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LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Dearest Readers,

Words fail me as I struggle to convey how much I have come to cherish *Persephone*. After a year of extreme personal hardship, which culminated in my taking an emergency leave of absence during the spring semester, this issue suffered significant delays in publication. One of my greatest concerns was that I was failing our applicants, whose erudition and dedication shine forth in every possible form. When I communicated my situation to them, I expected their rightful disappointment regarding the uncertain date of publication, especially considering how much effort each one of them had put into their pieces. Instead, I was met with love.

As I received heartfelt messages full of compassion and countless well-wishes, I reflected on the nature of the undergraduate Classics community. Scattered across the globe, so often seemingly “forgotten” by the modern world, the very notion of community may seem impossible for us; yet, we are indelibly linked by our common appreciation for antiquity and its outcomes. Each time we engage with the discipline - be it as translators, historians, or artists - we link ourselves to a vast lineage of individuals who have pondered the Ancients and yielded to their great enchantments. The passion that we feel for the raging myths of heroes or the poems of Catullus spans millennia, and it is my belief that this love will never die, so long as humanity perseveres.

Such love can be found on every page of this issue. It is present in the deep snows of Horace's winter *carmen*, and in dusty family photographs of Mt. Vesuvius and the Colosseum. It is captured in the tender handshake motif found on gravestones that suggests an eternal connection between the living and the dead, reaching out its own hand to us as we try to interpret the meanings of things long past. Each young scholar and artist featured in this publication has managed to convey their sincere affection for their subject, and has presented exceptional work. I am honored to have had the opportunity to serve as their editor, and am so grateful to them for the kindness and patience they have granted me throughout the long process. All of us at *Persephone* are delighted to present their work in the 2024 issue: we hope you enjoy its content as fiercely as we do.

With warmest wishes,

Fiona McFerrin-Clancy, *Editor-in-Chief*
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PERSEPHONE

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HORACE, ODE 1.9 (ENGLISH TRANSLATION)

NOAH APTER, UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

A NOTE FROM THE TRANSLATOR

"THE BURDEN OF SNOW ON STRUGGLING TREES"

Is there any more evocative image than the one that we see every winter? The weight of snow on suffering trees (or, as Tennyson has it, "their weight of venerable snow") elicits the endless quiet struggle of Nature. Horace's masterful eye captures in the crispest language a number of elements - heat, cold, freezing and biting frost, so that we come away with a new appreciation of what lies around us. Horace tells us that careful observation of Nature has much to teach us about our own lives. Let the tree struggle with its weight of snow as it might, but we must throw off our burdens and seize what fortune gives us. And in fact it was this ode that I recited a few years ago on a trip to Italy with my Latin-learning compatriots, to visit Horace's villa. Standing there on a promontory next to the *fons Bandusiae* in Licenza, the poet's hometown, I had dipped my toes in the gentle stream of crystal-clear water amid the whispering pines next to the sanctuary of the Sabine goddess Vacuna and breathed the scent of ancient timber (Horace had made a narrow escape from one of these falling trees, it is said). It was there, thanks to Quintus Horatius Flauccus, that I realized what, for me, classical studies was all about - the pursuit of beauty through the contemplation of Nature.

HORACE, ODE 1.9 ("TO THALIARCHUS IN WINTER")

Vides ut alta stet nive candidum
Soracte nec iam sustineant onus
silvae laborantes geluque
flumina constiterint acuto?

Do you see how Mount Soracte stands, white, shining with deep snow, and how the struggling trees can no longer bear the burden of snow, and how the rivers will have been frozen over with biting frost?

Dissolve frigus ligna super foco
large reponens atque benignius
deprome quadrimum Sabina,
o Thaliarche, merum diota.

5

Ward away the cold by tossing logs onto the hearth,
O Thaliarchus, and pour more generously the four-year-old pure wine from the two-handled Sabine jar.

Permitte divis cetera, qui simul
stravere ventos aequore fervido
deproeliantis, nec cupressi
nec veteres agitantur orni.

10

Leave everything else to the gods above: as soon as they have calmed the winds battling on the feverish sea, the cypress trees and the ancient ash trees are disturbed no longer.



Quid sit futurum cras, fuge quaerere, et
quem fors dierum cumque dabit, lucro
adpone nec dulcis amores
sperne, puer, neque tu choreas,

15

Cease asking what tomorrow will bring and take as a gift
whatever day fortune thrusts your way, and while you're
still a young lad don't spurn sweet love affairs and dances,

donec virenti canities abest
morosa. Nunc et Campus et areae
lenesque sub noctem susurri
composita repetantur hora,

as long as wayward white hairs are far away from you in
your prime, green age. Now, just before night at the
appointed hour, make for the field and the public squares
and murmurs, search while you can!

nunc et latentis proditor intumo
gratus puellae risus ab angulo
pignusque dereptum lacertis
aut digito male pertinaci.

20

And now the pleasant laughter of a girl concealed in a
secret corner betrays her position, and a pledge is
snatched from her arm or her (willfully) weak finger.



WINGED VICTORY (Oil Paint on Canvas)

SARAH SCHOENBERGER, UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH

Description: *Winged Victory reimagines the famous statue, Nike of Samothrace, in a collage-type style, surrounded by roses with a fractured black tile background.*

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in black and white, framing the text on the left and top edges.

GENDERED LANGUAGE IN ARISTOPHANES' BIRDS

MUHAMMAD REHAN, UCLA

ABSTRACT

In the past two decades, a growing body of literature has examined the socio-linguistic aspects and implications of the language in Attic drama, both in tragedy and comedy [1]. In the realm of Greek comedy, Alan Sommerstein [2] and Andreas Willi [3], among others, have successfully applied socio-linguistic theories to understanding the differences in the speech of male and female characters. In *The Language of Aristophanes*, a study of dialects, sociolects, and genderlects as observed in the Aristophanic corpus, Willi dedicates a whole chapter entitled “Female Speech” to observing statistical anomalies in the lexicon, syntax, and pragmatical function of “female speech,” and understanding them in the light of modern socio-linguistic theories [4]. In this paper, I build on Willi’s neat distribution of linguistic features that characterize “female speech” and analyze the comic *agōn* of the play’s comic-hero Peisetairos and Iris, the goddess familiar to most from the Homeric epic, for the construction and pragmatics of gendered language. My analysis will start with Lauren Taaffe, who notes in the persistent sexual innuendo of Peisetairos against Iris an allusion to the “falseness of the representation of the female figure” [5].

