between audience and pollutive act, those who speak of Iphigenia's death state that "[they] did not see and… cannot tell, / but the prophecies of Calchas are always fulfilled."[11] Given that the gods demanded both the death of Iphigenia by her father's hand and the death of Clytemnestra by her son's,[12, 13] the only substantial difference between these acts of pollutive bloodshed is the relationship between the perpetrator and the victim. The two degrees of separation between the audience and the act of filicide, as compared to the single degree for the acts of matricide and mariticide, serves a hierarchy whereby more pollutive acts garner more stringent protective measures.

Speech becomes heavily involved when illustrating the pervasiveness of a pollutive act. The deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra — and later Clytemnestra and Aegisthus — are loudly proclaimed; the horror of their deaths is verbally illustrated by the actors, and their shrouded bodies are almost proudly displayed. However, Iphigenia's name is not mentioned until late in the play, when Clytemnestra uses it to justify the death of her husband, stating "Yes, he has suffered, deed for deed, / for what he did to our daughter, Iphigenia, / his own flesh and blood!"[14] Clytemnestra uses Iphigenia's name only after the deed has been done and she has already sullied herself with her own crime. Therefore, the mention of Iphigenia cannot affect her as it might affect a more innocent party. Iphigenia becomes synonymous with the Curse of Atreus, embodying every transgression of decency and religious law that has led the bloodline to their current tragedy—a violation of religious ritual through Agamemnon's false betrothal of Iphigenia to Achilles, a physical representation of Agamemnon's impiety and hubris, and most poignantly, a victim of filicide.

The taboo of Iphigenia's name and the crimes associated with her is furthered by

10 Aesch. *Ag.* 1415-20.

11 Aesch. *Ag.* 248-9.

12 Aesch, *Ag*. 195-205.

13 Aeschylus, "The Libation Bearers" in *Oresteia,* trans. Peter Meineck, and ed. Helene P. Foley, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998). Lines 269-75.

14 Aesch. *Ag.* 1524-1526.

who mentions her and who does not. Agamemnon does not reference his daughter once, either through his familial relation to her or by her name itself. It is as if he is willfully ignoring her existence and the associated crimes he has committed. Clytemnestra, who has already polluted herself, mentions Iphigenia in order to justify her lesser crime with a greater one. The chorus refers to Iphigenia exclusively as the daughter of Agamemnon, serving as a reminder to the audience that while Agamemnon may not mention his relation to the daughter he slew, those observing, be they mortal or divine, have not forgotten. After being used by her mother to justify the death of Agamemnon, Iphigenia is not mentioned by name again. While the deaths of Agamemnon and Clytemnestra are consistently referred to, the victim whose murder conspicuously sets this spiral of tragedy into motion is only referred to once in the following plays, in Electra's first conversation to Orestes where she refers to Iphigenia as "sister,"[15] not by her name. Thus, Electra and the chorus seek to protect themselves — and by extension the audience — from the *miasma* of Iphigenia's murder, while reminding the audience of the true nature of Agamemnon's crime.

Aeschylus' Agamemnon and Establishing Degrees of Violence

Occurring much closer to the audience than the death of Iphigenia, Agamemnon's murder is rife with references to health and sickness, cleanliness and pollution. The first metaphors occur in Cassandra's premonitions of Agamemnon's death: prior to the announcement of the murder, she states, "What huge horror lurks in the House? What evil plotting? / The family cannot bear it, there is no cure."[16] The use of the word 'cure' once again likens death to a sickness from which the audience must be separated and protected. In witnessing the murder of Agamemnon in her prophetic visions, the pollution of the death stains Cassandra, contributing to her tragic outcome. This reinforces the interpretation that witnessing the physical act of murder or death stains the viewer, and thus the audience must be spared the sight of the murder in order to remain unpolluted. Since death is never outright portrayed for the audience to view, Aeschylus uses Cassandra to exposit the descriptions he feels are necessary for the audience to visualize. Namely, she describes the image of Agamemnon dying in the bath, a place of cleanliness. Given the importance of bathing in the Hellenic rituals of hospitality, Clytemnestra's slaughter of Agamemnon while he bathes is a pollution or infection of not just the family and the household, but of the sacred laws set forth by Zeus.

