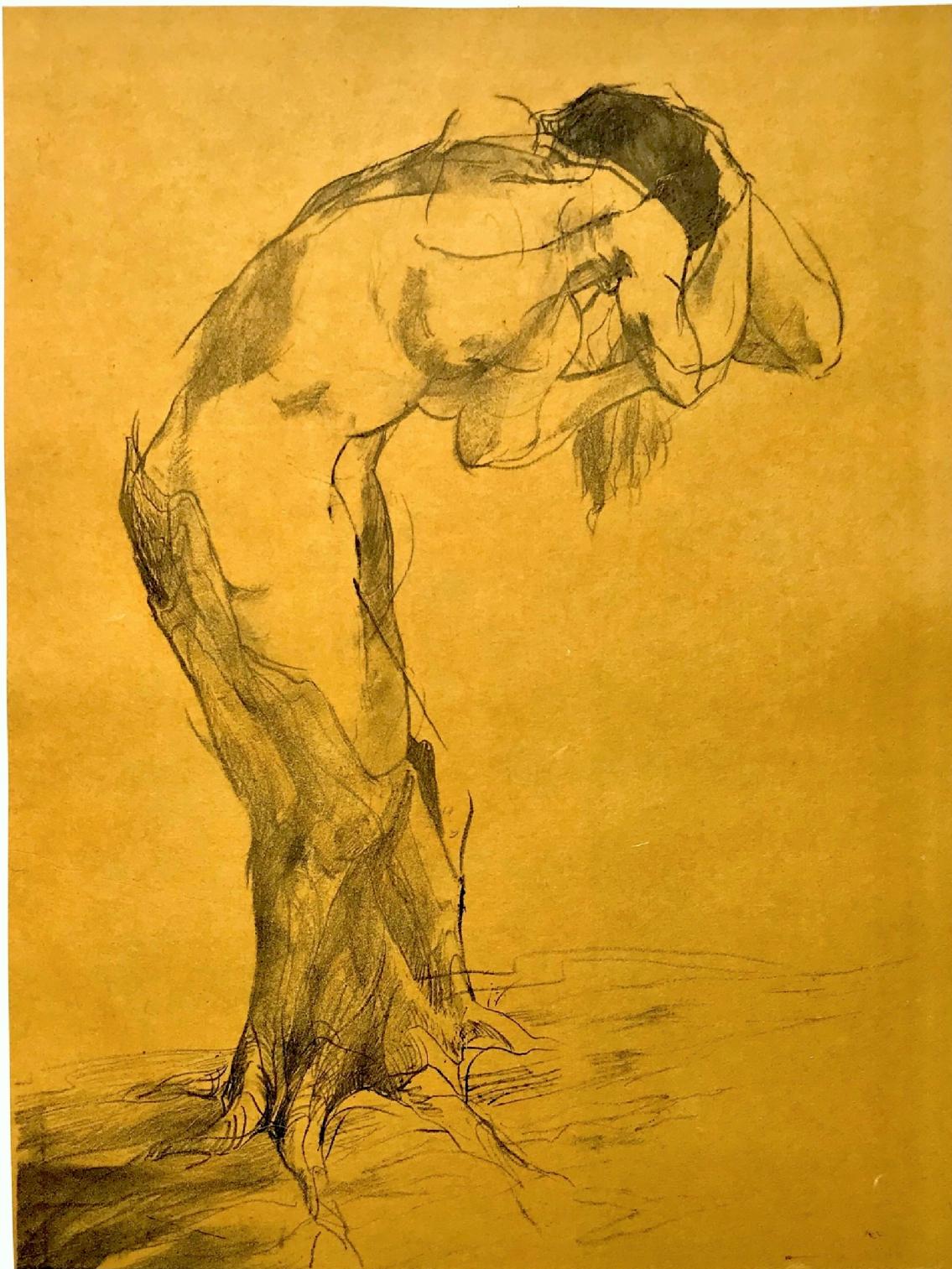


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EV 3

"A single splendor remains in her"

Alice Olliver 2020

Dear Readers,

It is with great joy that we present to you the Spring 2021 issue of our beloved *Persephone*. This year has been full of challenges: we have missed the company of our peers, worried over the health of our families, and mourned the loss of many potential experiences while confronting the COVID-19 pandemic. Throughout the long months, when despair and loneliness have threatened to overtake me, I have turned again and again to the Classics as a refuge. While reading the fluid prose of Thucydides, the beautiful odes of Horace, or the fiery orations of Cicero, I have experienced a sense of stability in a world that feels increasingly unpredictable and have felt an intimacy with antiquity that was previously unknown to me. Clearly, I have not been alone in this sentiment, as evidenced by the overwhelming interest that the journal has seen in the past year. The submissions we received were not only of high quality, but also demonstrated a wide range of scholarly interests that proves the delightful complexity of this discipline. Although the final selection process was a true challenge, we believe that the chosen pieces reflect some of the very best talent in the current field of undergraduate Classical studies. Through thoughtful analysis and inspired artwork, they allow us to engage with the rich culture of the Mediterranean in new ways and provide avenues for fresh conversation and interpretation. We are so proud to share the insights of these authors and artists, and we cannot wait for the safe return of our community, when we may once more share in the magic of the Classics together.

With best wishes,

Fiona McFerrin-Clancy, *Editor-in-Chief*  
Harvard College Class of 2023

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## **Reproductive Agency and the Role of the Female Psyche in Soranus' *Gynaecology***

### **INTRODUCTION**

Medical literature underwent a transformation between the classical period and the first and second century CE, in which later texts increasingly considered the volitional soul and mental pathologies within their treatises.<sup>1</sup> Later gynecological texts similarly expanded their purview to account for the presence of the psyche, either alone or in conjunction with the body, within reproduction.<sup>2</sup> Prior to this, Hippocratic writers of the classical period focused on the somatic and physiological conditions within female patients in order to establish female health as dependent on reproductive ability, thus filtering social agendas of marriage and childbearing through the biological body.<sup>3</sup> Previous scholarship has centered on this classical period, specifically, as Dean-Jones has argued, on the woman's object position that perpetuates a reproductive imperative. In this context, Dean-Jones and Halperin have contended that female desire or agency was virtually non-existent.<sup>4</sup>

This paper contrasts the Hippocratic writers' emphasis on the female body as a solely corporeal entity to limit patient volition with Soranus' *Gynaecology*, a gynecological treatise that emerged within the late-antique period's focus on individual subjectivity and mental pathology. His text allows space for the female *psukhē* (ψυχή) to act on, or disrupt, the reproduction process - it dispels the seed post-conception, causes difficult labor, and misshapes the fetus. What is the effect of Soranus' inclusion of the *psukhē*, particularly in relation to potential agentic action? This paper analyzes the impact of female psychical<sup>5</sup> action in relation to regulatory and autonomous forces that intersect around the female, and asserts that the addition of the psyche opens up the space to consider, not radical female reproductive

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agency, but rather the degrees and levels of interventions females could make in relation to their *own* bodies. I argue that the female psyche's capacity to interfere with the reproduction process reflects an agency – often assumed to be absent from female patients – that registers as resistance to regulation of the reproductive imperative or as attempted self-regulation.

I start by exploring the historical background and development between the classical and imperial periods to contextualize the space for the female psyche that I will be investigating. In the first section, I address psychical action that may exist within reproduction but prior to conception, and explore the regulatory and agentic forces (such as "nature" and "health") that come together during the act of intercourse itself. In the next section, I investigate the psyche's action within stages of the pregnancy process itself, and the relation between this impact and the reaction by medical authority.<sup>6</sup>

### **METHODOLOGY**

Although this paper pursues a literary analysis of Soranus' *Gynaecology*, it is necessary to specify further the specific strategy it employs to investigate the relationship between the psyche and autonomy. This paper does not wish to conclude that simply the presence of the *psukhē* inherently suggests more female autonomy.<sup>7</sup> Rather, it attempts to conceptualize a potential space for agency<sup>8</sup> at moments in which a woman's critical psyche acts upon the reproductive process, given the regulatory forces<sup>9</sup> that come together at moments during reproduction. It presents a comprehensive study of the psyche's impact because it hypothesizes that Soranus' space for female autonomy can be measured through analyzing examples of psychical action *in relation to*

reproduction, regulation, nature, and health. This investigation recognizes agents as those that have an active role in producing a specified effect, and agency as moments of chosen action to impact the reproductive process within a system that seems to deny volition to the female body. Through this strategy, this paper reveals local instances or degrees of impact that female bodies make, rather than assert that the female body has radical agency within the Greek medical system.

## BACKGROUND

Scholarship on the female body within the Hippocratic medical corpus has concluded that medical writers, to establish authority and explain the unknown internal of women, focused on female patients within a social hierarchy whose imperative was to perpetuate the female reproducing body. This method existed because, as Helen King notes, “the Hippocratics argued from the outside to the inside; they assumed equivalence between the seen and the unseen.”<sup>10</sup> Through this method, the woman’s social role is made natural and fulfilling this role is healthy.<sup>11</sup>

An illustration of this medical methodology occurs in the Hippocratic *Diseases of Young Girls* in which a mental disease that expresses a form of social disruption is described in a completely physiological manner. The author explains that blood gathers near a woman’s heart and compels a woman to hang herself. Phrasing an act of suicide in this way focuses not on a woman’s *choice* or agentic decision to hang herself, but rather places the causality behind the action on corporeal forces. It denies a space through which to conceptualize a woman’s choice, and as Brooke Holmes notes, “the very fact that women fall prey to these diseases suggests that they are not, as it were, self-regulating organisms.”<sup>12</sup> This pattern of denying female self-control is taken up by Lesley Dean-Jones who argues

that the Hippocratic writers do not present psychological desire independent of physiology for women, although they do so for men. Women’s need for sexual intercourse is positioned as solely a physiological need that impacts the womb’s dilation and other vessels. As she writes, “the female sexual appetite described in the Hippocratic gynecology precludes directed desire and the exercise of self-control over the body’s imperative to intercourse.”<sup>13</sup> The female is denied conscious control, “any power to use her pleasure” and agency in her sexual life.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, in *The Social and the Sexual Body*, David Halperin writes that female desire was constructed as “passive” and entirely determined by the female body’s need for “regular phallic irrigation” in contrast to male “acquisitive” desire.<sup>15</sup>

Dean-Jones’ model in which the woman becomes an object submissive to the regulatory forces around her body deprived of conscious control over her own sexuality,<sup>16</sup> is relational to the Hippocratic limited view of patient agency.<sup>17</sup> However, perhaps the case of female desire is more complicated. Why is there *such* emphasis on regulating female desire and understanding it physiologically? Indeed, if women were solely conceptualized as physiological beings there perhaps would be a lesser need to manipulate female health medically, since presumably the causal force of nature, or biological forces, within the body would do so. It is possible that the presence of medical authorities to correct and regulate female desire rejects a purely physiological picture. Female desire’s medicalization and regulation by physicians suggests it holds an independence that needs to be controlled. Holmes explains this idea that women are *not* “like animals who reflexively satisfy the needs of their natures.”<sup>18</sup> She continues, “it is possible that women in some cases do feel desire but require the physician’s sanction to act on it. The very idea that they are contained within

structures of social control, however, recognizes that they are agents at the most basic level.”<sup>19</sup> Here, then, women are conceptualized as agents because the pervasive regulation of their desire suggests that female desire must hold an autonomy that would *necessitate* this medical control. Therefore, by focusing on women’s complete lack of desire as compared to men, Dean-Jones too holistically denies the female agent’s existence and lacks conceptualization of a potential space of limited agency that women may hold. It is not the aim of this paper to reassess the potential for female agents within the Hippocratic writers, but this critical evaluation and reframing of Dean-Jones’ argument is useful as a strategy to reintroduce agency into a space that has often been viewed through a dichotomy of 1) lack of female volition versus 2) male psychological control and individual will.

This potential nuance of female agency within the Hippocratics is exacerbated in the late-antique period in which Soranus wrote his *Gynaecology*. Chiara Thumiger explains that this new time period granted increased space for volition and individual subjectivity which became susceptible to pathology; subjective experience which previously had been contained by ethics and philosophy now become the concern of medicine. In her article, Thumiger explains that satyriasis is a disease that reflects this new focus on mental health in relation to individual will, volition, and psychological therapy. Although satyriasis mostly affects men, Thumiger contends that “it is a mental syndrome with a strong element of moral aberration and social stigma, that can basically affect women too *despite* the lack of a penis.”<sup>20</sup> Further, she notes that in a sexual disease such as this, there is an “interlacement of will and the moral worth of the individual, the propriety of his (or her) behaviours.”<sup>21</sup> Thumiger’s use of the feminine pronoun suggests that in this

disease individual will extends to *both* male and female patients, and that women are impacted by satyriasis equally to men through shared symptomatology (or “symmetrical female ailment[s]”<sup>22</sup>). However, this implies that female patients are positioned equal to male patients with respect to mental pathologies, which does not appropriately register the unique position women occupy in medical literature. Although susceptible to a physical disease like men, Thumiger’s classification of patients’ will is male centric, without nuance for the female, since it focuses on a male disease (satyriasis) and claims that through male *physical* symptoms, *mental* pathology is similar. However, more broadly, Greek medical science draws on physical differences “to construct a female body inherently weak...thereby buttressing her subordinate and restricted position in society.”<sup>23</sup> Indeed, the female body’s internal system was described to position the male and female in a hierarchical relationship in contrast to one another: the male body’s equilibrium was juxtaposed with the female body’s irregularity.<sup>24</sup> Women were presented without knowledge about themselves, and their sexual and psychological difference was continuously highlighted in order to deny mastery of their own desire and bodily decision making. Thus, while men had access to this new focus on individual will that Thumiger highlights, women were subject to medical regulation which limited their volition.

Therefore, this new shift to the late-antique period in which men were accorded more mental space cannot be completely mapped onto women, but it also complicates prior claims about non-existent psychological desire within the Hippocratics. As such, this paper focuses almost exclusively on Soranus’ *Gynaecology* for two reasons. First, the addition of the female *psukhē* and its actions in his treatise complicate the issue of female choice and second, more scholarly attention

has been paid to the classical Greek authors or Soranus solely in comparison to the Hippocratics, rather than on his own.<sup>25</sup> Within his treatise, Soranus perpetuates the normative development in a woman's life from menstruation to childbearing, however, he also aims to establish his authority against prior claims that conclude that failure to follow this norm is unhealthy. Rather, for Soranus, this norm is unhealthy (while "permanent virginity is healthful"),<sup>26</sup> and thus his discussion of pregnancy is advanced for humanity's health, not the woman's. Soranus' medical discussion around the reproducing female body engages with both somatic and psychical conditions. Soranus describes the psyche's relation to sexual intercourse, fetal development, pregnancy, and labor as a potential force of impact and intervention. For Soranus then, the female psyche is a causal force separate from somatic ones. This attention to female psychical influence invites consideration of degrees of female agentic action, although not conclusively granting it. It is through this space that this paper attends to Soranus' parameters that constrain women in relation to those that potentially ascribe deliberative action.

## PRECONCEPTION

Rebecca Flemming, in her *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*, briefly mentions female agency in Soranus' *Gynaecology* but confines it to her analysis of his section on abortives at the end of Book 1. Soranus agrees with those who prescribe *phthorion* in situations in which birth is dangerous (as opposed to its use surrounding adultery), although gives directions for the use of *atokion* as well.<sup>27</sup> Flemming argues, "here then are the first real indications of female agency, for it is presumably adulterous and vain women who might make these demands, and all the directions and substances are for her."<sup>28</sup> Flemming's schema for female agency focuses on the woman's understanding of

treatment options and her deliberative choice towards a desired outcome as a result (here the use of abortives). Thus, this definition centers on women who make demands outside of the socially normative reproduction process (through abortives or contraceptives). These women distance themselves from medical regulation of reproduction, or, as Flemming implies, are able to manipulate their position within it. Like female athletes and singers described elsewhere in Soranus, their actions are sites in which women are distanced from socially normative reproduction; however, this distance is not always a site for conceptualizing female agency, since Soranus ascribes the cause of certain reproductive variations to nature, rather than to female *choice*.<sup>29</sup> Further, this distance does not address female manipulation of their position *within* the normative reproduction process (the process which Soranus prioritizes), and thus this paper will investigate the possibility (or lack thereof) of female agency within the reproduction process itself.

The first relevant point in the examination of the female psyche in relation to reproduction is the psychical action that occurs during the act of intercourse itself. In Book 1, Soranus establishes the conditions under which fruitful intercourse and conception should occur. Within this discussion, Soranus establishes that urge (*όρμης*) and appetite (*όρέξεως*) for intercourse (*συνουσίαν*) must be present to ensure proper conception:

Just as without appetite (*όρέξεως*) it is impossible for the seed (*σπέρμα*) to be discharged (*καταβληθῆναι*) by the male, in the same manner, without (*χωρὶς*) appetite (*όρέξεωσ*) it cannot be conceived (*συλληφθῆναι*) by the female. And as food (*τροφὴ*) swallowed without appetite (*χωρὶς ορέξεως*) and with some aversion is not well received and fails in its subsequent digestion, neither can the seed be taken up or, if grasped, be carried

through pregnancy (κυοφορηθῆναι) unless urge (όρμήν) and appetite (ὄρεξις) for intercourse (συνοισίαν) have been present (παρεῖναι).<sup>30,31</sup>

Yet, this claim omits women who lack the sexual appetite that Soranus centralizes, namely women who are forced to have intercourse. Do these bodies still conceive? Soranus continues as follows:

For even if some women who were forced (βιασθεῖσαι) to have intercourse have conceived (συνέλαβον), one may say with reference to them that in any event the emotion (πάθος) of sexual appetite (όρέξεως) existed in them too (παρῆν), but it was obscured (έπεσκοτεῖτο) by mental resolve (ύπὸ ψυχικῆς κρίσεως).<sup>32</sup>

Here, if the woman is forced to have intercourse, her mental decision (ψυχικῆς κρίσεως) essentially blocks a more physical feeling of sexual appetite (όρέξεως). What is going on here? What is the effect produced with this specific use of *ψυχή*? It is not my intention to conclude that the very presence of “ψυχικῆς κρίσεως” in this moment is justification for agency, therefore we must look holistically at the situation and the particular effect that this psychical intervention aims to produce.

This woman is positioned within a specific instance of conception: rape. Because he writes that she is forced to conceive, Soranus makes it clear that the woman does not desire to have sex and *conceive in a particular way*, perhaps with one person, or at a given time. As a result, the woman uses an element of her *ψυχή* to act on sexual desire within a specific instance of undesired conception. Yet, for the female to be seen as an agent, she must be attempting to produce a specific effect (as a subject acting on an object), which would require a separation between the psyche and sexual appetite to explain this intervention. This is the manner in which this example is framed.

One force (that of the *ψυχή*) is the subject of a verb (ἐπιπροσθέω – “obscure”) that acts on the other (the sexual appetite - *όρεξις*) as an object. This subject-object verb relation allows the female to act within this space, since it is her *ψυχή* that is the subject acting on *όρεξις* as an object. A similar division between forces surrounding sexual desire is discussed elsewhere in the text. Soranus writes that the suitable time for conception corresponds with *όρεξις* (sexual desire), but that dependence upon *όρεξις* is not enough: one must also attend to other factors.<sup>33</sup> He advocates against women who are adulterous and have an impulsive (όρμητικός) sexual appetite within them at all times, and rather for a balance between desire and everything else. This implies that the woman is not automatic in her actions, and must deliberate or attend to the proper relation between *όρεξις* and other conditions for conception. This deliberative action is imbued in this rape example in the word *κρίσις*, which by definition connotes judgement and active decision making. Because it agrees with *ψυχή* grammatically, it suggests that the psyche holds the capacity for calculative action. This word, coupled with the subject-object relation between sexual desire and the psyche, suggests that the female in this moment of forced conception is a subject who can utilize her mental force (ψυχικῆς κρίσεως) to obscure an appetitive feeling (πάθος ορέξεως). This obscuring action may be framed as agentic because the condition of intercourse around the female is undesirable, so the psychical intervention represents an attempt to produce a specific effect, namely the rejection of conception at that moment. Although the text itself does not overtly state that the raped woman is an agent, Soranus frames the example to position the female attempting to use action from the *ψυχή* to obscure a sexual appetite that exists already in her body.

However, female psychical action is complicated in this example further because Soranus claims the woman *does* conceive, despite a potential intervention. What does this mean for female deliberate intervention into reproduction? If Soranus does prescribe to the woman an ability to use a psychic faculty to prevent an appetitive desire, why does the woman still conceive?