Instead, I argue that through the stark accumulation of linguistic features — that betray a feminine character in an Aristophanic comedy — just before the threat of rape (1253–1256), Aristophanes emphasizes the femininity of Iris for the dramatic illusion, in order for the joke to land. My analysis

looks first at the distribution of obscenity and euphemistic vocabulary in the *agōn* of Peisetairos and Iris. Then I look at the salient linguistic features of female speech, identified by Willi, and their distribution in the speech of Iris. To conclude this section, I discuss the distribution of the word λιγνύς and sophistic vocabulary within the *agōn* of Peisetairos and Iris.

1) OBSCENITY AND EUPHEMISTIC VOCABULARY

During his aggressive interrogation of Iris, who has stopped mid-flight [6], Peisetairos lets go a stream of foul language ascending in depravity — from risqué to obscene [7]. Since obscenity is hard to classify and depends heavily on the cultural context, a working definition of obscenity can help us analyze the language. Jeffrey Henderson provides such a definition in his seminal work on the obscene language of the Aristophanic corpus:

By obscenity we mean verbal reference to areas of human activity or parts of the human body that are protected by certain taboos agreed upon by prevailing custom and subject to emotional aversion or inhibition. These are in fact the sexual and excremental areas. In order to be obscene, such a reference must be made by explicit expression that is itself subject to the same inhibitions as the thing it describes. Thus, to utter one of the numerous words, to be found in any language, which openly (non euphemistically) describe the tabooed organs or actions is tantamount to exposing what should be hidden [8].

Although Henderson is interested only in the obscene language, I will also analyze the euphemistic vocabulary that builds up to the obscene language, the non-euphemistic verbal references to tabooed areas of human activity, to show that the interrogation of Iris has sustained sexual undertones.



The first double entendre comes shortly into the interrogation of Iris, as Peisetairos indignantly orders her arrest— ταυτηνί τις οὐ ξυλλήψεται / ἀναπτάμενος τρίορχος (“won’t a three-legged hawk fly up and grab *her*?”) [9] — to which a shocked Iris replies ἐμὲ ξυλλήψεται; / τί ποτ’ ἐστὶ τοῦτὶ τὸ κακόν; (“*Grab* me? / What’s this wretchedness?”) [10]. Nan Dunbar writes that there is “probably a word-play on τρεῖς ὄρχεις, taking τρίορχος as *with three testicles* i.e. unusually lecherous” [11]. Dunbar’s suggestion has its merits because metonymic word play for humorous effect is certainly consistent with Aristophanic tendencies [12] — more so when it concerns metonymical word play with sexual connotations [13]. It also seems that with the middle deponent of συλλάμβανω (“to seize, lay hold of”) [14], the sexual allusion would be hard to miss. In another question, later into the interrogation, the string of double entendres undermines Iris’ position for comic effect:

Πε. ἤκουσας αὐτῆς, οἷον εἰρωνεύεται;
πρὸς τοὺς κολοιάρχους προσῆλθες; οὐ λέγεις;
σφαγῖδ’ ἔχεις παρὰ τῶν πελαργῶν;

Peisetairos: Do you hear her, how she mimics Miss Manners?
Did you come onto the Chief Jackdaws? Speak, won’t you?
Do you have a *stamp* from the storks?

Ιρ. Τί τὸ κακόν;

Iris: What’s this wretchedness?

Πε. Οὐκ ἔλαβες;

Peisetairos: You didn’t get it?

Ιρ. ὑγιαίνεις μὲν;

Iris: You *are* sane, no?

Πε. οὐδὲ σύμβολον ἐπέβαλεν
ὀρνίθαρχος οὐδεὶς σοι παρών;

Peisetairos: And no Chief Bird was around to stick a *stamp* on you?

Ιρ. μὰ Δί' οὐκ ἔμοιγ' ἐπέβαλεν οὐδεὶς ὦ μέλε.

Iris: By Zeus, nobody's been *sticking* me, mister! [15]

Dunbar also sees this sequence of interrogation as laden with double entendres, which she believes could have been made explicit by further gesticulation [16]. She posits that προσῆλθες “might contain a double entendre,” but she sees surely obscene undertones in σφραγῖδ' ἔχεις and σύμβολον ἐπέβαλεν. She suggests that σφραγίς and σύμβολον are used synonymously to refer to “semen-deposit.” The only other reference to σφραγίς in the play supports her conclusion, since it also occurs in an earlier sexualized context: Peisetairos announces ἐπιβάλλειν σφραγῖδ' αὐτοῖς ἐπὶ τὴν ψωλήν (“stick a seal on their hard pricks”) [17], as the punishment for adulterous male-gods while convincing the birds to join forces. Then he recycles the joke against Iris, a goddess, as the audience is already primed for sexual undertones of σφραγίς from the earlier passage. Iris' responses — the colloquial τί τὸ κακόν, the unusual μέν implying Peisetairos' insanity, and the empathic rebuttal shutting down the discourse on σφραγίς — underscore both the comical nature of the situation and the increasingly sexualized nature of the interrogation. Although Dunbar classifies all the elements in this exchange as double entendres, Iris' comment at 1215 tells us that she has interpreted the double entendre as a euphemistic allusion to sexual intercourse with the birds — an assertion which justifiably angers her.

Peisetairos has plausible deniability on his side, but he abandons its comforting embrace to embark on a discourse of all-out obscenities as his attempts to threaten Iris prove futile. After threatening to send an assortment of avian attackers, eagles and six hundred Porphyryns to burn

down the house of Zeus (1246–1252) [18], Peisetairos, as a last resort, threatens to sexually assault Iris:

Πε. σὺ δ' εἴ με λυπήσεις τι, τῆς διακόνου
πρώτης ἀνατείνας τὼ σκέλει διαμηριῶ
τὴν Ἴριν αὐτήν, ὥστε θαυμάζειν ὅπως
οὔτω γέρων ὦν στύομαι τριέμβολον.

Peisetairos: And if you distress me at all,
then I'll take on the servant first – raise up her
legs and screw her, so as to amaze her how at my age
I'm still hard enough like a three-ships beak [19].

