Plebeian

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Contents

Part of the Community: Homosociality in *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Metamorphoses* 12 1
Tallulah Valliere-Paul

Great and Essential: An Analysis of the Intention Behind Emperor Claudius' Monumental Drainage of the Fucine Lake 11
John Weachter

Hot Gates and Iron Curtains: Nationalism and the Reception of Thermopylae in American Film 21
Piper Hays

Powerless Protagonists: The *Servus Callidus* in Roman Comedy 35
Kate Levey

Reevaluating the Impact of the Antonine Plague on Army Mortality in the Roman Empire 47
Kamyar Jumabhoy

Taking the Piss: The Coinage of Pisistratus 59
Anoushka Banerjie

A Mascot For What You've Become: Antinous and the Iconography of Queer Grief 71
Elisa Kogan Penha

Editor's Note

In a field such as ours, spanning centuries of culture and history, ten years can come and go in the blink of an eye. However, I believe that the ability to stop and consider the longevity of a decade is a great gift. Ten years of undergraduate scholarship is no small feat, and it is a testament to the ambition and curiosity of the Classics undergraduate student body that our beloved *Plebeian* continues to thrive.

In our tenth issue, we are returning to our roots: we are the plebeians, the *hoi polloi*, the assembly, all terms which we are proud to claim as our own. Not the nameless mass one might see when looking down from above, but a foundational community as seen from within. Our papers this year are dedicated to investigating the undersung and undervalued, a feeling every undergraduate has experienced at some point in their careers. As we proudly display the fruits of our labours, we are reminded of the community which raised us up to these heights and to which we still belong.

I have had the immense fortune to be Editor-In-Chief for a second time this year, in the face of this momentous occasion. It will undoubtedly be one of the highlights of my undergraduate career to have watched the journal grow, and to help facilitate the academic careers of such talented editors and authors. I am incredibly grateful for the opportunity to have led such a wonderful team in such a supportive community, and there are no bounds to my excitement looking forward as a new Editor-in-Chief takes the reins and continues to innovate, explore, and amend *Plebeian* as the years progress.

It is impossible to overstate the gratitude I have for my Deputy Editor-in-Chief, Emily Hart, and my Head Associate Editor, Tallulah Valliere-Paul, with whom I have spent many a night planning, scrambling, and screaming into the uncaring void. They are the pedestal on which *Plebeian* rests, and should rest on their laurels accordingly. Thanks is also due to the Department of Classics, whose support has been invaluable in all respects, and to the editors and authors who have put their heart and soul into this publication.

And of course, to our beloved readers, without whom *Plebeian* would have never seen two issues, let alone ten: thank you, from the bottom of my heart. Here's to ten more issues and at least one inscribed stone tablet (for posterity).

Piper Hays, *Editor-in-Chief*

Part of the Community: Homosociality in *Thesmophoriazusae* and *Metamorphoses* 12

Tallulah Valliere-Paul

Abstract
Both ancient authors and modern scholars of antiquity are highly interested in gender. However, the study of classical subjects subverting gender norms is still in its infancy. Most scholarship holds that the Ancient Greeks and Romans conceived of gender in bio-essentialist terms: they directly correlated gender with one's sexual organs. This essay focuses on two case studies, Aristophanes' *Thesmophoriazusae* and Book 12 of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, and how they portray community as central to gender. It argues that, although these texts are from different genres and were produced by different societies, both view gender as fundamentally social. Specifically, they depict acceptance into same-gender spaces as more indicative of a person's gender than their genitalia. Incorporating modern gender studies scholarship into my analysis of Aristophanes, this paper examines different characters' performances of femininity and their successes and failures at integrating into the female social sphere. Then, turning to Ovid, it looks at how Caeneus' hyper-masculine feats in battle earn him acceptance from the heroes at Troy, thus affirming his gender. By shifting the focus away from genitalia and towards homosocial acceptance, I hope that this essay provides a route for further discussion of trans-analogous experiences in antiquity.

Gender is a central topic of fascination in many classical texts. For societies with such rigid and bio-essentialist gender binaries, the Ancient Greeks and Romans loved exploring the blurring and crossing of boundaries in their gender systems. Filippo Carlà-Uhink argues that, to an ancient subject, crossing such a narrowly defined and carefully monitored binary implies a "superhuman" ability. This explains why so many proto-trans[1] characters are found in myth — their stories require an interaction with the divine.[2] Other figures can be found

1 I will avoid using modern trans terminology to describe these characters, as I do not wish to project contemporary conceptions of gender onto the ancient world. My use of 'proto-trans' rather than 'proto-transgender' is a deliberate one — where the word 'trans' implies a movement across a binary, certainly applicable here, the definition of 'gender' has changed significantly over time.

2 Filippo Carlà-Uhink, "Between the Human and the Divine: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the

in comedy, due to the genre's ability to push boundaries and use humour to get away with undermining societal norms. In this paper, I will look at two texts: Aristophanes' comedy *Thesmophoriazusae*, and the Caenis/Caeneus episode in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* 12. Though these two texts come from different genres and societies, one being Greek and the other Roman, they share key elements. Both Aristophanes and Ovid demonstrate, through the characters of Cleisthenes and Caeneus respectively, that integration into homosocial[3] spaces is the main determinant of gender, implying an internality and social aspect to gender that goes beyond a character's body and external presentation. In a play full of failed performances of gender, Cleisthenes is the only character successful in crossing between gendered realms due to his[4] truthfulness and kinship with the women at the Thesmophoria. Caeneus' successful performance of masculinity, conveyed through both his actions and Ovid's use of the epic genre, prove his manhood by granting him acceptance into male homosocial spaces.

Gender Performance and Female Homosociality in *Thesmophoriazusae*

Thesmophoriazusae is all about performance, and its drag[5] draws attention to the constructed nature of the gender binary in Athens. The play contains many layers of cross-dressing — with regards to both gender and genre, in-play and metatheatrical —, some more successful than others. It will thus be productive to incorporate the work of gender studies scholar and queer theorist Judith Butler into our study. Butler views gender as a constructed and performed identity, and argues that "in imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself."[6] In other words, by including drag in his theatrical performance, Aristophanes highlights the performative nature of Athenian gender. The metatheatrical layer to the play's cross-dressing, stemming from the fact that all roles are played by men, further destabilizes the gender binary.[7] The audience sees Mica as a man playing a woman who attempts to perform a feminine ideal of motherhood — and fails, as her "baby" is revealed to be a wineskin.[8] This

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Graeco-Roman World," in *TransAntiquity: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2019), 15.

3 The word 'homosocial' refers to interactions between people of the same gender, or within a same gendered community, that are not specifically sexual and/or romantic in nature.

4 Throughout this essay, I shall refer to characters with the same gender of pronouns that the primary texts use.

5 The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines drag as, "(typically glamorous or outrageous and stereotypically gendered) costumes, make-up, etc., worn by a performer who adopts a flamboyant, exaggerated, or parodic feminine or…masculine persona."

6 Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York, NY: Routledge, 1989): 175.

7 Isabel Ruffell, "Poetics, Perversions, and Passing: Approaching the Transgender Narratives of Thesmophoriazousai," *Illinois Classical Studies* 45, no. 2 (2020): 357.

8 Of course, in failing to perform motherhood, Mica is revealed to fall into another feminine stereotype: that of

contrasts with Mnesilochus, a man playing a man, who similarly tries and fails to perform a version of femininity. Though both are played by male actors, the audience is meant to perceive them differently. In doing so they are called upon to grapple with the absurdity of the gender binary and the inherent performance it entails.

While Agathon and Mnesilochus perform femininity in different ways, neither is able to successfully cross into the female homosocial space. Agathon's gender presentation involves a mixture of masculine and feminine elements, which unsettles Mnesilochus:

> What's a looking glass doing with a sword?
> And you yourself, child,
> if you're being raised as male, where's your cock,
> your trews, your Spartan boots?
> Oh, so you're a woman then?
> But where are your boobs?[9]

Agathon justifies his femininity by saying that in order to write plays about women, he must understand them,[10] yet he refuses to infiltrate the Thesmophoria because he fears the women would kill him for "intruding on their / nocturnal mysteries and / getting away with being a far more female Aphrodite."[11] He only imagines entering female homosocial spaces through deception, and his anxiety about outperforming the women in femininity reveals that he views interactions with women in hostile and competitive terms. His lack of knowledge about women is further emphasized by the incongruity of his outfit, as Isabel Ruffell points out. While Agathon "claims a full immersion into the *tropoi*[12] of women" and believes that he passes as one, Mnesilochus describes an outfit blending masculine and feminine elements.[13] This reveals limits to Agathon's understanding of women due to an incomplete immersion into feminine *tropoi* — namely, a lack of interaction with women, in female homosocial spaces or otherwise, seeing as he only interacts with men in the play.

Similarly, Mnesilochus' failure to integrate into the female homosocial realm

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overabundance and lack of self-control.

9 Aristophanes "Women at the Thesmophoria Festival," in *Aristophanes: The Complete Plays*, trans. Paul Roche (New York, NY: New American Library, 2005), 488-9.

10 Ar. *Thesm.* 489.

11 Ar. *Thesm.* 491.

12 For our purposes, we can translate this as 'ways of life.'

13 Ruffell, "Poetics, Perversions, and Passing," 342.

stems from a misunderstanding of women and reveals his true identity to those present at the Thesmophoria, creating the main conflict for the latter half of the play. In his speech to the women at the festival, Mnesilochus gives a cartoonish portrayal of a shameless and licentious woman, revealing a lack of knowledge about women that makes him a target of the assembly's suspicions. In order to judge if he belongs, Cleisthenes and the assembly question him, first by asking for the name of his husband and roommate,[14] then by quizzing him on the events of last year's Thesmophoria, with Critylla saying, "Leave her to me. I'll grill her well and proper about last year's festivities."[15] By asking about his ties to the community and his knowledge of the all-female event, they assess if Mnesilochus is a member of their homosocial space. As soon as he fails the test, Critylla switches to male pronouns: "Cleisthenes, quick, grab him. He's the man you want."[16] She views him as a man prior to finding his phallus, demonstrating the integral role that homosociality plays in gender construction.

Of all the characters in the play, Cleisthenes is the only one who successfully integrates into the female homosocial space, and he does so without attempting to pass.[17] In contrast to Agathon and Mnesilochus, Cleisthenes approaches the women on equal terms and is honest about who he is. He enters with the words, "Dear women, kindred in my way of life,"[18] displaying a sense of camaraderie with the women where Agathon saw competition. His use of the word *tropos* further contrasts Agathon; while Agathon claims to experience a woman's way of life, he performs femininity in a vacuum, whereas Cleisthenes' place in the female homosocial realm shows a true immersion into female *tropoi*. In the structural and thematic centre of the play,[19] Cleisthenes helps strip Mnesilochus, revealing his phallus and exposing him as an imposter in the female homosocial space. Enrico Medda explains his involvement by saying, "In Cleisthenes' eyes, in fact, [Mnesilochus] is an imposter two times over: towards the women, but also towards those who, like himself, have the right to wear feminine clothes."[20] While Cleisthenes has a phallus, his lived experiences and homosocial ties

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14 Ar. *Thesm.* 507.

15 Ar. *Thesm.* 508.

16 Ar. *Thesm.* 508.

17 i.e., To be perceived as female by the women at the festival.

18 Ar. *Thesm* trans. Dr. David Sutton "φίλαι γυναῖκες, ξυγγενεῖς τοὐμοῦ τρόπου." 574.

19 Florence Yoon, "The Mirrored Structure of Thesmophoriazusae: Hero, Plot, and Themes," *Phoenix* 73, no. 3-4 (2019): 264.

20 Enrico Medda, "'O Saffron Robe, to What Pass Have You Brought Me!' Cross-Dressing and Theatrical Illusion in Aristophanes' Thesmophoriazusae," in *TransAntiquity: Cross-Dressing and Transgender Dynamics in the Ancient World* (London: Routledge, Taylor & Francis Group, 2017), 143.

supersede his body's gendered status, granting him access to the Thesmophoria. In contrast, Mnesilochus' phallus only confirms his status as an imposter, which his lack of belonging in the female homosocial space previously revealed. Interestingly, as the only character successful in crossing between gendered realms, Cleisthenes seems the least concerned with his performance of gender. He doesn't attempt to pass as female, but his homosocial ties grant him access to the world of women. Cleisthenes' experience shows an interiority to gender that perhaps reveals some limitations to Butler's view of gender as primarily performative.

Genre and Male Homosociality in Ovid's Caeneus Episode

In *Metamorphoses* 12, Caeneus' successful performance of masculinity grants him access to male homosocial spaces, and this once again proves to be more integral to his gender than his phallus. J. L. Watson notes that, unusually, Ovid does not draw out his description of Caenis' transformation, nor does he describe the creation of the phallus, instead focusing on Caeneus' "deeper tone" of voice,[21] a "secondary characteristic" of sex. This de-emphasis of the phallus shows that Caeneus' masculinity is not primarily determined by bio-essentialist markers.[22] Rather, like Cleisthenes, his integration into homosocial spaces is what validates his gender.[23] He gains access to these spaces through an exemplary performance of gender: in a Roman system where an ability to penetrate others determines masculinity, Caeneus is an impenetrable warrior whose skill in combat allows him to penetrate others. When he is called a woman by an enemy centaur — a standard pre-battle taunt that takes on an additional layer when directed at a man born female[24] — Caeneus gives the most characteristically masculine response possible. Wordlessly, he "let[s] fly his spear and furrow[s] out / The centaur's flank where horse and man unite,"[25] penetrating the centaur in a spot that emphasizes his opponent's incomplete masculinity. Watson argues that this battle functions as a metaphorical rape scene, with Caeneus using his phallus-shaped weapon to violently pierce his enemies,[26] asserting his masculini-

21 Ovid, "Book XII," in *Metamorphoses*, trans. A. D. Melville (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 280.

22 J. L. Watson, "Reframing Iphis and Caeneus: Trans Narratives and Socio-Linguistic Gendering in Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Helios* 48, no. 2 (2021): 150-1.

23 Watson argues that Caeneus' actions, namely his penetration of opponents in war, are what affirms his gender. While I agree that the phallus is not the most determining factor of Caeneus' masculinity, I will argue that this martial penetration is important because it leads to homosocial acceptance.

24 Allison Keith, "Versions of Epic Masculinity in Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Ovidian Transformations* (1999): 237. This line also bears a striking resemblance to modern-day transphobic tactics of dead-naming and misgendering.

25 Ov. *Met.* 12, 288.

26 Watson, "Reframing Iphis and Caeneus," 164.

ty by doing unto others what Neptune once did to him. This forces the other centaurs to acknowledge Caeneus' gender, as Monychus' attempt to invalidate his masculinity quickly becomes confused: "Worsted by one — hardly a man! Yet man / He is and we — such feeble efforts — we / Are what he was!"[27] Because Caeneus has proven himself a successful penetrator, they are no longer able to misgender him, and their efforts to invalidate his masculinity end up undermining their own masculine status.

Ovid's use of the epic genre and parallels to the Trojan War further affirm Caeneus' masculinity by increasing his ties to the homosocial space of the Achaean heroes. Charlotte Northrop observes that while the story of Caenis' rape is told in the feminine-coded genre of *ehoie*-poetry, the Battle of the Lapiths and Centaurs transitions to the masculine epic genre, reinforcing Caeneus' transformation.[28] The sequence parallels the *Iliad* in genre as well as subject matter, as both conflicts begin at a wedding and break the rules of *xenia*, or ritual hospitality, by stealing a woman.[29] Caeneus himself shares similarities with Achilles, as they are both great warriors with feminine pasts, Caeneus because he was born female and Achilles because he initially avoided the war by cross-dressing on Skyros.[30] These associations provide Caeneus with a spot among the great heroes at Troy, connecting him to their heroic masculinity. Keith argues that Ovid structures *Metamorphoses* 12 around *virtus*, or 'heroic valour,' by beginning with a description of the personified *Fama*, a word which can refer to "the 'reputation, fame, glory, renown' that the epic hero gains from the display of his *[v]-irtus*."[31] *Fama*, depicted as the Achaean heroes' main motivation, thus requires manliness to obtain, as *virtus* stems from *vir*, or 'man.' Ovid plays with this linguistic connection when he uses the word *vires*, 'strength,' twice to describe the centaurs, including in Monychus' speech about being emasculated by Caeneus in combat: "What good's our giant size, / Our twofold strength?"[32] By standing alone against an army of centaurs, Caeneus proves that he has more strength, and thus more manhood, than them. He also obtains *fama* from this display of *virtus*, as evidenced by the fact that his story is recounted in a homosocial camp of Greek heroes.

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27 Ov. *Met.* 12, 289.

28 Charlotte Northrop, "Caeneus and Heroic (Trans)Masculinity in Ovid's Metamorphoses," *Arethusa* 53, no. 1 (Winter 2020): 31.

29 Keith, "Versions of Epic Masculinity in Ovid's Met," 234-5.

30 Northrop, "Caeneus and Heroic (Trans)Masculinity in Ovid's Met," 33. Northrop also argues that the two heroes meet similar effeminizing ends, however I find her argument that Caeneus dies a female death of suffocation to be a stretch, given the heroic coding of the sequence and the fact that it is the only way for the centaurs to defeat him.

31 Keith, "Versions of Epic Masculinity in Ovid's Met," 231.

32 Keith, "Versions of Epic Masculinity in Ovid's Met," 235-6; Ov. *Met* 12, 289.

Caeneus' archetypically male actions in combat, as well as his connections to the heroes of the Trojan War, cause these heroes to accept him into their homosocial group, thus validating his masculinity. All of the Achaean heroes refer to Caeneus with his male name and masculine gendered language, and Achilles prompts Nestor's story by saying:

> Let us hear
> (We all have the same wish) who Caeneus was,
> And why his change of sex, in what campaign,
> What battle-line you knew him, and by whom
> He was defeated, if he met defeat.[33]

As the greatest hero of the Trojan War, Achilles primarily shows interest in Caeneus' heroic feats in the male homosocial space of combat, only briefly mentioning his birth sex. This is reflected in the structure of Ovid's narrative, which briefly recounts Caeneus' transformation before giving a lengthy description of his heroic exploits in a generically epic fight sequence. The only characters who doubt Caeneus' gender are the centaurs, who are portrayed as "uncivilized" and improperly masculine — as half beasts, they are unable to exercise the Roman masculine ideal of self-control, getting drunk and attempting to rape another man's wife. The characters at Troy, who represent a heroic male ideal, view Caeneus as one of them because of his successful performance of masculinity. For Caeneus, integration into male homosocial spaces affirms his manhood, outweighing his past.