15 Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*, 242.

16 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon,* 1101-3.

Although the physical act of Agamemnon's death is not portrayed onstage, the chorus and the audience are still exposed to the crime to a greater extent than Iphigenia's censored death. Agamemnon narrates his own demise from the wings, throwing the chorus into chaos where they had once spoken in unison. This descent into disarray aligns with the role ritual has in Greek society — purity and order gained through properly administered rituals are the desirable cures to chaos and pollution. Agamemnon's death transgresses ritual order by polluting a place of both physical and spiritual cleanliness, and violating not only rituals of hospitality but disrupting how an *oikos* and a kingdom are run. Clytemnestra may not be polluted by slaughtering a blood relation, but she corrupts the order of the kingdom by murdering its king and taking control of the land and the order of her household by murdering her husband and taking his role as head of the house.

Clytemnestra's crime, though not an act of kin-killing through blood, is still a drastic upheaval of the natural order within the *oikos* and the kingdom — she has slain both her king and her husband, the two figures with the utmost authority in her life. Cassandra's death is almost secondary to this crime; the chorus laments only Agamemnon's death, and Cassandra herself claims that Orestes will "exact vengeance. He will kill his mother and avenge his murdered father,"[17] making no mention of herself and her own lack of vengeance despite objectively being the more innocent of the two victims. Orestes exacts his revenge on his mother at the gods' behest, not just for her acts as murderess, but for slaying the rightful authority figure in her life and therefore transgressing the divine hierarchy of power. The references to Agamemnon as "godlike," while Clytemnestra is referred to as "godless," support this claim. Clytemnestra, a woman, has taken the role of the authority figure from its rightful heir through murder, thus extending her pollution to the members of her household and across the kingdom of Mycenae itself. The physical and verbal reactions to Agamemnon's death often mention the disorder of the land or the house, such as when the chorus laments "There is no sun, only hateful gloom, / desolate darkness envelops the House, / where a master was brutally killed."[18] This casts a shadow over not just Clytemnestra, but the entire household and land she has unjustly taken from her husband.

Although the death itself occurs offstage, Agamemnon's body, along with the body of Cassandra, is shown onstage, albeit shrouded. This once again references the degrees of pollution Aeschylus introduces through his writing and stagecraft. Covering the bodies of the dead with a funeral shroud was a vital part of the An-

17 Aesch. *Ag.* 1280-2.

18 Aesch. *Libation Bearers*, 51-3.

cient Grecian funeral rites, a ritual performed by women such as Clytemnestra,[19] who is the one presiding over the body and is therefore implied to be the one who has laid the shroud. Even though it is later shown that Clytemnestra neglects the grave of Agamemnon, only sending libations when she is tormented with nightmares,[20] Aeschylus utilizes religious ritual to allude that in treating the dead with proper respect and ritual, the bodies themselves are now no longer pollutive and can be safely viewed by the audience.

The Libation Bearers and the Necessity of Pollution

Like *Agamemnon, The Libation Bearers* continues the theme of violent death as an infectious plague. From the outset of the play, the chorus reminds the audience of the imagery of sickness by stating "Nurturing Earth has drunk too much blood, / the gore of vengeance congeals, it will not drain away. / Agonizing ruin infects the guilty, / sickened by devastating suffering."[21] The imagery of cleanliness being violated is also evoked when the chorus states "Nothing can remedy the virgin's defilement, not / even all the rivers of the earth, flowing / together in one great torrent, could cleanse / the stain of murder from tainted, bloody hands."[22] Just like the preceding deaths of Agamemnon and Cassandra, the deaths of Clytemnestra and Aegisthus are not shown, but their bodies are displayed under the shroud of Agamemnon. However, unlike the shroud's last appearance where it is implied that Clytemnestra had laid the cloth over the corpses, this time it is Orestes who stands alone over the shrouded bodies. This suggests that Orestes was the one to lay the shroud. Given that Orestes is a man and funeral rites are meant to be performed by women, this staging decision may add another aspect to the Furies' avid pursuit of Orestes: the hunt is not simply for the act of matricide and retributive justice, but for further transgressing the rituals of death and potentially jeopardizing the purity of the innocent audience.