In this hair-raising threat of sexual violence, the truly coarse vocabulary comes out: διαμηριῶ, στύομαι — both classifiable as primary obscenities [20]. These obscenities form the climax of the sexualized context established fifty lines earlier. The ascending order of foulness, the gradual build-up to the obscene with double entendres, and the continuation of obscenities once the primary obscenity is introduced follows an Aristophanic tendency, which Robson dubs the “build-up” technique [21]. The audience is primed for the introduction of obscenities, which here takes the form of a remarkable outburst deflating the hostility of Iris, who can now think of no witty response and concedes defeat to Peisetairos' language: διαρραγείης ὦ μέλ' αὐτοῖς ῥήμασιν (“Blast you, mister, and your utterings”) [22].

Sommerstein finds that even in the three so-called “women's plays,” out of the 16 obscene words with a total frequency of 75, only 20 occur in the speech of women despite female characters having more than half the verse lines [23]. Women have a disproportionate access to the lexicon of obscenity, and this is nowhere more apparent than in the *agōn* of Peisetairos and Iris. Berated by Peisetairos from the beginning of the *agōn*, her speech nowhere contains sexual innuendo despite its frequent use, as we have seen above, by her interlocutor. The word that comes most close to marking abuse is at the end of Iris' speech, in a moment of frustration: διαρραγείης. However, the

use of the word, even within the play, does not signify a strong sense of reproach. Only in the second line of the play, Euelpides, fatigued from their protracted dislocation, tells Peisetairos to “get blasted” διαρραγείης — in the somewhat customary fashion of a quibble that opens Aristophanic comedy [24] — and does not garner any strongly provocative reaction from Peisetairos. So, we have seen in this scene that Iris, despite being a goddess, has no access to obscene vocabulary and fleeting access to terms of abuse, whose pragmatic implications are not severe. Now, we can focus on the language of Iris in the *agōn* and examine how, in addition to the adherence to social conventions of abuse and obscenity in Athenian society, Iris’s language hints at her femininity near the threat of rape by Peisetairos.

2) ARISTOPHANIC CORPUS: METHODOLOGY AND THE RELEVANT LINGUISTIC FEATURES

Before we begin, it is crucial to point out that the linguistic features that will be called “female” are spoken by male actors in all of Aristophanes’ plays. While it is possible that these male actors used falsetto voices and modified their pitch to sound feminine [25], our evidence does not permit a fool-proof reconstruction. In light of this, it is a more justifiable approach to look at the linguistic features themselves whose distribution is positively skewed in the speech of female characters. Our starting point will be Willi, who counts as “female” linguistic features those that have a distribution significantly higher than 17.4% in the entire Aristophanic corpus. He bases this statistic on the frequency of “women’s lines” in the Aristophanic corpus: excluding female characters taking on male personas and including male characters taking on female personas, especially in the three so-called “women’s plays,” the total of women’s lines’ adds up to 2,672 — about 17.4% [26] of the lines in the extant corpus [27]. If a linguistic feature is found in the speech of female characters a lot more than 17.4%, we might endeavor to explain its distribution along gendered lines, although considerations of social status are not fully discountable [28]. Unfortunately, as Willi laments, the extent and nature of our corpus does not accommodate tests of statistical significance, i.e., we cannot know with certainty whether a

linguistic feature in the speech of female characters is a result of poetic manipulation, or pure randomness [29]. But if we see an accumulation of certain “female” linguistic features, of which see below, we have a solid footing for drawing inferences. In looking at the relevant linguistic features for our analysis, I have divided them into the categories of syntax and pragmatics, and lexicon: 3) reviews the relevant linguistic features at the level of syntax and pragmatics, as presented by Willi, and 4) deals with the lexica disproportionately found in the speech of female characters and feminized contexts.

3. SYNTACTICAL AND PRAGMATIC FEATURES

In the *agōn* of *Iris* and *Peisetairos*, *Iris* has sixteen whole verse lines and eight lines shared with *Peisetairos*, her inquisitive interlocutor, who frequently interrupts her and bombards her with questions and clarificatory statements. While gestural features and speech acts have been successfully explored elsewhere for making socio-linguistic inferences in Greek drama [30], we will be focusing on the linguistic features most readily apparent from the text.

3.1: FINAL CLAUSES

In his analysis of final clauses, Willi finds that female characters prefer to use subjunctive clauses, and occasionally optative, with ὅπως (ᾗν) or ὡς (ᾗν) to convey purpose rather than subjunctive construction with ἵνα and the more objective future indicative, or future participial construction. He explains this distribution along the lines of the modern socio-linguistic research that imputes to women’s speech a more subjective nature [31]. *Iris* uses both constructions in her dialogue with *Peisetairos*, and the distribution, as I will argue later, corresponds to the poetic impulse of making the speech of his female characters more feminized: when asked for a second time where she is sailing in — “and tell me this thing, where are you sailing in with these wings” (φράσον δέ τοί μοι, τὸ πτέρυγε ποῖ ναυστολεῖς) [32] — *Iris* answers nonchalantly, “me? I am flying from my

father’s side to the humans, / to tell them to sacrifice to the Olympian Gods” (ἐγὼ; πρὸς ἀνθρώπους πέτομαι παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς / φράσουσα θύειν τοῖς Ὀλυμπίοις θεοῖς) [33]. Even though an alternate construction to express purpose would be grammatically possible (πέτομαι...ὡς φράζω θύειν), Aristophanes here uses a construction that does not mark her gender, and at the same time, sneaks in a joke about her swiftness. The future participle to convey purpose is particularly common with ὡς, however ὡς is frequently omitted, as in the above lines of Iris, with verbs of going and sending [34]. In this instance, the omitted ὡς most likely signifies an attempt at a joke with πέτομαι conveying not its root meaning of “flying” but rather of “a quick motion” [Homer +]: “I am rushing from my father’s side / to tell the humans to sacrifice” [35]. In the first instance, considerations of generating humor overpower the construction of a more feminized language.

We must also recognize that there is wide variation within the speech of people of the same gender, including within the speech of one individual [36], and Aristophanes exploits this variation to make Iris’s language conform more closely to Peisetairos. Later in the *agōn*, in the paratragic threat, Iris resorts to the negative purpose clause introduced by ὅπως μή with the subjunctive aorists ἀναστρέψη (< ἀναστρέφω) and καταθαλώση (< καταθαλώω) [37], which is marked relative to the unmarked ὡς with “no remarkable distribution” [38]. In his response to Iris’ threat of calcination, Peisetairos mirrors the language of Iris [39], but in a stark contrast, uses only the indicative mood that demarcates a real threat as opposed to the potential threat of Iris and reinforces gender hierarchies [40].