Comparison and Conclusions

While for Cleisthenes, integration into the female homosocial realm proves more important than his phallus, Caeneus' place in homosocial spaces affirms his phallus and proves more important than his past. The two characters achieve this integration in very different ways. In a play about the performance of gender, Cleisthenes appears to be the only character not performing. It is his openness and shared experiences that gains him access to the Thesmophoria. Conversely, it is Caeneus' successful performance of heroic masculinity that gains him *fama* and acceptance among the Achaeans. Despite these differences, both texts depict homosociality as the most vital element of a character's gender, reflecting a dimension of gender that goes deeper than a person's exterior, relying on lived experiences and community. While we do not see the process of Cleisthenes and Caeneus' integration into homosocial spaces, we see the powerfully gender-affirming result. These texts may be fictional, but fiction reflects and

33 Ov. *Met.* 12, 279.

offers commentary on real life. It also has the capacity to unlock possibilities for readers who may have seen themselves represented in these characters, even in a disparaging or mythical context. Traditional scholarship on the Greco-Roman world emphasizes the societies' bio-essentialist gender binaries, but by shifting our focus to homosocial integration, perhaps we can open up space to consider proto-trans narratives and experiences in the Ancient Mediterranean.

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Great and Essential: An Analysis of the Intention Behind Emperor Claudius' Monumental Drainage of the Fucine Lake

John Weachter

Abstract
Emperor Claudius' (r. 41-54 CE) attempt to drain the Fucine Lake was both one of the most ambitious undertakings of the Roman Empire and an infamous failure. This paper seeks to disprove the claim initially made by the engineer Alexandre Brisse in his *Desséchement du Lac Fucino* (1876) that the Emperor Claudius intended to only partially drain the lake. Brisse made his claims based on unsound religious speculation about the Italic Marsi people who lived on the lakeshore and on archaeological evidence that neither offered any concrete proof beyond estimation nor took into account the environmental change over the millennia. The paper seeks to prove based on the financial and agricultural motivations behind Claudius' great undertaking, the Roman understanding of disease, and the historical sources' distinctly and universally negative reaction to the project's failure that Emperor Claudius did intend to fully drain the Fucine Lake.

A mechanical silver Triton rises from the depths of the lake. With the sound of its horn, one of the largest staged sea battles of Roman history began.[1] The Emperor Claudius staged the fight in 52 CE to mark the inauguration of the largest construction project of antiquity. After eleven years of constant work by 30,000 men, the tunnel meant to drain the Fucine Lake was complete.[2] It would prove to be a failure.

The Fucine Lake,[3] once the third-largest lake in Italy, occupied an endorheic basin in the central Apennines directly east of Rome.[4] On its shores lived the Marsi people, a famously martial Italic tribe who led the Italian allies in the Social War

1 Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, trans. J.C. Rolfe (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), *Claud.* 21.6.

2 Suet. *Claud.* 20.2.

3 Also known as the Lago Fucino (Italian) and Lacus Fucinus (Latin).

4 Endorheic (literally from the Greek 'flowing in') basins have no outlet from which water can flow out. Examples include the Caspian Sea and the Great Salt Lake.

of the early first century BCE and were much admired by Julius Caesar.[5] The lake provided them with fresh water, fish, and fertile fields. However, because the lake lacked a natural outlet, the water level would fluctuate greatly depending on a season's precipitation, often and unpredictably flooding farms and homes. The constant risk led the Marsi to petition Rome to drain the lake. Julius Caesar intended to take up the task, but the plan died with his assassination.[6] Augustus, citing cost, refused to adopt his predecessor's plan.[7] It would take until Emperor Claudius, spurred by the prospect of reclaiming farmland for an Italy in the grips of famine and by the increased contributions of private investors, for the project to gain imperial blessing once again.

Despite the project's enormous cost, the draining would not succeed. Poor construction and neglect by Claudius' successors limited the tunnel's efficacy.[8] Although Hadrian made some improvements in the early second century CE, the tunnel was apparently abandoned and functionless by the time Cassius Dio described the project in the early third century.[9] The Fucine Lake returned to its natural state following the collapse of the Roman Empire. Eighteen centuries after Claudius, the Roman banker Prince Alessandro Torlonia took up the project in 1856, and after expending a similarly monumental cost, the lake was completely drained in 1876.[10]

A curious discrepancy exists between our ancient and modern sources. The ancient authors assumed that Claudius intended to fully drain the lake, and they consistently expressed their dismay with the project's failure.[11] However, when modern sources recount the event, they work under the assumption that the Romans only intended to drain the lake partially.[12] The root of this difference comes from the foundational modern source *Desséchement du Lac Fucino,* written

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5 Suet. *Iul.* 44.3; Cesare Letta, "The Marsi," in *The Peoples of Ancient Italy*, ed. Guy Bradley and Gary D. Farney (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 514.

6 Suet. *Iul*. 44.3.

7 Suet. *Claud*. 20.1.

8 Alexandre Brisse and Léon de Rotrou, *Desséchement du Lac Fucino, Exécuté par S.E. Le Prince Alexandre Torlonia,* trans. V. De Tivoli (Rome: The Propaganda-Press, 1876), 18; Pliny the Elder, *Naturalis Historia*, trans. Henry T. Riley (London: H.G. Bohn, 1855), 36.24.

9 Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, trans. Earnest Cary (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1914), 15.11.5.

10 Brisse, 1.

11 Tacitus, *Annals*, trans. J. Jackson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1925), 12.57.1; Plin. *HN.* 36.24; Cass. Dio 15.11.5.

12 Antonio Linoli, "The Fucino: The Draining of a Major Lake in the Second Half of the XIXth Century," in *Integrated land and Water Management in History,* trans. Ken Hurry (2005), 171. See for an example of a modern source following Brisse.

by the Engineer-in-Chief of the modern drainage project, Alexandre Brisse.[13] Modern sources must rely on Brisse's work for the archaeological records of the Claudian project as the modern tunnel destroyed the ancient remains.

In his remarkable work, Brisse claimed that based on his estimates of the silting rate of the basin, or how quickly erosion from the surrounding landscape fills the basin, the bottom of the lake would have been several metres below the entrance to the tunnel, thus proving that the Romans intended to only partially drain the lake.[14] He supported his hypothesis with cultural speculation concerning the Marsi and their religious practices. However, Brisse made his claim based on questionable estimations of potential silting and backed it with nonexistent cultural evidence. Considering Claudius' financial and agricultural motivations behind the draining, the Roman understanding of disease, and the attitudes of the ancient historians towards the project's difficulties and failure, the most likely conclusion is that Claudius intended to fully drain the Fucine Lake.

Brisse himself acknowledged that "it is impossible now to ascertain what the highest level of the bottom of the lake was in the time of Claudius."[15] Despite that impossibility, he hazarded a guess of the basin silting at a rate of 0.265 metres per century.[16] Thus, the basin floor would have been elevated by 4.77 metres over the course of eighteen centuries, putting the original level 1.207 metres lower than the entrance to the Roman tunnel.[17] To Brisse, "this fact is of the greatest importance in the history of the draining…because it proves that the Romans did not intend to drain the lake entirely."[18] To explain the choice to leave part of the lake undrained, Brisse claimed that the Marsi requested a part of the lake be preserved out of respect for the local lake god, Fucino, a claim that has no basis in any of the ancient accounts.[19]

For Claudius' tunnel to be at grade with the bottom of the lake, Brisse's estimation would have to be off by 1.207 metres or about twenty-five percent. A few factors could explain this difference. For one, the figures which Brisse relied upon were built on poor foundations. Additionally, the estimate failed to account for the environmental change over the centuries, as the landscape surrounding the Fucine Lake changed dramatically over the course of nearly two millennia.

13 Lit. '*Drying Out of the Fucine Lake.'*

14 Brisse, 17.

15 Brisse, 16-7.

16 Brisse, 10.

17 Brisse, 17. Figure found in correcting footnote at bottom of page.

18 Brisse, 17.

19 Brisse, 17-8.

Despite his assertion of the fact's importance, Brisse did not produce his own estimate of the silting rate, instead relying upon the estimate of Carlo Afan de Rivera, a preceding engineer who laid much of the groundwork for the modern drainage. In his work outlining a potential restoration of the Claudian tunnel, Afan de Rivera included estimates for the yearly water inflow into the Fucine basin.[20] He then estimated that the yearly inflow of earth and gravel into the lake would be four-thousandths of that figure, coming to 0.016 Neapolitan palms (≈0.00424 m).[21] Afan de Rivera never gave any particular reason for why he chose four-thousandths instead of any other division besides that he seemed to think it a reasonable number. He provided no data on depth levels, no archaeological strata records, no empirical evidence whatsoever on where the four-thousandths estimate may have come from. While it is not impossible that the silting rate be around this figure, neither Brisse nor de Rivera offer any evidence beyond instinct and conjecture. The opacity of its source and lack of any evidence should hinder it from being used as definitive proof of Roman intention.

In addition, Brisse himself noted that Afan de Rivera's figure may be an overestimate due to it applying evenly across eighteen centuries instead of taking into account changes in environmental conditions.[22] The forestation of the Apennine Mountains changed greatly over the centuries between Claudius and Brisse, and the single estimate of silting rate fails to adjust for these changes. Thanks to their height, the Apennine Mountains draw more moisture from the air than the lowlands and once hosted dense forests in antiquity, a fact alluded to in Homer, Hesiod, Pliny, and others.[23] Moreover, because of the demographic decline following the collapse of the Roman empire, forest vegetation increased in the centuries following.[24] It would not be until the seventeenth century that deforestation across the Apennine mountains took hold, leading to the barren land-

20 Carlo Afan de Rivera, *Progetto Della Restaurazione Dello Emisserio Di Claudio E Dello Scolo Del Fucino* (Naples: Stamperia e Carteria Del Fibreno), 16.

21 Afan, 16. Brisse takes this figure (multiplied by a hundred for a century estimate) as one Neapolitan palm (≈0.265 m) instead of 1.6 palms (≈0.424 m). The conversion of local pre-metric Italian units is not easy, particularly for Afan de Rivera's figure, which came four years before the standardization of the Neapolitan palm in 1840. This apparently lengthened the preceding unit, but I could not find a firm source on by how much. Perhaps Brisse adjusted for the lengthening; perhaps he pulled the number from memory instead of direct reference with Afan de Rivera's work.

22 Brisse, 10.

23 Ellen Churchill Semple, "Climactic and Geographic Influences on Ancient Mediterranean Forests and the Lumber Trade," in *Annals of the Association of American Geographers,* no. 9 (1919), 17-8. Semple gives examples of Hom. *Il.* XXIII.118-21, Hes. *Op*. II.203, Plin. *HN.* XVI.15-6, among others.

24 Matteo Garbarino et al., "Forest Dynamics and Disturbance Regimes in the Italian Apennines," in *Forest Ecology and Management*, no. 388 (2017), 60.

scape Afan de Rivera knew.[25] Afan de Rivera may have provided an estimate he considered reasonable for the time and landscape in which he lived, but that estimate based on deforested hills would differ greatly from an estimate based on the dense woods of the centuries intervening. This neglect of information could help explain the overestimation of basin silting.

As mentioned previously, Brisse did not rely solely on the silting estimate for his hypothesis that the Romans intended to drain the lake only partially. He suggested the Romans wished "to avoid giving offence to the superstitious prejudices of the [Marsi], who were, no doubt, most desirous that the god Fucino should be…deprived of the power of annoying his neighbors, but at the same time, they never would have consented to allow his domain to be quite dried up."[26] This could be a valid reason supporting a partial drainage. Deities associated with local water features such as rivers, springs, and lakes abound across ancient Italy.[27] However, multiple modern sources dealing explicitly with Marsi religion make no mention of worship of a god of the Fucinus.[28] Instead, the main focus of Marsi religion, besides gods found elsewhere in the Greco-Roman pantheon such as Hercules or Apollo, was a snake goddess associated with Medea and magic named Angitia.[29] While the god's omission from these texts certainly does not prove the Marsi never worshiped a god of the Fucine Lake, it seems inconsistent that a god mentioned neither in ancient literary accounts nor in the archaeological record nor in modern scholarship specifically focused on studying the Marsi religion halted the full draining of the lake.

An evaluation of the motivations behind the Claudian plan puts Brisse's hypothesis onto even shakier ground. Local and imperial factors influenced Claudius' decision to construct the tunnel in 41 CE. As stated previously, the lake represented a great danger locally to the Marsic population living on its shores. This came not just from the flooding itself but also from the malarial hazard the lake posed. On a wider, imperial scale, Claudius intended to reclaim the land under the lake for more agricultural land in order to both appease the investors in the project and lessen the risk and impact of intermittent famine striking Rome.

The Marsi had good reason to request the draining of the lake. Writing about the

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25 Garbarino, 61.

26 Brisse, 17.

27 Ingrid Eglund-Berry, "Hot, Cold, or Smelly: the Power of Sacred Water in Roman Religion, 400-100 BCE," in *Religion in Republican Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 162.

28 See Letta, di Fazio, and Ercole (source in works cited); all three focus on Marsi culture and religion without mention of the Fucino god.

29 Massimiliano di Fazio, "Religions of Ancient Italy," in *The Peoples of Ancient Italy* (Boston: De Gruyter, 2018), 166.

lake, the geographer Strabo reported that "at times its waters rise to the heights of the mountains which surround it."[30] While there might not be much literal truth to this anecdote, Strabo conjured a striking image of the threat the lake could pose. Any sudden increase in precipitation threatened to destroy the homes and livelihoods of the Marsi. But in this regard, either a partial drainage for controlling the water level or a full drainage would have addressed the Marsi's anxieties. However, further evaluation of the motivations for draining reveals that it was always intended to be drained fully.

However, the Fucine Lake threatened the Marsi biologically as well. Whenever the lake receded from the flooded Marsi fields, it left behind damp soil ideal for the propagation of malaria-carrying mosquitos.[31] Despite this, the ancient writers did not cite disease as a cause of the drainage. However, the Romans did have a thorough understanding of the connection between damp swampland and disease.[32] Agricultural writers such as Columella warned against building farms near low-lying marshes.[33] Varro even made the connection between small animals breeding in swamps and pestilent disease.[34] Ancient authors regarded projects attempting to rid Rome and Italy of dangerous swamplands, such as the draining of the swamp where the Roman forum now resides and the proposals to drain the Pontine Marshes, as worthy pursuits.[35] The Romans understood the dangers a shallow freshwater pool could pose, even if they did not fully understand the causes. Thus, it is highly unlikely that the Romans would have designed their drainage project in a way that would maximize the potential biological risk.

Of course, the Roman emperors did not act solely out of charity when deciding which projects to embark upon. While Caesar may have agreed to drain the lake out of his respect for the Marsi as allies in his legions, the enormous cost of the endeavor kept the next three rulers of the Roman state from attempting the project. Claudius' decision to drain the lake came from two changes in the cost-benefit analysis. The first, an offer from private parties to provide partial

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30 Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, trans. H.C. Hamilton and W. Falconer (London: George Bell & Sons, 1903), 5.3.13.

31 Robert Sallares, *Malaria and Rome: A History of Malaria in Ancient Italy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 71. Sallares cites a noticeable uptick in malaria cases occurring during the modern drying of the lakebed during the 1860s, which is an example of the effect.

32 Sallares, 56. It is worth noting that the Romans did not have a concept specifically of mosquito-bourne malaria, but rather a general view of the relationship between disease propagation and swampland.

33 Sallares, 61; Sallares cited Columella. *Rust.* 1.5.6.

34 Sallares, 60-1; Sallares cited Varro. *Rust.* 1.12.2.

35 Suet. *Iul.* 44.3-4.

or complete funding in exchange for the reclaimed land, reduced the cost.[36] The second, an increased risk of famine in the city of Rome, increased the potential benefit of draining. Both of these factors pushed Claudius to approve the project. They also would have pushed for the lake to be drained as fully as possible.

In the first case, the private investors would have wanted to gain the largest return on their investment. While the details of the deal made between the state and these investors are unknown, two possibilities seem likely: either the investors would receive land in proportion to the investment they put in or the capital they invested would essentially buy them a set amount of acreage of the drained land. If it was the first case, the investors would push for more of the lake to be drained in order to get the most farmland possible. If the second, the state would attempt to drain as much as possible in order to either meet the terms of its agreement or to gain excess land which it could either have farmed itself or sold to offset cost. In either case, Claudius would have had strong motivation to drain as much as possible.

The second factor pushing Claudius to approve the project, the need for increased food security in Italy, moved the potential benefits beyond the purely financial. Suetonius recorded the draining of the Fucine Lake as "great and essential."[37] Suetonius also reported that unrest over hunger insecurity hounded Claudius. Once in a time of scarcity, a mob stopped him and "so pelted [Claudius] with abuse and at the same time with pieces of bread, that he was barely able to make his escape to the Palace by a back door."[38] Afterwards, Claudius endeavored to ensure grain security by any means necessary, including guaranteeing profit for grain merchants by covering any potential loss from storms and granting of citizenship and increased privileges for grain ship builders.[39] This was a time of drastic measures for Claudius. That being the case, there would be no reason for Claudius to then invest enormous sums of money and resources into a project specifically intended to alleviate the issue of food security then purposefully limit the possible fruits of that labour by only partially draining the lake.

Despite Claudius' ambitions, the ancient sources made it exceedingly clear that the project failed. Tacitus especially made his dismay at the project's difficulties and failures known. His disappointment helps to reveal the understood intentions

36 Suet. *Claud.* 20.2. Unfortunately, "private parties" is as specific a detail as Suetonius gave. No further information on who these men were or the amount they funded is given in any ancient source.