Like the death of Iphigenia, Orestes' pollutive acts are complicated by the divine motives behind them. Orestes acts with divine order and justice on his side, vindicated by the blessing of Apollo and the reclamation of his birthright. However, the death of Iphigenia has shown that divine influence does not remove the stain of kin-killing completely. Orestes is aware of the consequences of his actions:

19 Michael Gagarin, Elaine Fantham, and Peter Toohey, "Death and Burial in the Ancient World," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome, vol. 1* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 363-368.

20 Aesch. *The Libation Bearers*, 44-50.

21 Aesch. *Libation Bearers*, 66-9.

22 Aesch. *Libation Bearers,* 70-3.

he states in the plotting with his sister Electra that "by the will of these hands. / I will do away with her, then I can die,"[23] fully understanding the harsh nature of his punishment. Orestes is joined by Electra and his companion Pylades in the ferocity of his self-justification, calling upon the gods to help him strike down his mother and bring order to the House once more. But in stark contrast to his vengeful fervour, he also shows fear and abhorrence of his own deed, asking Pylades the quintessential question: "How can I kill my own mother?"[24] Pylades' response puts the past conflict between obeisance to the gods and moral allegiance to spiritual purity into simple terms, stating, "Better to be hated by every man on earth than hated by the gods."[25]

This exchange troubles the conceptions of Iphigenia's death, and the pollutive nature of kin-killing in its conflict against the demands of divinity. In *Agamemnon,* Clytemnestra dedicates her vengeance to her daughter; she is clearly consumed by her grief, which drives her to commit crimes against nature and the gods for what she believes is retribution for the ultimate act of pollutive bloodshed. However, if Pylades' assessments are correct, Clytemnestra has no justification, divine or otherwise, for her deeds — the slaying of Iphigenia was demanded by the gods, and therefore Agamemnon was equally blameless. Just as with the dilemma itself, Aeschylus' textual elements and staging collide: Orestes' justification is hollowed when he murders his mother without the physical presence of the divine — in words, he has the support of Apollo, but on stage, he stands alone over his mother's shrouded body, the sole polluted perpetrator. It is not until long after the murders have been committed and Orestes is driven from the homeland he was meant to reclaim that any divinity appears on stage and speaks in his defence.

The Eumenides and Divine Presence

Although the allusions to illness are less explicit in the third play, *The Eumenides,* the appearance of the god Apollo continues to uphold this theme. As the god of medicine and plague, Apollo's role as a protector of Orestes adds to the interpretation of death's pollution as something akin to disease. In one scene of the play, Apollo engages in an onstage argument with the Furies,[26] a physical representation of the battle between the plague of deadly retributive justice and the cure

23 Aeschylus, *The Libation Bearers*, 436-7.

24 Aesch. *Libation Bearers,* 899.

25 Aesch, *Libation Bearers,* 901.

26 Aeschylus, "The Furies" in *Oresteia,* trans. Peter Meineck, and ed. Helene P. Foley, (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company, Inc., 1998). Lines 179-235.

of divine forgiveness and authority. Breaking farther from the format of the last two plays, *The Eumenides* is the only play to not have a death offstage or a body displayed, and the only play in which divine figures appear onstage with speaking lines. This furthers the notion that the cure to death's pollution is proper divine authority and order, whether literal as in the appearance of Athena and Apollo, or through the proper performance of funeral rites.