3.2: POSSESSIVE ADJECTIVES AND PERSONAL PRONOUNS

As Willi writes, “In total, 23 of the 110 examples of μου/σου (20.9%) and 43 of the 186 examples of ἐμός/σός (23.1%) are used by female speakers, which shows that women indicate possession slightly more often than men but do not prefer the modern and more colloquial μου/σου” [41]. In the *agōn* of Peisetairos and Iris, Iris’ speech has all the two instances of the personal pronouns μου/σου, and the only instance of the more conversative adjective

ἐμός. These instances are found in the paratragic threat, in a state of heightened intensity and vexation: In the paratragic threat, Iris distinguishes her kind from the kind of ephemeral: μὴ θεῶν κίνει φρένας / δεινάς, ὅπως μὴ σου γένος πανώλεθρον, appropriately translated by Sommerstein, “provoke not thou the hearts / of gods, most terrible, lest all *thy* race” (emphasis mine) [42], and then finishes her threat with another personal pronoun: λιγνύς δὲ σῶμα καὶ δόμων περιπτυχὰς καταθαλώση σου Λικυμνίοις βολαῖς (“and lest fiery flame calcinate the folding embrace of your house with Licymnian thunderbolts”). ἐμός is similarly ejected in a state of vexation. Peisetairos insists that Iris take flight swiftly (οὐ ταχέως;), and an indignant Iris threatens: ἤ μὴν σε παύσει τῆς ὕβρεως οὐμός πατήρ (“Just you see, my father will put an end to your insolence”). The positively skewed distribution of certain linguistic features in heightened states of affairs is regularly observed as the way-around of writers to encode dialectal, and we might dare to extend that to genderlectal, information in literature. As Stephen Colvin notes about encoding dialect in literature, “a second device is to increase the intensity of markers at critical points or junctures in the narrative, thus reminding the reader of the presence of the dialect, and to scale it down elsewhere” [43]. We have already observed the use of the negative purpose clauses being present in the paratragic threat, and we can add the accumulation of the personal adjectives and personal pronouns as markers of a genderlect too.

4) FEMINIZING LEXICON

4.1: THE CASE OF λιγνύς

In Iris’s two-fold threat to Peisetairos, discussed above, the second part contains an unusual word: λιγνύς (“thick smoke, soot”) [44]. The word seems unusual, almost definitely paratragic, in its co-location with καταθαλώ because in other dramatic passages, an instrumental dative marks the instrument of “calcinating” (τὸ καταθαλοῦν): In Euripides’ *Suppliants*, it is Zeus, who will “calcinate with a fire-turning thunderbolt” (κεραυνῶ πυρπόλῳ καταθαλοῖ) [45], and in Euripides’ *Ion* the chorus sings of the all-

destructive power of Zeus' thunderbolt: τὸν δαίον Μίμαντα πυρὶ καταθαλοῖ (with its flame, he calcinates the destructive Mimas) [46]. However, here we get λιγνύς, also in opposition to Peisetairos' use of καταθαλόω in his response, who will accomplish the calcination of “the halls of Amphion” with “fire-bearing eagles” (πυρφόροισιν αἰετοῖς) [47]. Using this observation as a starting point, the contexts in which λιγνύς is found in Athenian drama strongly suggest that the word might have been folk-linguistically associated with women's speech.

If we look at the evidence from Athenian tragedy [Aeschylus +], the word is found in Aeschylus' *Seven Against Thebes*, and Sophocles' *Trachiniae* and *Antigone*. In the Aeschylean tragedy, the Scout, in an ekphrasis of Hippomedon's shield to the Chorus, attaches the epithet “variegating sister of fire” to λιγνύς (Τυφῶν' ἰέντα πυρπνόον διὰ στόμα / λιγνὸν μέλαιναν, αἰόλην πυρὸς κάσιν “[on his shield] Typhon, ejecting through his mouth / fiery black smoke, the variegating sister of fire”) [48]. In Sophocles' *Trachiniae*, similarly, Hyllus recounts for Deianeira the sheer agony that her robe of death caused his father Hercules [49], and in a similar vein, in Sophocles' *Antigone* the word is used in a feminized context. After Creon has exited to free Antigone from captivity, the Chorus sings of the fiery flame emanating from the residence of the Bacchic Nymphs: σὲ δ' ὑπὲρ διλόφου πέτρας / στέροψ ὄπωπε / λιγνύς, ἔνθα Κωρύκται / στείχουσι Νύμφαι Βακχίδες / Κασταλίας τε νᾶμα. (“And upon you [Iacchus] looked the flashing fiery flame from beyond the double-peaked cliff, where the Corcyean Nymphs of Bacchus tread, where the Castilian spring [flows]” [50]. It's very much possible that Aeschylus started this association of λιγνύς with femininity; and comedy, in addition to the contexts discussed above, has more evidence for a more feminine coloring of this word.

Our evidence from comedy comes from two of the three so-called “women's plays” *Lysistrata* and *Thesmophoriazusae*. In Aristophanes' *Lysistrata*, after Lampito, the Spartan, and her band of women have taken over the Acropolis and a band of men has thrown in fire-blazing torches [51], the Women's Chorus enters the stage “nicely dressed” and carrying water

pitchers [52], and the “Women’s Leader” urges swift action from them: λιγνὸν δοκῶ μοι καθορᾶν καὶ καπνόν, ὃ γυναιῖκες, / ὥσπερ πυρὸς καομένου· σπρευστέον ἐστὶ θᾶπτον (“I seem to be seeing some smoke and flame, women, like if a fire was burning. We must speed up swiftly!”). The mention of λιγνός comes in the very first scene of the antagonistic activity between the men and women on stage, when the female characters, in a chaotic state, first enter the stage — after their exit upon taking the oath of Lysistrata to dress up voluptuously and get their husbands hot and bothered [53]. Contextualizing this linguistic situation with the observation that the “female” linguistic features are more densely distributed at the beginning of women’s speeches [54], we have strong evidence for a more feminized coloring of λιγνός.

Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae*, on the other hand, presents us with some seemingly tangled evidence. While λιγνός is addressed to a woman, the imaginary maid Thratta, it is Euripides’ Relative who is trying to entice her: δεῦρό νυν, ὃ Θραῖτθ’, ἔπου. / ὃ Θραῖττα, θέασαι, καομένων τῶν λαμπάδων / ὅσον τὸ χρῆμ’ ἀνέρχεθ’ ὑπὸ τῆς λιγνύος (“Hurry up here now, Thratta. / Look, Thratta, at the torches burning, / look such a big multitude is moving up under the fiery smoke”). We might note that here that Euripides’ Relative is trying to fit into the assembly of the women on Euripides’ edict [55], and the use of λιγνός comes at the beginning of a lengthy speech, where we would expect to find a clustering of female features. Moreover, Euripides’ Relative has just been dressed in feminine garments borrowed from Agathon, and has donned the appropriate accoutrements for sneaking into the Thesmophorium [56]. For good measure, Euripides tops off his transformation with a remark on his dress and gives him the instruction to be his most convincing: ἀνήρ μὲν ἡμῖν οὔτοσι καὶ δὴ γυνή / τό γ’ εἶδος. ἦν λαλῆς δ’, ὅπως τῷ φθέγματι / γυναικιεῖς εὖ καὶ πιθανῶς (“our man here is a real woman, / at least in appearance. And when you chatter, be womanly in your voice /, and be well-convincing”). What looks like a complicated quotation of λιγνός is actually Euripides’ Relative being well-convincing and matching his speech to attire.

We find that λιγνύς is used solely in our extant corpus of drama in either feminized contexts or contexts which make us more alert to the femininity of λιγνύς, not based on grammatical gender, but because of the word's association with feminine involvement i.e., Deianeira's robe, the smoke from the dwelling of Bacchic Nymphs. In the mouth of Iris, it undermines her threat by using a more feminized alternative to πύρ, which Peisetairos uses in his mirrored threat to Iris, and makes Peisetairos accuse her of “furnishing dummies” (μορμολύττεσθαι) [57].

4.2 SOPHISTIC LEXICON:

In 5th-century Attica, language, as a “propaedeutic to the successful study and use of rhetoric,” became an “important object for intellectual investigation,” with emphasis, among other things, on the “correctness of names (ὀνομάτων ὀρθότης)” [58] — the investigation of para-synonyms by the likes of Prodicus, whose skill, according to Socrates in Plato's *Protagoras*, is to distinguish “wishing” (τὸ βούλεσθαι) from “desiring” (τὸ ἐπιθυμεῖν) [59]. This over-refined discourse of the so-called sophists was parodied most notably in Aristophanes' *Clouds*, and in Aristophanic comedy, λαλεῖν (“to chatter”) frequently denotes women's discourse, and the speech of the sophistically trained dandies [60], e.g., Eurpides' *Relative* (see 4.1). In Attic literature, also, there are multiple other folk-linguistic notions about the similarities in the speech of women and the “sophistically educated and supposedly effeminate élite politicians” [61]. Coming back to the *agōn* of Peisetairos and Iris, we find two instances of sophistic vocabulary [62];

Πε. ἄκουσον αὐτή: παῦε τῶν παφλασμάτων:
 ἔχ' ἀτρέμα. φέρ' ἴδω, πότερα Λυδὸν ἢ Φρύγα
 ταυτὶ λέγουσα μορμολύττεσθαι δοκεῖς;

Peisetairos: Listen here, you: stop your bubblings:
 Stay still! Look here, do you think I am some Lydian or Phrygian
 that you will have scarecrowed saying *these* things?

In Peisetairos' outburst of profanity, the noun *πάφλασμα* and the verb *μορμολύττομαι* securely establish the idiom as sophistic. In his examination of the linguistic features of the various languages and dialects in Aristophanes' plays, Andreas Willi (2006) includes the abstract *μα-* nouns under "Sophistic Innovations" [63]. While he mentions that the class of *-μα* nouns is old and that stylistically unmarked *-μα* nouns exist (e.g., *πρᾶγμα*, *πνεῦμα*), the hapax legomenon, the Aristophanic neologism *πάφλασμα* (< *παφλάζω* "to splutter," "to bluster") [64] is anything but stylistically unmarked [65], especially because of its co-location with *μορμολύττομαι*—which is only found in contemporary usage in philosophical texts. In Xenophon's *Symposium*, Charmides playfully retorts Socrates' claim of self-control against kissing boys in the bloom of youth. He retorts that Socrates is scaring them away from beautiful boys (*μορμολύττη ἀπὸ τῶν καλῶν*), although he keeps himself busy chasing Critobolus [66]. The verb *μορμολύττομαι* is used in similar contexts of a feigned threat in Plato's *Crito* [67] and *Phaedo* [68]. Here the co-location of *πάφλασμα* and *μορμολύττομαι* serves a two-fold function: in the mouth of Peisetairos, it marks the speech of Iris as sophistic, and at the same time signals a feigned threat on her behalf, recalling associations with female speech. For extra effect, the first words of Peisetairos emphasize the femininity of Iris: ἄκουσον αὖτη ("listen here, you [f.])." The phenomenon of linguistic accommodation, represented by code-switching matrices, has been widely studied in linguistic interaction [69], and here it plays out in Peisetairos parodying Iris' language by mirroring the style of language that he is mocking.