Soranus uses an analogy to female mourners to explain the moment of forced conception, which complicates the space for female agency. He writes:

Similarly, in women who mourn ( $\pi\epsilon\nu\thetao\sigmaai\zeta$ ), appetite ( $\delta\rho\epsilon\xi\zeta$ ) for food ( $\pi\rho\circ\zeta \tau\eta\tau \tau\rho\phi\eta\zeta$ ) often exists but is obscured ( $\epsilon\pi\sigma\kappa\omega\tau\eta\zeta$ ) by grief ( $\lambda\upsilon\pi\eta\zeta$ ) from their misfortune ( $\sigma\mu\phi\rho\alpha\eta\zeta$ ). Indeed, later they are compelled ( $\alpha\pi\alpha\gamma\kappa\zeta\omega\tau\eta\zeta$ ) to eat by reason of exceeding hunger ( $\lambda\mu\mu\eta\zeta$ ), putting aside their resolve ( $\kappa\pi\sigma\eta\zeta$ ).<sup>34</sup>

Women who mourn have an appetite for food in them (presumably because the body needs food for its existence), but when a woman holds grief in mind, she will not eat. Here, there is a dichotomy between two relatively autonomous forces: 1) the emotion of grief and its manipulation by  $\kappa\pi\sigma\eta\zeta$  in opposition to 2) hunger (an imperative in her body that forces aside the initial choice to cease consumption). What is the relation between these forces? For one, because the prevention of hunger does not last, Soranus seems to imply that hunger (a non-psychical element like sexual appetite) compels the woman to eat, displacing the emotional resolve of grief. Indeed, the verb  $\alpha\pi\alpha\gamma\kappa\zeta\omega\tau\eta\zeta$  (and its voice) suggests that there is a force that drives the female in a particular direction. Conversely, the other verb in the sentence “putting aside” ( $\nu\pi\epsilon\rho\beta\alpha\lambda\lambda\omega$ ) implies a more active action; perhaps the female chooses to eat, which would imply an agentic decision. It is quite possible that the female’s initial agentic resistance to food turns into agentic realization

that she should eat, as Holmes writes, “autoregulation incorporates the agent who longs to eat,”<sup>35</sup> and she chooses to prioritize the natural and healthy imperative over the grieving process. Indeed, humans are supposed to manage their relations to natural processes,<sup>36</sup> especially if human health is involved. Men, as Plutarch writes, “ought, by attention to other details, to preserve the natural constitution of [their] bodies.”<sup>37</sup> The attention to natural processes and longing for food in this instance would turn the woman into an agent to restore the natural and healthy constitution of her body.

How do the dichotomous forces in this mourning analogy compare to the rape example? Within the rape example, Soranus similarly conceptualizes the body returning to a condition separate from that which the mental intervention initially intended: conception. Conception, like hunger in the above example, is a condition aligned with nature. Within Soranus, nature is an abstract autonomous force with regulatory significance. Nature holds power over humans to measure ( $\mu\epsilon\tau\rho\eta\zeta$ ) their appetites ( $\tau\zeta\delta\rho\epsilon\xi\zeta$ ) to prevent consumption of too much food.<sup>38</sup> Placing nature as controlling the act of measuring not only positions it as an acting force but also one that can regulate bodily action. Further, nature regulates excess ( $\pi\lambda\epsilon\omega\alpha\sigma\mu\eta\zeta$ ) that is an antithesis to the ideal body for intercourse: the natural body without excess or deviation.<sup>39</sup> He claims that females in an unnatural state ( $\pi\alpha\pi\alpha\phi\sigma\tau\eta\zeta \delta\iota\alpha\kappa\epsilon\mu\eta\zeta\eta\zeta \eta\zeta\eta\zeta$ ) do not hold the inserted seed ( $\tau\zeta\omega\mu\epsilon\thetai\mu\eta\zeta\eta\zeta \sigma\pi\epsilon\mu\eta\zeta\eta\zeta$ ), but by their own badness ( $\epsilon\alpha\pi\tau\eta\zeta \kappa\kappa\eta\zeta$ ) force it to sicken ( $\sigma\mu\mu\phi\sigma\eta\zeta$ ) or to die ( $\alpha\pi\alpha\lambda\lambda\mu\eta\zeta\eta\zeta$ ). Nature is thus a regulatory force positioned to align the natural and reproductive body, because the natural state (or the state of conception) is prioritized; the female’s “badness” or psychical action have the *potential* to impede the sexual appetite and by extension the natural body (which is best for fruitful

intercourse).<sup>40</sup> This presentation of nature frames psychical action as a force antithetical to the natural state for conception.

This complicates and reframes the earlier analysis of the parameters for agentic action, because it introduces *nature* as a force within this example against the female psyche, whereas earlier the dichotomy was between the female psyche and a moment of socially undesired intercourse (rape). Said differently, due to the natural imperative, the female occupies a space that frames her not only as a local agent in opposition to a social instance of forced conception, but perhaps also in opposition to the normative natural body more broadly. Nature as a force complicates this space because nature's regulation for the reproducing body is unhealthy in Soranus: permanent virginity is healthy.<sup>41</sup> Thus, if the body desires the healthy option, the agentic choice would mean avoiding the reproduction process, intervening at a critical moment before the woman enters a process that negates her health (i.e. using the *ψυχή* to obscure the appetite). Viewing psychical intervention as healthful regulation accounts for the agent who longs for self-care, a force that "serves as a mechanism that turns the intentional agent into a pure conduit between what the body needs and the fulfillment of those needs through deliberate action."<sup>42</sup> Therefore, the deliberate action of obscuring sexual appetite with her psyche, though resistance to a specific social condition, also reveals the constraints of the broader natural imperative within this medical text that denies the woman health.<sup>43</sup>

Yet, despite this potential reinterpretation of the psychical blockage of sexual appetite into an act to avoid reproduction for the woman's own health, the woman still conceives. One possible reason for this conception is that Soranus understands that nature, and the woman's reproductive *body*, overshadows the *ψυχή* in this moment. We

might conclude that the woman's agentic action (via her *ψυχικῆς κρίσεως*) to resist the natural imperative and internal sexual appetite is *limited by* the natural imperative present in Soranus. Therefore, conception despite intervention onto sexual desire may be explained by the regulatory role of nature within Soranus.

However, while unlikely, a second possibility arises in his language's ambiguity that does not preclude the woman's *self*-regulation to cease the moment of psychic intervention for conception's perpetuation. Because sexual appetite existed in the woman initially, psychical prevention was limited from the start. Soranus presents the woman's attempt to intervene to obscure sexual appetite (*ὅπεξις*) as a momentary one, and if the woman conceptualized her limited volition, perhaps she understands that this psychic intervention has to be regulated for the continuation of the medical reproductive process. Although it seems unlikely that a woman would choose to halt an intervention during this instance of forced conception that is "unhealthy," Soranus does not directly preclude this possible explanation. This chosen removal of the obscuring action violates the assumption that no one willingly harms themselves; however, the fact that this possibility to conform to normative reproduction exists reveals how entwined the woman is in the forces that come together around her body, and the intensity of the ingrained social imperatives within her own mind.

Through this condition of rape, we see the manner in which the female's *ψυχή*, or mental force, holds the potential to block ("ἐπιπροσθέω") a moment of sexual appetite within her body. Yet, this act does not prevent her from conception, and her person is suspended between biological imperatives, socially normative medical regulation from physicians, and a reproduction process that Soranus believes to be unhealthy for the woman. Here then, rather than full autonomy,

the female as “agent” is limited in her agentic action, by the time and direction of impact, but it nevertheless exists in the form of momentary mental intervention into an undesired condition of her reproduction. This type of female agency is referenced elsewhere by Soranus in which he explicitly provides instructions on how a woman may manipulate conception and pregnancy. He writes that within the moment of intercourse, if the woman does not wish to conceive, she may hold her breath and draw herself away so as to not allow the seed to enter too deep in the uterus. Further, she may drink cold water, sneeze, smear the orifice with olive oil, honey, or cedar resin, among others.<sup>44</sup> These tangible prescriptions provide the woman the ability to act in relation to her own conception in an agentic manner, since she would be able to act through these methods in order to produce a desired outcome prior to conception itself.

## POST-CONCEPTION

This paper’s analysis thus far has examined the parameters under which agentic action may be constrained prior to conception, however, Soranus devotes over half of his gynecology to concerns over pregnancy’s disruption. Soranus is concerned with the effect of environmental factors, the fetus, and the mother’s condition on the ease of pregnancy. Within this last category, although Soranus devotes more space to somatic concerns, he also discusses psychic ones. These consist of emotional variation, states of the soul, and general psychical change. My discussion that follows explores the manner in which Soranus portrays female psychical impact throughout pregnancy and agentic action within later stages of reproduction.

Within the first stages of pregnancy, Soranus is first concerned with the issue of seed generation. In his section about identifying those capable of conception, he provides parameters on age, body condition,

and hardness and moisture of the uterus, as well as ease of food digestion. He then shifts from a somatic description to write that the soul imbued with high spirits and sorrow (*ἐπίλυπόν τε καὶ θυμικὸν τῆς ψυχῆς*) disturbs breath and destroys (*ἀπωθέω*) the seed. In the following section, Soranus continues to outline the potential emotional impact on the seed.<sup>45</sup> He mentions other writers who express concern less at the presence of emotion (like joy (*χαρὰς*) and grief (*λύπας*)), but rather at rapid shifts in emotional state or desire which result in temperature imbalance in the body, destroying (*ἐξαφανίζεσθαι*) the seed.<sup>46</sup> Soranus continues with concerns around fetal change that the psyche causes. He details that various states of the soul (*τὸποὶ τῆς ψυχῆς κατάστημα*) produce changes in the fetal shape.<sup>47</sup> These states of the soul consist of imaginative fantasies due to drunkenness. Because offspring resemble the mother in soul, he argues that this resemblance should stem from a stable state and not from one deranged (*παρακοπή*) by drunkenness (*μέθη*).

Next, Soranus cautions against disruption during the first period of pregnancy. He writes that after conception one must guard (*φυλάττεσθαι*) excess change both psychical and bodily (*σωματικήν τε καὶ ψυχικήν*).<sup>48</sup> Part of this psychical change consists of mental intervention caused by various emotions (fear - *φόβον*, grief - *λύπην*, joy - *χαρὰν*) which evacuate (*έξιται*) the seed. If seed ejection occurs, there will be measures to correct it (*διορθώσεως δὲ τεύξεται πρὸς τὸ*) to secure against a repetition of this failure in conception (*δεύτερον τὴν αὐτὴν τῆς συλλήψεως ἀποτυχίαν*).<sup>49</sup> These corrective measures are prescribed to *appease* (*παραμυθεῖσθαι*) the soul (*ψυχήν*), which suggest a causality in psychical impact. Later, Soranus reframes this theme of correction to also discuss prevention. He directs physicians to oppose pregnant women’s desires (*ἐπιθυμίας*) for

harmful things ( $\tauὰ \betaλαβερὰ$ ), because that which fulfills desires, harms ( $\kappa\alpha\kappa\omega$ ) the fetus ( $\gamma\alpha\sigma\tau\rho\varsigma$ ).<sup>50</sup> Here, Soranus implies that the woman's satisfaction of desires ought to be subordinated to fetal care, but also that female desire is something that can act on its own and thus needs to be opposed. Indeed, these opposed desires consist of those that seek  $\kappa\mu\nu\rho\pi\alpha$  (plants used for abortions). This section of the text suggests that care for the pregnant woman consists of noticing and correcting the relation between the psyche's action and pregnancy's distortion.

What emerges from this chronological analysis of the pregnancy process and the  $\psi\chi\eta$ 's impact is a sense that Soranus emphasizes the psyche's potential for *change*, but psychical change in terms of psychical *intervention* or *disruption*. Indeed, the verbs of which the psyche is subject are ones that register as disruption and impediments to the reproduction process, namely  $\grave{\alpha}\pi\omega\theta\acute{e}\omega$  (repel (1.34)),  $\grave{\epsilon}\xi\alpha\phi\alpha\acute{v}\zeta\omega$  (destroy),  $\sigma\upsilon\nu\phi\sigma\acute{e}\omega$  (sicken),  $\grave{\alpha}\pi\grave{\o}\lambda\lambda\bar{\nu}\mu\iota$  (kill (1.35)), change ( $\phi\acute{e}\rho\acute{e}\iota \mu\acute{e}ta\beta\iota\lambda\acute{a}\ς$  (1.39)),  $\grave{\epsilon}\xi\iota\epsilon\iota\sigma\acute{t}\epsilon\acute{e}\omega$  (eject (1.46)),  $\kappa\alpha\kappa\omega$  (harm (1.53)). This disruption is antithetical to, and implicitly prioritizes, Soranus' promotion of an unchanged state: the natural body without these  $\psi\chi\kappa\grave{\alpha} \alpha\acute{t}\iota\alpha$  (psychic causes) as the ideal body for conception, since the unnatural state destroys the seed.<sup>51</sup> If psychical intervention disrupts the ease of pregnancy, how should its regulation be managed? How does this relate to agency?

The answer to this question depends on the specific moments and language of regulation that Soranus provides. Most of the text, especially for prescription of somatic issues, grants authority to the physician and midwife to effectively manage medical concerns. However, moments in which Soranus withholds discussion of specific treatments by medical authorities allow space for the woman's self-regulation and understanding of her own psychical change. For example,

when Soranus describes the fear of excess psychical change and emotional disruption on the fetus,<sup>52</sup> he presents this as a concern during pregnancy, but does not specify *how* an external body should compel a woman to prevent this disruptive force. Therefore, the woman's autonomy here would be dependent on her control over her *own* emotions and how she chooses to manipulate them for herself. Within this example, Soranus quickly moves on to discuss those elements of disruption that *are* within the control or authority ( $\grave{\epsilon}\pi\grave{\iota} \tau\eta\varsigma \grave{\eta}\mu\acute{e}\tau\acute{e}\rho\varsigma \grave{\epsilon}\xi\phi\sigma\acute{v}\iota\alpha\varsigma$ ) of medicine (such as food, oils, and baths). Psychical regulation is not addressed in this description of treatment and medical authority's actions. Therefore, if the physician does not interfere medically in a moment of the female psyche's disruption of the reproduction process, it opens up space for the female's control. Similarly, when Soranus establishes that the sorrowful and overly passionate state of the soul expels the fetus, he omits description of medical treatment in terms of *how* to prevent or treat this sorrow to avoid fetal expulsion, it is simply stated as a concern.<sup>53</sup> Elsewhere, Soranus is more direct in the possibility for female self-regulation, seeming to prescribe more action to the woman in relation to the psyche's action. In Book 1, he writes that the woman's own badness ( $\kappa\alpha\kappa\grave{\alpha}$ ) compels ( $\grave{\alpha}\nu\acute{a}\gamma\kappa\acute{\zeta}\acute{e}\iota$ ) her to dispel the seed.<sup>54</sup> By placing the woman as the subject of this verb, Soranus provides her subjectivity and internal control that impacts pregnancy. This controlled action is extended in his concern about maternal imaginative fantasies changing the mold of the fetus.<sup>55</sup> Since he ascribes causality to alcohol for causing this fetal deformity, the female's agentic intervention could manifest as regulation of her own drinking. Likewise, he writes that the "idea" of not being pregnant causes difficult labor,<sup>56</sup> and thus the control of mental attitude here could shift the ease of labor. It

becomes clearer that a woman may perform agentic manipulation of her psyche when he writes that a woman can engage in “passive exercises” (*αιώραις τε χρῆσθαι*) and generally relax her psyche (*διαχύσει τῆς ψυχῆς*). The list of actions following this example places the woman as the subject of these verbs, which suggest calculated intervention to produce specific action. These moments illustrate that the female psyche not only impacts reproduction, but that the woman herself is positioned as an actor over these potential reproductive distortions who can respond to these impacts to produce a specified effect, which can be read within the parameters of agentic action.<sup>57</sup>

Elsewhere, however, Soranus is clearer in his concern for correcting psychical disruption via *external* regulation by physicians. For example, in response to difficult labor caused by grief (*λύπας*), fear (*φόβον*) or other mental impediments, relaxation should be prescribed.<sup>58</sup> This is a case in which direct treatment to the psyche is given in order to regulate excessive emotional reactions to ease labor.<sup>59</sup> More preventative action occurs when Soranus advocates for intercourse under sobriety to prevent maternal impressions and fetal deformation, because he stresses the need for physicians to maintain that a woman is sober. Similarly, Soranus writes that the physician must actively oppose (*ἐνστατέον*) female desires (*τὰ βλαβερὰ τῶν κυουσῶν ἐπιθυμίαις*) that harm the fetus.<sup>60</sup> Here it is also important to note that Soranus includes an abortive plant in his definition of harmful things, and discusses its use as a desire contrary to reproduction that must be actively opposed and prevented. He assumes female desire involves the use of that which harms the fetus as its primary aim. These medical authorities are meant to regulate moments of excess and deficit to ensure reproduction perpetuates.<sup>61</sup> It suggests that via corrective

measures, physicians have an imperative to block psychical intervention.

Therefore, Soranus presents the regulated psyche as the medical norm. Soranus’ prioritization of an unchanged state (in which the psyche’s changes and interferences demand medical regulation) not only complicates the earlier conclusion of agentic *self*-regulation, but it also frames female psychical intervention, or female self-regulation that misaligns with the focus of the medical project, as a pathological diversion or a form of resistance.

However, defining female agency as intervention that resists the project of pregnancy (non-compliance to the physician), potentially oversimplifies the forces that intersect in the gynecological space. It does not seem to be the case that the only reason for the female’s agentic psychical manipulation or action is to be non-compliant, because the stakes on her own body’s functionality and health are so high. What does psychical intervention resist?

This requires an explanation of health within Soranus’ *Gynaecology*. Like other medical literature on the female body, health is aligned with regulation in this text. As Flemming writes, the health regimen was “interactive, requiring the patient to behave as the physician instructed, and directed more diffusely towards health. Indeed, health can in a sense be defined in terms of these compartments of human activity and, therefore, their regulation is a constant concern.”<sup>62</sup> Directed regulation towards the psyche during pregnancy in relation to health has two levels. For one, *unregulated* mental derangements are against a notion of health as defined within the reproductive space already, if one can assume that fetal expulsion, excessive miscarriage, and other results of the woman’s agentic manipulation of her psyche for disruptive ends would harm her body. On another level, the physician is responsible for reinforcing the reproductive

process and its normative continuation, which is prioritized *over* holistic health in Soranus. He writes that permanent virginity is healthy,<sup>63</sup> yet prescribes treatment to perpetuate pregnancy. Given this conclusion, the physician is caught between competing imperatives, namely overall health and the social imperative to reproduce. This social imperative is then filtered through the physician who aligns himself with the social imperative for normative reproduction, but attempts to perpetuate its continuation in the healthiest way possible: the physician and midwife<sup>64</sup> are placed between positions of medical and social control.

This contextualization of levels of health in relation to the social imperative and the physician's social licensing allows for a more comprehensive space through which the female and the constraints of her potential agency exist. As we have seen, one view of female agency is the purposeful disruption of pregnancy within the medical space, framed as non-compliance or resistance on two levels. First, psychical manipulation against the physician's facilitation of reproduction is non-compliant because forms of non-compliance, like cases of fetal impact, mental derangement, and excessive change, register as mental pathologies that are unhealthy (or disruptive) on the local medical level. However, second is the register of psychic manipulation not as solely medically non-compliant action, but rather as compliance to her health. Agency imbued in the resisting patient's non-compliance is not only *against* the physician's socially determined notion of health but rather resistance *for* her health, an *attempt* in the limited space with which she is presented to prioritize her health (since Soranus conclusively decides that intercourse is unhealthy). Although this seems disruptive, given the harsh impacts that psychical problems cause to the reproducing body, the space for this form of agentic action exists. This would perhaps manifest as

calculated emotional exasperation to dispel the seed within the woman, which is agentic because it takes an action to produce the desired effect of disruption. This frame of agency follows the assumption that patients might desire their own health and would choose to regulate for that end. Holmes writes, "patients must often step in to implement those necessary measures by mimicking natural processes in the deliberate, controlled pursuit of health,"<sup>65</sup> and within Soranus his discourse of the psyche's intervention opens up this possibility.