37 Suet. *Claud*. 20.1.

38 Suet. *Claud.* 18.2.

39 Suet. *Claud.* 18.2, 19.1.

for the project. Writing about the opening ceremony, Tacitus reported that when the gates to the tunnel were opened, "carelessness was at once evident in the construction of the tunnel, which had not been sunk to the maximum or even the mean depth of the lake."[40] His allegations of carelessness in leveling the tunnel so that only part of the lake might drain does not accord with Brisse's hypothesis of a partial draining. Nor does his report that "an interval of time was therefore allowed for the channel to be cleared to a lower level."[41] This does not necessarily prove that Claudius intended to drain the lake fully, as a lower level could simply be to a greater but still partial extent. However, authors such as Pliny the Elder and Cassius Dio clearly regard the drainage as a failure even though part of the lake did drain.[42]

The ancient sources did not always get their facts correct. Inconsistencies between accounts, different viewpoints on the same event, and opinions presented as facts fill the histories. Yet in this case, with remarkable consistency, the authors condemned the project as a failure. Not one of the five accounts which mention the draining declare it a success, despite the majority of those accounts having direct access to imperial records.[43] It seems very unlikely that each source would make the same interpretive mistake if Claudius had intended to drain the lake only partially.

Unfortunately, due to the mostly circumstantial nature of the evidence, there is no smoking gun for either side. Brisse, despite often engaging in speculative history beyond what the archaeology or literature suggested, did not operate irrationally. He worked mainly with what he considered conservative and reasonable figures, and his larger work provides a fundamentally important source for both the ancient and modern draining.[44] His work does a great service in providing important information on two monumental projects that deserve to be better known. However, none of that changes the fact that Brisse's claims regarding both the silting rate of the lake and the religious practices of the Marsi have no substantial evidence supporting them. Considering the financial and agricultural motivations behind the draining, the Roman understanding of disease, and the remarkably consistent dismay of the ancient historians, Emperor Claudius' most likely intent was to fully drain the Fucine Lake.

40 Tac. *Ann*. 57.1.

41 Tac. *Ann.* 57.1.

42 Plin. *HN.* 36.24; Cass. Dio 15.11.5.

43 i.e., Suetonius, Tacitus, Cassius Dio, Pliny the Elder, and the *Historia Augusta*.

44 Brisse, 10.

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Hot Gates and Iron Curtains: Nationalism and the Reception of Thermopylae in American Film

Piper Hays

Abstract
The 300 Spartans have been popular symbols of nationalism and austerity since Herodotus' *Histories.* Modern America's fascination with themes of liberty and defense of the homeland during the Cold War and the War on Terror have influenced cinematic adaptations of the Battle of Thermopylae, which function as both entertainment and nationalist propaganda on behalf of America and its "Western" allies. This paper argues that comparative analysis of Rudolph Maté's *The 300 Spartans* (1962) and Zack Snyder's *300* (2007) to Herodotus' *Histories* exposes these nationalist undertones in their deviations from historical narratives of the Persian Wars. Modern appropriations of the Persians as an allegory for the contemporary enemy simplify the barbarism of the "other" that Herodotus portrays in his narrative in order to exacerbate their perceived lack of morality. Furthermore, the subversion of attested Classical Greek politics and military structure serves modern perceptions of freedom, loyalty, and power rather than explaining ancient ones. These changes symbolize a perceived continuity between Classical Sparta and modern American nationalist agendas which misrepresents the history attested in primary sources and simplifies understanding of contemporary conflict.

The construction of national fables is vital to the sustenance of a nationalist spirit: it gives countries a rallying cry and a method of maintaining a sense of unity and superiority over both allies and enemies. Herodotus' *Histories,* despite claims of historical objectivity and neutrality, aided in the construction of a Hellenic national fable in its heroic depictions of the Greek defeat of the Persian Empire.[1] Thermopylae is a gripping example of this nationalist fable, with the martyrdom and subsequent memorialization of Leonidas' 300 Spartans remaining one of the most well-known sequences in Herodotus' account of the Persian Wars. The mythologization of this defeat inspired two blockbuster films: Rudolph Maté's 1962 film,

1 Paul Cartledge, "'We Are All Greeks'? Ancient (Especially Herodotean) and Modern Contestations of Hellenism." *Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies* 40 (1995): 75-82, 76-78.

The 300 Spartans, and Zack Snyder's 2007 film, *300*, both of which appropriate the events at Thermopylae for modern nationalist purposes. From the Cold War to the War on Terror, Thermopylae stands in the American imagination as an allegory for American martyrdom against an oppressive Eastern threat, depicting a free West in its battle against the hordes of Communism and Islamic fundamentalism.

Nationalism and the Reception of the Persian Wars in Modern Western Thought

As a function of Ancient Grecian forms of nationalism, the *Histories* are biased against the Persians, believing them to be deviant from Hellenic religious, linguistic, and social practices and assigning a negative moral value based on these cultural differences. Herodotus often refers to them as barbarians, or *barbaroi* — a term describing those who did not speak a Greek dialect — not necessarily meant as a pejorative term, but denoting a clear culturally inferior 'other.'[2] In this sense, Herodotus positions the Greeks as the normative protagonists of his *Histories* from which the Persians deviate, depicting a free, self-driven society at war with an exotic, selfish empire.[3] This sense of deviance underlies the narrative through the use of descriptions such as *barbaroi.* Despite this, Herodotus takes great care to portray Xerxes and the Achaemenids as a complex and overstretching empire, which modern directors subsequently mutate into an all-consuming horde.[4] Herodotus' depictions of exoticism and barbarity are not inherently negative, as he often explains the nuances of unfamiliar cultural practices to his audience with relative neutrality. American adaptations exoticize and simplify their portrayals of Persia to create a deviant antagonist onto which the audience may project their interpretations of the Oriental and despotic. However, this is not a uniquely American interpretation, but rather a particular trend in reception symptomatic of intensely nationalist Western cultures.

The modern fascination with this selective interpretation of Spartan militarism and masculinity finds its roots in the twentieth century with the nationalist regimes of the Second World War, particularly in Nazi Germany. Aligning ideologically with Sparta's culture, which prized a brand of masculinity constructed around defending the well-being of the *polis,* Nazi Germany consciously emulated many aspects of Spartan society, from austere militarism to state-sponsored eugenics

2 "Glossary" in Herodotus, *The Histories*, ed. John Marincola, trans. Aubrey de Selincourt (New York, NY: Penguin Books, 2002).

3 "Foreword" in Herodotus, *The Histories,* 18.

4 Rosaria Vignolo Munson, "Who Are Herodotus' Persians?" *The Classical World* 102, no. 4 (2009): 457-70, 457.

practices intended to exterminate children deemed too weak or disabled to support the military complex.[5] German military leaders particularly idolised the 300 for their willingness to die heroically for the good of the state.[6] Most poignantly, the allegory of the 300 Spartans was utilised on the Eastern Front, particularly in the Battle of Stalingrad. Field Marshal Hermann Göring compared Stalingrad to Thermopylae, going so far as to mimic the famous epitaph of Simonides, "Go tell the Spartans, stranger passing by, that here obedient to their laws we lie,"[7] by stating, "If you come to Germany, tell them you have seen us fighting in Stalingrad, obedient to the law, the law for the security of our people."[8] Hitler repeated this sentiment during the Red Army's siege on Berlin to martyr himself and spur the remnants of his army to persist against their inevitable defeat at the hands of a larger, invading Eastern army.[9] The combination of intense anti-communist rhetoric and idolization of militarism pushed the Nazis to use the 300 as a symbol of their martyrdom against a deviant, lesser society invading from the East — a narrative which would persist even after the Nazi regime's defeat.

Following the end of the Second World War, the North American fascination with Thermopylae began to flourish. Where Nazi Germany appropriated the strict militarism and eugenic practices of the *polis* itself, Americans found themselves relating to the more salutary themes of liberty against tyranny and self-governance righteously defying harsh authoritarian oversight, both of which were nominally found in Herodotus' narrative.[10] The American reception of the events at Thermopylae, like Nazi Germany's emulation of Spartan society, selectively interpreted aspects of Sparta rather than seeking an accurate depiction of the culture or any historical events. Rather than building Spartan values and history into their society, American reception projected modern American ideals onto Leonidas and the 300. In particular, the American imagination of Thermopylae projected the concept of a final bastion of freedom martyring itself to spur the rest of its civilized — but markedly less heroic — comrades to arms in defence of the free world against the hordes of oppression.

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5 Stefan Rebenich, "Reception of Sparta in Germany and German-Speaking Europe," in *A Companion to Sparta,* 685-703, ed. A. Powell, (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 696.

6 Rebenich, "Reception of Sparta in Germany and German-Speaking Europe," 698.

7 "File:Thermopiles Memorial Epitaph.Jpg - Wikipedia," August 24, 2006.

8 Rebenich, "Reception of Sparta in Germany and German-Speaking Europe," 685-6.

9 Rebenich, 686.

10 Sean R. Jensen, "Reception of Sparta in North America," in *A Companion to Sparta,* 704-22, ed. A. Powell (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd, 2017), 713.

Molon Labe: Cold War Commentary in Rudolph Maté's *The 300 Spartans*

In the case of Rudolph Maté's film, the allegorical evil of Persia is an oblique reference to the Soviet Union at the height of the Cold War, similar to Nazi Germany's rhetorical position as the last stand against the tyranny of communism. The political undertones communicated in Maté's film rely less on portrayals of Persian cultural barbarism—although Orientalism plays a major role in the depictions of the Persians—but rather on themes of loyalty, liberty, and defence of the free world which parallel the geopolitical conflicts surrounding the film's 1962 release. As the film's narrator states, "this is the story of a turning point in history, of a blazing day when 300 Greek warriors fought here to hold with their lives, their freedom and ours."[11] From this quote, the audience draws a direct line from the ancient past to their present: America's freedom has roots in the sacrifice of the Spartans at Thermopylae, and the film subsequently honours that legacy. Through Leonidas and the Athenian general Themistocles, Maté paints the picture of a united Greece gathered together through the leadership and sacrifice of the Spartans, a historical anachronism that speaks more to the desire for a modern united West than an accurate representation of Greece.[12]

Although the Pan-Hellenism which led to the Persian defeat is attested in Herodotus and other narratives, American political motives are blatantly projected onto the ancient setting as a way to encourage the audience to support a unified Western force. The film argues that political infighting is counterintuitive to protecting civil society from the looming threat of oppression. As Leonidas states, "Mere cities don't matter now. It is Greece that counts! Only by being united can we hope to avoid slavery."[13] Similar arguments to Leonidas' were made by the United States during the formation and early era of the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.[14] The film was released one year after the completion of the Berlin Wall stoked tensions between the West and USSR to one of the highest points in the Cold War, and shook the credibility of both NATO's capability to defend the West, and America's ability to lead the alliance. Political divisions within the United States over its military role in Europe and involvement in Vietnam further threatened the success of further American efforts abroad. The film appears to address a similar schism by inventing a camaraderie between Leonidas

11 *The 300 Spartans,* 00:00:46-55.

12 Emma Clough, "Loyalty and Liberty: Thermopylae in the Western Imagination," in *Spartan Society,* 363-84, ed. Thomas J. Figuera (Wales: The Classical Press of Wales, 2004), 374-5.

13 *The 300 Spartans*, 00:31:05.

14 Clough, "Loyalty and Liberty," 376.

and Themistocles, demonstrating the necessity of political unity between warring factions with their own interests. In the *Histories,* Sparta's general Eurybiades leads the coalition's navy in the wake of Thermopylae after other *poleis* refuse to be led by an Athenian general; Athens acquiesces for the sake of preserving the alliance.[15] In the film, as a show of goodwill and in blatant contrast with the historical portrayal, Themistocles voluntarily places the Athenian navy under nominal Spartan command to show the necessity of military and political unity, and to prop up Sparta as the undisputed leader of the alliance in a reflection of America's self-perception of its diplomatic role abroad. Furthermore, Leonidas defines himself as a soldier, while Themistocles describes himself as a politician; through the combination of Leonidas's military abilities and Themistocles' rhetorical skills, the film makes it clear that the internal divisions between military and political interests are damaging to the alliance. As Themistocles states, the Persians' power "lies in their unity,"[16] comparative to the Warsaw Pact which bound together the Soviet Bloc. Paralleling the themes of liberty versus tyranny, the Warsaw Pact was a coercive alliance helmed by the USSR rather than a democratic alliance. According to the film, "a unity of free men fighting together resisting this united tide of tyranny"[17] was the only method of defeating the enemy, showing that the theme of unity through liberty parallels modern American values.

The moral qualities of liberty that America admires are further extolled by the loyalty of the 300 and the fictional character of Phylon to both Sparta and Leonidas. As Leonidas states, "A Spartan king cannot act without the authority of his people. But I know my people, and I know they will fight."[18] This statement undermines the historical authority of Spartan kings, but speaks to the value of democracy and freedom prized by the film's producers. The 300, whom Leonidas labels with the modern terminology of his "personal bodyguard," stand out as heroes due to their loyalty to their state as directed by those in power.[19] "Free people," a term used to describe the citizens of the Hellenic states in the film, is another anachronism echoing modern politics and perceptions in the West. America's self-proclaimed image as the land of the free and home of the brave is at odds with attestations of Sparta's — and the larger Greek world's — colonialist slave society. These modern values are included to obscure the historical realities in order to preserve the integrity of the protagonists.

15 Herodotus, *The Histories*, 8.2-3.

16 *The 300 Spartans*, 00:15:06.

17 *The 300 Spartans,* 00:15:52.

18 *The 300 Spartans,* 00:19:23.

19 Clough, "Loyalty and Liberty," 377.

Although Leonidas hopes more Spartan soldiers will join them, the 300 fight alone even after they know reinforcements will not arrive, further exemplifying their dedication to the liberty of the "free people" at all costs. Phylon, the son of a Spartan defector, personifies the onus that the film places on liberty and loyalty. Phylon makes great efforts to regain the values of Sparta that his father renounced, not simply to redeem his family from shame, but out of a sense of selfless loyalty to his country.[20] His willingness to fight for freedom in the face of death and disdain demonstrates an ideal of how highly liberty should be valued, and the shame that those more reluctant, such as the ephors, should face when they fail to value these principles. Phylon's encounter with the famous traitor Ephialtes — who ultimately causes the Spartan defeat in the film — shows the stark contrast between the young soldier's admirable and selfless patriotism and the skulking betrayal of the greedy traitor, a narrative which would persist in the American political landscape from McCarthyism and the Red Scare into the Vietnam War.

Although the film concerns itself more with the moral backbone of Hellenic society as a proxy for American and Western society, there are still overtones of Persian culture as a deviant cultural other. As Themistocles argues, "These men [the Persians] are fierce, savage, bloodthirsty, merciless."[21] Their portrayal, although less overtly racist than the later depictions in Snyder's film, reductively shows a culture with an opulent and despotic aristocracy that oppresses and controls the starving, ideologically and physically enslaved masses, and which seeks to consume more at all costs. This characterization resembles a fear in the American political establishment of being similarly devoured by communism, which was regarded as a vast, all-consuming ideology. One-dimensional portrayals of Xerxes and the Persian army as insatiable and barbaric are suitable for this allegory, but are not reflective of Herodotus' nuanced views on Persia, as will be more clearly exemplified by the schism between the historical narrative and Snyder's later portrayal of Persia.

Appropriation and Anti-Eastern Rhetoric in Zack Snyder's *300*

300's fundamental division between Spartan and Persian — just like its cinematic predecessor — reflects a division between a noble, free West and a repressive, monstrous East. However, the face of the enemy had changed by the newer film's release, with the dangers of being overrun by communism dissipating after the fall

20 Clough, "Loyalty and Liberty," 376.

21 *The 300 Spartans,* 00:14:55.

of the USSR and replaced with the post-9/11 fear of Islamic fundamentalism. The political message of the film is somewhat altered from its past iteration, taking a more individualistic stance as the United States transitioned away from its desire for global alliances. Leonidas and his men are alone in their willingness to go to war with Persia, while there is only a passing, hostile mention of Athens. Furthermore, the governing body of the ephors refuses to back the mission for various reasons — religion, greed, lechery, and political expediency all play a role in their decisions. In the *Histories*, Thermopylae comes after various city-states side with Persia rather than the Greek alliance; references to this in the film correlate to the actions of the United Nations and some prominent members of NATO — namely France, Germany, and Canada — in their refusal to support the American invasion of Iraq. Leonidas' defiance is portrayed as morally upright and ends up being the correct course of action despite the ephors' protest and his sacrifice spurs the rest of Greece into the war. Since the film was produced during the height of the Iraq War, Snyder seems to imply that the American actions in Iraq will have the same effect and justified conclusion despite the casualties.

Despite the overt political messages, the portrayal of the Persians is the most contentious and convincing evidence of American projection onto Sparta in the film. The Spartans of *300* are played by white actors performing with British accents; conversely, the Persians in this iteration are cast and costumed to appear largely of Middle Eastern descent. However, Xerxes and his first emissary are notably played by Hispanic and Black actors respectively. The film's conflict therefore becomes a battle between White and non-White forces, a racialized conflict that reflects modern Western perceptions of the 'other' — Herodotus makes little to no mention of skin colour, and his descriptions of division between Greeks and Persians rely on cultural differences.[22] This division in physical appearance is compounded by a physical dehumanization of the Persians, where some of the Persian soldiers are portrayed as deformed, grotesque monsters. This choice is meant to discourage the audience from empathizing with the enemy soldiers, since their inhumanity and corrupted appearance correlate with a lack of moral justification for their brutality—they commit corrupted violence for the sake of mindless carnage, while the Spartans commit righteous violence for the sake of freedom, justice, and defence of the homeland.

This portrayal blatantly echoes the rhetoric of the West — particularly the United States and Great Britain — during the war in Iraq that was hitting its stride in modern-day Persia in the same period as the film's production and release. The

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22 "Foreword" in *The Histories,* 18-9.

Iraqi and Afghan combatants in the War on Terror were broadly dehumanized in speeches by political leaders, painted as incapable of nobility and empathy. As George Bush stated in a speech calling to renew the Patriot Act in 2004, "Now we have a chance to lock up monsters, terrorist monsters," claiming that these combatants were "people who have no soul, who have no conscience."[23] Similarly, the Spartan narrator Dilios in *300* describes the soldiers of Xerxes as such: "Eyes as dark as night... teeth filed to fangs... soulless."[24] This lack of humanity in the Persians is not present in Herodotus, whose depth of written documentation on Persian cultural practices is indicative of his view of them as a complex society, and even includes approval of certain aspects of the Persian way of life.[25] Although the Persians are the antagonists of his historical narrative and do not follow Grecian customs of hospitality and religious practice, Herodotus describes their culture as honest and fair, particularly admiring the balance within their justice system.[26] Snyder's depiction appropriates the Persians not as the thriving, culturally rich empire and historical military force which Herodotus describes, but as villainous caricatures serving only to reflect modern attitudes towards the Middle East.