The physical presence of the divine in the only play of the trilogy to not contain a murder is seemingly a conscious choice on the part of Aeschylus, where once there had been a distinct lack of any divine presence that many characters use to justify their pollutive acts. Where the mortal audience experiences the moral revulsion and quarantined sicknesses of the displayed bodies, the gods cannot share the same stage, nor even the same play, with the pollutive acts and their immediate aftermath. Death is inherently antithetical to divinity — the immortal gods cannot die, and so death is an affront to their way of being.[27] The *miasma* of death is not permitted within temples or religious sanctuaries since it is repugnant to the gods. Despite the underrunning divine justifications of the previous plays, Orestes himself is not seen with the gods, nor does he enter a temple or religious sanctuary until after he has been cleansed by his uncle Menelaus. It is only once his crimes have been washed away by the authority of a king that the gods themselves appear at his side, rather than being mentioned as passing rationalization.

The presence or absence of Apollo onstage is particularly poignant given the role he has played throughout the plot, despite only physically appearing in one play of the trilogy. Athena's physical presence is consistent with her role as patron of Athens and arbiter of law, but Apollo's divine authority has nothing explicitly to do with mortal law. The pollution within the House of Atreus was present even before the plays' inception — Apollo's role as god of plague and medicine gives meaning to why he is the patron of Orestes, who suffers under the weight of his diseased bloodline. However, before the Furies begin pursuing Orestes, the disease is man-made; disregarding the outlier of Iphigenia's death, the murders of the House of Atreus are the doings of mortal men as acts of mortal revenge. Thus, Apollo seems not to concern himself with physically appearing in the midst of a mortal conflict, but rather designates an actor as morally justified through narration. It is not until the Furies themselves appear onstage as a divine symbol of the disease that Apollo finally appears in defence of Orestes. In this staging decision, Aeschylus makes the statement that in the face of divine retribution, only the appearance of a divinity can protect the actors, and by extension the audience.

27 Parker, *Miasma*, 35.

Conclusion

Aeschylus meticulously weaves the themes and religious ideals of his plays into the physical portrayal of his works. From the gods whose images are portrayed onstage to the deaths which are hidden in the wings, the choices of the plays' characters and stage directions make it clear that violent death should not be witnessed or even spoken about. By "quarantining" the bodies of the dead from the audience's sight and placing great emphasis on the proper use of ritual, tradition, and order to purify oneself, Aeschylus seeks to protect his audience from the *miasma* of Orestes' ordeals.

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A Fool To Use: Piso and the Death of Germanicus

Anna Hurnanen
First Year Feature

Abstract
Tiberius' heir, Germanicus, died five years into his reign. Previous scholarship has focused primarily on whether or not Germanicus was actually poisoned by Piso, as the sources claim, or if he simply fell ill. This paper will elaborate on the potential involvement of Livia and Plancina in the death of Germanicus. Using a deep reading of Tacitus' *Annals*, with support from Seutonius' *De Vita Caesarum* and the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre*, this paper will discuss Livia and Plancina's actions in relation to Germanicus' death. It is plausible that Livia conspired with Plancina to remove Germanicus, so that her own grandson would become Tiberius' heir. Plancina, who was in the east with Piso, had the opportunity to poison Germanicus, as well as make it appear as though Piso were the one at fault. This paper will provide a new perspective through which to consider the death of Germanicus.

Five years into his reign, Tiberius' heir Germanicus died under suspicious circumstances. Only one of the accused conspirators was punished in the following trial, Gnaeus Calpurnius Piso, and he might not have even been involved. Piso and his wife, Munatia Plancina, moved to Syria when Piso was appointed governor of Syria by Tiberius in 18 CE. While there, they maintained a hostile relationship with Germanicus Julius Caesar and his wife, Agrippina the Elder. Germanicus had been given command in the Roman East in 17 CE, and had been travelling through the eastern provinces. Germanicus then died in 19 CE, accusing Piso and Plancina of poisoning him. Piso and Plancina were both placed on trial in 20 CE for the murder of Germanicus, but Plancina was acquitted and distanced herself from Piso, who then supposedly died by suicide.[1] This essay will argue that Livia Drusilla conspired with Plancina to have Germanicus killed in order to secure the legacy of her own bloodline, while using Piso to take the blame. Both Livia and Tiberius had reason to want Germanicus dead, as he posed a threat to their power. Plancina, who was a close friend of Livia's, had the opportunity to poison Germanicus when she moved to the east with her husband. Piso had a history of

1 Tacitus, *Annales* 3.15

insubordination and lack of respect for the Imperial family, making him an ideal candidate to be framed for Germanicus' death.