## CONCLUSION

Soranus' *Gynaecology*'s inclusion of the female *psukhē* (unlike medical texts on women's bodies before him) complicates the space for the female patient. It presents the woman in a liminal space in relation to her own body, in which she is not a solely physiologically motivated being but also not a fully autonomous agent. Rather, Soranus prescribes treatment, lists medical regulation, or otherwise describes parameters that constrain women as well as those that ascribe agentic intervention. This paper has sought to grant focused attention to Soranus' *Gynaecology* unlike prior scholarship which has 1) implicated this text solely on relational terms with classical works, and 2) has not fully investigated the effect of Soranus' addition of the female psyche, especially in relation to agentic action. Further, this paper comes between debates on the female body's volitional desire and lack thereof in Greek medical literature, and also situates itself within discourse on more expansive patient volition in the late antique period, but it asserts, in contrast to Thumiger, that this individual subjectivity does not map fully onto women despite similar symptomatology. Soranus' text is situated within this dichotomy, in which female mental influence is introduced, thereby inviting consideration of degrees of female agentic action within a

system that seems to restrict female agency. Thus, this paper complicates the binary of male psychological agency vs. female lack thereof, and contrasts Flemming's conclusive statement that "agency, in its full sense, is exclusively male."<sup>66</sup> Rather, it reveals the manner in which procreation is *not* just a matter of bodily mechanics,<sup>67</sup> but a process in which Soranus delimits the space in which forms of psychical agentic action could exist. This examination reevaluates prior denial of female volition and reveals the moments of agentic choice that position the female in medical literature in a liminal space between a solely physiologically motivated being and an agent of psychical intervention and self-regulation.

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2. Rebecca Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women: Gender, Nature and Authority from Celsus to Galen* (Oxford; New York; Oxford University Press, 2000), 207.
3. Leslie Dean-Jones, "The Politics of Pleasure: Female Sexual Appetite in the Hippocratic Corpus," *Helios* 19 (1992): 73; Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*; Helen King, *Hippocrates' Woman: Reading the Female Body in Ancient Greece* (London; New York; Routledge, 1998).
4. Dean-Jones, "The Politics of Pleasure;" David Halperin, "The Social Body and the Sexual Body," in *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome* eds. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).
5. Psychical, as it is used in this article, is an adjective meaning related to, or stemming from, the psyche (or ψυχή/psukhē).
6. This division between pre and post conception is used for two reasons. First, in Greek literature, once a woman becomes pregnant there is a specific set of terms that govern that which is healthy and natural. Second, the Greek language, as well as Greek medical gynecology, distinguishes between the *parthenos* (virgin) and the *gyne* (woman). Indeed, at the start of Book 3, Soranus introduces questions about women, but it is clear that he includes women who have yet to be pregnant. Elsewhere however, he believes pregnancy transforms the female body and his language is consistent with Hippocratic works in which postpartum women (or the pregnant women) are different

- physiologically and mentally from the *parthenos* (see *Diseases* 1.62, which describes experienced women and women who know their bodies).
7. Brooke Holmes, “Causality, Agency, and The Limits of Medicine,” *Apeiron* 46, no. 3 (2013). The notion of agency is related to the psyche but not equal to it. Holmes explains the distinction between a physical cause and a “human” one (“an agent”). Medical writers generally “assume a difference between physical causes and agency, we would expect them to recognize a boundary between physical causality and intentional action within the embodied person. Granted, such a boundary is sometimes obscured in medical writing by the nature of the physician-patient relationship, which, to the extent it implicitly aligns the patient with physical causality (the diseased body) and the physician with intentional action, formalizes the divide between causality and agency” (6). This is complicated further with the female gender given the structures of biopolitical regulation that intersect around a woman’s body, and further again by moments of deliberation and patient intervention.
  8. This paper’s strategy is implemented in this manner because female actions in *Gynaecology* are not immediately obvious as agentic. There is a challenge that exists in this project because the language of female agency is not explicit in Soranus’ Greek. However, “agency” is not a unique concept during his time; Thumiger outlines the language of “will” that existed in the late antique period. This paper tracks modes of intervention or disruption within the text that may be framed as degrees of female action. It is necessary to read against the grain and envision a schema that does not track perfectly as a Greek concept (one not codified in the text).
  9. By regulatory forces I mean nature, the physician, social imperative, and the female’s self-regulation.
  10. King, *Hippocrates’ Woman*, 26.
  11. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*, 117; 4.
  12. Holmes, “Causality, Agency, and the Limits of Medicine,” 12.
  13. Dean-Jones, “The Politics of Pleasure: Female Sexual Appetite in the Hippocratic Corpus,” 73.
  14. Dean-Jones, 75
  15. Halperin, “The Social Body and the Sexual Body,” 148.
  16. Dean-Jones, “The Politics of Pleasure: Female Sexual Appetite in the Hippocratic Corpus,” 79. Dean-Jones further claims that the woman had “no chance” to exercise *enkratēia* (power over) her appetite for sex.
  17. For a longer explanation, see Holmes “Causality, Agency, and the Limits of Medicine.” It is not the case that the Hippocratics were not interested in the soul (*psychē*), but the notion of agency is that which they could not precisely capture with their apparatus. As she notes, “they generally treat the automatic workings of the body as somehow discontinuous with the springs of deliberate action” (7). These writers infer the relation between the mind and choice, but attempt to situate humans “within a limited set of causal terms, rather than addressing patients as agents” who have a deliberate part in their own health and sickness.
  18. Holmes, 12.
  19. Holmes, 12.

20. Thumiger, "A Most Acute, Disgusting and Indecent Disease": Satyriasis and Sexual Disorders in Ancient Medicine," 277.
21. Thumiger. 270 22. Thumiger. 282.
23. Dean-Jones, *The Cultural Construct of the Female Body in Classical Greek Science*. 191, in. *Sex and Difference in Ancient Greece and Rome* eds. Mark Golden and Peter Toohey (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2003).
24. Jean-Baptiste Bonnard, Lillian E. Doherty, and Violaine Sebillotte Cuchet, "Male and Female Bodies According to Ancient Greek Physicians." 29.
25. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*. 2. She writes, "attention has thus far centred on the classical Greek rather than the imperial Roman period. Even Soranus, who is the most discussed of the later authors, is considered more in comparison with earlier Hippocratic writers than in his own right."
26. Soranus, *Gynaecology*. 1.32. Soranus lays out both sides of the debate surrounding the healthfulness of virginity and then concludes "we, however, contend that permanent virginity is healthful." He describes that in animals, those prevented from intercourse are stronger and less susceptible to disease.
27. Soranus, *Gynaecology*, 1.60. *Phthorion* = abortive; *atokion* = contraceptive.
28. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*. 239.
29. Indeed, this site in which women opt out of reproduction is not a site for thinking about their agency in doing so, given that distance from reproduction embodied by priestesses, for example, might be hereditary. Soranus writes that those who do not menstruate, such as singers, athletes, and mannish women,
- have no ailment (3.7). He expresses the opinion that there are those who do not menstruate because of a healthy state of the body, or because of other physiological reasons, and thus menstruation's absence should not be treated as a disease. He says that it is impossible or dangerous to change that which is natural, and that when the physiological is changed to its opposite it becomes pathological (3.9). However, even though he notes that this natural diversion is not concerning, he does allow solutions for women who seek to menstruate but cannot because of their way of life. They are encouraged to rest and cease exercising to make the body more feminine. This mention of variably menstruating bodies is relevant to this paper because it is a moment in which Soranus marks the limits of his expertise with reference to the reproduction process. Rather than operate in the vein of the Hippocratic *Diseases of Young Girls* in which medical assessment leads to a direct social outcome, Soranus understands these female bodies that do not menstruate as tangentially related to his project but precludes focus from them to emphasize the reproducing body itself.
30. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 1.37
31. Translations are from Owsei Temkin 1956 (Reprinted 1991 Johns Hopkins University Press)
32. Elsewhere in the text, Soranus conceptualizes the female agentic ability to override natural desire – he believes that virgins can choose to "arouse in themselves premature desires" (1.33). Here, female agentic action lies in the woman's ability to *deliberately* intervene in her developing

- process. This instance is important in understanding moments of agency within Soranus, but does not fall within the purview of this paper, which focuses more on the reproduction process directly.
33. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 1.38
  34. Soranus, 1.37.
  35. Holmes, “Causality, Agency, and the Limits of Medicine.” 12
  36. Holmes, 5.
  37. Plutarch, “*De Tuenda Sanitate*,” in *Moralia*, trans. Frank Cole Babbitt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1928), 24.
  38. Soranus, *Gynecology*, 1.28.
  39. Soranus, 1.28. This emphasis on the best bodily state for intercourse being the natural and regulated state of the body is repeated at 1.35; 1.36 and 1.38 as well. He also writes that the proper function of the uterus is present in the natural state.
  40. Soranus. *Gynecology*. 1.36. The ideal time for intercourse is with the *balanced* body, when it is neither in want or too weak.
  41. Soranus. *Gynecology*. 1.32.
  42. Holmes, “Causality, Agency, and the Limits of Medicine.” 12.
  43. This reframing of psychical intervention follows the assumption that no one knowingly harms themselves (Holmes, 13).
  44. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 1.61.
  45. Soranus. 1.34.
  46. Soranus. 1.35.
  47. Soranus. 1.39. ὅτι καὶ τὸ ποιὸν τῆς ψυχῆς κατάστημα φέρει τινὰς περὶ τοὺς τύπους τῶν συλλαμβανομένων μεταβολάς
  48. Soranus. 1.46
  49. Soranus. 1.47 50. Soranus. 1.53.
  51. Soranus. 1.35
  52. Soranus. 1.46
  53. Soranus. 1.34
  54. Soranus. 1.35.
  55. Soranus. 1.39
  56. Soranus. 4.54
  57. This follows a pattern in Greek medicine more broadly. Within Greek medicine, there is a value placed on this deliberate mastery and the agentic self-regulation and care. As Foucault writes, male patients strive to become formed subjects with concern for their own bodies (108). This relationship is active, and thus results in tension between the patient and the physician who holds autonomy and mastery. Further, Plutarch establishes that a man ought to handle his own body, regulate it in a balanced manner, and understand its needs as one attends to the sail of a ship (*De Tuenda Sanitate*, 13).
  58. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 4.59.
  59. Similar instances occur when rest is prescribed for melancholic madness and mania (3.48). Also see 1.46.
  60. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 1.53.
  61. Within the history of Greek medical literature more broadly, this manner of regulation (that which reinforces the female reproducing body) has a long, dominant history. Appropriate bodily regulation consisted of preserving the uterus for its natural (i.e. reproducing) function. Within the Hippocratic corpus, as King outlines in full, intercourse and marriage were prescribed as medicine. Indeed, “woman’s health depends on her reproductive activity; fulfilling her social role makes her healthy” (Flemming, 117). Greek medicine assumed the role of fortifying the social – the female as a reproducing body.
  62. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*. 112.
  63. Soranus, *Gynecology*. 1.32.
  64. However, the midwife occupies a unique role within this regulation. She is a

practitioner, but holds a female body herself. As such, she exists in a liminal space between agential authority and yielding to the medical text itself. Within Soranus, a midwife regulates her actions to the text's (medicine's) authority (1. 46; 1. 50/51/52; 2.83; 2.84; 2.110; 3.32), and she also is regulated to ease the disruptive parts of pregnancy, thereby limited in the healthful actions that she may prescribe (1.29; 1.25). Perhaps the midwife as a medical agent is meant to subordinate her prescriptions to Soranus' textual authority that propagates reproduction, as the female psyche is also limited in its intervention by reproduction.

65. Holmes, "Causality, Agency, and the Limits of Medicine, 5.
66. Flemming, *Medicine and the Making of Roman Women*, 158.
67. Flemming, 207.

**The Barmaid (*Copa*) by Pseudo-Virgil  
A Translation in Blank Verse**

**Aimée Jean LaFon  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville**

Barmaid Surisca, crowned with Greek band,  
Skillfully stirs her hip to the clappers,  
She drunkenly dances in ill-famed inn,  
Shaking her shrill flutes towards her elbow.  
What is better to a man, wearied by  
Summer sand, than to lay on wine-stained couch?  
Gardens, cabins, glasses, roses, flutes, lutes,  
There, a cool pavilion in shady reeds.  
Lo! ‘Neath Arcadian cave sweetly laughs  
The rustic water pipe in shepherd’s mouth,  
And plonk wine just poured from a pine-pitched jar,  
And the stream roars with water’s shrill mutter,  
There are crowns, violet with saffron’s bud,  
And saffron garland joined with crimson rose.  
And Achelois bears lilies she plucked  
From virgin stream in a woven basket.  
Too, there are cheese curds a rush basket dries,  
And there are soft plums from an autumn day,  
Chestnuts and fruits that are sweetly blushing.  
Here is Ceres pure, here Love, here Bacchus.  
Bloody mulberries, grapes in torpid clumps,  
And sea-green cucumber hangs in the rush.  
The lodge’s warden, armed with willow scythe,  
Is not fearsome, but for his huge member.  
Come here as guest, your weary ass now sweats.  
Spare him; the ass is Vesta’s beloved.  
Now, in the trees, cicadas belt dense songs  
Now, many a lizard hides in cool spot.  
If ye be wise, rest! Wash it down with a cup,  
Or have yourself fresh crystal chalices!  
Tired man, go here, relax ‘neath viny shade  
Bind your heavy head with a rosy wreath,  
Plucking a young girl’s lips in the shadow  
Begone, to he who has a passé mien!<sup>1</sup>  
Why save sweeter wreaths for worthless ashes?  
Do you want bones veiled by flowered tombstone?  
Do ye bring forward the wine and the dice!  
Who desires tomorrow should perish!  
Death pulls my ear. “Live,” says he, “I approach.”

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Lit. “an archaic expression.”



***Study of Lucretia***

Digital Illustration

Saul Villegas

University of California, Santa Cruz

## Metatheatre as Social Critique: Temporary Transgressions in Plautus and Shakespeare

From crafting witty asides to breaking the fourth wall to staging plays-within-plays, Plautus often infuses his work with the art of metatheatre. Scholars have long debated the precise definition of “metatheatre;” however, we can understand the term broadly as “drama about drama, or any moment of self-consciousness by which a play draws attention to its own fictional status as a theatrical pretense.”<sup>1</sup> This essay, consisting of three parts, investigates Plautine metatheatre as a means of social critique. I begin by examining the prologue of the *Menaechmi*, which illuminates Plautus’ view of the theater as a space in which to embrace fluidity and experimentation. I then show how Plautus brings this view of the theater to life in his *Miles Gloriosus*, focusing on Palaestrio the clever slave as a paradoxical figure who simultaneously upholds and destabilizes social convention in his role of “playwright.” Finally, I argue that Palaestrio the playwright serves as an effective agent of social critique by prompting audience members to question the world they inhabit without directly advocating for subversive or radical change. In this respect, I propose that Palaestrio’s moments as “playwright” fulfill a function similar to that of the trial scene in Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice*. Through this novel comparison, I aim to demonstrate that Plautus, like Shakespeare, adopted metatheatre as a technique to challenge the status of socially designated “others.”

To begin, the Prologue’s speech in the *Menaechmi* offers a glimpse into the dynamic nature of the Plautine stage. The Prologue sets the scene in a very particular location, bringing us to the Sicilian city of Epidamnus: *haec urbs Epidamnus est, dum haec agitur fabula.*<sup>2</sup> As in other Plautine comedies, the specific locale situates the audience in a

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“theater of imagination,” removing viewers from their daily lives and transporting them to another world entirely.<sup>3</sup> But as he inserts the qualifying phrase *dum haec agitur fabula*, the Prologue also establishes that the nature of this transformed stage is as definitive as it is temporary—it lives only so long as the story lasts. His words recall the fact that all Roman stages were improvised during Plautus’ lifetime and continued as such until Pompey established the first permanent theater in 55 BC. Thus, the Prologue generates a kind of security for the audience, assuring them that the scene before their eyes is soon to vanish like all the others that have come before. And so, as he simultaneously dismantles and preserves the world as we know it, the Prologue invites the audience into his “dynamic stage,” a realm of finite duration but infinite possibility.

The Prologue also captures this idea of a dynamic stage in the very language that he uses to introduce the play. He notes, for example, that Epidamnus will soon become another town when another story is performed, just as the individual households will also be changed: *quando alia agetur, aliud fiet oppidum / sicut familiae quoque solent mutarier.*<sup>4</sup> The repetitive rhythm of “some other story” and “some other town” in this sentence reflects the continuous cycle of names and places that shuffle through Plautine theater. Meanwhile, the passive verb *mutarier* diminishes the agency of the *familiae* themselves, recalling the power of the playwright to engineer (and promptly extinguish) a world of his own. The use of the word *familiae* also reinforces the idea of roles and identities shifting onstage to suit a given context.<sup>5</sup> As Muecke points out, this persistent theme of doubleness or “impersonation” in Plautine comedy draws our attention to the

“double nature of theater as representation (or fictional imitation of reality) and performance.” The sense of “doubleness” also reflects the idea that Plautine actors were “were ‘playing parts once removed’ from their Greek originals.<sup>6</sup> At this particular moment in the play, the Prologue’s allusion to the doubleness of the *familiae* and other theatrical pretenses serves to ground us in the world of the play itself, reminding us that this whole story is, after all, only fiction. As he describes each imagined city or town fading in and out of our experience, the Prologue returns to Plautus’ vision of a dynamic stage where the audience can, for a short while, dare to inhabit a world beyond their own.

The Prologue goes on to highlight the transience not only of places and settings in Plautine theater, but also of characters. He next offers up a list of stock characters in Roman theater, all of whom, he claims, have called this very stage home at some point: *modo habitat leno, modo adulescens, modo senex, / pauper, mendicus, rex, parasitus, hariolus.*<sup>7</sup> He brings forward one figure at a time, allowing the audience to hold each in their minds before making way for the next in line. Thus, the Prologue confronts us once again with a continuous shuffle of names and identities, reminding the audience that nothing lasts forever onstage. Instead, he leaves us to preserve all that we have seen in memory alone. This repeated emphasis on the fluid, fleeting presence of individual characters reflects another important characteristic of Roman comedy; namely, that each play consisted of only a few actors who would cycle through the kaleidoscope of different characters. As he draws our attention to these features of the fantasy world he inhabits, the Prologue solidifies our understanding of the theater as a place of experimentation and of continuous redefinition of roles, where the playwright himself will bring different people and places

to life at different times for the audience to behold.

In these profoundly metatheatrical lines, the Prologue also brings out Plautus’ embrace of paradox. He jokes with the audience about his paradoxical environment, underscoring the absurdity of different worlds coming together in one physical space: *verum illuc redeo unde abii, atque uno asto in loco.*<sup>8</sup> This moment resonates with the fact that the Prologue himself is also a kind of paradoxical figure, straddling the world of the audience and the world of the play, simultaneously serving as an actor and an outsider in his own story. Thus, he offers paradox as one more feature to characterize the theater overall, and Plautus’ work in particular.<sup>9</sup> The Prologue’s attention to paradox here fits into his previous statements about the nature of Plautine drama, as he removes his audience one step further from reality and re-affirms our standing in the realm of the impossible.

In sum, the Prologue convinces us that Plautine drama is self-conscious of its own fictionality. Even as he draws us into an outrageous plot, the Prologue urges us to remember that Plautus’ work ultimately dwells beyond the confines of daily life. This dramatic mode ultimately lends itself to a distinctive method of social critique that extends beyond the *Menaechmi* and into the rest of the Plautine corpus. Although his characters often transgress social norms, Plautus repeatedly calls our attention to the unlikeliness of their transgression and thus reinscribes the established social order once his actors exit the stage. In this way, he invites the audience to question their surroundings without confronting them with an explicit call to action. I now turn to one character in particular who exemplifies Plautus’ ability to stabilize and deconstruct social order through the use of metatheatre: the playwright-slave Palaestrio in *Miles Gloriosus*.

One of Plautus' most metatheatrical works, the *Miles Gloriosus* brings the *Menaechmi*'s characterization of a Plautine stage to life. The story centers on a pair of tricks engineered by the slave Palaestrio in order to deceive his master, the braggart soldier Pyrgopolynices, who has recently abducted an Athenian woman named Philocomasium. In his first trick, Palaestrio instructs Philocomasium to pose as her own identical twin so that she can conduct an affair with Pleusicles, her former lover and Palaestrio's former master, who happens to be staying next door as a guest. In the second trick, Palaestrio enlists a prostitute to feign her love for the Major, capturing his attention and prompting him to send Philocomasium back home with Pleusicles. Both tricks rely on doubleness and disguise, casting Palaestrio as the mastermind of a play-within-a-play. This play shatters any illusion of Pyrgopolynices' grandeur and exposes the reality of his foolishness. Paradoxically, it draws our attention to the Major's "reality" through theatrical pretense, ultimately rendering him a "failed spectator" to the plot unfolding in his midst.<sup>10</sup> In this way, the slave emerges freer than his master, claiming victory in a quintessentially Plautine moment where "only the shrewd are free."<sup>11</sup> As he upends the conventions of Roman social order, Plautus immerses the audience in an imaginary world that celebrates the transformative power of drama and casts Palaestrio as a triumphant "playwright."