5) CONCLUSION

All of these linguistic features — lexical, syntactical, and pragmatic — contribute to the creation of a more feminized speech. And the parody of Iris's speech, in concentrated lines of dialogue, in a heightened state of affairs, sees Peisetairos resort after all to obscene vocabulary, flaunting his access to a part of the lexicon not shared equally by the female characters. As Willi notes about obscene words, "women do not normally use them in front of men" [70]. The issue at hand becomes the use of fancy words and

more feminized languages to feign threats (μορμολύττεσθαι). μορμολύττομαι is a denominal verb (< μορμώ, οὔς, ἡ “bogey, spectre”) [71], and it refers to a certain kind of monster: *figure grimaçante de femme, sorte de monstre dont on se servait comme d'épouvantail pour les enfants* (“a grimacing figure of a woman, a kind of monster used as a scarecrow for children”). In challenging the self-proclaimed feigned threats of a feminine monster, Peisetairos, donning a satyr-like persona [72], threatens to rape Iris. While Lauren Taaffe is right to see in the persistent sexual innuendo of Peisetairos a falseness of representation, this falseness is suppressed in the threat of rape by variegating the language along gendered lines. The collocation of the sophistic with the coarse, intellectual with the obscene, makes for an exaggerated comic effect (one typical of Aristophanes) since the obscenities, as Robson argues, “can also serve to emphasize a figure’s non-conformity with social conventions and/or lack of social sophistication” [73]. In a matter of a few lines, Peisetairos establishes himself as an intellectual trained in the rhetorical arts, only to expose himself by resorting to coarse vocabulary when the situation compels. I do not mean to imply that a sophist cannot have coarse vocabulary in their repertoire; only that Peisetairos seemingly reveals his hidden coarseness from under the sophistic garb he had put on earlier in the play [74]. When brain fails him, he turns to brawn, to open threats of sexual violence, and central to the reinforcement of the gender dynamics in the scene are the linguistic features in the speech of Peisetairos and Iris. In translation, it is hard to capture how derisively belittling Peisetairos is in his response to Iris. Still, we should be aware nonetheless that we can gain a better understanding of most gendered interactions in comedy by using the statistical analyses of Aristophanic corpus as the starting point.

CITATIONS & TEXTUAL NOTES

- [1] cf. Virginia M. Lewis, “Gendered Speech in Sophocles’ *Electra*,” *Phoenix* (Toronto) 69, no. 3 (2015): 217, n.1. See also, for the grossly disproportionate access of the female characters to the vocabulary of sex and food, Naomi Scott, “Women and the Language of Food in the Plays of Aristophanes,” *Mnemosyne* 70, no. 4 (2017).
- [2] “The Language of Athenian Women,” in *Lo spettacolo delle voci*, ed. Francesco De Martino and Alan H. Sommerstein (Bari: Levante, 1995).
- [3] *The Languages of Aristophanes: Aspects of Linguistic Variation in Classical Attic Greek* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).
- [4] Willi, 157–197.
- [5] Lauren K. Taaffe, *Aristophanes and Women* (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 42.
- [6] Ar. *Av.* 1201–1202. The edition used is Alan H. Sommerstein, *Birds*, in *The Comedies of Aristophanes*, Vol. 6. Aris & Phillips, 1987. Translations throughout are my own, except when otherwise noted. A major part of this section will appear in “Mind your Language Mister! A Case Study in Aristophanic Humor,” *Animus Classical Journal* 3, (Winter 2023).
- [7] Ar. *Av.* 1205–1256. A critical caveat here: The definition of obscenity and its cultural context in 5th-century Athens does not operate on the same principles of inhibition as in most modern European societies. Jeffrey Henderson persuasively shows that the Greek definition of obscenity revolves around the concept of *aischros* (“shameful”) — the open proclamation of acts in the public sphere that belong in the private sphere of life. Hurling obscenities is not associated with guilt, but rather with shame. See Jeffrey Henderson, *The Maculate Muse: Obscene Language in Attic Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970), 5ff.
- [8] Henderson, 2.
- [9] Ar. *Av.* 1205–1206.
- [10] Ar. *Av.* 1207–1208.
- [11] Nan Dunbar, *Birds* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), ad loc.
- [12] M. S. Silk, *Aristophanes and the Definition of Comedy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 122–123.
- [13] James Robson, “Slipping One In: The Introduction of Obscene Lexical Items in Aristophanes,” in *Ancient Comedy and Reception: Essays in Honor of Jeffrey Henderson*, ed. Douglas S. Olson (Boston: De Gruyter, Inc., 2013), 41.
- [14] LSJ, s.v. “συλλαμβάνω.”
- [15] Ar. *Av.* 1211–1216.
- [16] Dunbar, ad loc.

- [17] Ar. *Av.* 559–560.
- [18] Ar. *Av.* 1246–1252.
- [19] Ar. *Av.* 1253–1256.
- [20] Henderson, *The Maculate Muse*, 5.
- [21] Robson, “Slipping One In: The Introduction of Obscene Lexical Items in Aristophanes,” 43.
- [22] Ar. *Av.* 1256–1257.
- [23] Alan H. Sommerstein, “The Language of Athenian Women,” 78–79.
- [24] cf. The opening of Aristophanes’ *Frogs* and the extra-narrative quibbling of Dionysus and his slave Xanthias about the “load,” and metatheatrical commentary on the typology of jokes that please the audience (*Ran.* 1–37).
- [25] Edith Hall, “Actor’s Song in Tragedy,” in *Performance Culture and Athenian Democracy*, ed. S. Goldhill and R. Osborne. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 102–103.
- [26] An exact count is virtually impossible because there is wide-spread disagreement in several plays about the text of Aristophanes. It is unclear if certain lines represent Aristophanes’ text, or are the later interpolation of scribes.
- [27] Willi, *The Language of Aristophanes*, 173–174.
- [28] Stephen Colvin, *Dialect in Aristophanes* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 95.
- [29] Willi, 174.
- [30] See Evert van Emde Boas, *Language and Character in Euripides’ Electra* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 16ff.
- [31] Willi, 176–177.
- [32] *Av.* 1229.
- [33] *Av.* 1230–1231.
- [34] *The Cambridge Grammar of Classical Greek* (CCGC), s.v. “52.41,” 629.
- [35] LSJ, s.v. “πέτομαι.”
- [36] Heiko Motschenbacher, *Language, Gender and Sexual Identity: Poststructuralist Perspectives* (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 2010), 20–25.
- [37] *Av.* 1239–1240.
- [38] Willi, 178–179.
- [39] cf. the repetition of καταθαλώω (this time in the future indicative καταθαλώσω) and the use of another future indicative πέμψω in paratactical protases (*Av.* 1246–1250).
- [40] In “neutral conditions” where the speaker gives “no indication of the likelihood of the realization of the action in the protasis,” the future indicative in the apodosis carries a “connotation of unpleasantness, undesirability,” (CCGC, s.v. “49.5,” 552).
- [41] Willi, 180.