The costuming in the film plays a central role in the depiction of the Persians as the contemporary enemy in Iraq and Syria. Clothing in the ancient world served as a physical signifier of foreignness—in Attic art, Persians were depicted in pants and large hats, whereas the Greeks donned familiar *chitons* and armour.[27] In *300,* minimal effort is made for historical accuracy in either Spartan or Persian costumes, but the clear marginalization is still evident. The Persians vacillate between donning gaudy Orientalist costumes complete with wreaths of gold jewellery, and characteristically modern robes or linen facial wrappings that evoke stereotypical portrayals of "Arabic" extremism found in many portrayals of the War on Terror. The former costuming choice effeminized the Persians compared to the overtly masculine Spartans with their leather loin-cloths and heroic red capes, portraying Persia as a society with an excess of wealth and deviance compared to austere Sparta. This depiction creates a direct parallel between Western Orientalist perceptions of the modern Middle East, as similar facial wrappings can be found on enemy combatants in films set during the invasion of Iraq. Even

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23 George W. Bush, "President Bush Calls for Renewing the USA PATRIOT Act," transcript of speech delivered in Hershey, Pennsylvania, April 19, 2004.

24 *300*, 01:02:14.

25 Hdt., 1.135-40.

26 Hdt., 1.135-40.

27 Margaret Miller, "Persians in the Greek Imagination," *Mediterranean Archaeology* 19/20 (2006): 109-23, 110, 114.

in battle sequences which do not use these reductive modern costuming choices, the Persian soldiers wear either full coverings and monstrous masks that do not reveal their human faces, or chains and manacles, further distancing them from the almost superhuman Spartans.

These costuming choices contribute to perceptions of an "enslaved" civilian population that the Western force seeks to liberate from a deviant and oppressive culture. The Spartans make many references to the subjugation of the Persian people: Dilios succinctly describes the Persian army as "an army of slaves, vast beyond imagining."[28] In contrast, Snyder depicts the Spartans as bastions of freedom, with Leonidas' defiant declaration that "The world will know that free men stood against a tyrant."[29] This particular portrayal of the Spartans is a direct schism between Herodotus and *300*: in the *Histories,* Herodotus describes the Spartans as being accompanied by the Thebans, whom Leonidas utilizes as hostages who fight "very much against their will."[30] Similarly, the film makes no mention of the helots, the Spartan slave class which was brutally subjugated to facilitate the Spartan military complex through their agrarian and household labour, and their use as soldiers in battles such as Plataea.[31]

This alteration lays out the Americanization of Snyder's Sparta, which democratizes an austere oligarchy as a beacon of freedom, evoking how the United States views itself within the context of the Iraq War. In Bush's words, "America's commitment to freedom in Iraq is consistent with our ideals."[32] America's foreign policy regarding the war in Iraq was predicated on liberating the Iraqi people from the tyranny of Saddam Hussein and Islamic fundamentalism.[33] Both Xerxes and Hussein, although sharing very little physical similarity in their depictions, are portrayed as brutal authoritarian rulers whose defeat would subsequently liberate the oppressed East. Bush speaks about Hussein's defeat as such: "The tyrant will soon be gone. The day of your [the Iraqi people] liberation is near."[34] Similarly,

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28 *300*, 00:06:22.

29 *300,* 01:24:58.

30 Hdt., 7.224.

31 Richard J. A. Talbert. "The Role of the Helots in the Class Struggle at Sparta." *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte 38*, no. 1 (1989): 22-40, 22-3.

32 George W. Bush, "President Addresses the Nation in Prime Time Press Conference", transcript of speech delivered in Washington DC, April 13, 2004.

33 Sharat G. Lin, "US Lying about Halabja: Justifying the Invasion of Iraq." *Economic and Political Weekly* 42, no. 36 (2007): 3625-32, 3626.

34 George W. Bush, "President Says Saddam Hussein Must Leave Iraq Within 48 Hours" transcript of speech deliv-

Dilios describes the defeat of Xerxes at Plataea as “This day we rescue a world from mysticism and tyranny and usher in a future brighter than anything we can imagine.”[35] As with the term ‘barbarian’, the function of the word ‘tyranny’ is once again variant based on ancient and modern contexts. While Herodotus does note the imperialistic practices of Persia in their subjugation of various Near Eastern groups such as the Scythians and Assyrians, the term ‘tyrant’ would have described the political office of any ruler whose power was neither democratically granted nor inherited, and does not necessarily carry the same imperialistic or violent connotations as modern usage.[36] The term has negative connotations in both cases, but Snyder’s interpretation completely neglects the ancient context in favour of portraying the same unilaterally evil tyranny that Bush cites in his speeches.

Women are specifically singled out of this enslaved population as further justification for liberation: in the film, the Persian emissary derides Leonidas for letting Gorgo speak on Sparta’s behalf, asking “What makes this woman think she can speak among men?”[37] This portrays the oppression of women from a modern perception, utilizing Gorgo as a commanding and outspoken female protagonist to show the barbarism of the Persians and the corruption of the Ephors as partially represented by their misogyny. Sparta is portrayed as a beacon of women’s rights in the ancient world, which is an oversimplified conception of the role of women in its military society. Although women could possess property and had more freedom of movement than comparative *poleis,* their societal positions were still regarded as reproductive and maternal, with minimal variance outside of these roles.[38] Similarly, the United States portrays itself as defending women’s rights in the Middle East. As President Bush stated in a speech in Pennsylvania, “They [the Taliban] must have hated women. Women were given no rights. Young girls did not go to school. There was a barbaric regime.”[39] However, the US still faces rampant gender inequality, especially along the axes of race, class, and bodily autonomy[40] — its self-aggrandization of women’s rights is hypocritically weaponized as a moral justification for war.

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ered in Washington DC, March 17, 2003.

35 *300,* 01:48:37.

36 “Glossary” in Hdt., *The Histories.*

37 *300,* 00:09:42.

38 Sarah B. Pomeroy, *Spartan Women* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 44.

39 Bush, “President Bush Calls for Renewing the USA PATRIOT Act”.

40 Elizabeth Chuck, “U.S. Ranks 43rd on Gender Parity Index This Year, Sliding 16 Slots from Last Year,” NBCNews.com, June 20, 2023.

The acceptability of participation in violence further contributes to the political misappropriation of Herodotus' history of Thermopylae and the Persian Wars. In the *Histories*, Herodotus differentiates between violence as a result of warfare, and "savage and unnatural violence" that results from moral corruption.[41] Rather than adopting this differentiation which condemns the violence of tyranny, Snyder's recreation of the events moralizes the use of violence at Thermopylae in a similar manner to American rhetoric in the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan by creating or exacerbating episodes of Persian atrocities. Leonidas kills or maims various Persian emissaries and messengers in a clear violation of the film's rules of war, given that the first emissary attempts to defend himself by arguing that "Persian or Greek, no man threatens a messenger[...]This is blasphemy! This is madness!" just before Leonidas executes him.[42] Later in the film, Leonidas and his men use the bodies of dead Persians to build a wall during Thermopylae, as both a physical and psychological deterrent against the advancing Persian army. The Spartans are thus portrayed as righteously violent, since the Persians deserved these fates as the villains. However, when the Spartans come upon the destroyed Greek village earlier in the film, they are horrified by the aftermath of these acts of violence they witness, including the gruesome display of the villagers' bodies.[43] Both scenes show the same levels of violence in the desecration of bodies, but where the violence against Persians is easily justified within the film, the violence by the Persians is further proof of their monstrosity.

Many propaganda pieces from the War on Terror had a parallel double standard, where acts of violence by Iraqi forces were considered barbaric but similar acts of violence by the invading Americans were excusable. The 'with us or against us' mentality of the post-9/11 world allowed American politicians and pundits to justify the invasion of Iraq and the otherwise objectionable violence against its people in the name of 'liberating' them from Hussein, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban.[44] The impetus for the invasion of Iraq — that Hussein's government possessed 'weapons of mass destruction' — has been categorically disproven and was known to be implausible at the time, as cited by UN member states unwilling to support the American invasion.[45] This made the US the invading force, rather

41 Hdt., *Hist,* 3.80. The use of the term 'violence' in the *Histories* is often describing this morally corrupt violence. The term does not appear, at least in translation, in the episode at Thermopylae.

42 *300,* 00:12:14-43.

43 *300*, 00:33:06.

44 Lin, "US Lying about Halabja," 3625-7.

45 Lin, 3626.

than the Iranians or Iraqi forces: however, Snyder's adaptation of Thermopylae utilizes the moral injustice of the Persian invasion to justify the desecration of bodies and other war crimes. Similarly, the use of Guantanamo Bay to inter and torture prisoners of war without due process had been excused as a reaction to threats against freedom, despite the condemnation of similar violence by Islamic groups.[46] In this sense, Snyder seems to use the historical invasion of Greece by the Persians as a method of excusing otherwise objectionable violence by portraying the Near-Eastern culture as a looming threat, just as Bush portrayed Iraq and Iran as an invading threat to the West in the wake of 9/11.

Conclusion

Nationalist propaganda has been made more appealing by the inception and availability of modern cinema. As a result, the cyclical popularity of the sword-and-sandal genre in modern film carries with it appropriations of ancient history and myth for modern purposes and audiences. Popular American portrayals of Thermopylae since 1950 have shown that despite a primary mandate to entertain its audience, there is an implicit nationalist undertone to the changes directors make to the events, and how they deviate from Herodotus's *Histories*. Both Snyder and Maté alter historical events to suit their portrayals of Americanized justice and liberty, as well as to exacerbate the heroism of the Spartans and the insatiable despotism of the Persians. The legacy of Leonidas and the 300 Spartans persists today as a proxy for Americanized values of liberty, loyalty, and anti-totalitarianism, altered from primary sources into a simplified, easily digestible narrative with a clear hero and villain. Although the Persians were a diverse and complex empire, the American imagination of Thermopylae contributes to a fundamental misunderstanding of the ancient world by the general public, and a persistent spirit of austere nationalism within the West — with America leading the charge.

46 Andrew Tully, "U.S.: Washington Debates Application of Geneva Conventions," RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty, April 8, 2008.

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Powerless Protagonists: The *Servus Callidus* in Roman Comedy

Kate Levey

Abstract
The *servus callidus* character archetype, known in English as the clever slave, is the protagonist of almost all Roman comedies. He drives most of the plot action, is usually the smartest character on the stage, and is never punished for his actions. However, he exists in stark contrast to the role of slaves in Roman society, where they were demeaned and often despised. Through an examination of the *servi callidi* in the works of Plautus and Terence, this paper explains the societal context that made the *servus callidus* possible by examining his origins in Greek comedy, his role in the plot as a stand-in for the *adulescens* (the son of his master), his relatability to all members of the audience, and the sources of his humour through his encapsulation of the Saturnalian spirit and his usage of dark humour.

The trickster is an important character in the literary traditions of many cultures.[1] Loki, the god of mischief, plays a central role in many Norse myths as he lies to and cheats the other gods. In Northern Northwest Coast mythology, Raven acts as both the creator of the world and as a selfish trickster. Rome is no exception to this tradition, as seen in the *servus callidus* character archetype in Roman comedies. With their reddish hair and short tunics, clever slaves fill the world of Roman comedies, scheming and deceiving in order to achieve their goals.[2] In this essay, four main aspects of the *servus callidus* will be examined: his origins, his role in the plot, what makes his character possible in the context of Roman society, and why he was funny to the Roman audience.

The two most influential Roman comedy playwrights, Plautus and Terence, wrote Roman adaptations of Greek plays. It is therefore no surprise that the *servus callidus* has his roots in Greek comical theatre. The *servus callidus* can

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1 Ferdinand Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge: Plays of Deception," in *A Companion to Plautus*, ed. George Fredric Franko and Dorota Dutsch (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 137.

2 Shawn O'Bryhim, "Stock Characters and Stereotypes," in *A Companion to Plautus*, ed. George Fredric Franko and Dorota Dutsch (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 129; A. Quinn, "Smiling Slaves: Figural Depictions of Classical Comedy's 'Clever Slave' in Roman Social Context," *Inter-Section* 1 (September 2015): 15.

be found in all three eras of Greek comedy: Old Comedy (fifth century BCE), Middle Comedy (404-336 BCE), and New Comedy (320-260 BCE). The earliest iterations of the *servus callidus* can be found in the works of the comic writer Aristophanes, who wrote during the Old Comedy period. In Aristophanes' plays, slaves are used for the purpose of exposition or comic relief, never as drivers of the plot.[3] He writes a few slave characters who do engage in some trickery, deceit, and impersonation, such as Xanthias from the *Frogs*, a slave who makes jokes at his master's expense and devises minor schemes that advance the plot. For example, Xanthias jokingly tells his master, the god Dionysus, to go to hell.[4] However, these characters are exceptions within Aristophanes' plays. Even when slaves do have agency in the plot, their purpose is always to move the action along, not star in it.[5] While Xanthias moves much of the action in the first half of the play, he moves none of the action in the second half, making it clear that Dionysus is the star of the play. The lack of prominent slave characters in the work of Aristophanes makes perfect sense, as he preferred to write social commentaries and political satire over comedy and therefore was less interested in character-driven stories.[6] He also saw character-driven stories as low comedy written by his rivals, and wanted to distance himself from it by making high-brow, sophisticated comedies that could only be understood by those educated in politics.[7] Aristophanes actively did not want his plays to have mass appeal.[8]

Spurred on by the collapse of Athenian democracy and free speech, the surviving fragments of the transitional period of Middle Comedy show a shift away from Aristophanes' political comedy and towards the more recognizable aspects of Roman comedy: a plot that revolves around a love story, with set family character archetypes.[9] In New Comedy, these changes are fully cemented, as is apparent in the writings of the author most relevant to our understanding of the period, Menander. It is in Menander's work that the source of almost all aspects of Roman comedy can be found. He employed the character types of the stern father, the courtesan, and, most importantly, the clever slave.[10] Many of

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3 C. Stace, "The Slaves of Plautus," *Greece & Rome* 15, no. 1 (April 1968): 74-5.

4 Aristophanes, *Frogs*, ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 34.

5 Stace, "The Slaves of Plautus," 74-5.

6 Stace, 74-5.

7 Amy S. Lewis, "Aristophanes And The Poetics Of Low Comedy," (PhD diss.,University of Pennsylvania, 2020): 1.

8 Lewis, "Aristophanes And Poetics of Low Comedy," 1.

9 Stace, "The Slaves of Plautus," 64.

10 O'Bryhim, "Stock Characters and Stereotypes," 123-4.

Menander's plays, such as *Thais*, revolved around a deceptive ploy to get money for a young master's courtesan, in which a slave would play a part.[11] In *Dis Exapaton*, the basis for Plautus' *Bacchides*, the slave Syros hatches a ploy that involves two deceptions.[12] Daos, a slave from Menander's *Perinthia*, brags about cheating his master and takes refuge on an altar.[13] Both actions are later taken by the slave Tranio in Plautus' *Mostellaria*.

While the deceiving, braggart slave and plots that revolve around ploys to gain money are all common to Roman comedy, there are many facets of Roman comedy that have no basis in Menander. Even when Menander's slaves are clever and tricky, they remain loyal to the family.[14] *Perinthia* opens with a monologue delivered by Daos, who is under the impression that his master is dead and is greatly saddened by that fact, showing a genuine loyalty to the man that owns him.[15] Like Aristophanes in Old Comedy, Menander uses his slaves for exposition and to advance the plot, but they do not take the role of the protagonist.[16] While plots involving the *servus callidus* have their roots in Greek comedy, the *servus callidus*' place as the main actor who shapes the plot and action is a Roman invention.

While Plautus and Terence both utilized the *servus callidus* character archetype, it is Plautus that invented the Roman *servus callidus*. Terence sticks to the original Greek New Comedy model far more than Plautus does. As a result, his *servus callidus* is merely a Greek figure adapted for a Roman audience.[17] His *servus callidus* tends to be more incompetent and less active in initiating the deception.[18] He can lose control of the situation, and his plans can fail.[19] In Terence's *Phormio*, for example, Geta is initially against the deception and loyal to the *senex*. Similarly, in his play *Eunuchus,* the *servus callidus* Parmeno reveals the

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11 Philip Whaley Harsh, "The Intriguing Slave in Greek Comedy," *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 86, no. 10 (1955): 139.

12 Evangelos Karakasis, "Masters and Slaves," in *A Companion to Terence,* ed. Antony Augoustakis and Ariana Traill (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing Ltd, 2013), 212.

13 Philip Whaley Harsh, "The Intriguing Slave in Greek Comedy," 139; Menander, *Perinthia* 13-5; due to religious conventions, a master could not whip or otherwise hurt their slave while the slave was taking refuge on an altar.

14 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 137.

15 Menander, *Perinthia,* ed. and trans. W. G. Arnott (Loeb Classical Library 132, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1979), 1-18.

16 Quinn, "Smiling Slaves," 15.

17 Karakasis, "Masters and Slaves," 212.

18 Karakasis, 212-3.

19 Karakasis, 213.

deception to the *senex* after it fails.[20] Plautus' *servus callidus*, on the other hand, actively wants to commit mischief, is incredibly self-confident, and is always successful.[21] Plautus follows the Greek New Comedy models far less closely than Terence by shifting the focus of the plot away from the family and towards the *servus callidus*, making him the star of the show.[22] Plautus did not name his play *Pseudolus* after its central *servus callidus* character on a whim. Terence and Plautus have around the same number of clever slaves, but Plautus' slaves make more of an impression because they have a far larger impact on the plot.[23]

The *servus callidus* played a central role in most Roman comedies. Roman comedies, at their heart, are stories about domestic relationships.[24] The dramatic crux of a standard Roman comedy is simple. The *adulescens* is in love with a courtesan who is usually an enslaved prostitute. The *senex*, the *adulescens*' father and the master of the house, stands in the way of the *adulescens* and the needed money. The *adulescens* must, with the help of the *servus callidus*, acquire enough money to buy her from her pimp and overcome the obstacles formed by the *senex* in order to obtain her.[25] The *servus callidus* must create a deception in order to steal the needed money from either the *senex* or the pimp.[26] In the end, the *servus callidus* succeeds, the *adulescens* gets his courtesan, and the *senex* is defeated.[27] The social order, which was upturned by the *servus callidus* taking control over his master, is returned, and everyone lives happily ever after in their pre-ordained roles.[28] Not every Roman comedy follows this exact story, but the vast majority of them do, and those that do deviate will still include many of the elements of the standard plot. For example, in the *Mostellaria*, the *adulescens* Philolaches already has his courtesan, but obtaining her has put him in debt. The *servus callidus*, Tranio, then still needs to secure money in order to pay off said debt.