At first glance, the outcome of the *Miles* might lead us to interpret this work as the pinnacle of subversive stagecraft. After all, our story ends with the provocative image of Pyrgopolynices naming Palaestrio as his conqueror and acknowledging that justice has been served: "*Vae misero mihi...scelus viri Palaestrio, / is me in hanc inlexit fraudem / iure factum iudico.*"<sup>12</sup> Taking such moments into account, McCarthy identifies Palaestrio as a clear manifestation of the "farcical," or

transgressive, mode in Roman Comedy, which she opposes with the "naturalistic," or stabilizing, mode.<sup>13</sup> I want to suggest, however, that Palaestrio does not leave the world entirely upside down and therefore cannot be understood as entirely "farcical." Instead, I propose that Palaestrio simultaneously upends *and* restores the established social order, crafting a distinctly subtle critique of Roman society that sows the seeds of doubt without directly advocating for radical change. His complexity develops over the course of the work, revealing in layers his true character and what he really aims to accomplish.

In many ways, of course, Palaestrio is the archetype of the *servus callidus* in Plautine theater. While a 'clever slave' appears in many Roman comedies, this figure plays a uniquely "exuberant" part in Plautus' work.<sup>14</sup> Palaestrio casts himself in this role most clearly when he sketches out the plot of his second trick. Here he assumes a position of leadership and begins telling his co-conspirators exactly what to do, as if to provide them with "stage directions:" "*igitur id quod agitur, hic primum praeverti decet / nunc hoc animum advortite ambo.*"<sup>15</sup> His use of the phrase "*id quod agitur*" in this speech echoes the line "*dum haec agitur fabula*" from the prologue of the *Menaechmi*. His imperative "*animum advortite*" also appropriates a command typically given to audience members at the onset of a performance.<sup>16</sup> This explicitly theatrical language confirms that Palaestrio is not just the mastermind of a prank, but in fact the writer and director of his own play. Accordingly, he also adopts the verb *decet* in these lines, granting himself the power to determine what is "right" and "proper" from this point forward. Thus, he launches into the details of his plot, true to the form of the Plautine *servi callidi* who don the "magic armor" of wit and "possess the imagination to remake the world and

themselves.”<sup>17</sup> In doing so, he invites us to explore a fictional land where the lower orders of society can rise up to take control over their own destinies.

Throughout this same scene, Palaestrio strengthens his claim to the role of playwright by manipulating the identities of those involved in his trick. He envisions the details of the prostitute’s disguise, reminding his coconspirators that she must stay “in character” in order for the trick to work: “*memineris ne Philocomasium nomines... [sed] Diceam.*”<sup>18</sup> As he invents a new name for the girl and weaves her into his grand scheme, he evokes the image of a playwright spinning characters out of thin air and promptly dismissing them at his own discretion. Noting derisively that Pyrgopolynices fancies himself an “Alexander,” he presents his victim as one more “character” to claim for his own. Thus, he aligns himself once again with the Roman *poetae* who, like Plautus himself, reappropriated Greek figures in their own plays. Significantly, Palaestrio’s role of redefinition here comprises far more than humorous diversion: in fact, it carries very real consequences in the world of the *Miles*. As Moore observes, Plautine metatheatre tends to further the action of the play rather than appear only in backhanded comments or allusions.<sup>19</sup> Fitting himself neatly into this pattern, Palaestrio seizes metatheatricality as a means of control, obtaining the privilege to determine what happens both in the trick and in the larger world of the play to which he belongs.

At the same time, however, Palaestrio also reinforces the play’s more “naturalistic” tendencies, re-affirming the familiar slave master dynamics embedded in Roman society. To understand Palaestrio in this somewhat counterintuitive light, we must first recall the Prologue in the *Menaechmi* insisting that all theater is only temporary. If we follow his logic, the world of the *Miles Gloriosus*

constitutes a kind of holiday from real life, an occasion to cast aside our traditional experience of the world and revel in the novelty of the imagination. In this view, Palaestrio’s scheming takes on the character of Saturnalia, the Roman festival during which masters would provide table service for their slaves for one night each year. The inherent irony in this ritual is, of course, that it relies on the institution of slavery itself: the slave’s very participation in the festivities *presupposes* his status as a slave. Paradoxically then, we can understand the Saturnalian ritual as “temporary anarchy that implies order.”<sup>20</sup> Palaestrio devises a similarly carnivalesque inversion of the social ladder in *Miles Gloriosus*, upending society for one brief moment before vanishing along with the rest of the play. Just like a Saturnalian celebration, the thrill of the whole affair relies on social standards remaining intact beyond the spatial-temporal limits of the stage.

Palaestrio also acknowledges the looming threat of slave punishment throughout the *Miles*, continually re-asserting the very social order that he aims to overturn. In general, we can observe that “the verbal texture of Plautine comedy is saturated with the language of punishment and torture.”<sup>21</sup> For all its plotting and scandal, the *Miles* nonetheless offers a prime example of this phenomenon. Palaestrio himself invokes the cruel reality of slave punishment in his own trick, urging Sceledrus not to go spreading stories that could get him into serious trouble: “*verum enim tu istam, si te di ament, temere hau tollas fabulam: / tuis nunc cruribus capitique fraudem capitalem hinc creas.*”<sup>22</sup> Moments like this one, scattered throughout the play, serve as a constant reminder that the real world still lurks behind the scenes of Palaestrio’s triumph. Each harkens back to the Prologue’s assurance in the *Menaechmi* that all drama is only fantasy in the end, that it cannot touch the hierarchical reality of

Roman life. And so, by scripting his “play” against the backdrop of slave torture, Palaestrio in fact confirms the very features of the Roman world that he simultaneously dares to challenge.

Palaestrio’s genuine loyalty to Pleusicles, his former master, also establishes a more “naturalistic” dimension to his character. In the prologue to the *Miles*, Palaestrio tells us that he has devised a trick with the express purpose of luring the Major out of his attachment to Philocomasium and thereby reuniting her with Pleusicles: “*itaque ego paravi hic intus magnas machinas, / qui amantis una inter se facerem convenas*).”<sup>23</sup> In this passage, Palaestrio makes clear that his motivations transcend his own self-interest. He differentiates himself from the typical clever slave in an *adulescens/senex* paradigm, where the slave indulges the lustful yearnings of the *adulescens* to stage a joint rebellion against the hierarchy of both the family and the established social order.<sup>24</sup> Palaestrio, by contrast, takes the side of true love (rather than lustful debauchery), breaking up one domestic union but restoring another at the same time. Thus, he remains at least partially subservient to external authority: he typifies the virtues of a “good slave” in his devotion to Pleusicles while rejecting these same virtues in his hatred for the Major. Palaestrio proceeds to emphasize his own ambiguous nature, meanwhile, when he casts himself as an actor in his own play.<sup>25</sup> This move makes him out to be a pawn in his own scheme, framing him as both the creator of the story and as one of its created parts. The paradox of Palaestrio’s self-presentation thereby mirrors his paradoxical effort to both tear at the fabric of social order and stitch it back together.

On another level, Palaestrio’s devotion to reuniting the two lovers also leaves him subservient to the genre of comedy itself. The “love plot” that Palaestrio works to resolve is a defining feature of the

*Miles* that helps situate it in the tradition of Greek New Comedy and *fabulae palliatae*.<sup>26</sup> As Palaestrio propels us toward the play’s resolution, Plautus uses his character to drive his own plot forward and establish himself in the world of Roman drama. Thus, he reminds us that the “engineering playwright” we see onstage was first engineered by *another* engineering playwright, namely, Plautus himself. This reminder also serves to reinforce the naturalistic sensibility of the play: Plautus affirms that despite the slave’s scheming ingenuity, the real locus of control ultimately lies beyond his grasp. In effect, he toils throughout the play in the service of Plautus and Pleusicles, his master and his author, alike.

But while Palaestrio’s selfless devotion renders him subservient, it also invites a more destabilizing question about the humanity of slaves. If, as Plautus ventures to suggest, the slave is capable of great emotional depths, of devising “*magnas machinas*” at his own peril, the audience cannot help but question his standing in the social order. Indeed, Palaestrio’s loyal, empathetic stance renders him more “humane” than someone as bestial and repulsive as the Major — who, unlike Palaestrio, would have been considered fully “human” under Roman law.<sup>27</sup> As Christenson observes, Roman comedy often exposes this kind of “elaborate social script” underlying Roman life, with its manufactured hierarchy of slaves and masters, network of patrons and clients, and array of “social rituals” that were performed throughout the day (for example, a client’s morning salute to his patron). As Roman playwrights toyed with these structures in their plots, they left their Roman audience with “a model for evaluating their own social lives.”<sup>28</sup> In this same way, the *Miles* invites its viewers to take a second look at the “roles” that they have assigned one another in real life and ask themselves

whether or not they really find these roles to be justified.

Ultimately, Palaestrio both challenges and re-affirms the social status of the Roman slave in his moments as playwright. On the one hand, he topples the Major in a spectacular display of brilliance and cunning. At the same time, however, his self-conscious “staging” evokes the fleeting, carnivalesque atmosphere of the Saturnalian rituals that, paradoxically, rely on the institution of slavery itself. In addition, he devises his scheme with the cruel reality of slave punishment looming in the background. Finally, he displays a fervent loyalty to his former master and even comes forward as subservient to the genre of comedy itself. These distinct elements join together to reassert the boundaries crossed and put Palaestrio back in his place on the fringes of the Roman social order. But as Palaestrio’s clever mind and loyal heart fade out of sight, Plautus plants a seed of doubt about the justice of his subordinate status. His query rings out centuries into the future, as the figure of Shylock from Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* takes up this very Plautine question concerning the place of the “other” in society.

Shakespeare’s *Merchant of Venice* clearly establishes an “other” in the figure of Shylock. Some have proposed that Shylock represents an Elizabethan counterpart to the Latin slave-dealer. “Possessive,” “hostile,” and often accused of “godlessness,” Shylock does indeed share some defining traits with this stock character.<sup>29</sup> Like many slave-dealers in Roman comedy, he serves as a kind of *agelast*, or “blocking figure,” in the plot of the *Merchant*. He clings to his desire for a “pound of flesh” with a grotesque insistence that recalls his miserly predecessors in Roman drama.<sup>30</sup> He sneers and snarls onstage until the resolution of the play proceeds from his humiliating defeat in court. These

parallels, however, do not tell the whole story of his complicated character. I aim to demonstrate that Shylock in fact resonates most with the lowest orders of society in Plautine theater, and, in particular, with the playwright slave Palaestrio from *Miles Gloriosus*.

While Shylock is not enslaved, his sub-human status in Venetian society recalls that of the Roman slave. By the early seventeenth century, Venice claimed to be “tolerant, bourgeois, and republican,”<sup>31</sup> a city where men of all different backgrounds could come together and engage in commerce. But Shakespeare’s play probes beyond the surface to reveal the fissures within this model. Again and again, the play shows us spiteful Venetians replacing Shylock’s name with “The Jew” or other insults, reducing his identity to slurs and stereotypes. They dismiss him as “violent” and “bloodthirsty,” denying him a capacity for the warmth of human connection. In these moments, Shakespeare reveals that legal protections alone could not erase the hard boundaries established between different groups. In spite of the basic rights afforded him by law, Shylock occupies the bottom rungs of a rigid social order, repeatedly deprived of the same human selfhood that Romans once denied their slaves. Thus, he occupies the role of “the other” in a world that was, much like Elizabethan England, predominantly Christian.

Even as Shakespeare goes along with the Venetian narrative of a “Jew-villain,” he also grants Shylock the space to assert his humanity. In a moment riddled with raw emotion, Shylock delivers some of the most moving lines in all of Shakespeare:

I am a Jew. Hath not a Jew eyes? Hath not a Jew hands, organs, dimensions, senses, affections, passions; fed with the same food, hurt with the same weapons, subject to the same diseases, healed by the same means, warmed and cooled by the same winter and

summer as a Christian is? If you prick us do we not bleed? If you tickle us do we not laugh? If you poison us do we not die? And if you wrong us shall we not revenge? If we are like you in the rest, we will resemble you in that. If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility? Revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew, what should his sufferance be by Christian example? Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute, and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.<sup>32</sup>

This passage offers a new perspective on Shylock's behavior. In all its pleading sorrow, the speech condemns Venetian society as a whole, suggesting that the city itself, stratified and hypocritical as it is, has fostered Shylock's thirst for vengeance by its own "Christian example." Here, Shylock steps back from the minutiae of his daily concerns to see himself trapped in a relentless cycle of "sufferance," hatred, and misunderstanding. For this reason, Bronstein concludes that Shylock is more complex than meets the eye, "a villain and comic, but also sympathetic."<sup>33</sup> He plods along against the myriad charges hurled against him, confined to the stereotype that Shakespeare simultaneously embraces and, in glimmering moments of rebellion such as this one, rejects. In this way, the play strikes a delicate balance between its subversive and stabilizing undertones. It sparks a question in the viewer's mind without encroaching on the realities of daily life, challenging the audience to peer beyond external appearances and ask themselves what they really see in the world around them. And so, as Shylock operates within the social paradigm and dares to break outside of it at the same time, he harkens back to Palaestrio's own dual nature as a playwright-slave.

Like Plautus, meanwhile, Shakespeare goes on to devise a metatheatrical framework

for his play. In particular, the trial scene at the end of the *Merchant* stages a kind of play-within-a-play that recalls the central conceit of Palaestrio's trick. As Shylock proclaims, "I stand here for law" and "I stand for judgment," he adopts the language of roleplay, as if to "try on" the part of justice like an actor in costume.<sup>34</sup> These statements imply that Shylock aims to transcend himself and speak as the very embodiment of "the law" in the trial scene. Antonio mirrors Shylock's decision to speak "in character" as he laments: "I am a tainted wether of the flock / meetest for death."<sup>35</sup> Thus, he assigns himself the part of "the victim," framing Shylock as the antagonist in his role of "the law." Meanwhile, as the group waits for their trial to begin, stranded in suspense like an audience before curtain call, Bassanio asks Shylock: "Why dost thou whet thy knife so earnestly?"<sup>36</sup> His pointed question conjures an image of Shylock wielding his knife like a prop, gesturing wildly as if to rehearse his upcoming scenes in pantomime. Weaving these moments into our anticipation of the decisive event to follow, Shakespeare characterizes the scene of the trial as a theater in which Shylock will plead his case and assume the part of "the law."

Portia only heightens the metatheatricality of the trial scene upon her arrival, appearing in disguise to play the part of Balthasar, the "young and learned doctor." Here she adopts a trick from the repertoire of Plautine deceptions and presents a fake letter explaining that the court's usual judge has fallen ill. She inserts herself in his place, setting the "play" in motion. At first, she casts herself Shylock's ally, declaring, "Why, this bond is forfeit; / And lawfully by this the Jew may claim / A pound of flesh."<sup>37</sup> In this moment, however, it is important to note that she replaces his name with "the Jew," once again paring his identity down to socio-ethnic status. This choice in language foreshadows

her intention to put Shylock back in his place on the established social ladder and reclaim the law from his hands. Accordingly, she soon dismantles his claim as the trial proceeds, pointing out that Shylock cannot seek the life of a citizen under Venetian law. Thus, we see that she has been following a “script-within-a-script” all along, advancing a plot contrived to undermine Shylock’s claim to justice. Restoring the world to its former stratified status, Portia draws the “play” to a close and sends Shylock away in disgrace.

On the surface, Shylock’s humiliation in court stands in direct contrast to Palaestrio’s triumph over the Major. But if we look closely, the trial scene in fact invites the same kind of subtle critique as the *Miles*. Once again, we must begin from the Prologue’s words in the *Menaechmi* and recall his insistence that the world of the theater is fluid, dynamic, and experimental, a place of infinite possibility where people and places are constantly in motion. Shakespeare picks up this theme in the *Merchant*, as Shylock morphs before our eyes from “bloodthirsty” to pitiable to vanquished in the end. His character transports us into a space where, for one brief moment, even the lowly can “try on” power like a costume, only to find the old boundaries redrawn as reality sets in at the close of the play. Thus, Shakespeare brings us a story that is neither dangerous nor overtly radical, but questioning. His careful attention to the “humanity of the foreigner,” coupled with Portia’s long speech on the virtues of Christian mercy for *all*, prompts the audience to ask themselves whether justice has really been served.<sup>38</sup> And so, in the same way that Palaestrio plants his Saturnalian scheme in our minds before fading away into the folds of memory, here too we leave the world of theater with Shylock’s demands for justice still ringing in our ears. Neither figure

can hope to upend the world as we know it, but instead simply leaves us all to ask: what if?

And so, entering into dialogue across the bounds of time, both Shakespeare and Plautus immerse their audiences in the sorrows, triumphs, and fundamental humanity of those whom society would deem “others.” Through the use of metatheatre, each playwright sets up a fluid, experimental and dynamic stage where Palaestrio and Shylock temporarily overturn the conventions of the established social order. Although their subversive victories ultimately give way to the “real world” in the end, each leaves his audience with a sense of restlessness and discomfort as he exits the stage, leaving viewers to re-evaluate the social “roles” that they both inhabit and enforce in their own lives. Engaging with a question that continues to grip the human conscience, Shakespeare and Plautus each seize on the power of literature to spark conversation and leave transformative ideas lingering well beyond the realm of dramatic performance.

## WORKS CITED & TEXTUAL NOTES

1. Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford University Press, 2008), 35.
2. Plautus, *Menaechmi*, ed. A.S. Gratwick (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 72.
3. Cf. Pl. *Amph.* 97 (*haec urbs est Thebae*) and Ter. *Dys.* 1-2 ( $\tau\eta\varsigma$  Άττικης νομίζετ’ εἴναι τὸν τόπον, / Φυλήν); for a similar discussion of location in Roman comedy, see A. Schoeman, “Mercury and Metatheatre II: The *Argumentum* in Plautus’ *Amphitruo*,” *Akroterion* 44, no.1 (1999): 39.
4. Pl. *Men.*, 74-75.

5. A.S. Gratwick suggests “households” for *familiae* here, although the word can of course mean “troupes” (of actors) in other contexts. Thus, the use of *familiae* here conjures a self-reflexive image of actors being “changed” into members of particular households.
6. Frances Muecke, “Plautus and the Theater of Disguise,” *Classical Antiquity* 5, no. 2 (Oct. 1986).
7. Pl. *Men.*, 75; as A.S. Gratwick observes in his commentary on the *Menaechmi*, this list draws from both comedy and tragedy, in both the Greek and Roman styles. The range here further emphasizes the versatility of the stage and the continuous cycle of stories that it has to tell.
8. Pl. *Men.*, 56.
9. Other examples of Plautine paradox include the *servus callidus* as a “speaking tool,” cf. Kathleen McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press), 83; Hanno as a “Roman foreigner” in Pl. *Poen.*, cf. Erich Gruen, “Roman Comedy and the Social Scene,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Comedy*, eds. Michael Fontaine and Adele C. Scafuro, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 10; the possibility of “enslaved freemen” in Pl. *Capt.* and “scripted improv” in Pl. *Pseud.*, cf. David Christenson, “Metatheatre,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy*, ed. Martin A. Dinter, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 138 & 149.
10. Timothy J. Moore, *The Theater of Plautus: Playing to the Audience*, (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1997), 77.
11. Erich Segal, *Roman Laughter: Poetics and Playfulness in Plautus and Terence*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1987), 164.
12. Plautus, *Miles Gloriosus*, 180-181.
13. McCarthy, *Slaves, Masters, and the Art of Authority*, 83. Here McCarthy proposes that clever slaves like Palaestrio are “without complications of character type” and in fact represent the view that Roman masters wanted to take in their own lives.
14. William Fitzgerald, “Slaves in Roman Comedy,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Roman Comedy*, ed. Martin A. Dinter, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 189, Fitzgerald observes that eight of Plautus’ twenty surviving plays feature a *servus callidus* and that 44% of all Plautine monologues are spoken by slaves.
15. Pl. *Mil.* 380-382.
16. Cf. Pl. *Men.* 5 (*nunc argumentum accipite atque animum advortite...*), Pl. *Cap.* 38 (*nunc iam huc animum omnes quae loquar advortite...*), Pl. *Poen.* 5-6 (*sileteque et tacete atque animum advortite / audire iubet vos imperator...*).
17. Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 164; Niall W. Slater, *Plautus in Performance: Theater of the Mind*, (New York: Routledge, 1985), 146.
18. Pl. *Mil.* 807-808.
19. Moore, *The Theater of Plautus*, 7376.
20. See Segal, *Roman Laughter*, 166-172 for a detailed discussion on the parallels between Saturnalia and the Roman stage.