- [42] *Av.* 1239–1240
- [43] Colvin, *Dialect in Aristophanes*, 9.
- [44] LSJ, s.v. “λιγνύς.”
- [45] Eur. *Supp.* 640.
- [46] Eur. *Ion* 214–215.
- [47] Ar. *Av.* 1247–1248.
- [48] Aesch. *Sept.* 494–495.
- [49] Soph. *Trach.* 795.
- [50] Soph. *Ant.* 1126–1130.
- [51] cf. Ar. *Lys.* 240ff for Lampito’s exit, Ar. *Lys* 270ff for the inception of the men’s plan to set the Acropolis ablaze.
- [52] Jeffrey Henderson, *Birds. Lysistrata. Women at the Thesmophoria* ed. and trans. Jeffrey Henderson (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 311.
- [53] Ar. *Lys.* 219–221.
- [54] Willi, 196.
- [55] Ar. *Thesm.* 277–279
- [56] Ar. *Thesm.* 249–251.
- [57] Ar. *Av.* 1245
- [58] Willi, 118.
- [59] Pl. *Prt.* 340b1.
- [60] Willi, 169.
- [61] Laura McClure, *Spoken Like a Woman: Speech and Gender in Athenian Drama* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 221. On the characterization of sophists and Socrates, see David Williams, “Socrates and the ‘Sophists’ in the Old Comedy,” *TAPA (Society for Classical Studies)* 152, no. 2 (2022): 348ff.
- [62] Ar. *Av.* 1243–1245.
- [63] Willi, 136–141.
- [64] LSJ, s.v. “πάφλασμα.”
- [65] The noun *πάφλασμα* might also echo Aristophanes’ favorite target Cleon, the Paphlagonian, from Anatolia with a play on *παφλάζω* — especially since Aristophanes xenophobically ridicules the Near-Eastern Phrygians and Lydians, commonly associated with effeminacy in Attic drama; thereby Aristophanes would not only have targeted the prevalent sophistic lexicon but also snuck in ridicule of Cleon, as he does in his earlier plays *Knights* and *Clouds* (cf. Ar. *Kn.* 2, 6; see also Ar. *Cl.* 581).
- [66] Xen. *Symp.* 4.26–4.27.
- [67] Pl. *Crito* 46c.
- [68] Pl. *Phd.* 2.468.

[69] Colvin, 9.

[70] Willi, 188.

[71] *Etymological Dictionary of Greek*, s.v. “μορμώ,” 967

[72] Scharffenberger, “Peisetairos’ ‘Satyric’ Treatment of Iris: Aristophanes ‘Birds’ 1253-6.” *The Journal of Hellenic Studies* Vol. 115 (1995): 172-173.

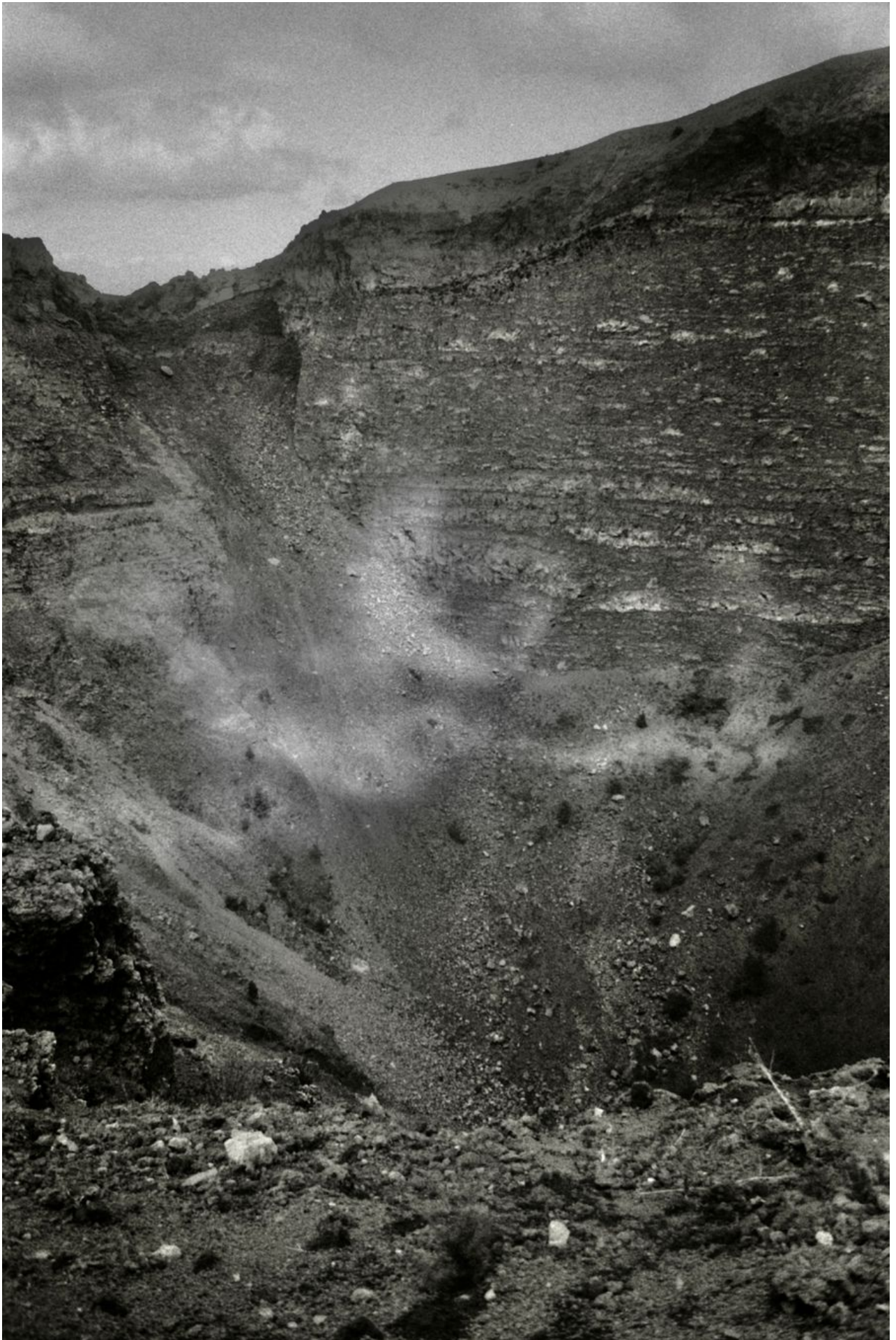
[73] Robson, 36.