The *servus callidus* is a paradox in many ways. He performs in a slave society where he is at the bottom of the social hierarchy, yet on stage, he triumphs

20 Terence, *Phormio* 75-6; Terence, *Eunuchus* 923-40.

21 Martin T. Dinter, "Slaves and Roman Comedy," in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy,* ed. Martin T. Dinter (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 191.

22 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 138.

23 Stace, "The Slaves of Plautus," 66.

24 Dinter, "Slaves and Roman Comedy," 189-90.

25 Karakasis, "Masters and Slaves," 212.

26 O'Bryhim, "Stock Characters and Stereotypes," 125.

27 O'Bryhim, 125.

28 O'Bryhim, 125.

over his citizen masters. The impossibility of his character is made possible in many ways, the first of which is through his relation to the *adulescens*. While the *servus callidus* is the protagonist of his play, he never acts solely in his own interests. In most Roman comedies, the goal of every deception is to obtain the *adulescens*' courtesan from whoever currently possesses her. In this way, the *servus callidus*, though unruly on the surface, is never truly rebellious; he is always serving his master, just not the right one. Roman comedies where the *servus callidus* acts as an agent for the *adulescens* cannot be understood, then, as a struggle between master and slave.[29] They are a struggle between father and son, and in this context, the *servus callidus* is better understood not as an independent actor, but as a stand-in for the *adulescens*.[30] These two character-types are natural allies because they are both under the complete control of the *paterfamilias*.[31] But the slave can take actions the son cannot. He carries out the son's desires, he defies and makes a fool out of the *senex*, and he disrupts the social order.[32] The *servus callidus* can do this because as a slave, he is not tied down by dignity, making these actions far more palatable to the audience than they would be if performed by a free, highborn male citizen.[33] The *adulescens* is then spared of all the guilt his own wants and desires create. The slave becomes his alibi, and all of the anger of the *senex* is then transferred onto him, not the *adulescens*.[34] The slave taking on the role of the *adulescens* in the narrative explains why father and son never meet in *Epidicus*, *Mostellaria*, and *Pseudolus*. This theory also explains why the *senex* channels all his anger at the *servus callidus* instead of his son, like Theopropides does in the *Mostellaria*, despite the son being the source of the conflict in the first place.[35] Father and son must reconcile for order to be restored at the end of the play, and therefore the *servus callidus* must be pardoned. It is in the conclusion of many of Plautus' plays that the *servus callidus*' role as the *adulescens* is most apparent, as it is often the son, or a friend acting on his behalf, that advocates for the *servus callidus*.[36] And so Callidamates gets Tranio pardoned on the behalf of Philolaches in *Mostellaria*,

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29 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 137.

30 Stürner, 137.

31 Dinter, "Slaves and Roman Comedy," 190.

32 Holt Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch: The Servus Callidus and Jokes about Torture," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 119 (1989): 244-5.

33 Dinter, "Slaves and Roman Comedy," 193.

34 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch," 244-5.

35 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 138.

36 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch," 246.

and Bacchis for Chrysalus, and Stratippocles for Epidicus.[37] The *senex* pardons his son, and the *servus callidus* is pardoned along with him.[38]

The *servus callidus* can not only be understood as a stand-in for the *adulescens*, as he is also an independent character with his own personality and motivations. He enjoys his role as a deceiver, and is confident.[39] By comparing himself to generals, mythological heroes, and historical figures, the *servus callidus* clearly shows that he is proud of himself and his work.[40] Tranio from the *Mostellaria* compares himself to Alexander the Great and Agathocles of Syracuse.[41] Pseudolous uses the language of war to describe his plan as he talks about "sieging" Ballio and Simo's houses with his "troops."[42] Chrysalus from *Bacchides* compares himself to Odysseus and Agamemnon, and compares his plan to that of the wooden horse from the Trojan war.[43] He is actively and obviously intellectually superior to the other characters in the play, which he demonstrates by constantly fooling the characters around him.[44] For example, Tranio both fools Theopraprides and Theorpropprides' next-door-neighbour Simo. While Theopropides thinks that Simo has sold his house to Philolaches, Simo thinks that Theorpropides simply wants to see his women's apartments in order to use them as inspiration for his own.[45] As a result, Simo shows Theopropides his home, with neither man knowing that he has been deceived. The *servus callidus* is not merely an actor for the *adulescens*. In fact, he has power over the *adulescens*, as the *adulescens* often follows his instructions. This can be seen when Philolaches listens to Tranio when Tranio tells him to stay in the house when Theopropides comes home.[46] The *servus callidus'* power over the *adulscens* can also be seen in *Miles Gloriosus*, where the *adulescens* Pleusicles directly asks the *servus callidus,* Palaestrio, "Why don't you tell me what I'm to do then?"[47]

The *servus callidus* is allowed to have power over his masters because of the Saturnalian aspect of Roman comedy. Saturnalia was a Roman festival in which

37 Parker, 246; Plautus, *Mostellaria* 1154; Plautus, *Bacchides* 1182; Plautus, *Epidicus* 721.

38 Parker, 246.

39 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 139.

40 Stürner, 141-2.

41 Plautus, *Mostell.* 775-777.

42 Plautus, *Pseudolus* 579-593.

43 Plautus, *Bacch.* 925-78.

44 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 136.

45 Plautus, *Mostell.* 613-20, 740-59.

46 Plaut., *Mostell.* 391-407.

47 Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus,* 1183.

social norms were ignored for a day, and masters would serve their slaves at the dinner table.[48] This concept transferred onto the stage. For just this day, for just this show, there is freedom from social constraints, and society is flipped.[49] The *servus callidus*, who is supposed to lead the *adulescens* as his pedagogue, does the opposite and leads him astray and against his father.[50] The slave is allowed to take control of his masters and manipulate them in his schemes. The master is allowed to be fooled, to lose control of his house and its occupants. The *servus callidus*, instead of fearing the whip, the ultimate tool of degradation and control, risks the punishment brazenly and brags about the scars he received from it in the past.[51] The slave, despite humiliating and rebelling against his masters, goes completely unpunished.[52] The audience, following the Saturnalian spirit, is willing to overlook these societal absurdities and enjoy the humour of a slave taking control over his masters against all societal conventions.

To make sure the audience is never disturbed, however, they are given constant reminders of their control over slaves through the threat of torture.[53] The *servus callidus* constantly talks about past punishments and how the *senex* will punish him for his trickery throughout the play.[54] The audience can relax as they know that the *servus callidus* is only allowed to get away with his schemes because of the Saturnalian spirit of the day, and that on any other day, he would be severely punished for his actions. At the end of the play, order must be restored just like social order is returned at the end of Saturnalia. The *servus callidus* goes back to being a slave, the *senex* back to being in control, and the *adulescens* back to being under his father's command. No matter what he does, the *servus callidus* always returns to being powerless. He will always end in the same role he began in. This must be the outcome, as the audience must be assured that the Saturnalian spirit was only for that one day. The *servus callidus* never improves his lot in life, and all nerves from the audience, who were attached to tradition and social immobility, are settled.[55] It is for this reason that any interpretation of the *servus callidus* as a rebellious figure fails. Plautus sends a message with the end-

48 Quinn, "Smiling Slaves," 18.

49 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch," 234.

50 Parker, 243.

51 Kathleen McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004): 23.

52 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 140.

53 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch," 238.

54 Parker, 238.

55 O'Bryhim, "Stock Characters and Stereotypes," 131.

ings of his plays. Just as every character has a set role, so does every person in Roman society.[56] A person can deviate a little bit, but at the end of the day, they must always return to the proper order.

The nerves of the audience are further settled by the fact that Roman comedies are always set in Greece, not Rome.[57] It was easier to laugh at a master with the Greek name of Simo than a master with the Roman name Marcus. By setting the play in Greece, the playwright distances the Roman audience from the story, letting them become mere observers. Despite this separation, the *servus callidus* is also designed to have a relationship with the audience and to be a relatable figure for them. Plautus constantly has his slaves perform fourth-wall-breaking monologues that let the character speak to the audience directly, establishing a rapport with them.[58] While the tastes of elite male audience members were valued the most by playwrights, the audience of Roman comedies included both genders and all social classes. For that reason the *servus callidus* may have been designed with mass appeal to all social groups in mind, at least on some level.[59] Roman society was multi-tiered, with many people stuck in the middle, dominant to some but subservient to others. The *servus callidus*, as a subordinate figure rising against his dominant masters, was relatable to those who were in positions of social submission themselves, be them a slave or a plebeian client to a patrician.[60] The *servus callidus* was not just relatable to the subordinated, but the dominant as well. Those on the higher rungs of Roman society had to work tirelessly to control those beneath them, especially slaves.[61] The antics of the *servus callidus* allowed them to release their worries and anxieties from their labour as a master and enjoy the story of a master being bested by a slave.[62] The *servus callidus* being a figure of escapism is just as true for the dominant as it is for the subordinate, allowing everyone to celebrate the *servus callidus*' triumph at the end of the play.

The *servus callidus* as a figure of escapism may also explain the character's overwhelming popularity, as evidenced by the figurines of the character that playgoers would buy and display in their homes.[63] However, all free Romans

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56 O'Bryhim, 131.

57 Dinter, "Slaves and Roman Comedy," 189.

58 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 144-5.

59 Stürner, 136.

60 Quinn, "Smiling Slaves," 17-8.

61 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters and the Art of Authority,* 22.

62 McCarthy, 22.

63 Quinn, "Smiling Slaves," 15-6.

had a fear of slaves. Despite the fact slaves were on the lowest rung of Roman society, Roman citizens were aware of the fact that they were massively outnumbered by slaves; a fear of slave revolt was a staple of the Roman mindset. Therefore, despite the fact that all levels of Roman society could identify with the *servus callidus*, that identification was not strong enough for free Romans to take pleasure in seeing Roman society be completely overturned by a slave truly winning over his masters, and so order must still be restored at the end of the play.[64]

The *servus callidus* is made possible through the Saturnalian aspect of Roman comedy and his relationship with the *adulescens* and the audience. Both of these narratives give humour to his character, as both provide absurdity by flipping society and its norms on its head. However, there is a third component to his clownish humour: dark humour. Dark humour is most apparent in Roman comedy in the constant jokes about torture, especially in Plautus. While torture never actually happens on stage, it is constantly mentioned, such as when Chrysalus jokes about being made into Cross-alus in *Bacchides*.[65] These jokes make the *servus callidus*' triumph at the end of the play all the sweeter, as he conquered the odds.[66] They also turn human suffering into a quip, letting the audience laugh at the darkness of torture. The *servus callidus* is unafraid of punishment. This fearlessness can be seen when Tranio continues to mock Theopropides while taking refuge on an altar even though Theopropides is actively threatening him with death and crucifixion.[67] This lack of fear highlights an important anxiety of Roman society: losing control over your slaves.[68] Plautus never frees any of his slaves for this reason.[69] But the *servus callidus* is not funny despite these fears; he is funny because of them. A core part of comedy is mocking what you fear.[70] If you treat something like a joke, it loses its gravity.[71] The *servus callidus* then turns the free slave from a terrifying figure to a comfortable one. In a society terrified of the exact kind of slave he represents, he becomes laughable.

The *servus callidus* first stepped onto the stage in the Greek plays of Aristo-

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64 McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority,* 22.

65 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch,", 233; Plautus, *Bacch.* 362.

66 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 142-3.

67 Plautus, *Mostell.*1106-20.

68 Stürner, "The Servus Callidus in Charge," 142-3.

69 Roberta Stewart, "Slave Labor in Plautus," in *A Companion to Plautus*, ed. George Fredric Franko and Dorota Dutsch (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 372.

70 Parker, "Crucially Funny or Tranio on the Couch," 235.

71 Parker, 235.

phane and Menander, but it was Plautus who shaped him into an undeniably Roman figure. The *servus callidus* drove the plots of his plays, working against the *senex* as he secured money for the *adulescens*. The audience accepted his commanding role in the plot despite his enslavement because they were given a degree of separation, achieved by setting the play in Greece. The audience saw the s*ervus callidus* as a stand-in for the *adulescens*' conflict with the *senex*, saw him through the lens of the Saturnalian spirit, and related to him as a character. Because of his subversion of Roman societal norms and the mirth derived from dark comedy, the Roman audience found the *servus callidus* hilarious. He became the most recognizable symbol of Roman comedy, both to the Roman audience and to modern scholars.[72] He was Plautus' crowning achievement and a purely Roman figure, and his image was found in many Roman homes in the form of a statuette.[73] Nevertheless, while the *servus callidus* triumphed in his plays and was adored by the crowds who came to watch him, he never truly triumphed in any way that mattered. Above all else, just like many of the actors who played him, he was, and remained, a slave.

72 Quinn, "Smiling Slaves," 16.

73 Quinn, 15.

Plebeian

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Terence. *Eunuchus*.

Terence. *Phormio.*

Reevaluating the Impact of the Antonine Plague on Army Mortality in the Roman Empire

Kamyar Jumabhoy

Abstract
The Antonine Plague is one of the most studied plagues from the Roman world. Its impact on the Roman population, economy, and military has been considered particularly catastrophic, leading some historians to consider it a principal factor in the fall of the Roman Empire. However, the evidence surrounding the plague has generally been uncritically evaluated, allowing for tenuous, hyperbolic claims regarding its consequences. This essay attempts to reevaluate the plague, considering the socio-economic climate of Rome during this period, to shed light on the possibility that the mortality rate within the Roman army has been skewed to conform to the biases of our sources. By addressing the weaknesses of the literary sources, the contradictions in the physical evidence, and the overall socio-economic climate of Rome during this period, we are able to more critically examine the claims of historians, and our sources which seem to overestimate the Roman army's mortality rate from this plague.

It is a contention of some historians that the fall of the Roman Empire can be principally attributed to the sharp population decline from the Antonine Plague.[1] Their evidence, methods, and arguments overestimate the mortality rate of the Antonine Plague, particularly in the Roman army. This essay aims to reevaluate the evidence surrounding the Antonine Plague's impact, suggesting that the high army mortality rates proposed by historians like Kyle Harper and Duncan-Jones is based upon tenuous literary and physical evidence. Their maximalist claims grievously ignore the impact of the Marcomannic War, and the broader socio-economic and climate conditions under Marcus Aurelius. While the army *may* have suffered heavier losses than the rest of the population during the plague years, there is not enough evidence to suggest that the impact or disparity is as drastic as

1 Yan Zelener, "Smallpox and the Disintegration of the Roman Economy after 165 AD" (Undergraduate thesis, Columbia University Press, 2003), 207-10; Arthur E.R. Boak, *Manpower Shortage and the Fall of the Roman Empire in the West* (Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1955); and H.M.D. Parker in "A History of the Roman World from A.D. 138-337" (London, Methuen, 1958) cited in J. F. Gilliam "The Plague under Marcus Aurelius," *The American Journal of Philology* 82, no. 3 (1961): 226.

scholars claim, nor were these deaths due entirely to the plague.

Section 1: The Literary Evidence

Scholars have claimed that the Antonine Plague ravaged army camps, disproportionally killing soldiers.[2] However, the fourth century secondary literary evidence which largely substantiates their arguments for army mortality rates between thirteen and thirty percent is unreliable, and demands scrutiny.[3] The main fourth century literary evidence of scholars includes: Orosius' *Historiae Adversus Paganos*, Jerome's *Chronicon*, Eutropius' *Breviarium ab Urbe Condita*, and the *Historia Augusta.*[4] Duncan-Jones admits the quality of these texts are "not very high," or "questionable," then suggests that "the fact that these sources say so much about this plague and generally so little about other the plagues […] shows that the tradition here was a strong one."[5] While Duncan-Jones' logic seems valid, it erodes under further scrutiny. Orosius, a substantial source in plague discussions, claims that the Roman Empire suffered "ten very grievous plagues"[6] as divine retribution:[7] lamenting a plague under Nero,[8] Vespasian,[9] and the Antonine and Cyprian Plagues[10] with some detail. Orosius, however,

2 Kyle Harper, *The Fate of Rome: Climate, Disease, and the End of an Empire* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 2019): 115; Natasha Stange, "Politics of Plague: Ancient Epidemics and Their Impact on Society," *Claremont Colleges Library Undergraduate Research Award* (2021): 34; R. J. Littman and M. L. Littman, "Galen and the Antonine Plague," *The American Journal of Philology* 94, no. 3 (1973): 225; R. P. Duncan-Jones, "The Antonine Plague Revisited," *Acta Philologica Fennica* LII (2018): 52-3 [herein "Revisited"].

3 Littman, "Galen and the Antonine Plague," 255 and Stange, "Politics of Plague," 33 both claim that the mortality was about 13-15% in the army; Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 50, suggests that about a third of the army population would have died; Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 115, proposes a 15-20% mortality rate in the army.

4 Jerome is cited by Stange, 34; Harper, *The Fate of Rome,* 115; C.P. Jones, "Ten Dedications to the 'Gods and Goddesses' and the Antonine Plague," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 299 [Herein "Dedications]; and Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 51 and "The Impact of the Antonine Plague," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 9 (1996): 120 [Herein "Impact"]. Orosius is cited by Littman, 255; and Duncan-Jones "Revisited," 51 and "Impact," 120. Eutropius is cited by Littman, 255; Duncan-Jones "Impact," 120. *Historia Augusta* is cited by Litman, 255; C.P. Jones, "Dedications," 299; and Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 51 and "Impact," 119.

5 Duncan-Jones, "Impact," 119.

6 Orosius 7.27, quoted in Roy J. De Ferrari, "The Seven Books of History Against the Pagans," Catholic University of America, 1964.

7 See Orosius 7.27 for the connection between the persecution of Christians and the occurrence of Plagues; i.e., his arguments for the plague as 'divine retribution.'