21. Fitzgerald, “Slaves and Roman Comedy,” 193.
22. Pl. *Mil.* 294-295, see also 309-312, 398, 404-405, 408-410, 471-480, 491-493, 531, 548, 565-568.
23. Pl. *Mil.* 138-139.
24. Fitzgerald, “Slaves and Roman Comedy,” 189.
25. See Pl. *Mil.* IV.3 and IV.5, where Palaestrio helps maintain the ruse in his dialogue with the Major.
26. George E. Duckworth, “New Comedy” in *Nature of Roman Comedy*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2015), 28.
27. Edgar S. Shumway, “Freedom and Slavery in Roman Law,” *The American Law Register* 49, no. 1 (Nov. 1901), 636.
28. Christenson, “Metatheatre,” 149.
29. Engin Uzmen, “The Merchant of Venice and Latin Comedy,” in *Shakespeare’s Historical Plays: Key Figures by Sources*, (Ankara: Hacettepe University, 1973), 104; Northrop Frye, “Characterization in Shakespearean Comedy,” *Shakespeare Quarterly* 4, No. 3 (Jul., 1953), 276,
30. Cf. Sannio in Ter. *Ad.*, Dormio in Ter. *Phorm.*, Labrax in Pl. *Rud.*, et al.
31. Allan Bloom, “Shakespeare on Jew and Christian: An Interpretation of *Merchant of Venice*,” *Social Research* 30, No.1 (Spring 1963), 5,
32. William Shakespeare, “The Merchant of Venice,” eds. Barbara A. Mowat and Paul Werstine (Washington, D.C.: Simon & Schuster, 2004), III.1, 57-72.
33. Herbert Bronstein, “Shakespeare, The Jews, and *The Merchant of Venice*,” *Shakespeare Quarterly*, 20, no. 1 (1969), 9.
34. Shakespeare, *Merchant of Venice*, IV.1 104 & V.1 144.
35. Shakespeare, IV.1, 116-117.
36. Shakespeare, IV.1, 123.
37. Shakespeare, IV.2, 239-241.
38. Frye, “Shakespeare on Jew and Christian,” 1; Bronstein, “Shakespeare, The Jews, and the *Merchant of Venice*,” 8.

**September 1687**

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Sing through me muse, of so and so  
Or such and such,  
Of some translation new or old  
Or crumbling at the touch.  
Sing through me of columns bold,  
Of mighty structures stretching to the sky,  
Of stories that will with us one day die,  
Of hollow ships and blackened sails  
All caught in parchment paper's dusty eye.  
Sing through me that ancient song  
That passed from child to child like coloured hair,  
That changed and grew with every further thread,  
To weave a long gone culture's burial shroud.  
Sing of statues dark in frog-like hue,  
Of mighty bronzework toppled by a crowd,  
Of crouching women hiding from the view  
Of marbled thousands stood without a sound.

Sing through me of rotting sacred sites,  
Of burn marks on the temple walls,  
Of shattered bricks pretending to the light  
That mankind never had the gall  
To spew them into life  
And then discard them on the Attic floor.



***Cupid and Psyche***  
Mural  
Madeleine Rubin-Charlesworth  
Pomona College

## The Stranger in a Strange Land: Exile in Euripides' *Medea*

*"Of all creatures that have breath and sensation, we women are the most unfortunate. First at an exorbitant price we must buy a husband and take a master for our bodies... The outcome of our life's striving hangs on this, whether we take a bad or a good husband. For divorce is discreditable for woman and it is not possible to refuse wedlock. When a woman comes into the new customs and practices of her husband's house, she must somehow divine, since she had not learned it at home, how she shall best deal with her husband... But your story and mine are not the same: you have a city and a father's house, the enjoyment of life and the company of friends, while I, without relatives or city, am suffering outrage from my husband. I was carried off as booty from a foreign land and have no mother, no brother, no kinsman to shelter me from this calamity..."*

So proclaims the titular character in Euripides' *Medea* as she addresses the women of Corinth, having heard of her husband Jason's desire to divorce her in order to marry Glauce, daughter of the local king. This speech is hailed primarily as a seminal moment in Greek tragedy for its articulation of the collective calamity of the female condition in Ancient Greece. It clearly laments that the state of a woman's marriage was likely the key contributor to her misfortune, whilst also being the only avenue for her security. Furthermore, Medea's speech reflects the universal pain of removal from one's native land, as she bemoans her exile from Colchis and the prospect of exile once more from Corinth. The descent and enactment of vengeance which follows this speech, as well as Medea's possession of supernatural powers, have frequently been examined through the lens of gender, with Medea being interpreted as a proto-feminist,

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part-divine tragic heroine. Less discussed, however, is the role of exile – both its prior experience and the threat of its repetition – in shaping Medea's decisions, psyche, treatment by Euripides and by the characters which surround her.

Amidst the paucity of source material pointing to exile as a punishment or practice real women experienced, Medea stands out as one of only a handful of female characters in ancient tragedy subjected to exile. In this paper, I will first investigate the extent to which the experience of exile informs the identity, psychology, and decision-making of Euripides' *Medea*, by examining the treatment of Medea's prior and impending exiles within the play. Second, I will discuss whether her repeated subjection to exile constitutes a subversion or reification of typical accounts of exiled and foreign women in the context of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athens. Ultimately, I will argue that Medea's violent crimes and experience of exile mark her as an outlier among her tragic and historical female contemporaries; however, those same features of her identity and Euripides' original interventions in the Medea myth ultimately reaffirm 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athenian fears of the destructive power of foreign women, and the legal and political vulnerability imposed by exile.

## EXILE: PAST, PRESENT, & FUTURE

The tragedy and significance of exile to Medea's tale is made apparent from the outset of the play, with Euripides drawing upon previous incarnations of the Medea myth with which the 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athenian audience at the Dionysia would have been familiar.<sup>2</sup> As the Nurse describes in her opening summary of earlier events, Medea's first experiences of exile occurred prior to the events of Euripides' scene in Corinth.

Originally a princess of Colchis (present-day Georgia and Turkey), Medea's downfall began with her immediate infatuation with Jason upon his arrival to her father's kingdom while in pursuit of the Golden Fleece. It was this passion which motivated Medea to deploy the witchcraft she inherited through direct descent from Helios, the sun god, to assist Jason in stealing the Golden Fleece, in exchange for his agreement to take her back to Iolcus and marry her.<sup>3</sup> Having assisted Jason and abandoned her father's household for her future husband's, Medea fled Colchis.<sup>4</sup> It was only after the commission of a capital crime that Medea's flight from Colchis became an evasion of punishment: as she and Jason sailed to Iolcus, Medea kidnapped, murdered, and dismembered her brother Aspyrtus, knowing that her father, King Aeetes, would be delayed in his pursuit of the Argonauts' ship to retrieve the remains in order to give his son a proper burial.<sup>5</sup> Medea's first exile was, therefore, voluntary, and constituted not only the renunciation of her status as princess, and the familial obligations to father, brother, and homeland, but also the first of her destructions of the father-child relationship.

The second act of violence necessitating voluntary exile would occur, as the Nurse references, upon Jason and Medea's return to Iolcus. Fearing the political ambitions of Jason's chief rival for control of Iolcus, his uncle Pelias, Medea "persuaded the daughters of Pelias to kill their father" through another supernatural ploy, leading Jason and Medea to evade punishment by fleeing to Corinth.<sup>6</sup> According to the Nurse, these misfortunes reduced Medea to "[weeping] to herself for her dear father, her country, and her ancestral home. All these she abandoned when she came here with a man who has now dishonored her. The poor woman [had] learned at misfortune's hand

what a good thing it is not to be cut off from one's native land."<sup>7</sup> In this description of Medea's lamentations, the Nurse merely glosses over the brief interlude of happiness Medea and Jason enjoyed in Corinth with the birth of their two sons. Therefore, prior to Medea's appearance before the audience, she has already been introduced not only as a woman scorned, but as a woman twice exiled for her own crimes. In the fictional Corinth, the audience encounters a Medea whose primary concern with her present experience of exile is emphasized from her first appearance in the play. "O father, O my native city, from you I was parted in shame, having killed my brother," she exclaims, expressing regret for both the separation and crimes which led her to her current predicament.<sup>8</sup> Despite the Nurse's proclamation that Medea was at first "an exile loved by the citizens to whose land she had come," she reveals the fundamental precariousness of the exile's position in a Greek city-state, through the caveat that it was Medea's "lending to Jason himself all her support" which kept her "life free of trouble."<sup>9</sup> That is, it was Medea's categorization as a good wife through her adherence to Classical conceptualizations of the good, normal woman (i.e. the supportive wife) which contributed to this positive reception, and her relatively stable existence in Corinth.<sup>10</sup> It was during this stage of her life (and marriage) that Medea enjoyed a brief period of happiness, with her bearing of two sons further allowing her to fulfil another key element of normative femininity in the ancient world: motherhood.

The welcome Medea received from the Corinthians is, however, recognized not only as a product of her conformity to gender expectations, but also as the result of her intentional efforts to assimilate. These are highlighted by her statement that "a foreigner must be quite compliant with the city."<sup>11</sup> This acknowledgement by Medea is part of her aforementioned address to the women of

Corinth in an attempt to gain their support through reference to their shared experience as women. But as Medea makes clear, her “story and [theirs] is not the same,” for her status as an exile marks her as doubly vulnerable, and thus doubly deserving of the Corinthian women’s sympathy and support.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, while the play’s discussion of Medea’s past and present exiles does not provide a detailed illustration of her precarious legal and political position as a foreign-born woman in the *polis*, it clearly emphasizes the resentment and anger she harbors at having been exiled. By highlighting Medea’s unequivocally negative conception of exile, Euripides contextualizes her extreme reactivity to the prospect of being exiled once more.

Throughout the play, Medea’s exile from Colchis informs her rhetorical criticisms of Jason’s remarriage; however, it is not the primary motivation for her subsequent actions *per se*. Instead, it is the impending repetition of exile, following the Corinthian King Creon’s decree: “I order you to leave this land and go into exile, taking your two children with you, and instantly.”<sup>13</sup> This mandate, rather than a consequence of any crime committed against the house of Corinth, is preemptive, (ironically) a means of preventing Medea from doing harm unto Glauce and Jason’s new union.<sup>14</sup> In an attempt to delay her and her sons’ exile, Medea appeals to Creon as a suppliant, requesting an additional day in Corinth, ostensibly to make arrangements for her departure. This supplication scene, as highlighted by historian Ioanna Karamnou, is demonstrative of “her precarious position” as an exile under his jurisdiction.<sup>15</sup> It is at this moment where her marginality – as an exile, a foreigner without a patron in the Greek city-state, and a woman without the protection of a husband’s household (*oikos*) – is most clearly exposed. It is, however, precisely because she poses a threat to the

power structure of Corinth that she chooses to weaponize her vulnerability, successfully convincing Creon to allow her one more day in the city through her appeal from a position of weakness rather than of strength.

On this fateful day, Medea plots and enacts her revenge: in the second of the two supplication scenes in the play, she entreats Aegus, a visiting King of Athens, to allow her to seek refuge in Athens.<sup>16</sup> Then, under the pretense of reconciling with Jason and accepting his marriage, she sends her sons to deliver Glauce a *peplos* inherited from Helios which poisons the wearer upon physical contact. After Glouce’s painful death after acceptance of the gift (and Creon’s death after his rushing to Glouce’s aid and contact with the poisoned garment) is recounted to Medea, she steels herself for the task which she perceives as inescapable and necessary to the destruction of her failed union with Jason: the murder of her sons. In a scene which is no less momentous and harrowing for taking place offstage, Medea kills her sons (whose screams can be heard). This final act of violence Medea perpetrates within the play is the product of much internal debate, as highlighted by just three lines from her monologue prior to the filicide itself: “I groan at what a deed I must do next! I shall kill my children: there is no one who can rescue them. When I have utterly confounded the whole house of Jason, I shall leave the land, in flight from the murder of my own dear sons, having committed a most unholy deed.”<sup>17</sup> To Medea, the killing of her sons is the culmination of the plan she adopted immediately upon her realization that she and her sons would be exiled, whilst also being a source of great pain which she must overcome.<sup>18</sup> The decision to commit the most shocking of her crimes is attributed not to any hatred of her children or motherhood itself, but due to Medea’s understanding that it is “the way to hurt [her] husband the most.”<sup>19</sup> Although her previous acts of violence were

committed in Jason's best interests, here Medea's filicide serves to injure Jason as a form of revenge for inspiring the crimes which led to her original exile; for abandoning her in spite of her sacrifices on his behalf; and, in cruel irony, for forcing her to face exile once more.

## EXILED WOMEN, REAL & IMAGINED

Beyond its artistic strengths as a tragedy, Euripides' account of the Medea myth is particularly remarkable when contrasted with real and imagined accounts of female exiles and criminals. As a figure in Greek tragedy, Medea's memorability and significance stem not only from her experience of exile as a woman, but also the fact that her exile was a consequence of crimes she herself had committed. As classicist S. Georgia Nugent notes, "exile as a fact of political life can hardly apply to women in antiquity."<sup>20</sup> In the context of Classical Greece, and, indeed, throughout the entirety of antiquity, women were not classified as citizens. Therefore, they were not in possession of rights of political participation which could be stripped through mechanisms which sought to prevent citizens' accumulation of excessive political or economic power (i.e. *atimia*, ostracism, or general exile).

Instead, women in antiquity generally experienced exile through their relationships with men; for example, exile was a potential consequence of a city-state's loss in a war.<sup>21</sup> More often, women shared in exile as a punishment meted out to their husbands or fathers, a fate documented throughout antiquity. From the earliest poetic sources in the 8<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> century, Hesiod provides accounts of innocent women and children who shared their husbands' and fathers' fates of exile, such as Alcmene, whom he describes as "following warlike Amphitryon" in his exile Thebes in the *Shield*, as well as in his *Catalogue of Women*.<sup>22</sup> Isocrates, the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>-century rhetorician confirms his own experience of exile, and its impact on his

family: "I had only recently suffered exile and was living in an alien land among foreigners, and had lost my fortune; in addition, I saw my mother and my sister driven from their native land and ending their lives in a foreign land among strangers."<sup>23</sup> Though recounting events which had occurred centuries before, Plutarch in the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup>-century AD praised the wife of Panteus of Sparta, who ran away to share her husband's exile, and the remarkable decision of Chilonis to first leave her husband to follow her father Leonidas into exile, and then to leave her father to follow her husband Cleombrotus into exile, upon Leonidas' regaining of political power.<sup>24</sup>

Although exile was a common penalty experienced by men for various crimes, women's prosecution for capital offences such as murder were more often punished through the death penalty.<sup>25</sup> This is perhaps supported by the relative rarity of exile as a punishment for female perpetrators of violence, even within fictional and mythological accounts, such as those found in tragedy. Bearing in mind the limited representation of tragedy in capturing the lived realities of plebian, mortal women, it is nonetheless noteworthy that death, not exile, is emphasized as the punishment for treason, murder, and manslaughter. In an early 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>-century account of the Trojan War, Greek poet Stesichorus recounts Menelaus's initial plan to stone Helen to death for her adultery.<sup>26</sup> Stoning to death, due to the prevalence of its use as a punishment for capital offenses in the Mycenaean period depicted in epic poetry and tragedy, is also cited in Sophocles' *Antigone* as the punishment for disobedience of the royal edict prohibiting burial of Antigone's brother Polynices.<sup>27</sup> In Sophocles' *Electra*, stoning is again the punishment to which Orestes and Electra are sentenced as punishment for their matricide.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, fictional women who find themselves guilty of crimes inadvertently are typically driven to suicide upon realization of their actions, such as Heracles's second wife, Deianeira, who kills herself upon discovery of her accidental poisoning of Heracles; or Jocasta, who also commits suicide following the realization of her participation in an incestuous relationship with her son.<sup>29</sup> Exile as a punishment for women's own crimes is referenced very rarely, and almost never enacted as a punishment: although Clytemnestra is sentenced to being "forever cut [out] from our community," following her murder of her husband in Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, she is killed before this fate comes to fruition.<sup>30</sup> And while the fifty daughters of Danaus do in fact seek exile to Argos rather than accept forced marriage to their cousins in Aeschylus' *Suppliant Women*, they do so voluntarily to preempt a worse fate, rather than as the consequence of their own wrongdoing.<sup>31</sup>

On one hand, Medea's exiles to Corinth and later, Athens, bear some resemblance to the exile of the Danaids, given the former's desire to evade the punishment she would have received in Colchis and Corinth, respectively. Despite this, Medea remains an outlier among her fictional and historical contemporaries due to her perpetration of violent crimes *qualifying* her for punishment rather than an unfavorable existence not of her own making. For while there are certainly accounts of women who committed capital crimes, and women who evaded undesirable circumstances in their homelands, Medea's repeated experience of exile is simultaneously the consequence of her violence, and her evasion of less desirable punishments (likely death).

## THE LAW & POLITICS OF MEDEA'S EXILES

An analysis of Medea based on the extant accounts of exile amongst women indicates Medea's subversion of both expectations and realities of women's behavior; however, a discussion of the legal and political context of marriage, citizenship, and exile in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athens leads to rather different conclusions about the separation between typical women (fictional and real) and Euripides' *Medea*. By comparing exile to other axiomatic forms of displacement experienced by women during marriage, and by interpreting Medea's extreme actions as reflective of the hostilities towards foreign women, her characterization can be seen much more as a product of the legal practices of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athens than a subversion of normative femininity.

Medea's frequent invocation of her voluntary exile from Colchis demonstrates the odiousness of exile and separation from one's homeland and contextualizes her subsequent rage. Moreover, it evokes Athenian conceptions of obligation under marriage. This is demonstrated by Medea's claiming of the crimes she committed at Colchis and Iolcus as foundational to the agreement between herself and Jason. "I saved your life," she asserts, when confronting Jason about his desire to divorce her and remarry Glauce for political and material gain. "The dragon who kept watch over the Golden Fleece... I killed... Of my own accord I abandoned my father and my home... I murdered Pelias by the most horrible of deaths—at the hand of his own daughters—and I destroyed his whole house."<sup>32</sup> Here, Medea's defense of her crimes as the very basis of her marriage contract serves to remind Jason of the obligations of faithfulness owed to her through marriage. Additionally, the sorcery Medea employed to assist Jason in his procurement of the Golden Fleece, his safe escape from Colchis, and the preemptive elimination of harm from Pelias, can be

considered symbolic replacements for the dowry which she would have brought to their marriage. As historian Susan Blundell notes, “a woman was legally incapable of arranging her own marriage, and this responsibility normally fell to her guardian,” in Ancient Greece, with her dowry being the “most significant form of property” she would acquire in her lifetime.<sup>33</sup> Having abandoned her family and forsaken any property which she could have claimed as her dowry, Medea substituted the monetary benefit which would have been accrued to Jason through marriage with her own intellect, supernatural abilities, and willingness to employ them on his behalf.

Medea’s initial exile from Colchis is further symbolically associated with marriage through its replication of the experience of removal from her native household, which all women experienced upon their marriage. As Nugent highlights, all women who were married were “in some sense, exiled,” due to their transfer from their father’s *oikos* to their husband’s.<sup>34</sup> With the household being the most fundamental political unit in 5<sup>th</sup>-century Greece, as well as the sphere to which wives would largely be confined, it is not unthinkable that the abrupt, potentially forced movement from one household to another would produce a highly disruptive experience for women, with strong parallels to exile. That Euripides may have intended to draw this parallel is supported by his characterization of marriage in his other tragedies, with his protagonist Electra describing her unhappy marriage as analogous to “wasting [her] soul up on the mountain tops, in exile from [her] father’s house.”<sup>35</sup> So while Medea’s subjection to exile is rarely paralleled in tragedy or accounts of female criminality and punishments, it does simulate marriage both in its similarity with removal from the paternal *oikos*, and its symbolic replacement of the marriage dowry. Medea’s experiences

of displacement are, perhaps, different in degree rather than in kind.