In regard to the sources, both Tacitus' *Annals* and Seutonius' *Lives of the Caesars* were written about a hundred years after the events of Germanicus' death. Seutonius is known to have presented rumours in the same way as he did historical facts, so his accounts are not entirely accurate. While acknowledging that, his writing does provide insight into the reception of Germanicus' death to the Roman public. The *Annals*, the main source of evidence on Germanicus' death, provides more factual details. It corresponds with the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre,* the documents from Piso's trial, which were contemporary to the events that occurred. As it was written during Tiberius' reign, the *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre* presents Tiberius positively, while Tacitus' account is deeply critical of Tiberius. The bias evident in these sources demonstrates the reach of Tiberius' influence.

Tiberius viewed Germanicus as a threat to his power and behaved accordingly. Augustus had appointed Tiberius as his heir, with the stipulation that Tiberius adopt Germanicus as his heir to ensure that there would be a smooth transition of power for the next two generations. Augustus, however, did not anticipate Germanicus' popularity with the Roman military and public, which surpassed the favour the people held toward Tiberius, thus creating a challenge for Tiberius in claiming his position as emperor. When Augustus died, the legions rejected Tiberius, wanting instead to have Germanicus in power.[2] Had Germanicus not reminded them that their allegiance was to Rome rather than him, Tiberius may have never been emperor.[3] Tiberius, aware of the public's preference for Germanicus, sent him away from Rome to settle disputes occurring in the eastern territories.[4] Tiberius belittled Germanicus' accomplishments, "[making] light of his most illustrious deeds as insubstantial and [criticising] his most glorious victories as crippling to the state."[5] Augustus had bolstered the reputation of his potential heirs while he was still alive, so that the succession of power would be accepted by the public. Tiberius should have been establishing his heir's reputation in a similar manner, but instead tried to decrease Germanicus' influence. Tiberius' actions demonstrate both an awareness and concern for the threat Germanicus posed, a threat which he unsuccessfully attempted to resolve with verbal counter measures.

Livia similarly viewed Germanicus as a threat to her position. As the widow of

2 Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum* 4.1

3 Suet., *Caesarum*, 4.1

4 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.43

5 Suet., *Caesarum*, 3.52

Augustus and mother of the current emperor, she was a highly influential figure in Roman administration. Her grandson, Drusus Julius Caesar (d. 23 CE), would have been Tiberius' heir if not for Germanicus. She would have been able to claim another emperor as her descendant and maintain her position within the Imperial family. Tacitus makes reference to the friendship between Livia and Plancina, stating that "Augusta, prompted by female jealousy, certainly advised Plancina to persecute Agrippina."[6] Plancina's relocation to Syria put her in close proximity to Germanicus, providing her with the opportunity to poison him. During the trial following Germanicus' death, Livia protected Plancina by pressuring Tiberius into having her acquitted, suggesting an alliance between the two.[7] While the Senate framed the acquittal in a positive light: "the very great devotion of our princeps to his mother should be supported and indulged; and that the punishment of Plancina be remitted," the public did not agree with Tiberius' actions.[8] Tacitus wrote of the response to Livia's aid that "it was morally acceptable, then, for a grandmother to look her grandson's killer in the face, they said, and to talk to her and rescue her from the hands of the Senate."[9] It was important enough to Livia to have Plancina acquitted that she chose to risk angering the public. It was not until 33 CE, when the death of Agrippina the Elder dredged up memories of Plancina, that Tiberius had her once again put on trial for the murder of Germanicus. Livia, who had died in 29 CE, was no longer there to protect her, and so Plancina took her own life instead of being prosecuted.[10]