8 Orosius 7.7 quoted in "The Seven Books."

9 Orosius 7.9 quoted in "The Seven Books."

10 Orosius 7.15, 7.22 quoted in "The Seven Books."

is notably unreliable,[11] and his religious agenda desires a correlation between plagues and the persecution of Christians, incentivizing exaggerations about the plague's effects. Not only does this contradict Duncan-Jones' claim that sources like Orosius mention "little" about other plagues, it also ousts Orosius as an unreliable source. Other scholars, like Littman, by failing to address the tenuity of Orosius' claims, unfaithfully present him as an accurate source.[12] While other fourth century sources do reference or discuss other plagues, their comments (even of the Antonine Plague) are brief, generally occupying no more than a few lines.[13] This repudiates Duncan-Jones' claim that these sources say "so much" about this plague. A deeper study into the individual biases and weaknesses of each source merits its own discussion, though it should suffice to say that *even* if we allow these unreliable texts to qualify the overall effect of the plague, their brief, biased, and anachronistic comments should be used more cautiously when attempting to estimate the *specific* mortality rate within the army.

Nonetheless, these sources have been used, perhaps even manipulated, by scholars to suggest a greater mortality rate, especially in the army. Duncan-Jones' footnote distortedly translates Marcus Aurelius' statement, "*quid de me fletis et non magis de pestilentia et communi morte cogitatis,*"[14] as "why weep for me rather than for the plague and those whom it killed"[15] — even *if* Marcus Aurelius said this, the original Latin does not *necessitate* such a correlation between the plague and the death.[16] Duncan-Jones' translation falls prey to its own bias: in believing the plague to have been detrimental, he allows his translation to immoderately privilege a maximalist reading of the plague. Furthermore, Duncan-Jones suggests that the line, "a grievous pestilence had carried away thousands of civilians and soldiers," 'singles out' "the plague's extreme impact on the army."[17] However, this sentence is excerpted from a section focused on soldiers in the Marcomannic War hence why soldiers are explicitly mentioned. It does not oblige that soldiers died disproportionately. In removing it from its context, however, Duncan-Jones makes his claim appear stronger. Evidently

11 See Gilliam, 248-9 for further information.

12 Littman, 243-255.

13 Jerome references the Athenian Plague (87.35a), the plague under Vespasian (214.9h), and the Plague of Cyprian (258.1a), and a plague in 333 CE. (278.27e); *Historia Augusta* references a plague under Hadrian (21.5), and the Plague of Cyprian (Claudius 12.1-2; Galleni 5.5); Eutropius discusses the Plague of Cyprian (9.5).

14 Marcus Aurelius, *Historia Augusta* 17.2.

15 Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 41-73.

16 A more reasonable translation would be "why do you weep for me, instead of thinking about the pestilence *and* about death which is the common lot of us all" (M. *H.A.* 28.4).

17 Marcus Aurelius, 17.2; Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 41-73.

the usage of these unreliable texts, and tenuous arguments made from these texts by allegedly scrutinous scholars, has exaggerated the impact of the plague, particularly on the army. Therefore, I suggest that these texts be more heavily scrutinized when searching for specific evidence on army mortality rates from the plague.

Other scholars have corroborated their claims for a disproportionate military mortality with scant information from historians and authors who lived through the Antonine Plague. These include the works of Galen, Lucian, Herodian, and Cassius Dio.[18] While these sources are certainly more credible, they only offer brief comments, generally irrelevant to our discussion of the army. Galen's discussion of the Antonine Plague is primarily medical, however he does discuss the plague's devastating effect on the troops in Aquileia in the winter of 168/9 CE.[19] Lucian mentions the plague in both *Alexander* and *How to Write History*, but provides little, valuable insight for our study.[20] Cassius Dio provides a brief line of information, writing that "a pestilence occurred, the greatest of any of which I have knowledge; for two thousand persons often died in Rome in a single day."[21] While Dio was extremely young at the time, and the numbers of deaths may be inaccurate, this statement nevertheless attests to the generally devastating nature of the plague. Herodian similarly laments plague: "The suffering was especially severe in Rome, since the city, which received from people from all over the world, was overcrowded."[22] While these comments attest to the devastating nature of the Antonine Plague, they provide no insight into plague's impact on the army. Indeed, the lack of attention to the plague's impact on the army *may* suggest that the claims of later sources is simply an exaggeration.[23]

18 Galen is cited in Duncan-Jones, "Impact," 118; Lucian is cited in Duncan-Jones, "Impact," 118-9; Herodian is cited in Stange, 43; Dio is cited in Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 42 and Duncan-Jones, "Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy," 72. This is not a comprehensive list, there are certainly other modern historians who cite these near-contemporary sources, as they are among very few that survive and mention, in any detail, the Antonine Plague.

19 See Gilliam, 228; for citation, it is important to note that Galen specifically mentions the plague's effects as being devastating *because* it took place in the middle of winter.

20 Lucian lambasts Crepereius Calpurnianus for imitating Thucydides when writing about the Antonine Plague (*How to Write History* 15), and discusses how the plague "depopulated" the houses with Alexander's charms (*Alexander* 36). Neither of these are particularly helpful in our study.

21 Cassius Dio, *Roman History* LXIII. 14.3.

22 Herodian, *Roman History* 1.12.1, this quotation is about the plague in 189 CE, allegedly a later wave of the Antonine Plague.

23 Gilliam, 248, suggests that "the most striking, sweeping statements of the plague are found in fourth or fifth century writers" so "one may suspect that the fame of the plague is owing in part to accident and, even more, to exaggeration." The statements about the impact of the army, particularly, may simply be exaggeration.

The best evidence is Galen's reference to troops in Aquileia. However, this is diminished by Galen's commentary, which particularly mentions the impact of winter on the pestilence. His statement does not mean that such high mortality was anything more than a single, *seasonal* disparity: a discrepancy that likely evened out over the years-long plague. The literary evidence should be recognized as following a tradition of Roman pessimism about their times, likely exaggerating the effects of the *impact* and *disparity.* The seemingly unreliable literary evidence makes it necessary to evaluate the surviving physical evidence before proceeding further.

Section 2: The Physical Evidence

During the plague years, there were several changes in recruiting, discharging, and mobilizing troops. Although scholars allege this is a consequence of plague deaths, much of the evidence is seemingly misinterpreted, or is better explained by the impact of the Marcomannic War, Marcus Aurelius' lack of military knowledge, and the poor financial, climate, and social conditions of the period. The changes which scholars attribute to the plague are: the comparative lack of *diplomata* from the years 167 to 200;[24] allegedly lower veteran discharges in 195/8;[25] Marcus Aurelius' enlistment of slaves, gladiators and brigands during the plague years;[26] the enlistment of eighty men "from a town in Central Greece, normally exempt from legionary recruitment;[27] and the increased recruiting of camp-born individuals in Alexandria.[28]

Despite Duncan-Jones' claim, the lack of military *diplomata* was not a result of the plague, but rather an "economic measure from 167 onwards for the next 10 years."[29] This becomes evident when we examine the military *diplomata* from Raetia, which indicate "regular auxiliary troop discharges took place … to 167/8."[30] Since the plague can reasonably be dated to 165, it seemingly had no

24 Duncan-Jones, "Impact," 124, Fig. 6.

25 Harper, 112.

26 Harper, 112; Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 52; Stange, 34; Birley, 159.

27 Harper, 112.

28 Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 52 and "Structure and Scale in the Roman Economy," 72.

29 Duncan-Jones, "Impact," 124; Marcel Van Ackeren, *A Companion to Marcus Aurelius* (New Jersey, Wiley, 2012): 223, cites Eck, W. (2003), "Der Kaiser als Herr des Heeres. Militärdiplome und die kaiserliche Reichsregierung", in J. Wilkes, ed., *Documenting the Roman Army. Essays in Honor of Margaret Roxan* (London, University of London, 2003): 61, 81 ff.

30 William George Kerr, *A Chronological Study of The Marcomannic Wars of Marcus Aurelius* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995): 50.

effect on the discharge of troops until at least 167/8. This means that the oldest troops who served through the first two to three plague years were not significantly affected by the plague. Since the oldest troops seemingly survived the earliest waves of this plague without any noticeable impact, is it not likely that the younger troops survived the later years at a similar rate.

After 167, the economic situation became more dire: coin minting dropped by seventy-five percent likely because the mint lacked the metal to produce coinage.[31] The mint's lack of metals and the economic difficulties in 167 explain the economic measure which halted the production of *diplomata* until 177. While this economic measure does not explain the lack of *diplomata* from 177-200 CE, when we examine the economic state of the Roman Empire during these years, it becomes evident that the situation that prompted the halting of *diplomata* was largely worsened by political instability and Commodus' lavish spending.[32] Perhaps the resumption of military *diplomata* to the scale prior to 166 did not occur between 177-200 CE because of the poor conditions that led to their initial halt, and this is the cause of our lack of military *diplomata*.

Table 1: Number of Veterans Discharged by Year[33]

Publication	Fort and Province	Legion	Enlisted (Year - CE)	Discharged (Year - CE)	Number of Veterans Discharged
AE 1969/70	Alexandria, Eg	*II Traiana*	132/133	157	136
IMS II 52	Viminacium, MS	*VII Claudia*	134/135	160-?	239
C. VIII 18067	Lambaesis, Nu	*III Augusta*	140/141	166	c. 250?
C. III 6580	Alexandria, Eg	*II Traiana*	168	194	c. 120
IMS II 53	Viminacium, MS	*VII Claudia*	169	195	c. 270
C. VIII 18068	Lambaesis, Nu	*III Augusta*	173	198	c. 300

31 Kerr, *A Chronological Study*, 65-6.

32 Dio, 73.16.

33 This table was published in Miroslava Mirkovík, "The Roster of the VII Claudia Legion." *Zeitschrift* Für *Papyrologie Und Epigraphik* 146 (2004): 214.

Kyle Harper claims that the number of retirees in 195 reveals a "fifteen to twenty percent" loss of men "in the initial wave of the pandemic."[34] If, like Harper, we assume that recruitment rose sharply to combat deaths from the plague. However, the number of veterans discharged in 195/8 may reflect losses from a previous generation (i.e., enlistees prior to 173) and the impact of the war, which would have likely increased enlistment anyways, such that higher levels of recruiting were necessitated in 173; thus, consequently increasing discharges in 195/8.[35] Evidently, the evidence does not necessarily correlate with plague deaths. It may be impossible to *know* exactly how many people died from the plague in these legions, though the increased number of discharges should generally discredit the idea that the 'army' and legions were being 'wiped out' by the plague with the intensity that most of our literary sources suggest. This is precisely why we must more closely reevaluate the impact of the plague.

In *II Traiana*, the discharge of troops in 157 and 194 is remarkably similar, despite the latter having served through the plague years. This evidence, despite its small sample size, and evidently different circumstances, nonetheless suggests that the plague may not have had such a devastating effect on the army. For a more accurate understanding, we must ascertain if *II Traiana* enlisted more soldiers: if their legion did remain fairly stable as we assume, then this shows that the plague did not have any significant effect on their discharge rates.

Scholars suggest that the recruiting of slaves, gladiators, brigands represents a man-power shortage in the army due to the plague.[36] However, this should be contextualized both by need, and by Marcus Aurelius' other policies. Immediately upon taking office, Marcus Aurelius promised each soldier a huge bounty of twenty-thousand sesterces;[37] he raised two new legions, the first since Trajan;[38] he enlisted Italians, of which there were particularly few;[39] and he permanently transferred *Legio V Macedonia* to Potaissa in Dacia.[40] Marcus Aurelius had clearly taken multiple, unorthodox or otherwise extreme steps to prepare troops

34 Harper, 112.

35 For the quotations, and further calculations see Gilliam, 238; Gilliam is working with an outdated list, but his claims are even stronger when corroborated with the new evidence provided by Mirković, "The Roster of the VII Claudia Legion," 214.

36 See footnote 26 for citations.

37 Anthony Richard Birley, *Marcus Aurelius: A Biography* (Oxfordshire, Routledge, 2001): 117.

38 Kerr, *A Chronological Study*, 25.

39 Kerr, 25-26.

40 Kerr, 26.

for the war. In 170, the "Roman offensive met a disastrous setback,"[41] the culmination of a series of troubles which manifested as early as 167 when "six thousand Obii and Langobardi crossed the Danube."[42] In light of the gravity of the war, the recruitment of these individuals seems aligned with other changes in preparation for war on the Northern Front: a response to "an external threat, not merely a need to replace soldiers lost to the plague."[43]

The Marcomannic War strained both the recruiting of troops, and the treasury of the Empire, resulting in Marcus Aurelius' odd recruiting patterns. The recruitment of slaves was done in the Punic Wars:[44] therefore, it was more likely a response to the devastating war, as it was previously, than to the plague. The *Historia Augusta*, despite being an unreliable source, does also suggest that the gladiators were sent to war to deprive the people "of their amusements and thereby drive them to the study of philosophy."[45] Viewed in this light, the recruitment of gladiators seems aligned with Marcus Aurelius' focus on war, and general disinterest in public spectacles. As pertains to the brigands, it is difficult to ascertain why exactly they were being recruited, but it is possible that Marcus Aurelius simply wanted to recruit these people to maintain law and order in the cities while he was away at war. Moreover, slaves, gladiators, and brigands may have also been cheaper to enlist than nobles, many of whom had already perished in the war, and were urging Marcus Aurelius to abandon it.[46] His refusal to abandon the war may have alienated nobles, and he may have had little choice other than to enlist slaves, gladiators, and brigands considering the direness of the war, the financial state of the Empire,[47] and his philosophical goals. The plague, therefore, may have been a fairly unimportant factor in the recruitment of these individuals. Some attention should also be paid to Marcus Aurelius' complete lack of military knowledge:[48] not only did this make the war more difficult and costly, but it may explain some of the unorthodox strategies of his wartime recruiting.

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41 Birley, *Marcus Aurelius*, 163.

42 Kerr, 29-30.

43 Kerr, 61.

44 Kerr, 61.

45 Marcus Aurelius, *Historia Augusta* 23.5.

46 Marcus Aurelius, *Historia Augusta* 22.4-12.

47 Marcus Aurelius, *Historia Augusta* 17.4.

48 Birley, 122.

The penultimate piece of evidence is the enlistment of eighty men from a town in Greece, of which there is no further information.[49] While it is possible that the plague strained manpower so that previously exempt towns were made to offer conscripts, there is no evidence that other previously exempt towns began providing conscripts. It is also unlikely that this one, singular Greek town received a *mandata* to conscript soldiers because of the plague, and if they did, the small number of troops they sent certainly exhibits that the plague was not a particularly large threat. A more realistic answer to why this town began providing conscripts is simply that they underwent some internal change in their policies. The exact reason is hard to decipher, but to suggest that the enlistment from one exempt town shows a strain on man-power from the plague is extremely tenuous, especially when there is no information on the town.

Finally, we must examine an inscription which shows a high number of camp-born individuals being recruited in Alexandria in 168.[50] According to Duncan-Jones, the sons of legionnaires are recruited as a result of the plague killing soldiers. This argument should be taken extremely cautiously. During this period, there was extreme civil unrest in Alexandria which likely affected recruiting patterns. In nearby Kerkenouphis, the Nikochites killed "most of the men of the village," whereas the plague had only killed "some."[51] More than just the threat of the Nikochites, flight and ruination are given as significant vectors in the change of demographics in the Mendesian nome.[52] The study by Elliott evinces the impact of climate change and social instability on the region, and how these factors undermine much of the evidence from that region which may suggest a high mortality rate from the plague.[53] There is, however, no evidence to suggest that it was simply the plague which led to this change in recruitment, and *if* the plague was killing soldiers disproportionately, it does not make sense that their children would have survived to be enlisted: if the plague was ravaging army camps, these sons, after coming into contact with fathers, would have likely succumbed to the plague as well. Therefore, the better explanation is that the civil unrest in Alexandria and the nearby region forced legions to recruit from the sons of soldiers because it was difficult to recruit from increasingly unstable

49 Harper, 112.

50 Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 52; Duncan-Jones, "Structure and Scale," 72.

51 Colin P. Elliott, "The Antonine Plague, Climate Change and Local Violence in Roman Egypt," *Past & Present* 231, no. 231 (2016): 14.

52 Elliott, "The Antonine Plague," 4.

53 See Elliott, "The Antonine Plague,"; see also, Bagnall, "The Effects of Plague: Model and Evidence" and "*P. Oxy*. 4527 and the Antonine Plague in Egypt: Death or Flight" for further arguments suggesting that models of mortality underestimate the impact of flight.

cities and villages.

Overall, most of the physical evidence that has heretofore been examined has other, more plausible and established explanations, primarily based upon socio-economic instability, and the effects of the Marcomannic War. The strains of the war and the socio-economic instability which was affecting several parts of the Empire are greatly attested in a significant body of evidence, ranging from literary, to historical, to archeological sources.[54] While the plague did affect the army, there is simply not enough proof that it affected the army disproportionately, nor does the plague seem as deadly once we evaluate alternate reasons for the evidence. If the plague truly had struck the army so disproportionately, then one might expect there to be more evidence; perhaps this lack of evidence shows that the plague truly was not as impactful as these scholars suggest.

Section 3: Conclusion

All that remains is unevidenced arguments, hinged upon simple lines of reasoning. For example, some claim that the movement of the army, and the conditions they lived in may have caused the plague to disproportionately affect them.[55] While this logic makes sense intrinsically, there are a few confounding factors: troops in the army would have been healthier than the rest of the population; also, they would have been exposed to more disease ecologies through their travels, thus they may have been better adapted to survive the plague; lastly, it is extremely difficult to ascertain what killed soldiers, especially during a brutal war. In fact, it is more likely that our literary sources (mostly Romans) would have *wanted* to blame the deaths of soldiers on the plague (i.e., something not in their control) rather than on the war, because that would mean admitting weakness in their army. These factors deeply complicate the simple argument that the plague would have inherently killed more soldiers. To determine the validity of this argument, we must look at other plagues from that period and ascertain whether this logical argument is actually manifested in reality. Until such a study is undertaken, or until further evidence is found which directly shows that the army was disproportionately affected, it is extremely difficult to support this claim. The literary evidence which has been evaluated is extremely unreliable, whereas the physical evidence does not necessarily suggest a connection between mortality and the plague. Thus, the claims of extreme mortality in the army, and of the plague in general, seem far too unfounded to be taken at face value without a further reevaluation.