The conformity of Medea’s characterization with 5<sup>th</sup>-century norms is most apparent when contextualized against the backdrop of the legal and political status of exiles and foreign-born women. The precarious and particular vulnerability of exile and foreignness is highlighted both by Medea and Jason through their confrontations with each other. During Medea’s first conversation with Jason in the play, the constraints that exiled status placed on their individual decision-making processes loom large. Despite his status as a Greek, and the proportional increase of his proximity to Greekness in relation to Medea’s heightening barbarism throughout the play, Jason is also acknowledged as an exile living in a city-state which is not his own. Although citizenship rights associated with political participation are themselves not referenced by Euripides, it is likely that Jason and Medea occupied a status in Corinth most approximating that of *metekoi*, i.e. free non-citizens with obligations to be taxed and comply with the law.<sup>36</sup> Further, all metics were required to have patrons (*prostatai*) to represent them before Athenian law.<sup>37</sup> The instability of life as a foreign-born metic would have been especially recognizable to the Athenian audience at the Dionysia at which *Medea* was performed in 431 BC, given the presence of a substantial metic population in Athens at the time.<sup>38</sup>

Jason’s metic status is acknowledged as the impetus for his instrumental decisionmaking, despite his denial that his divorce of Medea is a betrayal or rejection of her as a wife: “when I first moved here from the land of Iolcus, bringing with me many misfortunes hard to deal with, what luckier find than this could I have made, marriage with the daughter of the king, though I was an exile?”<sup>39</sup> Given the centrality of citizenship status to security in the *polis*, as historian D.

F. Leao argues, Athenian audiences would have been sympathetic to Jason's desire to improve his own status, and potentially be granted citizenship.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, they would have understood that the combination of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athenian laws governing the status of metics and those governing women would have severely limited Medea's avenues of recourse. As a divorced foreigner without a *prostratai*, the only conditions under which she could remain in Corinth would be if she were to accept the demotion from her status as a wife to a concubine, and the relegation of her sons to bastards in favor of any children borne of Glauce and Jason's union, indeed contradicting Jason's assertion that his marriage to Glouce would provide greater security to his sons with Medea.<sup>41</sup>

The play's discussion of the citizenship status of children born to foreign women is especially salient given its production just two decades after the enactment of Pericles' Citizenship Law, which effectively barred the children of citizens and metics from possession of Athenian citizenship by stipulating that "anyone not born from both citizen parents would not have a share in the city."<sup>42</sup> In relation to this law, we see that Jason's increasing proximity to citizenship contributes to the heightening of his representative Greekness as contrasted with Medea's foreignness, producing a scenario in which, legally, their children have no citizenship or inheritance rights at all. As noted by historian Geoffrey Bakewell in his discussion of the Periclean law, the elimination of citizenship for mixed-status children, and the later prohibition of mixed-status marriages entirely represented the efforts of the assembly to "force... men to marry Athenian women," amidst a high prevalence of marriages between Athenian men and metic women.<sup>43</sup>

Therefore, the truly irreconcilable differences between Jason and Medea, and the latter's subsequent destruction of her

children with Jason, represent not only the already-precarious position of mixed-status children in Athenian life, but also the broader perception of the threat posed by foreign women intruding into and destroying the Athenian *oikos* and *polis*. Given that the performance of *Medea* at the Dionysia was precisely when the first generation of mixed citizen-metic children to have been affected by Pericles' Citizenship law were coming of age, the mirroring of "Medea's position [with] that of foreign wives after [its] enactment" would not have been lost on Euripides' initial audience.<sup>44</sup>

The significance of Medea's foreignness is nowhere more apparent than during her final confrontation with Jason, following her murder of their sons. "No Greek woman would have dared to do this," Jason mourns, "yet I married you in preference to them, and a hateful and destructive match it has proved."<sup>55</sup> Here, Medea's violence is cast as demonstrative of her barbarism, with Jason's only culpability lying in his choice of her over a Greek woman, like the Athenian men whose preference for metic women Pericles' Law sought to deter. Jason's subsequent description of Medea as a "she-lion, not a woman, with a nature more savage than Scylla the Tuscan monster" further serves to dehumanize the foreignness in her, and distance her actions from what is conceivably human.<sup>46</sup> This is not to argue that Euripides' emphasis on Medea's foreignness unilaterally denounces her and exalts Jason. In fact, Medea's entrance and exit from the final scene of the play on her ancestor Helios' golden chariot signifies divine approval for her actions rather than explicit condemnation. As historian Bernard Knox notes, the heroic portrayal of the "rejected foreign wife, who was to kill her husband's new wife, the bride's father, and finally her own children must have made the audience which saw it for the first time in 431 a trifle uneasy,"

perhaps explaining Euripides' third-place finish at the Dionysia.<sup>47</sup>

Despite the ambiguity produced by Medea's emergence from the play as a victor of sorts, Euripides' invocation of Athenian hostilities towards foreign women is demonstrably intentional, given the elements of his play which diverge from prior incarnations of the Medea myth. According to the earliest accounts by Eumelus of Corinth in the mid-8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., Medea sought not to kill her sons, but rather the opposite: she "carried each to the sanctuary of Hera and concealed them, doing so in the belief that they would be immortal" when they were born.<sup>48</sup> Another 8<sup>th</sup>-century epic poet, Creophylus of Samos, noted several versions of the death of Medea's sons. In one, the women of Corinth so despised their obligation to pay respect to a foreign sorceress that they killed Medea's sons themselves; alternatively, Medea fled Corinth after killing Creon but left her sons in Jason's care, not knowing that the Corinthian citizens would later kill them as revenge.<sup>49</sup> Yet another scholium to Euripides' *Medea* asserts that the playwright was himself bribed by the current citizens of Corinth with five talents (not an insignificant sum at the time) to shift the blame for the children's death from the ancestral Corinthian citizens to Medea herself.<sup>50</sup> Notwithstanding this accusation of bribery, Euripides' account appears to be the first in which Medea is directly – and willingly – responsible for her sons' deaths. Through his reimagination of this significant moment for the purpose of performing to an audience predisposed to hostility towards foreign women, Euripides constructs a Medea who deliberately engages in acts most clearly demonstrative of the destructive power of foreign women to the Greek household.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is evident from the play's treatment of Medea's past, present, and future displacement that exile is a condition and experience with which Medea as a character is deeply preoccupied. The frequency with which she invokes her exile from Colchis as the basis for her deep resentment towards Jason highlights the fundamental insecurity and undesirability of exile, and the significance of her voluntarily having accompanied Jason from Colchis to begin with. It contextualizes her subsequent reactivity within the play, with the threat of exile operating as a catalyst for revenge. When examining Medea's actions and experiences of exile in relation to those of fictional and real women (to the best of ability based on extant sources), her repeated and voluntary engagement in exile for her own capital crimes is striking due to its rarity. But when contextualized within the legal and political ecosystem of 5<sup>th</sup>-century Athens, Medea's exile can be seen to replicate axiomatic experiences of dislocation with which married women across the ancient world would have been familiar. Further, Medea's characterization within the play, in conjunction with the specific elements of the Medea myth reimagined by Euripides for the Dionysia's audience, underscore the particular targeting of female metics by a society which perceived them to be infiltrating the households and citizenry of Athens. Thus, in spite of her remarkable as a tragic, exiled heroine, Euripides' *Medea* serves not to subvert Classical Greek conceptions of either femaleness or foreignness, but rather to illustrate the toxicity of both to the Athenian *oikos* and *polis*.

## WORKS CITED & TEXTUAL NOTES

1. Euripides, *Medea*, trans. David Kovacs (Loeb Classical Library 12, Cambridge,

- Mass: Harvard University Press, 1994), 305-307.
2. The Dionysia was an annual festival in Athens beginning in 487 BC centered on the performance of dramatic tragedies to honor the god Dionysus. *Medea* is part of Euripides' tetralogy (sequence of three tragedies and a satyr play) of *Philoctetes*, *Dictys*, and *Theristal* first performed at the 431 BC Dionysia.
  3. Medea's supernatural abilities are also associated with Hecate, the Greek goddess of witchcraft and the hearth, whom she invokes as "the goddess I worship most of all, my chosen helper... who dwells in the inner chamber of my house" prior to her filicide. (*Med.*, 319-321).
  4. Although Medea likely would have been punished for her betrayal of the royal household by assisting Jason and the Argonauts, this punishment would have been far less than what she would have suffered had she not fled Colchis.
  5. Medea's destruction of the father/child relationship, and targeting of fathers' regard for proper burial rituals would be repeated in her murder of her and Jason's two sons, and her rejection of Jason's request to "bury these dead children and to mourn them" (*Med.*, 409). Instead, she coopts Jason's claim by proclaiming her intent to bury them herself in "the sanctuary of Hera Akreia so that none of my enemies may outrage them by tearing up their graves" (*Med.*, 409).
  6. *Med.*, 285.
  7. *Med.*, 287.
  8. *Med.*, 289.
  9. *Med.*, 285-287.
  10. As Sourvinou-Inwood notes, "first, [Medea] was seen through a 'normal woman' model, as this was perceived in normative ideology and constructed in the play." Sourvinou-Inwood, Christiane, "Medea At A Shifting Distance," in James Joseph Clauss and Sarah Iles Johnston. *Medea: Essays on Medea in Myth, Literature, Philosophy, and Art.* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), 254.
  11. *Med.*, 305.
  12. *Med.*, 307.
  13. *Med.*, 309.
  14. When asked by Medea for the reason for her exile, Creon cites his fear that Medea will harm his daughter, Glauce, due to her possession of magic, resentment towards Jason, and rumors of threats she has already made against the couple.
  15. Ioanna Karamanou, "Otherness and Exile: Euripides' Production of 431 BC" in Stuttard, David, and Euripides. *Looking at Medea: Essays and A Translation of Euripides' Tragedy* (London, New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2014), 37.
  16. Here, despite the opposing of Medea's foreignness and Corinth's Greekness, Euripides reifies the particular self-image of the Athenian *polis*, by praising Athens as the "traditional protector of suppliants and as a sanctuary for victims of oppression" (Karamanou, "Otherness and Exile," 42).
  17. *Med.*, 357.
  18. The notion that death was preferable to an existence in Corinth as the forsaken sons of Jason, or the sons of an exiled Medea in Athens contribute to the framing of Medea's act almost as a mercy killing.
  19. *Med.*, 359.

20. Georgia S. Nugent, "Euripides' Medea: The Stranger in the House." *Comparative Drama* 27, no. 3 (1993): 313.
21. David Schaps, "The Women of Greece in Wartime." *Classical Philology* 77, no. 3 (1982): 208.
22. Hesiod and Glenn W. Most, *The Shield*. (Loeb Classical Library 503. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), 1.
23. Isocrates and La Rue Van Hook, *Aegineticus*. trans. La Rue Van Hook (Loeb Classical Library 373. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1945), 23.
24. Plutarch and Bernadotte Perrin, *Lives, Volume X: Agis and Cleomenes*. Tiberius and Gaius Gracchus. Philopoemen and Flamininus. (Loeb Classical Library 102. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1921), 38.
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responsum fortis miles sic incipit ore:  
“non decet, o princeps, positum sic linquere solum  
te sine subsidio, cui plaga in casside iacta est.  
namque potest homini laeso res parva nocere.  
sed mandata sequar vestra et tum cernere pergam  
quid fiat, cuius referam tibi nuntia verba.”

dixerat, et fano cedit, quod lata ruina  
straverat, et qua luna loco dat lumina parca  
funereo, qui priscorum magna ossa tenebat  
herorum, et super haec sonitum maris aura canebat  
argutum gelidi, spurnas dum dissipat albas,  
hac vadit, dum circuitu scopulisque pererrans  
distantis nitidum stagni pervenit ad aequor.

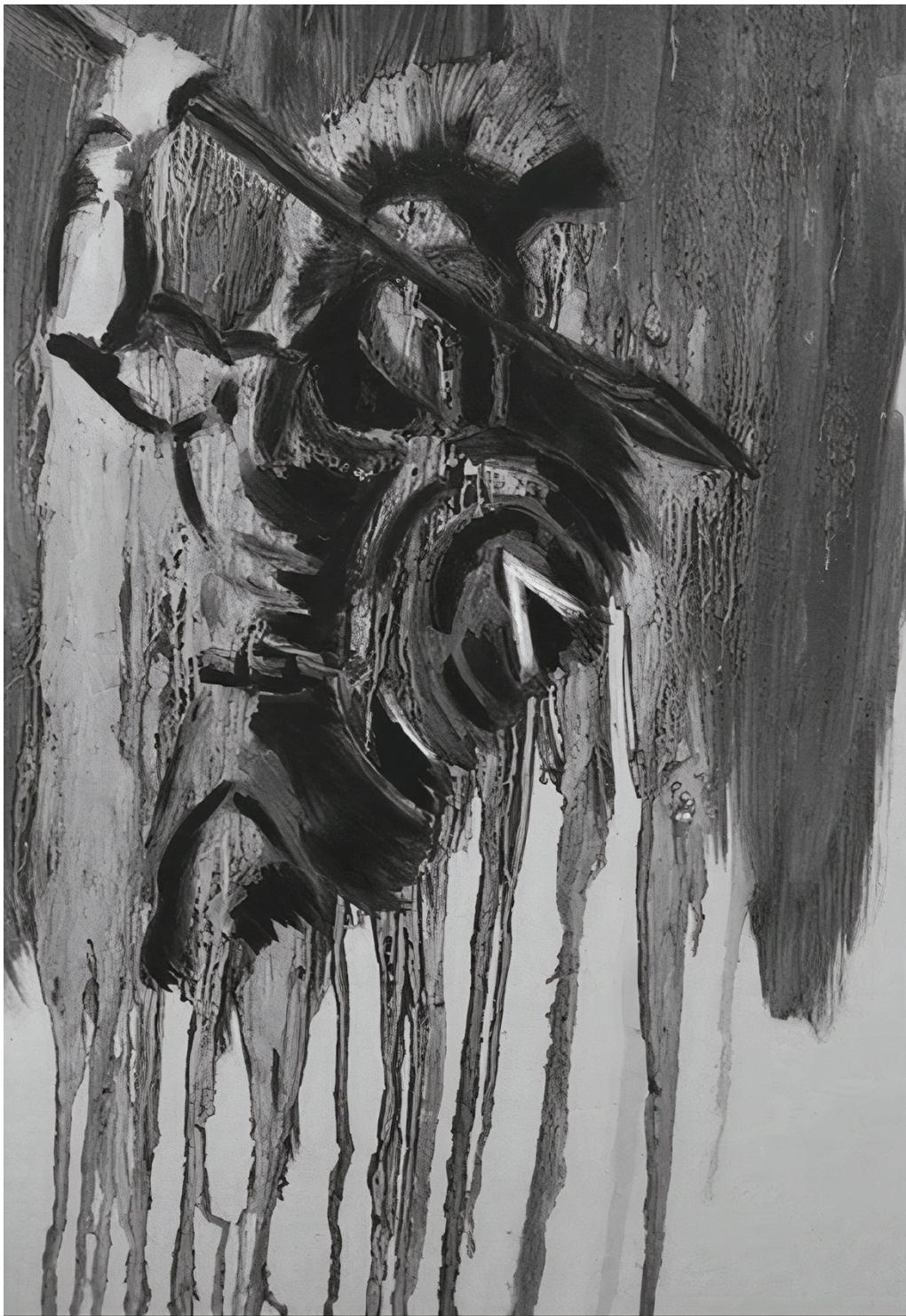
tum parens illud strinxit mirabile ferrum,  
cuius dum stringit, brumalis luce Diana  
illustrante amplas nubes, splendere pruina  
incepit capulus, decorant quem lumina achatae,  
innumerae cyani, et secti multa arte smaragdi.

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere:  
“It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee thus,  
Aidless, alone, and smitten thro’ the helm.  
A little thing may harm a wounded man.  
Yet I thy hest will all perform at full,  
Watch what I see, and lightly bring thee word.”

So saying, from the ruin’d shrine he stept,  
And in the moon athwart the place of tombs,  
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient men,  
Old knights, and over them the sea-wind sang  
Shrill, chill, with flakes of foam, he, stepping down  
By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,  
Came on the shining levels of the lake.

There drew he forth the brand Excalibur,  
And o’er him, drawing it, the winter moon,  
Brightening the skirts of a long cloud, ran forth  
And sparkled keen with frost against the hilt;  
For all the haft twinkled with diamond sparks,  
Myriads of topaz-lights, and jacinth work

Of subtlest jewellery.



*Clash by Night*

Oil on Panel

Erika Danielle Lowrance

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

**Graecia Capta Victorem Cepit et Vice Versa:  
The Classical Athenian Replica Fountain of  
Ottoman Sakız**

## INTRODUCTION

The Choragic Monument of Lysicrates from Classical Athens is an oftcopied architectural icon of its era. The “circular Corinthian edifice” frequently called the ‘Candlestick of Demosthenes’ or the ‘Lantern of Diogenes’ was built in 335/4 BCE, with a crowning tripod: the prize for Lysicrates’ choragic victory with his boy-chorus. Its location was once a “street of tripods,” but Lysicrates’ victory monument is the only one that survived.<sup>1</sup> Though much scholarship exists regarding worldwide imitations of the Lysicrates monument, an Ottoman fountain from the central square of Chios/Sakız that appropriates the Lysicrates iconography has largely escaped academic attention (fig. 1, 2, and 3).<sup>2</sup> The most the fountain has received is a few lines from an article about the promotion of tourism on the island.<sup>3</sup> This fountain is called the *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* (Abdülahmid fountain, sometimes referred to as the *Hamidiye Çeşmesi*) or *κρήνη της Πλατείας Βουνάκιον* (Vounaki Square Fountain).<sup>4</sup> Before examining the implications of the appropriative fountain monument, some background information is necessary.

The Lysicrates imitation monument began construction in 1900 in preparation for the 25th anniversary of Sultan Abdülahmid II’s rule in 1901. *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* was built in Vounaki square, the city center. The fountain stood at the center of shops and important buildings such as a monumental mosque built a few decades earlier.<sup>5</sup> The four-and-a-half meter tall red and white marble fountain was part of a celebratory 25th anniversary building campaign taking place in city centers throughout the empire, as is reported in a contemporary article from *Public Opinion* magazine.<sup>6</sup> The Lysicrates-imitating

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fountain also made the front cover of *Servet-i-Fünoun*, a popular Ottoman magazine, and became the subject of postcards (fig. 4 and 5). These popular media appearances evince that *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* had a strong public appeal, and as a part of the systematic anniversary building campaign, the fountain reflects the ideology of the Ottoman state at the turn of the 20th century.

This paper will place *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* within this imperial context, and through the case study of this understudied fountain illuminate some of the ways the Ottomans drew upon the classical Athenian past. As Ahmet Ersoy writes, “the question of how Ottoman identity was linked to the dominant cultural traditions of the past in traditional historiography is a colossal one;” this paper will add *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* to this broader academic discourse.<sup>7</sup> The fountain demonstrates how the ancient Athenian past became a canvas for Ottomanization, an embodiment of Ottoman legitimacy both geographically and in relation to classical civilization, and a symbol of Ottoman erudition and modernity. There are many ironies within this discussion, such as the use of the ancient past to suggest modernity, the fact that the warring Greeks and Ottomans both claimed the exact same classical legacy, and that this Athenian reference monument was built almost a century after the Ottomans had lost control of Athens, all of which ultimately demonstrates just how moldable the memory of ancient Athens had become.

## A MOLDABLE FORCE FOR OTTOMANIZATION

Firstly, the *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* replicates the purely decorative monument of

Lysicrates as a functional Ottoman fountain, which places the monument in the context of Ottoman urban *çeşmeler* (public fountains). This context is critical to understanding the monument in Vounaki Square. The Ottoman Empire had “a rich historical obsession with fountains.”<sup>8</sup> In the Aegean and throughout the broader region, there was an ancient tradition of state-sponsored public fountains,<sup>9</sup> a tradition which continued with the Ottomans who built *çeşmeler* from Cairo to the Balkans.<sup>10</sup> Fountains filled a critical role as sources of water and also carried a symbolic and religious connotation; the Ottomans in particular connected them with Turko-Mongol symbolism of water as resource control and the Abrahamic conception of rivers of paradise.<sup>11</sup> In addition to this general messaging, *çeşmeler* almost always bore poetic “foundation inscriptions” identifying the fountain’s patron and date, a valuable way to project the patron’s name, power, and influence.<sup>12</sup> These highly symbolic water monuments clustered in urban areas of the Empire, and helped to Ottomanize conquered urban spaces.<sup>13</sup> The *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* thus Ottomanizes the Classical Athenian legacy – through the form of the monument of Lysicrates – by placing it within the Ottoman urban context of the *çeşme*.