Piso did not hold the same Imperial favour as his wife. He was considered a poor choice of governor; he had a reputation for insubordination and looked down on Tiberius' children as his inferiors.[11] Piso believed that he was sent to the east in order to sabotage Germanicus.[12] To instigate his plan, Piso stopped in Athens on their journey east and made a speech disparaging the citizens, while simultaneously criticising Germanicus for his kind treatment of them.[13] He then continued on his travels and overtook Germanicus at Rhodes.[14] Piso's ship was caught in a storm shortly after, and Germanicus saved him from crashing into rocks.[15] Despite being rescued by Germanicus, Piso was quick to leave him behind and carry on

6 Tacitus, *Annales,* 2.43

7 Tac., *Ann.*, 3.15

8 *Senatus Consultum de Cn. Pisone Patre,* 115-120

9 Tacitus, *Annales*, 3.17

10 Tac., *Ann.,* 6.26

11 Tac., *Ann.*, 2.43

12 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.43

13 Tac.,*Ann.,* 2.55

14 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

15 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

to Syria.[16] Once there, he used corrupt means such as bribery to gain the loyalty of the legions.[17]

Tacitus, when describing Piso, stated that "there [was] also the noble station and wealth of his wife Plancina to fire his spirit," suggesting that Piso's power came predominantly from Plancina.[18] In Syria, she established a position of power for herself, and gained support independently of Piso. Defying the rules of propriety, Plancina maintained a presence on the training ground, where she would publicly insult Germanicus and Agrippina.[19] The soldiers were willing to comply because there was a rumour that what was happening did not go against Tiberius' wishes.[20] She was also said to have had a friendship with a woman named Martina, who was known for her poisonings.[21] Despite the evidence against her, Plancina was quickly pardoned during the trial following Germanicus' death. Even though they were close friends, Livia's protection of her is suspicious, as it placed her own reputation at risk as well. This demonstrates that the Imperial connection to Germanicus' death would have had to have been through Plancina, not Piso.

Germanicus was aware of what Piso and Plancina were doing, but he had more pressing issues with Armenia, regarding the change in rulers, to address first.[22] Upon his return from checking up on the status of Rome's eastern allies, Germanicus found that Piso had been ignoring his commands to lead part of the legions into Armenia.[23] Germanicus, who tended toward clemency, set aside his frustrations with Piso, even as Piso's offences continually increased.[24] Piso rarely attended Germanicus' tribunals, and on the occasions that he did, he always made his opposition clear.[25] It was not until after Germanicus' trip to Egypt, from which Germanicus returned to find that the orders he had left for the legions and cities had all either been cancelled or reversed, that he finally engaged with Piso.[26] Germanicus' reproaches of Piso were met with equal fervour, and Piso ultimately decided to leave Syria. He was forced to remain, however, after the former un-

16 Tacitus, *Annales,* 2.55

17 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

18 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.43

19 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

20 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

21 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.74

22 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.55

23 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.57

24 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.57

25 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.57

26 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.69

expectedly fell ill.[27]

The cause of Germanicus' sudden illness is not known for certain, but he firmly believed that he was poisoned.[28] He stated to his friends that "[he had] been cut down by the criminal act of Piso and Plancina."[29] While he was ill, Germanicus received reports of Piso attempting to gain sole control over the province and its legions.[30] Germanicus, frustrated with his weak state, was troubled that "the prizes of murder [were] going to remain in his killer's hands."[31] He thus wrote to Piso to renounce their friendship and demand that he leaves Syria, and with that, Piso finally set sail.[32]