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54 Certainly there are more texts which discuss the plague, for example the *Oracula Sibyllina*, but texts like this often gloss over the plague and focus on other issues that the Empire was facing, indicating, perhaps, a minimal effect of the plague. For further reading see Brunn, "The Antonine Plague and the Third-Century Crisis."

55 Duncan-Jones, "Revisited," 51.

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Taking the Piss: The Coinage of Pisistratus

Anoushka Banerjie

Abstract
The early coinage of Athens, known as the *Wappenmünzen*, appeared in the mid-sixth century BCE, and has drawn scrutiny in regards to their origins and function. The archaeological and literary evidence suggest Pisistratus was responsible for the introduction of these coins, and further studies have suggested that the changing type is related in some capacity to Athenian aristocratic families. This second hypothesis is relatively unexplored within the current literature: though it is known that early minters from aristocratic families often stamped their emblems on coins, the connection between Pisistratus and emblems is not sufficiently understood. I propose a stronger focus on Pisistratus' political networking using Herodotus' *Histories*, and a reinterpretation of the possible functions of changing type stamps. I argue that the *Wappenmünzen*'s changing type was a physical and economic manifestation of Pisistratus' political networking, and that they were explicitly a means of controlling his political allies. The different type stamps represented various factions with whom Pisistratus established social and professional networks.

Introduction

The advent of coinage in Greece is a thoroughly scrutinized event due to the limited amount of literary and material evidence. It has been an ongoing challenge for the better part of the last century to confirm the general timeline and sociopolitical contexts in which coinage emerged. Thus far, there are three reliable hypotheses concerning coinage in the eastern Mediterranean: the Lydians were the first to mint coins, the Greeks began minting coins after the Lydians at the tail end of the seventh century, and the use and availability of coins largely depended on contemporary social and political values. The third hypothesis forms the foundation for this paper. I will argue that the evolution of coinage in Athens was mostly due to the political networking of the tyrant Pisistratus, who came to power in the middle of the sixth century BCE, and whose family remained in power for nearly the next forty years.

By using a spectrum of political strategies as presented by Blanton et al., I examine the type of interactions between Pisistratus and his clients that necessitated the development of coins. At the two ends of the spectrum are the corporate strategy and the networking strategy, which describe the relationship between the ruler and polity in specific contexts.[1] The corporate strategy promotes community action and bottom-up society-building, resulting in a strong sense of camaraderie among members of various classes.[2] The corporate strategy promotes nationalism and civic identity as created by the people, rather than being ascribed by the ruling class for raw political utility in foreign relations. Athens, after the democratic reforms of Cleisthenes, is an example of a society that uses the corporate strategy to function. The network strategy relies on top-down control and access to networks of exchange and alliance both within and outside the polity.[3] This strategy does not create a popular sense of identity, but rather ensures regional subservience to the ruling class as long as they remain in power. The strategies employed by rulers are not immutable — if leadership changes, or if popular opinion has a strong enough influence, the strategy might also change.

Rulers may choose to implement a combination of strategies depending on their relationships with various political, economic, or social actors. A ruler can promote bottom-up, democratic governance within a polity while controlling networks of exchange with trade partners outside the polity — blending the corporate and network strategies. The social and political spheres had a significant effect on the economics of any given region, since it was these relationships that facilitated or blocked economic relations between polities. Tyrannical rulers tended towards the networking strategy since their method of power acquisition was usually outside the normal legal system and required a great deal of control and networking among allies. Maintaining their rule required them to strengthen their influence and win approval, rather than directly collaborate with their polity.

Out of his three attempts to establish himself as tyrant in Athens, Pisistratus was only successful in his third. His strategy differed significantly from his previous two attempts because he employed coinage as a means of control over interactions between various groups. He was an opportunistic ruler and made the most of economic reforms, using coinage to incentivize allies and Athenian citizens to pledge

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1 Richard E. Blanton et al., "A Dual-Processual Theory for the Evolution of Mesoamerican Civilization," *Current Anthropology* 37, no. 1 (1996): 1.

2 Peter N. Peregrine and Carol R. Ember, "Network Strategy and War," in *Alternative Pathways to Complexity: A Collection of Essays on Architecture, Economics, Power, and Cross-Cultural Analysis*, ed. Lane F. Fargher and Verenice Y. Heredia Espinoza (University Press of Colorado, 2016): 259.

3 Peregrine and Ember, "Network Strategy," 259.

loyalty, paying his mercenaries, and collecting revenue across Attica.[4] As a tyrant, Pisistratus had to use this alternate method of gaining power, since the legal method was nearly impossible for him. His networking strategy, first with allies, then with aristocratic enemies, earned him a solid footing within Athens and enabled him to rule for almost twenty years, albeit after two failed attempts. Compared to Pisistratus, Solon remained as archon of Athens only to make changes to laws, as requested by Athenians, before going into a self-imposed exile.[5] From this, we can infer that his time in office was short. Due to the unusually short time he spent in office, followed by ten years away, it is highly unlikely that Solon created the first coins of Athens.

My argument is twofold: first, I argue that it was Pisistratus who first developed coinage in Athens as a means of networking control over various factions and reject the possibility that Solon developed coinage at all. Second, I argue that the fourteen different type stamps represented various factions with whom Pisistratus established a social and political bond. I establish the historical context using Herodotus' *Histories*, focusing on the strategies that Pisistratus used to gain and maintain power. I emphasize that Pisistratus was an opportunist who utilized the networking strategy where he could. Then, I discuss the change in physical shape of currency and establish the function of type stamps in the context of trade networks. Finally, I examine the ways in which Pisistratus used silver coinage to strengthen his political and economic network.

Historical context

Pisistratus made three attempts to rule Athens and the region under its authority. The first attempt took place in approximately 560 BCE, when Pisistratus formed a faction to rival those of Megacles and Lycurgus.[6] As a demagogue in search of power, Pisistratus collected followers and named himself the leader of his faction, then wounded himself intending to gain sympathetic support from Athenians in the city, and finally cited his successes as a general in the war against Megara to promote his leadership.[7] The plan worked, and Pisistratus won club-wielding bodyguards who followed him around and supported his seizure of the acropolis.[8] However, he did not change any existing legal or political institutions.[9] Whether

4 Hdt. 1.62-3.

5 Hdt. 1.29-30.

6 Hdt. 1.59.

7 Hdt. 1.59.

8 Hdt. 1.59.

9 Hdt. 1.59.

this was a conscious decision so as not to cause further political strife, or if he simply wanted the seat of power, Herodotus does not say. Regardless of his ultimate motive, Pisistratus laid the foundations for his network in this first effort. Recall that the networking strategy functions on exchange and alliance; Pisistratus usedhis wartime success as barter for political power, gaining trust among Athenian aristocracy on the basis of his earned honour and glory.

After roughly five years, in 555 BCE, Megacles and Lycurgus formed a coalition and drove Pisistratus out, dissolving the tyranny.[10] This was a poor decision: the factions belonging to Megacles and Lycurgus broke apart and began fighting among themselves, prompting Megacles to offer the tyranny to Pisistratus once more, if Pisistratus would marry Megacles' daughter.[11] Since the factional in-fighting was so severe, Pisistratus and his followers determined it was best to have the goddess Athena announce his right to rule as a sign of divine authority.[12] They dressed up a woman from Paiana as Athena and taught her how to "project a distinguished appearance," then had her lead Pisistratus back into the city proper.[13] Herodotus believes this to be a rather silly scheme, but presumably the in-fighting was so extreme that the Athenians would have needed a miracle to stop fighting. Pisistratus held up his end of the bargain and married Megacles' daughter, once again strengthening his political network, but his second attempt was thwarted by his own actions: his marriage to Megacles' daughter would have borne him children of the Alcmaeonid line, which was publicly known to be cursed.[14] To avoid his own bloodline being affected by the Alcmaeonid curse, he "had intercourse with [Megacles' daughter] in an indecent way," angering Megacles, and Pisistratus was subsequently driven out of Athens once more.[15]

Over the next ten years, in his exile, Pisistratus and his faction travelled around Attica, collecting debts from various cities.[16] Herodotus singles out Thebes as providing Pisistratus with an exceptionally large sum of money, and further notes the arrival of mercenaries from Argos, as well as a man from Naxos named Lygdamis who provided money and men.[17] At this point, Pisistratus had formed a

10 Hdt. 1.60.

11 Hdt. 1.60.

12 Hdt. 1.60.

13 Hdt. 1.60.

14 Hdt. 1.61.

15 Hdt. 1.61. Herodotus refers to their intercourse as "indecent"; the reasonable interpretation would be "in a way that could not beget children."

16 Hdt. 1.61.

17 Hdt. 1.61.

strong network of allies through his favours and debts owed to him. Furthermore, the people of Marathon, the first city seized by Pisistratus, preferred tyranny over freedom, and joined his cause.[18]

His interfactional war with Athens took place in 546 BCE.[19] Pisistratus successfully seized power and established his tyranny in Athens, drawing revenue through taxes and bribes from both Attica and the region near the River Strymon, which formed the boundary between Thrace and Macedonia.[20] The sheer expanse of his influence as well as his ability to draw revenue from this vast region demonstrates his nearly unmatched networking abilities across Attica and Thrace. He established himself as the *polis*-wide patron, as tyrants tend to do, providing work for mercenaries and establishing advance loans to farmers.[21] Keeping with the network strategy, Pisistratus provided these advance loans to keep farmers funded, satisfied, and most importantly scattered about the country to prevent them from coming into the city and engaging in public business, effectively "union-busting" and mitigating any chance for rebellion against him.[22] Furthermore, he had a tendency to employ force against his opponents — sometimes physical, and other times psychological, using intimidation and fear tactics to force antagonistic factions into submission.[23] This kind of force in conjunction with his dogged determination deterred his opponents from acting directly against him, instead choosing to work with him, thus securing a network.

Part of Pisistratus' charm was that he hailed from the hill district of Athens, which could not sufficiently support itself due to the lack of arable land or access to water, unlike the districts belonging to Megacles and Lycurgus who ruled the shore and plains, respectively. Pisistratus was effectively a man of the people, a leader for those who could not afford a better life, and this made him incredibly popular with the lower classes. He was not particularly popular among the aristocracy and middle-class due to his methods in past efforts to gain power, and so he could not establish an *alliance* network, but he could buy out his opponents and establish a *business* network instead.[24] In fact, in all three of his efforts, Pisistratus managed

18 Hdt. 1.61.

19 Hdt. 1.61.

20 Hdt. 1.64.

21 Thomas R. Martin, "Why Did the Greek '*Polis*' Originally Need Coins?" *Historia: Zeitschrift Für Alte Geschichte* 45, no. 3 (1996): 272; G. L. Cawkwell, "Early Greek Tyranny and the People," *The Classical Quarterly* 45, no. 1 (1995): 75.

22 Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia*, 16.2–4.

23 Cawkwell, "Early Greek Tyranny," 74–75, 77.

24 Cawkwell, "Early Greek Tyranny," 74.

to establish a network of some sort to support his tyranny. The difference between his first two efforts and his final effort was money — buying out his opponents and keeping them happy with monetary funding and other business transactions was an effective political strategy, and highlights the necessity of networking as a tyrant.

Evolution of currency

Pisistratus used silver currency to establish loans and bribes, according to Aristotle, though whether the currency was bullion in ingot form or coin is unclear.[25] Coins and ingots were both used as trade commodities, since the weights of these currencies were their exact value. However, ingots were eventually phased out in favour of coins. To understand the evolution of coinage, we must first examine the function of metal bullion as a trade commodity, as well as the various reasons why bullion ingots were eventually phased out. By the seventh and sixth centuries, most *poleis* were using bullion as the mode of currency.[26] As the value of commodity-money depends on its weight, bullion would not lose its value even if it was altered in shape, provided nothing was added to or removed from it. The weight system in the bullion trade was standardized across the Mediterranean, even reaching as far as the Middle East and South Asia.[27]

As commodity-money, weighted bullion was convenient for a time. The intrinsic value of silver and gold were their actual value in the market, and they were transported as ingots — relatively easy to handle and store, but still unwieldy for casual purposes. Weighted bullion functioned as a trading item in a barter market, where it would be traded for something of equal worth. The whole ingot may not be traded, however; slivers of metal would be sliced off to match a price in weight. Naturally, the process of carrying ingots, slicing metal, and weighing out the appropriate amount became inconvenient as trade grew between *poleis*.[28] Flans became the popular physical form of currency, first introduced by the Lydians around 600 BCE.[29] In flan shape, currency became easier to port around — it was easier to carry a pouch of coins than haul a cart-load of ingots to the *agora*.

25 Cawkwell, "Early Greek Tyranny," 75; Aristotle, *Athenaion Politeia*, 16.2-4.

26 Clare Rowan, "Coinage as Commodity and Bullion in the Western Mediterranean, ca. 550–100 BCE," *Mediterranean Historical Review* 28, no. 2 (2013): 106.

27 Rowan, "Coinage as Commodity," 106.

28 Robert W. Wallace, "The Origin of Electrum Coinage," *American Journal of Archaeology* 91, no. 3 (1987): 387; Colin M. Kraay, "Coins and Minting," in *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1976): 386.

29 Wallace, "Electrum Coinage," 385.

They were usually smaller denominations of money, and far more convenient for day-to-day transactions made by an average Greek citizen.[30]

By the end of the seventh century and into the sixth, bullion was often stamped, usually by the *polis* of origin or some political authority.[31] The stamps performed a similar function to those of modern coins: modern coins are civic identifiers, acknowledge state authority, and therefore carry a guarantee of value.[32] In the same way, stamps represented their home polity by usually featuring publicly accepted emblems Athenian coinage used the owl, Aeginetan coinage used a turtle, Ephesian coinage used a stag, and so on. These emblems were essentially signatures on money. A *polis* required significant top-down control to have a single stamp on all of its coinage, and many authorities could not implement such uniformity — Athens would not gain uniformity until its democratic reforms. The new precedent of stamping made unmarked or wrongly marked bullion less trustworthy in comparison, since the value could not be guaranteed by a relevant authority. Without a guarantee, the coin is less likely to be accepted in trade. Trade outside a given area depends more on the coinage material than on the stamp.[33] The stamp would only guarantee value within the area under the governing authority of the *polis*; there is no trustworthy meaning to the stamp outside this area, thus a coin having or not having a stamp would not matter to outsiders.

If a coin is not identifiable by colour, then it must be identifiable by weight, and if it is not identifiable by weight, then it has to be identifiable by emblem. Since most Greek *poleis* minted currency using silver, colour did not matter. As previously established, the weight mattered more to traders between *poleis*, but having a stamped coin would identify exactly which *polis* a trader hails from. The size of a coin indicated its value, and since size and value both correlate to weight, smaller coins would be of lower value than larger coins. Unstamped currency from various *poleis* would not be recognized as being from those particular *poleis* without the emblematic stamp. Furthermore, moneyers' signatures were printed on the coins themselves, and this practice remained even when coin types became static and unchanging.[34] Kroll refers to this practice in the contexts of both early

30 Wallace, "Electrum Coinage," 386.

31 Colin M. Kraay, "Coins and Minting," in *Archaic and Classical Greek Coins* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1976), 2.

32 Rowan, "Coinage as Commodity," 106.

33 M. J. Price, "Thoughts on the Beginning of Coinage," in *Studies in Numismatic Method* (Cambridge, Great Britain: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 5.

34 John H. Kroll, "From Wappenmünzen to Gorgoneia to Owls," *Museum Notes (American Numismatic Society)* 26 (1981): 6.

Greek coinage and Roman Republican coinage, indicating its longevity.[35]

It has also been suggested that coins were a means of standardizing bonus payment, or gifts.[36] Without a state-sanctioned "standard" currency, like the later Athenian owl coins, it would have been difficult to introduce coinage into the economy without circulating it as a reward payment first.[37] Metal was a status symbol, and much like modern currency, it was a marker of status if one managed to amass a considerable amount.[38] Gifts of money served both to strengthen the relationship between issuer and recipient, and more broadly to introduce new currency to the economy.

Coinage therefore performed two main functions: it was both a means of economic trade and a means of strengthening social bonds. Since Pisistratus used currency in some form to establish loans and give bribes, both functions played a role in his networking strategy. The Athenian *Wappenmünzen* are the product of his efforts to maintain good social and political relations while strengthening trade and the economy.

The *Wappenmünzen*

Athenian currency underwent its own evolution over the sixth century BCE. One hypothesis posits that Solon was responsible for certain key reforms of Athenian currency. During Solon's reign, around 600 BCE, Athens used the Aeginetan silver weight standard for the drachma.[39] The Aeginetan silver weight standard meant that seventy drachmae equalled a single *mina*, which Solon changed so that the Athenian *mina* was worth one hundred drachmae.[40] Naturally, this meant that the Athenian drachma became lighter in weight. However, as Kroll and Waggoner note, there is no evidence of change in the weight of extant Athenian coinage, though there is a change in standard denomination around Pisistratus' time.[41] The archeological evidence does not support a major Solonian reform to coinage, much less his invention of the *Wappenmünzen*.

35 Kroll, "Wappenmünzen," 6-7.

36 Price, "Beginning of Coinage," 7.

37 Price, "Beginning of Coinage," 7.

38 Price, "Beginning of Coinage," 7.

39 John H. Kroll and Nancy Waggoner, "Dating the Earliest Coins of Athens Corinth and Aegina," *American Journal of Archaeology* 88, no. 3 (1984): 327.

40 Molly Miller, "Solon's Coinage," *Arethusa* 4, no. 1 (1971): 36. The Euboic-Attic drachma would have weighed 4.3 grams, so the *mina* weighed about 43 grams.