In addition to the Ottomanization of the choragic monument’s conversion to a fountain and its new Ottoman urban context, the Ottoman version does not have the Choragic inscription and friezes of the original, but instead bears an inscription lauding Sultan Abdülhamid II and the date of the monument’s construction. Gone is the myth of Dionysis and the Tyrrhenian pirates from the Homeric Hymn; enter the Sultan.<sup>14</sup> This monument of classical Athens now is the backdrop of an inscription that suggests Ottoman authority, and Ottoman claims to Greek territory. This is somewhat ironic, as the classical Athenian legacy was a strong

symbol of the Greek wars of independence won less than a century prior to the monument’s construction: Classical Athens continues to be a symbol of Greek nationalism today.<sup>15</sup> It is striking that the classical aesthetic of the new Greek state’s efforts towards Greekification was the same iconographic tradition the Ottomans evoked with *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*. This irony illustrates that the memory of Classical Athens was so moldable, that even the opposite sides of the fierce wars for Greek independence could both use it as a venue through which to express their respective authority and legitimacy.

## EMBODYING THE ANCIENT PAST

*Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* was not only a canvas on which to paint Ottoman legitimacy, but also embodied the Athenian past. The fountain was built as part of a whole appropriative monument moment which took place throughout the Ottoman Empire. *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*’s imitative design is similar to other contemporary monuments such as the Sintrivani Fountain of Thessaloniki which imitates an Egyptian obelisk, and the Idomeneas Fountain at Heraklion which imitates a Roman triumphal arch (fig. 6 and 7). The wide diversity of the monumental fountain subjects showcases the geographic reach of the Empire’s territorial claims, from Egypt to Greece to *Rûm*. The Athenian legacy, represented by *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*, was thus one of many ancient traditions incorporated in this broader moment of Imperial ambition. Notably, however, the Ottomans no longer controlled either Greece or Egypt: in the 19th century, the Empire was waning. The Athenian and Egyptian-style monuments thus geographically evoke an Ottoman Empire at its height back when it controlled Athens and Egypt, and therein the territorial claims that the Empire hoped to regain. The originally choragic monument of

Lysicrates had thus become molded to be an imperial political statement. These imitation-monuments also all directly connected the Ottoman Empire to the ancient past.

The way *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* relates Ottoman civilization to classical Athens follows a particular worldview of Islamic civilization's place in the historical timeline. The two central ways the Ottomans related themselves to the Hellenic past are exemplified in the two versions of the Parthenon mosque. The second iteration of the Parthenon Mosque, built after the famous 17<sup>th</sup>-century bombardment of the Acropolis, was a detached building inside the Parthenon with a shifted orientation towards Mecca. It embodies the idea of Islam as something alien imposed onto Greco-Roman history. The first iteration of the mosque by contrast used the same building as the original Periclean temple with slight modifications, a direct continuation of the building that had served as a sacred space for two thousand years prior. The worldview of this first version of the mosque sees Islamic and Ottoman civilization as the "continuation of Hellenic achievements."<sup>16</sup> This particular worldview was "an age-old Ottoman strategy for dynastic legitimization."<sup>17</sup> These Ottoman fountains imitating ancient monuments fall under this continuative worldview, and not only represent the Empire's geographic ambitions but also its continuation of the legacy of ancient civilizations such as Classical Athens. In the fountains built in the form of obelisks, triumphal arches and other iconic monuments such as the monument of Lysicrates, the Ottoman Empire staked its claim as the "rightful inheritor"<sup>18</sup> to a politically legitimizing ancient legacy.

While the Ottomans claimed ancient continuity, they still added their own spin, and "comparison with the esteemed civilizations of the past helped distinguish Ottoman culture as a distinctive and

prestigious entity" on par with classical civilizations.<sup>19</sup> This too can be seen in the *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*.

In addition to the aforementioned laudatory inscription dedicated to the Sultan, the base of the monument is particularly Ottoman, and far more ornate than the simple rectangular pedestal of the original monument of Lysicrates. For example, *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* has added many curvilinear elements, including the mini-arches above the four waterspouts, the circular foundation, the pottery-like water basins, and the finely carved rounded marble caps on each one of the projecting cuboids, whose four-corner arrangement suggests the original rectangular base of the Lysicrates monument while introducing more interesting shapes and angles. The imitation fountain also brings more color interplay than the remains of the original, through its use of red and white marble (see again fig. 1 and 2).<sup>20</sup> *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*'s placement of the Lysicrates monument form on top of a creative, Ottoman-style base acts as a visualization of the Ottomans' relationship to the classical past; the imitative portion suggests that they are legitimate inheritors of classical civilization, while the distinct portion suggests that Ottoman civilization is just as innovative and can build upon its classical inheritance to create something even grander.

The Ottomans were not the only civilization negotiating their relationship with the ancient Greek past. Other civilizations in the region set themselves up as the heirs of the ancient legacy, such as the Venetians when they seized a number of Aegean islands. During a prior period of Venetian control in Heraklion, they built fountains using spolia like the Priuli and Bembo fountains (fig. 8 and 9) which are just down the street from the later Ottoman Idomeneas fountain. The Ottomans themselves were not strangers to using classical spolia

for fountains. Spoliation goes one step beyond embodying the ancient past, it literally integrates it, and uses it to build something greater. However, no part of the *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* is actually ancient physical material from Classical Athens. It acts as a kind of manufactured spolia. Though the Ottomans no longer had control over the city of Athens, and could not physically integrate its classical past into new monuments, they could still manufacture a claim to that history through monuments such as the *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi*. This sort of manufactured connection to the past, manufactured spolia, is certainly not isolated to the Ottoman Empire. In fact, many places around the world feature imitations of the monument of Lysicrates, such as Australia, Scotland, and the United States (fig. 10, 11, and 12), all of which invoke the legacy of Classical Athens. However, as territorial claimants to the city of Athens, the Ottomans' ability to manufacture a physical connection to their former holding via the *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* took on a unique connotation.

Extending beyond the Empire's borders, worldwide imitations of the Lysicrates monument such as those aforementioned also suggested an erudition: the builder's familiarity with ancient Athens is evident in their imitation of an Athenian monument. To be erudite was a sign of status, both for the commissioner of a monument and for the civilization to which it belonged. *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* acts as proof of the Ottoman civilization's erudition, and within the context of the empire-wide building campaign, the fountain was a part of a coordinated effort to elevate the empire's status. In addition to erudition many Ottomans had a genuine appreciation and admiration for the Classical Greek past, which is evident in the inscriptions on other fountains on Sakız. On the nearby Ottoman fountain of Melek Pasha built in the previous

century, the north inscription proclaims that Melek Pasha is an admirer of Greek history, and poetically states that Alexander the Great will resurrect when you drink water from the fountain.<sup>21</sup> *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* too shows a knowledge and interest in Greek history, not through the language of an inscription, but in its form as the monument of Lysicrates. In this way, the *çeşme* molds the original Athenian monument to represent Ottoman Hellenic interest and high-status erudition made physically manifest.

## THE MODERNITY OF ANCIENT ATHENS

Ironically, imitating the Ancient Athenian monument was also a sign of modernity and a connection to the past. The *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* was built in the midst of major Archaeological developments in the Ottoman Empire. Archaeology was a young discipline at the time, and by this point European scholars had been exploring and exporting classical sites and artifacts in Ottoman territory for over a century. In response the Ottomans founded the *Müzei Hümayun* (Imperial Museum) and moved to produce Archaeological scholarship themselves to prove that they were on the same level as their European counterparts. The founder of these museums, Osman Hamdi Bey, also helped pass the *Asar-i Atika Nizamnamesi* antiquities regulations in 1884 to crack down on the export of antiquities.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, Sultan Abdülhamid II himself had a substantial interest in Archaeology, even keeping extensive personal photo albums of archaeological digs and their finds.<sup>23</sup> Considering the Sultan's personal archaeological passion, it is not surprising that his namesake fountain in Sakız would take the form of an ancient Athenian archaeological site. The *Abdülmahid Çeşmesi* thus participates in the broader context of an Ottoman desire to get on the same cutting-edge archaeological level as their European peers, and the state's modernization of its legal relationship with

the past. This adds another layer of meaning to imitative fountains such as *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*, in which the practices and aesthetics of archaeology took on a connotation of modernity. The Vounaki Square fountain points towards the modernizing future of the Empire, in addition to evoking antiquity, a temporal example of the moldable legacy of Athens.

## CONCLUSION

Taken as a whole, *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* stood at the crossroads of a number of different ways the Ottomans molded the legacy of classical Athens to their purposes. The fountain uses ancient Athens to Ottomanize the central space of Sakız, to lay imperial territorial claims, to enumerate the continuative and additive relationship between Ottoman civilization and the classical past, to establish Hellenic erudition, and to showcase modernity, all of which legitimizes the Empire and the Sultan to whom the fountain is dedicated. It is part of an empire-wide network of similar imitative fountains, each drawing upon different ancient traditions, and it became an icon of the empire in its own right as its magazine and postcard features demonstrate (fig. 4 and 5). Today, however, most tourism websites featuring Vounaki square actually devote more attention to the generically Ottoman-designed fountain of Melek Pasha than to *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*, even though they are of similar size and Melek Pasha is in a far less central location: it is not even in the square itself, but on a small corner across the street (fig. 13 and 14).<sup>23</sup> The tourism development article which mentions *Abdülahmid Çeşmesi* also devotes far more space to the Melek Pasha fountain.<sup>24</sup> All of these sources explicitly point out the Melek Pasha fountain's Ottomanness as a point of interest (fig. 15). The moldability of the classical Athenian legacy has created one final irony:

*Abdülahmid Çeşmesi*, whose appropriation of Athens once made it stand out as a postcard-worthy icon of the Ottoman-controlled city, is of far less interest now in its new Hellenic context in an independent Greece than the more overtly Ottoman fountain across the street.

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*Note from the editor: to access citations for referenced images, please contact harvardpersephone@Gmail.com.*

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2. The Greek name for the island is Chios, so when writing in a Greek context this article will use this name. The Turkish name for the island is Sakız, so in a Turkish context this article will use that name.
3. Pan Poulaki and Dimitrios Lagos, "The Monuments of the Ottoman Empire in Chios Island and Tourism Development," in *3rd International Cesme–Chios History, Culture and Tourism Symposium*. 2016.
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  15. Sarah A. Rous, *Reset in Stone: Memory and Reuse in Ancient Athens* (Madison, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2019); Karidis, *Athens from 1456 to 1920*. 90.
  16. Elizabeth Key Fowden, "The Parthenon, Pericles and King Solomon: A Case Study of Ottoman Archaeological Imagination in Greece," *Byzantine and Modern Greek Studies* 42, no. 2 (2018): 274.
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  18. Ersoy, 125.
  19. Ersoy, 125.

20. Naturally, the monument of Lysicrates would originally have been painted, but the then-recent discovery of the usage of paint on classical sculptures and buildings had not been broadly accepted by this time. From the point of view of the Ottoman architects they were adding more color to their version of the Lysicrates monument, which they thought of as pure monochrome.
21. Poulaki, "The Monuments of the Ottoman Empire in Chios Island," 10.
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## **The Fall of Troy**

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Sing O Muse,  
    who does not exist.  
Recount O bards, the  
    Dardanian myth.

The father is dragged.  
    His widow looks on.  
His child is crushed, from Poseidon's  
    walls thrown.  
Queens become slaves and wives to  
    strange men,  
carried into new wars to become slaves  
    once again.

God-like men bear a god-like  
    blame.  
Rose-fingered Dawn?  
    No, fire and flame.  
Ashes are setting o'er the city  
    made red.  
In this wretched land, life's  
    glory lay dead.  
City of Troy, great marvelous  
    pain,  
all to become the Greeks' bitter  
    gain.  
Why, fair Helen?  
    "Not I but the gods"  
Why did cruel Fate down this  
    city trod?

Tamers of horses, beware Greeks  
    bearing gifts  
But poets and bards, beware tales  
    that persist.



***East Meets West***  
Watercolor, Pen, and Ink  
Chrysante Kupuranis  
University of Arizona

## **Intellectual Drinking: Rethinking the Coexistence of Sense and Nonsense Inscriptions on Attic Painted Pottery**

“No Greek liked to write more than the Athenian, and it is on the Athenian vase that we find the richest and most varied corpus of inscriptions in ancient art,” observed Hurwit in the preface to his survey of artists’ signatures in ancient Greek art.<sup>1</sup> The appearance of nonsensical writing on several hundreds of ancient Greek ceramics, however, is part of an enigmatic epigraphic phenomenon which to this day remains relatively obscure. These vase-epigrams are an ideal field of study for the investigation of a wide range of aspects of ancient Greek society, including literacy, iconography, visual humour, multilingualism, and Greek international relations. By means of a close examination of two vases featuring a combination of “sense” and “nonsense” inscriptions, this paper explores the linguistic mechanisms and broader cultural dynamics that underlie the production and reception of these texts. The immediate impression that nonsense inscriptions do not communicate any meaningful content and that they are, therefore, worthless, has limited the scholarly interest in this material.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, the joint efforts of archaeologists, epigraphists, and modern linguists have considerably increased our understanding of the subject.

In her monumental manual on Greek epigraphy, Margherita Guarducci applied ornament theory to alphabetic writing.<sup>3</sup> In this work, she reduced the meaningless combinations of Greek letters that she identified on a range of disparate ceramic finds to mere shapes, associating them with ornamental patterns.<sup>4</sup> Her interpretive method was invalidated by Chiarini, whose research demonstrates the impossibility of rejecting the phono-linguistic referentiality of the written sign.<sup>5</sup> Another important contributor to the wider debate on nonsense

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inscriptions is Cécile Jubier Galinier. In her essay on the writing habits of the Sappho Painter, she underlined the increased freedom of interpretation that these texts provide to their audience.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, the absence of immediate linguistic content would have appealed to the viewer’s imagination, transforming the inscriptions’ apparent semantic vacuity into an infinite polysemous potential.

A third major scholarly voice in the field is that of Henry Immerwahr, whose monothematic essay on the connection between nonsense inscriptions and literacy laid the foundations for the analysis of the handwriting of individual artists.<sup>7</sup> Through detailed investigations of their epigraphic habits, Immerwahr delineated the painters’ compositional preferences, including the length and placement of their inscriptions. In addition, his paper provided the first satisfactory definition of the phenomenon, which he described as an ‘illusionistic technique’ emulating writing both optically and acoustically.<sup>8</sup>

The final scholar whose work deserves to be mentioned in this introduction is Sara Chiarini. Her recent monograph on the ancient Greek artists’ practice of writing nonsense on ceramic ware surveys the main theoretical frameworks through which earlier scholarship explained the emergence of the phenomenon and offers the first systematic overview of its linguistic features.<sup>9</sup> Its chief contributions include a new arrangement of the epigraphic material according to rising alphabeticity and a catalogue comprising the entire collection of vases and fragments that display nonsense writing. For the first time, full and accurate transcriptions of the inscriptions were published, which moreover, in many cases, were improvements upon Immerwahr’s earlier interpretations. Dismissive of most previous

scholarly interpretations, she argues that the parameters that govern both the production and the reception of this material are too numerous to reduce the phenomenon to a single explanation.

Within this multidisciplinary scholarly landscape, I suggest that nonsense inscriptions on ceramics associated with the social setting of the symposium may be read as verbal puzzles with multiple possible meanings. I will limit my discussion to two case studies. Before proceeding, I will outline the general features of nonsense inscriptions.

In the introduction of her monograph, Chiarini defines the epigraphic collection as “vases and fragments that carry letters on their surface that do not form any meaningful word of the Greek language.”<sup>10</sup> To identify a nonsense inscription, she establishes two determinative criteria. First, the dipinto needs to count no fewer than three consecutive and clearly legible signs that lack any linguistic affinities to ancient Greek, which is to avoid confusion with a potentially meaningful inscription. Second, nonsense should be the product of the author’s intention. Therefore, misspellings and failed attempts at writing Greek due to poor orthographic skills were excluded from her catalogue.<sup>11</sup>

Chiarini’s catalogue, the first complete inventory of this material, lists 1,399 vessels and fragments carrying meaningless combinations of Greek letters,<sup>12</sup> which represents 17.1% of all Attic vase-epigraphs so far reported.<sup>13</sup> This ranks nonsense inscriptions as the fourth most common type of Attic vase inscription.<sup>14</sup>

An Attic phenomenon,<sup>15</sup> the chronology of this material spans the period from the beginning of the sixth century BCE until the beginning of the fourth. Production peaks in the second half of the sixth century BCE,<sup>16</sup> which is reflected in the preponderance of black-figure over red figure.<sup>17</sup> Other, less common techniques include bilingual,<sup>18</sup> Six,<sup>19</sup> and white-ground.<sup>20</sup> A further relevant

descriptive parameter are vessel shapes, as they communicate something about the context in which the inscriptions were used and displayed.<sup>21</sup> But attribution of nonsense writing to an individual artist’s hand is much more problematic. Only part of the collection is attributed specifically,<sup>22</sup> to either workshops,<sup>23</sup> groups,<sup>24</sup> classes,<sup>25</sup> or painters.<sup>26</sup> Attributions of items ‘in the manner of’ a workshop, group, class, or painter<sup>27</sup> are much more conjectural, but the most problematic cases are the “plural attributions”<sup>28</sup>—items attributed to two or more workshops, groups, classes, or painters—and the “uncertain attributions”<sup>29</sup>—attributions followed by a question mark.<sup>30</sup> A final factor worth mentioning is the geographical distribution of the collection. Only part of the collection is provenanced.<sup>31</sup> The recorded places of discovery, located both in Greek and non-Greek regions, are distributed throughout the central and Eastern Mediterranean.<sup>32</sup>

Now that the main features of nonsense inscriptions have been laid out, I will turn to the first case study of this paper. An important plain lip-cup dated to c. 540 BCE features an illuminating example of nonsense writing (fig. 1a–b).<sup>33</sup> Mixed sense and nonsense dots the handle zone of this otherwise undecorated kylix. On the obverse, a signature carefully centred and neatly painted from left to right in large, firm letters, reads Ἐχεκίας | ἐποίε[σεν] (‘Exekias potted [me or it]’),<sup>34</sup> identifying Exekias as its manufacturer. This attribution was questioned first by Immerwahr,<sup>35</sup> then by Hurwit, who noted that the cup appears to predate most canonical Exekian works.<sup>36</sup> He hypothesizes that the vessel was potted and painted by an undistinguished ancestor of the celebrated artist.

Of particular interest to the present inquiry are the equally well-spaced nonsense syllables painted on the reverse, ENEOINOIOIEN. A first reading, proposed by Immerwahr, posits a mockery of the Greek word for wine, οἶνος.<sup>37</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this simplistic explanation did not resonate in subsequent scholarship.

Based on the echo of ἐποίεσεν in -οιοιεν, Steiner suggests that the dipinto mocks *epoiesen* inscriptions. Her analysis relies on the way in which this text — a letter combination familiar in sympotic contexts — would have been viewed. As she argues, the identical placement of both dipinti on either side of the cup invites the reader to compare them, surprising him with the garbled approximation of part of a signature that the reverse yields. Both sides of the vessel cohere via repetition of placement and sounds, which creates parody. ‘The nonsense mimics the sense’, she concludes.<sup>38</sup> From this observation emerged her idea that the combination of sense and nonsense on a single vessel demonstrates how parody is inherent to nonsense epigraphy.<sup>39</sup> The key problem with this interpretation is that it takes the literacy of all guests communing at the symposium for granted.<sup>40</sup>

More recently, Pappas imagined a scenario in which the drinker, lifting the obverse of the cup to eye level as he prepares to imbibe, reads out the craftsman’s signature. On facing *klinai*, fellow sympiasts examine the writing on the cup’s reverse, which mirrors the arrangement of the obverse and at first glance looks meaningful. However, a closer look reveals the painter’s trickery. The ensuing aural and oral echoes are paralleled by the visual resonance of both sides of the cup, just as the contrasting verbal component is directed by the visual. On this vessel, multiple modes of sensory perception negotiate the interplay between sense and nonsense.<sup>41</sup> A serious weakness with this argument is that it relies too heavily on the assumption that the drinker lifting the cup with the meaningful message on one side and the meaningless on the other would have had the meaningful

one before his eyes, while in an attempt to utter the meaningless letter string, colleagues would have exposed themselves to ridicule.<sup>42</sup>

An even more sophisticated reading suggests that, especially in the work of literate vase painters, it is unlikely that nonsense inscriptions placed next to sense inscriptions would be devoid of sense.<sup>43</sup> Yatromanolakis argues that, upon close examination, the dipinto may be seen as a “pictorial sound” which, to a certain extent, yields sense.<sup>44</sup> Despite his objection towards the leakiness of the boundaries of typologies, he classifies the text as a ‘riddle’ which a literate Athenian viewer would have attempted to decipher. Although not quite idiomatic, an initial attempt to ‘solve’ the dipinto, ἐ<ν> νέ<οι> οῖνο<i>> ιοιεν (ἐ<ν> νέ<ωι> οῖνω<i>> ιοίην),<sup>45</sup> would have been understood as ‘over new wine, may I come’. Other possibilities include ἢ νέ<οι> οῖνο<i>> ιοιεν (‘indeed, may new wines come’), ἢ νέ<οι> οῖνω<i>> ιοιεν (‘indeed, may young men come with wine’), ἢ νέ<ωι> οῖνω<i>> ιοίην (‘indeed, may I come with new wine’), ἢ νέ<οι> οῖνο<i>> ιοίην (‘look, new wines! may I come!’), and any similar syntactic constructions that would outdo the previous attempts. In the playful atmosphere of the symposium, any new attempt would prompt further ones, providing entertainment and competition amongst its participants.