After Germanicus' death, Piso returned to Syria in an attempt to reclaim the province using military force.[33] He recruited deserters from the Roman legions to fight for him.[34] When that failed, he headed to Rome to clear his name, only to find that he had little support.[35] Not only was he on trial for the murder of Germanicus, but also for the corruption of soldiers, insulting the commander, and leaving the province undefended.[36] Plancina stated that she would stay by Piso's side, no matter the outcome of the trial.[37] However, once she had secured her own pardon "she began, little by little, to separate her defence from his. The defendant realised that this spelled his end, and wondered whether to continue his efforts."[38] Piso's influence came from Plancina, and by leaving him to his own defence, she essentially sentenced him herself. Her pardon, given to her by Tiberius at Livia's insistence, demonstrates the influence she held within the Imperial family.[39]

The public was still in outrage over Germanicus' death, going as far as carving "give us back Germanicus" into walls across Rome.[40] The punishment of Piso provided a sort of compensation for the death of Germanicus. Piso was found

27 Tacitus, *Annales.*, 2.69

28 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.69

29 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.71

30 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.70

31 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.70

32 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.70

33 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.81

34 Tac., *Ann.,* 2.78

35 Tac., *Ann.,* 3.11

36 Tac., *Ann.,* 3.14

37 Tac., *Ann.,* 3.15

38 Tac., *Ann.,* 3.15

39 Tac., *Ann.,* 3.15

40 Suetonius, *De Vita Caesarum* 3.52

dead after the second day of his defence, either from murder or suicide.[41] Regardless of how he died, his death supplied closure for the death of Germanicus. Piso faced the consequences of the accusations, while Plancina was able to walk away from the trial. Germanicus' death removed a threat to Tiberius, and moved Drusus into position to become the next emperor. Livia and Plancina had worked together in order to remove Germanicus, and Piso was simply a tool to use in their scheme. Women in Rome may not have officially been given political power, but they were more than capable of using their influence to manipulate a situation into their favour.

41 Tacitus, *Annales,* 3.16

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Ben Pennell is a third-year student at University College, pursuing the unique degree combination of Planetary Science and Classical Civilization. He has done research throughout the entirety of his undergraduate studies. This research has been in the fields of Physical Chemistry and Galactic Astronomy. In addition to scientific pursuits, he has an interest in the ancient world. He has a particular interest in the character and reception of ancient rulers, in addition to the analysis of the ancient sources that describe them. In 2022, he joined the DETEXTUS project under the supervision of Niek Janssen.

Izzy Friesen is a third-year student at Victoria College and a self-described "Latin enjoyer". They are majoring in Classics (Greek and Latin), Classical Civilization, and additionally pursuing a minor in Science, Technology, and Society. Izzy is particularly interested in Latin literature — especially when it's late! — and its reception, as well as people's relationships to the environment in antiquity. When they aren't poring over Lewis and Short, Izzy enjoys long walks around Toronto, hanging out with their dog Sadie, and the Globe and Mail's cryptic crosswords.

Jevan Konyar is a second-year student at Victoria College in the departments of Near and Middle Eastern Civilization and the History and Philosophy of Science and Technology. He currently works with a number of publications and presented at the Undergraduate Research Conference earlier this year.

Laura Li is a fourth-year University College student studying Criminology, Classical Civilizations, and Ancient Greek. She is an avid fan of Greek poetry with a particular soft spot for Mimnermus and the epigrams of Callimachus. She is also fascinated by the study of Classical philology and aspires to combine it with her interests in ancient literature. Outside of Classics, Laura loves skiing in the winter and hiking when the snow melts. She plans to one day use these both as excuses to travel the world and climb as many mountains as she can.

Piper Hays is a second-year at Victoria College, double-majoring in History and Classical Civilizations and hoping to study the reception and appropriation of classics in 20th century Europe. Her Classics-centric research interests also include marginal identities in Greece and Rome, the politics and storytelling of Greek drama, whatever Alcibiades was doing between 415 and 404 BCE, and trying and failing to learn Latin despite being an obvious Hellenist.

Anna Hurnanen is a first-year Innis College student studying Classics and Classical Civilization. Her main academic interests lie within the Roman Imperial Period, back when upper class Romans would spend their days plotting, poisoning, and writing down all the drama in vivid detail. She aspires to learn Latin if only to be able to understand the Roman sense of humour.

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