41 Kroll and Waggoner, "Dating the Earliest Coins," 327.

The *Wappenmünzen* likely appeared later, in the mid-sixth century BCE. There were fourteen issues in total, circulated from at least 560 to 510 BCE.[42] Twelve of these issues were drachmas, which have already been established to appear well after Solon's time, and the last two issues were tetradrachms, appearing at the tail end of the sixth century BCE.[43] The twelve didrachm issues use various type stamps on the obverse, but the two tetradrachm issues maintained a *gorgoneia* stamp.[44] The reverses of these coins were usually a square incuse stamp divided into quarters by an 'X.'[45] All fourteen issues use icons that are present in Athenian art, unmistakably indicating civic identification. However, since this was only of significance within Athens and her immediate surrounding area, they were probably the signatures of local moneyers.[46]

Type stamps on coins, as previously established, were often signatures of the moneyers. While the stamps used for the *Wappenmünzen* were likely chosen by various minters, however, these minters themselves had been chosen by Pisistratus. Keeping in line with the networking strategy, Pisistratus gifted the moneyer position — a coveted position — to chosen allies, including aristocrats and personal friends.[47] He allowed his allies to choose their own emblems and imprint them on money that would then be circulated through Athens and *demes* under its authority.[48] Not only was this an effective method of maintaining good relationships, but it was also a way of ensuring the moneyers would be honest. Stamps acted as a guarantee of value, and if the coin was not the correct value, as was guaranteed, the moneyer could be identified. By rewarding potentially hostile parties with their own mints and oversight of coin-striking, Pisistratus created a means of self-protection in the event that a moneyer was dishonest, and he maintained a strong political network that lasted beyond his death.

42 Miller, "Solon's Coinage," 36.

43 Colin M. Kraay, "Hoards, Small Change, and the Origin of Coinage," *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* 84 (1964): 80. Didrachms equalled two drachmae; tetradrachms equalled four drachmae.

44 Kroll, "Wappenmünzen," 10-11.

45 Gil Davis, "Athenian Electrum Coinage Reconsidered: Types, Standard, Value, and Dating." *The Numismatic Chronicle (1966-)* 175 (2015): 2. Davis notes that only the owl, bull, and wheel obverses are reliably identifiable with *Wappenmünzen* emissions, since other coins use types that are not convincingly similar to known *Wappenmünzen* types.

46 Kroll, "Wappenmünzen," 9.

47 Kroll, Wappenmünzen," 9.

48 Kroll, "Wappenmünzen," 9.

Conclusion

Through years of shrewd scheming and unparalleled networking abilities, Pisistratus was able to establish a dynasty of tyranny, and crucially, firmly root his rule in the Athenian economy, influencing social and political relationships along the way. The invention of coinage in Athens was inevitable; coinage was developing all across Greece over the course of the sixth century BCE, and there was no reason for Athens to be the odd *polis* out. However, the implementation of the *Wappenmünzen* as a way to specifically control a network of allies and enemies alike was entirely unique. The circumstances of Pisistratus' three attempts and eventual ascent to power necessitated a novel method of maintaining that power, something his allies and enemies could invest in for their own individual gain. He understood the necessity of emblematic representation and the ongoing evolution of bullion into coinage and used it to his advantage, for the good of the people, and with little detriment to the aristocracy. Pisistratus, the opportunistic tyrant, manipulated the development of coinage to fit his goals, and set the precedent for the kind of networking Athens would have to do to maintain its reputation in the future.

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A Mascot For What You've Become: Antinous and the Iconography of Queer Grief

Elisa Kogan Penha
First Year Feature

Abstract
Victorian reception of Antinous, the young lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, is almost exclusively centred around his sensuality. In the centuries since his death, Antinous has become a religious symbol of homoerotic desire, and the evolving world of queer paganism. However, his veneration exists at odds with his contemporary posthumously identified sexuality, and his deification informs a larger tradition of the glorification of queer death in both history and popular culture. This paper will trace several instances of Antinous' reception, beginning with the material culture and texts about Antinous made in antiquity, moving then towards his literary and new-cult reception from the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries, and his transformation into a "gay god" by decadent, all-male drinking societies. I make a conclusion on the harmful purposes behind the overwhelming worship of young and dead queer people, one which has been shaped by and thus informed a culture made uncomfortable by elder queer people from the ancient world and until today.

The reverence for and deification of queer[1] men in the ancient world usually depended on them dying young and gorgeous. Hyacinthus, Hylas, Narcissus, Ganymede, Adonis, and the non-mythological outlier Antinous all share a likeness in their portraiture. They are addled by the same desirable bodies and lithe, unbearded faces, as though each *erastes*, each emperor, and each god shared one lover, more queer fantasy than real man. The tragic commonality which binds the male lovers together — their deaths, abductions, or imposed immortality — demonstrates a pattern in the means of depicting virtuosity in ancient queer figureheads. Though we are unable to assign characters and figures of antiquity

1 Throughout this paper, I use modern labels such as 'queer' to describe Antinous, Hadrian, and their contemporaries. I am using these terms because this is a paper about the reception of Antinous as a vehicle for current queer theory. I argue that 'queerness' works as a fluid and encompassing term which does not pigeonhole Antinous to a certain sexual orientation as he would be assigned today, but still functions well enough as a descriptor for contemporary readers to understand him. I use the word 'gay' in regards to Antinous in order to exemplify his modern day reception beneath the MLM umbrella.

definitive, modern labels of identity, the stigmatic connotations of same-sex relationships remain readable, and so does the parallel nature of their portrayals. The beautiful and dead caricature of a gay man, too desirable to be untouched but lost before he may become impure, is not only a staple of classical Greco-Roman history and mythos, but also of European classical reception and homoerotic stereotyping in contemporary media.

Antinous, the lover of the Roman Emperor Hadrian, was posthumously iconified as a symbol of homoeroticism and same-sex desire and necromanced into the youthful flag of queerness for worship cults and the queer scenes of Renaissance and Baroque England and France. Antinous as a figure of queerness represented through youthful and sexual grief has informed and been contextualized by a larger culture of similar ideology, one which admires queer youth purely in their deaths, when they are encased in untouchable heroism and stripped of the ability to act on their sexuality. The post-mortem iconography of Antinous is paradoxically a monument to both male purity and deeply sexual ideation. In tracing his material and literary portraiture from the time directly after his death to the rebirth of classical analysis, as well as those of contemporarily similar queer figures, one uncovers a disquieting history of artistically romanticizing the deaths of gay men to divorce them from sexual possibility and instead preserve them in young, sexless, glory.

The death of Antinous is contested, though most scholars agree it happened in some kind of suicidal and sacrificial procession in which Antinous wished to devote himself eternally to Hadrian.[2] The *Historiae Augustae* implies that this claim was commonly made and unsurprising, saying that such a fate was obvious because of "his [Antinous'] beauty and Hadrian's sensuality,"[3] thus underscoring the depth of their passion and the longing to keep Antinous in an honourable stasis. One must also remember that the *Historiae Augustae* was written long after the deaths of both Antinous and Hadrian. Therefore, such assumptions of possible gossip surrounding the alleged suicide of Antinous become more reflective of Aelius Spartanius, the author of the section of the *Historia Augustae*, and his fourth and fifth-century contemporaries than that of Hadrian's Rome.

Hadrian's memorializing of Antinous through artistic dedications immortalizes his former personhood into ornamental decadence. The physicality of such

2 Sarah Waters, "'The Most Famous Fairy in History': Antinous and Homoerotic Fantasy," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 6, no. 2 (1995): 197.

3 *Scriptores Historiae Augustae*, ed. and trans. by David Magie, Loeb Classical Library 139 (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 45.

Antinoan revivals include the founding and naming of a city at the sight of his death called Antinoöpolis. This city would also act as the sacred ground for the worshipping of the (at Hadrian's demand) deified Antinous. His cult practices, like all matters pertaining to Antinous, are elusive and not often given specific attestations outside the mere fact of them existing. However, later Christian criticism of the reverence of Antinous in and surrounding Antinoöpolis offers a prejudiced view of the people involved in his cult. In her thesis, Niayesh Jamshidi highlights the following passage from the *Exhortation to the Heavens* by Clement of Alexandria, which gives information on the worship of Antinous:

> Another new deity was added to the number with great religious pomp in Egypt, and was near being so in Greece by the king of the Romans, who deified Antinous, whom he loved as Zeus loved Ganymede, and whose beauty was of a very rare order: for lust is not easily restrained, destitute as it is of fear; and men now observe the sacred nights of Antinous, the shameful character of which the lover who spent them with him knew well.[4]

Jamshidi further states that Clement's work stresses and implies that Greek worship of Antinous happened solely because the Emperor Hadrian requested it, and the worship would change or cease entirely if they knew the true "character" of Antinous.[5] Though such Christian writings are an example of overwhelming anti-pagan propaganda, attacking the character of a deified youth such as Antinous holds a coded condemnation for the one and only piece of his attributed living character: his sexual relationship to Hadrian. Despite these condemnations of Antinous' irresistible and sinful lustfulness, and frequent claims that worship of Antinous only came as a result of a fear of Hadrian — complaints which, at the time of the writings, held no validity, as Hadrian had been dead for hundreds of years —, the popularity of Antinous persevered.[6] It was a careful persevering, however: never too indulgent in the life of Antinous, and more so interested in his death, which left him an ephebic lover for the rest of time. He was syncretized most often with the Egyptian god Osiris and with the Roman Bacchus, both of whom share stories of dismemberment and rebirth. Antinous, in turn, was said to have taken on death-god responsibilities, with inscriptions asking him for safe passage, said inscriptions also associated with Apollo, Ganymede,

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4 Clement of Alexandria, *The Writings of Clement of Alexandria*, trans. William Willson (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1882): 4, quoted by Niayesh Jamshidi, *Building a God: The Cult of Antinous and Identity in the Eastern Roman Empire* (MA thesis, The University of Oregon, 2018), 17.

5 Niayesh Jamshidi, *Building a God*, 17-8.

6 Jamshidi, *Building a God*, 20.

and Narcissus.[7] It thus becomes apparent, with these associations to other mythological queer icons, that Antinous is permitted to make use of his queerness and queer associations in death when he occupies the uncanny space of gods and heroes, but not when he is thought of as a real boy.

When looking at the statues of Antinous which littered Rome after his death and for millennia afterwards, much scholarly attention has been devoted to analyzing and predicting the societal "correctness" of his affair with Hadrian by drawing attention to whether or not he is depicted with pubic hair. If he was, he would supposedly be a man "of age," eighteen or nineteen years old, and it would therefore be shameful for him to be posited as the passive partner in a homoerotic relationship. To depict him without pubic hair, as full-body statues of Antinous most often do, would, theoretically, imply an age of thirteen or fourteen.[8] I am hesitant to agree with this hypothesis regarding the age of Antinous. I find it becomes anachronistic when considering his purported year or birth, death, and the posthumous nature of the works, as none of these artists ever met him. Perhaps the lack of pubic hair on the statues of Antinous is indicative of mere Roman aesthetic concern. Idyllic Roman beauty was heavily reliant on sultry youth as the utmost standard. Elizabeth Bartman opens her piece *Eros's Flame: Images of Sexy Boys in Roman Ideal Sculpture*: "Images of youthful males characterized by a soft, just-pubescent physique and a relaxed, soignee pose constitute a distinctive sculptural genre popular during Roman times."[9] It must have been expected, maybe necessary, to depict Antinous in accordance to this, as he was the deified favourite of an Emperor. However, it was equally necessary to somehow remove the eroticism, and not appear in praise of it. This implies the people who made or commissioned statues themselves did not want to acknowledge passive homoeroticism in somebody to whom they prayed. They wished to worship Antinous but, as Clement and the Christian writers so boisterously claimed, did not wish to accept his living character. In death, the de-aging of Antinous served as a way to reshape him into a man abiding by their standards of virtue — making him young, probably unwilling, and sexual, but not in a way he would be able to enjoy. Antinous was reworked into somebody not shameful to grieve. What is the allure of grieving Antinous, then, if it becomes necessary to remove his agency within his queer sexuality in order to pay him religious respects? Antinous became so unrecognizable from the amount of syncretism

7 Jamshidi, *Building a God,* 20-1.

8 R.R.R. Smith, *Antinous: Boy Made God* (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, 2018).

9 Elizabeth Bartman, "Eros's Flame: Images of Sexy Boys in Roman Ideal Sculpture." *Memoirs of the American Academy in Rome. Supplementary Volumes* 1, no. 11 (2002): 249.

that he is subject to that the religion surrounding him behaved more as a way to bring together worshipped aspects of similar deities, than a religion which specifically longed to worship Antinous. Later traditions, however, would reclaim the sexuality of Antinous, though it would remain concealed beneath the guise of appreciating him unmoveable in death.

In Ethan Doyle White's study on Antinous and queer paganism, he writes of the second revival of Antinous by the English, French, and German Gothic literary tradition, bringing Antinous to the very forefront of homophile cultures in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. He appeared in the works of Oscar Wilde and Montague Summers, and he was adopted as a mascot by hedonistic all-male drinking societies. White draws a comparison between Antinous and St. Sebastian, both of whom "had been young male religious icons who had been appropriated and secularized for the homoerotic culture of the nineteenth-century."[10] White continues, however, to comment on a difference in the figures: "What the new cultus of Antinous did was novel in that it took this figure from gay culture, one who was not explicitly religious, and *made* him explicitly religious, in effect re-deifying him. In this it represented a sacralization of older elements of gay culture."[11] Forcing new cults of religion onto Antinous was a deliberate redirection for those who wished to worship him but remained ashamed to admire him in his life. In early classical reception, Antinous was allegedly freed of the need to stifle and disguise his sensuality, and instead able to be revered as a wholly gay deity. But it is not so simple, for Antinous still needs to overcome the boundary of his worship being conditional to his youth. His life and sexual history with Hadrian are meant to be taken as examples of admirable decadence and not displays of romantic devotion and identity. His gayness is young and his sexual rebellion is made thrilling by the manner of his death. The Antinous of this second revival is still forbidden from being anything more than a beautiful corpse who would share not an inkling of veneration if he were not tragic. His receptive portrayals make his suicide into a harmful extension of his queerness. The youth of Antinous becomes a weapon, or perhaps a shield, wielded by his followers, for his sexuality to be acceptable in cult religion in the seventeenth through nineteenth centuries.

The cheek of the Antinous Mondragone was defaced with lipstick from the kiss of an admiring woman during a continental tour of the bust. Amelia Arenas recounts her learning of this, as well as her deep unsurprise that it had happened

10 Ethan Doyle White, "The New Cultus of Antinous: Hadrian's Deified Lover and Contemporary Queer Paganism," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 20, no. 1 (2016): 37.

11 White, "The New Cultus of Antinous," 37-8.

— that even and especially in his death, Antinous was an object of fervent lust. Arenas tells the familiar story of Antinous, and offers the following hypothesis on the unknown inner workings of Antinous' mind leading to his alleged suicide, suggesting he "may have become prey to the fear of growing up, of becoming unfit to stay by Hadrian's side and thus replaced by another, younger 'favorite.'"[12] While there is nothing from Antinous to sustain this musing, the larger context of the world in which he lived, and the world in which he died and thereby continued to live, certainly gives reason enough as to why this would have been a valid, and likely true, concern for the young Antinous. The sexual longevity of gay men in both the ancient and the contemporary world are pressing and vile matters of queer discourse. Contrasting the two becomes important with tracing systemic lineages of the dismissal of queer identity as "brand new" or relegated for youth.

In recent years, the internet has seen the rise of the term 'twink death,'[13] referring to the aging of a young, effeminate man into somebody older, less thin, and therefore less sexually appealing. 'Twink death,' or the degradation of desirable qualities in young gay and bisexual men, demonstrates an ugly underbelly to queer reception, informing the culture of wishing to keep gay men eternally young in order to preserve their attractiveness and virility. It is a term carrying malicious weight, giving a negative connotation to the mere idea of a gay man growing up and no longer presenting the youthful body of a teenager. Antinous illustrates the grotesque image of a gay man highly esteemed for having died before he could suffer this degradation.

Perhaps it is necessary, then, to examine how Hadrian is allowed to be remembered in equivalence. Hadrian lived until he was sixty-two. He is, in popular memory, afforded the affluence of characterization which transcends his sexuality. The justification that, of course, a man with a longer life would surely be remembered for doing more than a man who died young, does not fully explain this, as it is not simply Hadrian's tangible feats which have the grace of being codified, but his personality outside of sex. George C. Schoolfield writes, "Apart from being a poet, Hadrian had a second sort of reputation that also attracted literary attention: his affection for beauty."[14] Even the trivial implication of

12 Amelia Arenas, "Antinous' Lips: A Note on the Slippery Matter of Realism in Portraiture." *Arion: A Journal of Humanities and the Classics* 19, no. 1 (2011): 3.

13 A note that within the colloquial use of 'twink death,' the term 'twink' does not exclusively refer to lithe gay or bisexual men, as the correct queer terminology states, but rather to any twink-appearing man: skinny, usually white, feminine, and young.

14 George C. Schoolfield, "Hadrian, Antinous, and a Rilke Poem." *Creative Encounter: Festschrift for Herman*

Hadrian having a "reputation" is notable. Hadrian, for all intents and purposes, was just as much of a participant as Antinous in their relationship, and yet his queer sexuality became historically unimpressive in the absence of his youth. In popular thought, he *is* a military sensation and a hedonistic emperor, but he *was* "gay" long ago, before he had the chance to grow and know better.

The truth of the glamourization of queer grief becomes, then, the glamourization of queer people frozen in time, where their sexuality cannot become threatening, and can remain ideal and palatable — mentally and physically — for consumers. Why did Antinous need to be so intensely deified in order for his sexuality to be seen as something beautiful, and why was his and Hadrian's living love not enough to be valued for the same reasons they are worshipped post-mortem? Why must queerness be first buried and made static before it can be presented as something virtuous? Would Antinous have been deified in the same way if he had been able to grow older? Gay love, it appears, both in the ancient world and today, can only be attractive when the participants are "young enough" to turn it away and dismiss it as teenage libido, a sentiment which exists because of centuries of queer grief that did not allow societies to become used to the idea of aging queer people. Antinous, the lover of Hadrian, and Antinous, the functionally unknown boy from Bithynia, will forever be admired for never growing, admired for dying before he could become "gross." There are more portraits of Antinous than there are portraits of most Roman emperors. We are privy to thousands of copies of his large nose and wide, smooth, chest, his curly hair, his downturned eyes, and his purposefully de-aged body: an endless funeral for a boy whose greatest accomplishment was to die. Antinous escapes the dreaded 'twink death' and instead wanders a purgatory of his own sexuality — unexplored — and his own personality — lost to erasure and overshadowed by the idea of sex. It was said that Hadrian "wept like a woman"[15] when Antinous died. One wonders, if Hadrian *had* been a woman, if we would have learned of the death of Antinous at all.

Salingere 91, ed. Leland R. Phelps and A. Tilo Alt (University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 146.

15 Sha., *Hadr.* 45.

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