Moving on to the second case study, a redfigure amphora from Vulci dated to c. 510– 500 BCE displays two genre scenes (fig. 2).<sup>47</sup> On the obverse, a pair of archers in elements of Scythian attire are depicted helping to dress a young Greek hoplite who is fastening his armour. A fragmentary vertical string, MAE[...]Γ[.], is visible between the left warrior’s arms and continues in front of his shield. Additionally, he is labelled XYXΟΗΠΙ by a vertical string running downwards to the right of his legs. A

vertical sequence unfolding downwards to the hoplite's lower left identifies him as Θορυκίον ('Breastplate'). The vertical painter's signature, h[ο] Πολ<λ>ιο | ἔ[γρα]φσεν | Εὐθυμίδες{ες} ('The son of Pollias [i.e., Euthymides] painted [me or it]'), is a two-liner which unfolds downwards to his lower right. The second archer is labelled Εὐθυβόλ[ος] ('Straight-Shooter') by a vertical string in retrograde orientation running downwards to the right of his face.

On the reverse, a training *diskobolos* is flanked by another young athlete and his coach. The youth is labelled Πένταθλ[ο]ς by a vertical string which unfolds downwards to the right of his legs. A vertical sequence which runs downwards to the right of the athlete's middle identifies him as Φαῦλ<λ>ος, a famous pentathlete.<sup>48</sup> The trainer is labelled Ὁρσιμένες by a vertical string in retrograde orientation which unfolds downwards to the left of his face. The vertical painter's signature in retrograde orientation, Εὐθυμίδες | ho Πολ<λ>ιο, is a two-liner which runs downwards between his stick and his body.

Of interest is the non-Greek name of the left archer, Khukhospi. A first reading was offered by Ivantchik, who rules out the hypothesis of nonsense.<sup>49</sup> Rather, he revises the tag to arrive at the Greek personal name Χ[Α]ΛΧΑΣΠΙ[Σ] ('Copper-shield').<sup>50</sup> In light of the iconography with which the name is associated, Ivantchik argues that this name functions as a "speaking name."<sup>51</sup> He further points to other Greek names from the real onomasticon modelled on the same morphological basis, such as Λεύκασπις and Χρύσασπις.<sup>52</sup> Epigraphically, however, this restoration is hardly tenable. In order to be read as an A, the second character needs to be turned upside down, which, moreover, would yield a Λ-shaped alpha, an uncommon form in Attic Greek. Furthermore, the fourth character is much too round to be read as an A.<sup>53</sup> Steiner has argued that nonsense inscriptions with harsh -ch sounds on vases

embellished with images of Scythians and Amazons were intended as a parody of foreign speech.<sup>54</sup> The act of sounding out the letters in allusion to a barbarism would have had a humorous effect on a Greek audience. Chiarini adds that this idea fits in smoothly with the wider framework of playful intellectual stimulation intrinsic to nonsense inscriptions.<sup>55</sup>

The linguistic analysis of Mayor, Colarusso and Saunders suggests that the phonetics of the tag indicate an ancient form of Abkhaz translating as 'Enthusiastic Shouter' or 'Battle Cry', a plausible nickname for a warrior.<sup>56</sup> According to their study, a potential Abkhazian origin of the name is /həh'a-cb(a)-ey/ [shout-hot/fervent-name.suffix-emphatic]. 'Hot' in the sense of 'fervent' survives in modern Abkhaz as /á-ca/ (/ca/ = [tsa], Circassian /sa/), so this is most likely what the <s> denotes. The <p> is a variant of the naming suffix /-ba/, which devoices after voiceless consonants. Though the emphatic /y/ cannot be traced back to Abkhaz, an emphatic /-g̊ey/ survives in Abaza and Ubykh. Being an ancient stage of all these languages, Colarusso argues that one should expect to detect cognates that have since disappeared. Significantly, the Greek vocalization of this form with <υ> and <ο> matches the vertical vowel system of the Northwest Caucasian language family. The two or three vowels assimilate in rounding and in other articulatory structures to adjacent consonants, in this case to round the hypothesized pharyngeal. The Proto-Abkhaz-Abaza form \*/χ əχ a-c-b(a)-y/ with uvular fricatives, from which a lot of the pharyngeals derive, is possible, yet he takes this root as derived from Proto-Northwest Caucasian /(w-)q'a-/ 'to say', from which Abkhaz and Abaza /h'a-rá/ ('to say') and /h̥h'a-rá/ ('to hold a conversation'), Ubykh /q'a-n/ ('to speak'), West Circassian /?ə-n/ ('to say'), and Kabardian /ž-?ə-n/ ('to speak (back) to someone'). This interpretation submits that pharyngeal fricatives inspired

the Scythian's name and allows to date this semantic shift as an old one. The main limitation of this analysis is that, since the dipinto may represent a descriptive word in an unwritten ancient Caucasian language transliterated into Greek by a vase-painter some 2,500 years ago, its conclusions cannot be verified scientifically.<sup>57</sup>

Chiarini argues that the addition of a nonsense string to a vessel inscribed with otherwise meaningful tags follows an Euthymidean epigraphic pattern.<sup>58</sup> Indeed, she points to another red-figure amphora from Vulci, which is dated to c. 510–500 BCE (fig. 3).<sup>59</sup> On the reverse of this vessel, the right-hand komast is labelled ΕΛΕΟΠΙ by a vertical string in retrograde orientation which unfolds

downwards to the left of his legs. The juxtaposition of ΥΥΧΟΙΠΙ and ΕΛΕΟΠΙ highlights the analogous lettering, and the common ending, -πι, in particular, of both dipinti. Euthymides appears to have followed some graphic or phonic pattern in the composition of both texts.

The present paper analyses some of the linguistic devices and wider cultural issues that shape the dynamics of the production and reception of nonsense inscriptions. As I have shown, these vase-epigraphs yield a variety of scholarly interpretations which either clash with or augment one another. In citing the most widely approved readings for the texts of this study, I sought to show how these inscriptions, particularly when combined with meaningful content, may be viewed as polysemous puzzles. In the Athenian sympotic context, these would have functioned as riddles, which have been shown to have operated as a performative medium for the expression of competition.<sup>60</sup> Thus, it follows that these epigraphs, in this particular environment of what I termed 'intellectual drinking', produce sense. In this light, the label of 'nonsense' traditionally

applied to these texts needs to be reconsidered.

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2. Sara Chiarini, *The So-called Nonsense Inscriptions on Ancient Greek Vases: Between Paideia and Paidia* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 9.
3. M. Guarducci, (1995) *Epigrafia greca, Volumes I-IV*, 2nd edn. (Rome: Instituto Poligrafico e Zecca dello Stato, 1995).
4. Guarducci, 1.447-450.
5. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*, 19-31.
6. C. Jubier-Galinier, "De l'usage des pseudo-inscriptions chez le peintre de Sappho, du signe au sens," *Métis. Anthropologie des mondes grecs anciens* 13 (1998).
7. H.R. Immerwahr, "Nonsense inscriptions and literacy," *Kadmos* 45: 136-172. A call for individualised graphologies was already made by Lissarrague (F. Lissarrague, "Paroles d'images: remarques sur le fonctionnement de l'écriture dans l'imagerie attique," in A.-M. Christin (ed.), *Écritures II*. Paris: 74 and Lissarrague "L'autre guerrier. Archers, peltastes, cavaliers dans l'imagerie attique" (Paris and Rome, 1990), 194).
8. Immerwahr, "Nonsense inscriptions and literacy," 137.
9. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*.
10. Chiarini, 1.
11. Chiarini, 3-4.
12. Chiarini: 5; n. 13; App.
13. In light of CAVT's 8,173 entries, the estimate of one-third provided by Binek (N.M. Binek, "The Dipylon oinochoe graffito: text or decoration?" *Hesperia* 86.3: 438, n. 65); Immerwahr ("Nonsense inscriptions and literacy," 136); Mayor,

- Saunders and Colarusso (A. Mayor, J.M. Colarusso and D. Saunders “Making sense of nonsense inscriptions associated with Amazons and Scythians on Athenian vases,” *Hesperia* 83.3 (2014): 447–448.); and Yatromanolakis (D. Yatromanolakis, “Soundscapes (and two speaking lyres),” *Epigraphy of Art. Ancient Greek Vase-Inscriptions and Vase-Paintings*, ed. D. Yatromanolakis (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016): 21; 29) is henceforth outdated.
14. Osborne and Pappas 2007: Tab. 5.3. R.G. Osborne and A. Pappas “Writing on archaic Greek pottery,” in *Art and Inscriptions in the Ancient World* eds. Z. Newby and R. Leader-Newby (Cambridge, 2007), 131–155).
  15. H.R. Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey* (Oxford, 1990), 44; Osborne and Pappas “Writing on archaic Greek pottery,” 153; Yatromanolakis “Soundscapes (and two speaking lyres),” 22; 29.
  16. 352 items, or 25.2% of the corpus, can be dated to this period.
  17. 949 items, or 67.8% of the corpus, versus 401, or 28.7%; Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*: 5–6; App.
  18. 2 items, or 0.1% of the corpus.
  19. 22 items, or 1.6% of the corpus.
  20. 123 items, or 8.8% of the corpus; Chiarini 2018: 6; App.
  21. Chiarini 2018: 6–7; App.
  22. 975 items, or 69.7% of the corpus.
  23. 2 items, or 0.1% of the corpus.
  24. 78 items, or 5.6% of the corpus.
  25. 21 items, or 1.5% of the corpus.
  26. 598 items, or 42.7% of the corpus.
  27. 124 items, or 8.9% of the corpus.
  28. 141 items, or 10.1% of the corpus.
  29. 11 items, or 0.8% of the corpus.
  30. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*, 7–8; App.
  31. 781 items, or 55.8% of the corpus.
  32. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*, 8–9; App.
  33. Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1104; *ABV* 147.5; *AVI* 0741; *BAD* 310409; Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey*: 35, no. 146.
  34. My transcriptions follow the Leiden conventions. I used [...] for a lost letter that cannot be restored and ^ for the interruption of the ductus of an inscription. Since my aim is to provide transcriptions that render the actual graphemes painted on the pottery, the letters do not necessarily tally with their phonetic value in the Ionic-Attic alphabet. Consequently, I transcribed the Attic gamma as Λ and the Attic lambda as L.
  35. Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey*: 35, no. 146.
  36. J.M. Hurwit, *Artists and Signatures in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, 2015), 82.
  37. Immerwahr *Attic Script. A Survey*: 35.
  38. A. Steiner *Reading Greek Vases* (Cambridge; New York: 2007), 18.
  39. Steiner, 194–211.
  40. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions* 172; cf. Snodgrass who claims that it would suffice for the company to include at least one literate member (“The uses of writing on early Greek painted pottery,” in *Word and Image in Ancient Greece*, eds. N.K. Rutter and B.A. Sparkes (Edinburgh) 29).
  41. A. Pappas, “More than meets the eye: the aesthetics of (non)sense in the ancient Greek symposium,” in *Aesthetic Value in Classical Antiquity* eds. I. Sluiter and R.M. Rosen (Leiden, 2012), 83–84.

42. Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*, 133, n. 10.
43. Yatromanolakis, “Soundscapes (and two speaking lyres),” 40–42.
44. Chiarini has recently suggested an alternative definition: ‘poly-sense inscriptions’ (Chiarini, *So-called Nonsense Inscriptions*), 219. Lissarrague has convincingly argued that the iconographic function that vase-inscriptions perform on the painted surface is independent of their linguistic or phonetic content. It follows that pictoriality is not distinctive of nonsense inscriptions. In this light, Yatromanolakis’ label is inadequate (Lissarrague, ‘Paroles d’images), 88.
45. Threatte advances ἐν ἦ οἴνο<ι> τοῖεν, though Yatromanolakis is unsure how to interpret this reading (L. Threatte, *The Grammar of Attic Inscriptions, Volume I: Phonology* (Berlin, 1980), 353; Yatromanolakis, “Soundscapes (and Two Speaking Lyres),” 42, n. 273).
46. Alternatively, Yatromanolakis suggests the exclamation ἦ (ἦ, vé οἴνο· ιοίνιν, in this case without omitting the ν) (Yatromanolakis, “Soundscapes (and two speaking lyres),” 42, n. 275).
47. Munich, Antikensammlungen 2308; *ARV<sup>2</sup>* 26.2; 1620; *Add.<sup>2</sup>* 156; *AVI* 5259; *BAD* 200161; *CVA*, Germany 12, Munich, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst 4, 15–17, pls. 169.1; 170.1; 172.2; Immerwahr, *Attic Script. A Survey*: 65, no. 370.
48. Paus. 10.9.2.
49. A.I. Ivantchik, “Scythian’ archers on archaic Attic vases: problems of interpretation,” *Ancient Civilizations from Scythia to Siberia* 12 (2006): 214.
50. This is also the reading of Kretschmer 1894; Lissarrague 1990; and Neumann 1977. Cf. Chiarini 2018; Immerwahr 1990; Mayor, Colarusso and Saunders 2014; and Steiner 2007, who read XYXOΝΙΙ (P. Kretschmer, *Die griechischen Vaseninschriften ihrer Sprache nach untersucht* (Gütersloh, 1894); G. Neumann, ‘Zu einigen Beischriften auf Münchner Vasen’, *Archäologischer Anzeiger* 1977: 38–43.
51. On speaking names, see H. Heydemann, “Heroisierte Genrebilder auf bemalten Vasen.” In *Commentationes Philologae in Honorem Theodori Mommseni Scripserunt Amici* ed.T. Mommsen (Berlin 1877), 164–165; and Immerwahr 1971: 59, no. 7.
52. See *LGPN*, s.v.
53. Chiarini 2018: 153–154; n. 58.
54. Steiner 2007: 75; 205–206; 292, n. 69.
55. Chiarini 2018: 203; ch. 4.
56. Mayor, Colarusso and Saunders 2014: 470.
57. Mayor, Colarusso and Saunders 2014: 469.
58. Chiarini 2018: 152–154.
59. Munich, Antikensammlungen NI 8730; *Add.<sup>2</sup>* 155–156; *ARV<sup>2</sup>* 26.1; 1620; *AVI* 5258; *BAD* 200160; *CVA*, Germany 12, Munich, Museum Antiker Kleinkunst 4, 13–15, pls. 165–168; 172; 188; Immerwahr 1990: 65, no. 369; *LIMC* 4 Hekabe 16; 7 Priamos 41; 8 Silenoi 189; *Para* 323.
60. Yatromanolakis 2016: 41.

## CITATIONS FOR REFERENCED IMAGES

[Fig. 1a-b]: Athenian black-figure plain lip-cup, signed by Exekias, c. 540 BCE. Athens, National Archeological Museum, NI 1104. Photograph courtesy of the National Archeological Museum, Athens. To view these images, see D. Yatromanolakis,

“Soundscapes (and Two Speaking Lyres)” in *Epigraphy of Art. Ancient Greek Vase-Inscriptions and Vase-Paintings*, ed. D. Yatromanolakis (Oxford: Archaeopress, 2016), 21; 29.

[Fig. 2.]: Athenian red-figure belly amphora, type A, signed by Euthymides, showing a hoplite flanked by two Scythian archers, c. 510–500 BCE. Munich, Antikensammlungen, NI 2308. Photo R. Kühling; photograph courtesy the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München. To view this image, see Sara Chiarini, *So-Called Nonsense Inscriptions on Ancient Greek Vases: Between Paideia and Paidiá* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2018), 153.

[Fig. 3] Athenian red-figure belly amphora, type A, signed by Euthymides, showing three carousing komasts, c. 510–500 BCE. Munich, Antikensammlungen NI 8730. Photo R. Kühling; photograph courtesy the Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek München.

*I'm here, my brother. I came through so many countries and and seas to let you go to the miserable shadows.*

*I came across the sea, talked to so many people to get here so I could bury you properly because you're my brother and it's what you deserve and I I come to bury you not to — F\*\*\*k. 101.*

101.

*Carried across peoples and carried across seas I come to carry you to the pitying shadows, brother, to give you the final rites of death and try to console your senseless ashes.*

*Since Fortune took you away from me, my poor undeserving brother stolen from me, our parents would tell me to give you to the shadows, so take what tears are left.  
And forever, my brother this greeting is goodbye.*

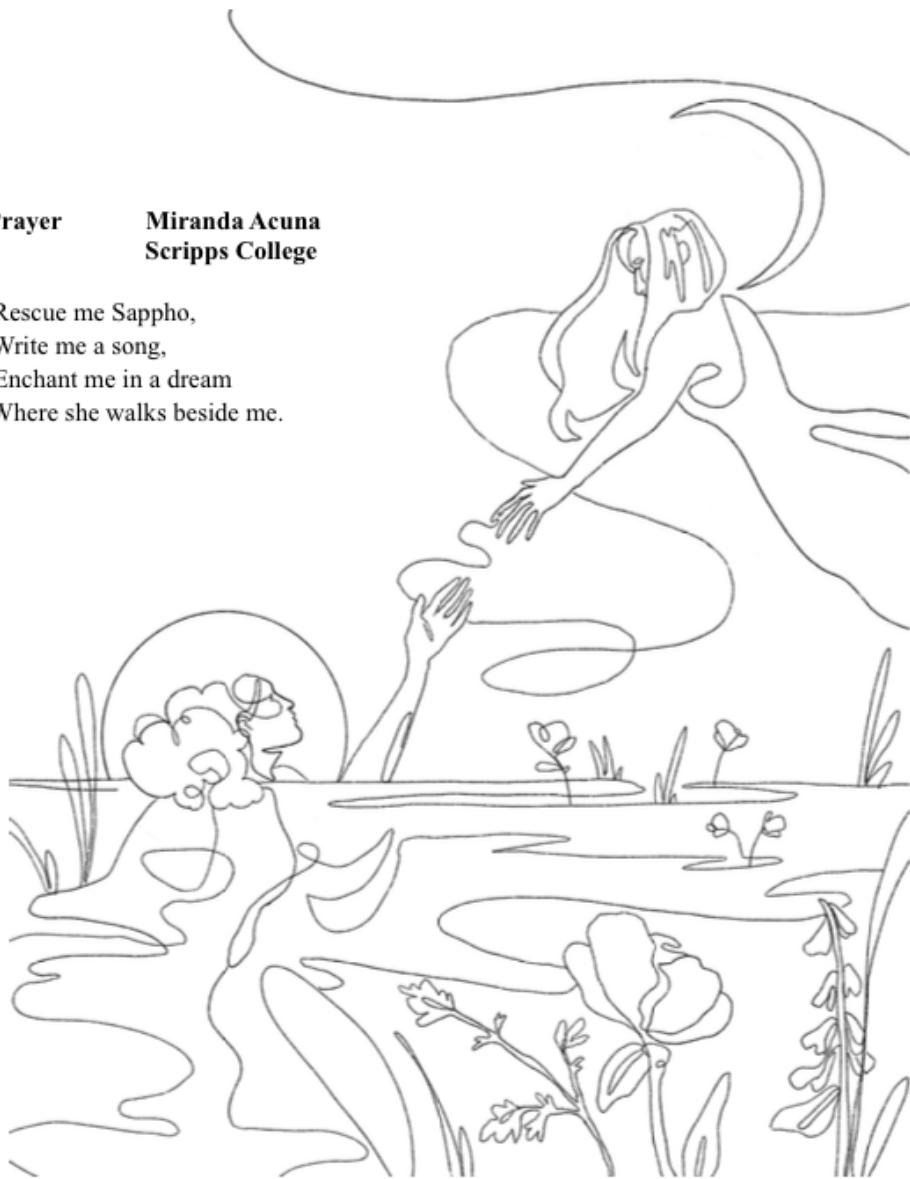


***Icarus: Eternal Flight***  
Kinetic Sculpture  
Eugene Meg Kim  
University of California, Berkeley

**Prayer**

**Miranda Acuna  
Scripps College**

Rescue me Sappho,  
Write me a song,  
Enchant me in a dream  
Where she walks beside me.



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