[74] *Ar. Av.* 450-452.



**FILM PHOTOGRAPHY OF COLOSSEUM, PYRAMID OF CESTIUS, &
INTERIOR OF MT. VESUVIUS (LATE 20TH CENTURY)**

EMILY STEPHENS, OXFORD UNIVERSITY



ΚΟΡΑΕ ("THE RAVEN")

*An Ancient Greek Translation of Edgar Allan Poe's Original Poem
(Pub. 1845)*

ANDREW BLEDSOE, UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

Δή ποτε νυκτι μέση δνοφερᾶ κόπος εἶλέ μ' ἔχοντα
νοῦν πρὸς τὰν βίβλω τῶν παραδοξολόγων
ἐγγύθι λήθης κρυπτά· δαμάζοντος δὲ καὶ ὕπνου,
ἦν κτύπος ἐξαπίνης, ὡς κτύπος ὦν προθύρου·
«δεῦρ' ἐπὶ τήνδε θύραν τις,» ἔφην, «ἐλθὼν ἐπάταξε·
τοῦτο γὰρ οὖν οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἔχει οὐχ ἑτέρως.»

5

φεῦ μέμνημαι πάντ'· ἐν χειμεριωτάτῃ ὥρᾳ,
φεψάλου ἐν δαπέδῳ κωφᾷ μαραινομένου,
ἐν βίβλοις ἐπόνουν πρὸ φίλης ἠοῦς πολυεύκτου,
εὐρήσων πένθους φάρμακον, ἀλλὰ μάτην·
ἦ γὰρ ἐπένθουν οἰχομένην νύμφην Λεονώραν,
ἦ ὄνομ' ἠδὺ θεοῖς, νώνυμος ἀλλοτρίοις.

10

καὶ ψαίροντ' ἀτόπως προκαλύμματα πορφυρίδες τε
δεῖμ' ἔφερον γ' οἴου πρόσθεν ἄπειρος ἐγώ·
ἐστήκως δ' ἄρ' ἀφαιρήσων πηδήματα δεινὰ
παλλομένης κραδίης, πολλάκις ὦδ' ἔλεγον·
«νυκτὸς ἀωρὶ θυραῖός τις δεῖται κατάγεσθαι·
ταῦτα γὰρ οὖν οὕτως, ἀλλ' ἔχει οὐχ ἑτέρως.»

15

νῦν δ' ἄρα τολμήσας ψυχὴν ἀπέλυσσα τότε ὄκνου,
κάγῳ ἔφην· «σύγγνωθ', ὦ ξένε, ὅστις ἂν ἦς,
ἄρτι δὲ νυστάζοντος ἐμοῦ μαλακῶς ἐπάταξας,
καὶ σὺ τόσον κόπτεις ἀτρέμα τ' ἠρέμα τε,
ὥστ' ἤκουσα μόλις σου.» ἔπειτα θύραν ἀνεῴξας,
τὸ σκότος ἠσπασάμην· οὐτι γὰρ ἄλλο παρῆν.

20

εἰς δ' ἔρεβός τι βλέποντι πολὺν χρόνον ὡς ἐνέπιπτον
θαυμά τε δεῖμά τ' ἐμοὶ καὶ κακοδαιμονία
καὶ φαντάσματα, οἷα κατ' ἀνθρώπους ἔτ' ἄσημα·
σιγῇ δ' εἰστήκει πάντοθεν, ἦκα δ' ἔφην·
«ὦ Λεονώρα;» καὶ φοιτῶσ' ἠχῶ «Λεονώρα»
ἀντήχησε μόνον, κούδ' ὅτιοῦν ἕτερον.

εἶτα ὑποστρέψας πάλιν εἰς θάλαμον καὶ ἅπασαν
καιόμενος ψυχὴν, ἔκλυον αἰφνιδίως
ὄξύτερον κτύπον ἢ τὸ πάρος· «νῆ τὸν Δία,» εἶπον,
«ἔστι δὲ δὴ τις ἐκεῖ, νῦν ἐπὶ τῆς θυρίδος·
τέτλαθι δὴ, κραδίη, καὶ ἐκεῖσ' αἰνιγμά γε λύσω·
τί δ' ἔστ'; οὐ δῆπου γ' ἄλλο τι πλὴν ἀνέμου.»

κῆρα καλύμμ' ἀνεῶξαντος, κυανόπτερος ὄρμη
αἰψ' εἰσέπτειτ'· ἰδού, δεῦρο Κόραξ γεραρὸς
ὡς ἐκ ἄνωθε χρόνων ἀγίων· εἶτ' αὐτίκα σεμνῶς,
οὐ μὲν μ' αἰδεσθεῖς, ὡς δὲ τὸ κῦρος ἔχων,
Παλλάδος εἰκόνι τῆδ' ἐφ' ὑπερθυρίῳ τάχ' ἐπήρει·
ἴζετο δ' ὡς ἐν ἔδρα, πάμπαν ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ.

νῦν μ' οἰωνὸς ἐρεμνὸς ἔθελξε προσγελάσαι μιν
ᾧψει σεμνοτάτῳ καὶ τραγικῷ, τότε ἔφην·
«καίπερ ἴσως λόφον ᾧδε κεκαρμένος, οὐ σὺ δύσσορnis
φαίνει νυκτικόραξ, ὃς θανατηφόρος ἦν.
εἰπέ, τί σοι καλὸν οὔνομ' ἐπ' ἠόνι Ἄιδου ἀφεγγεῖ;
ἀντιβολῶ σ', ὦναξ.» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ.

δὴ τότε ἑθαύμασα γ' ἀγροίκου πτηνοῦ φάτιν οἷαν
εἰς ἀκοὰς συνετήν, κὰν ἀπόρῳ γενόμεν
τί κληδὼν ἠνίξαθ'· ἅπας γὰρ ἂν ὅστις ἔμοιγε
εἶποι τῶν μερόπων οὐδένα πω κατιδεῖν
θῆρ' ἐφ' ὑπερθυρίῳ κὰπ' εἰκόνος ἢ πτερόεντα,
ὃς δι' ἀπορρήτων «Οὐκέτι» τοῦνομ' ἔχων.

ἀλλὰ Κόραξ ἔρμαϊος ἐπ' εἰκόνος εἰς ἓνα μῦθον 55
ἐξέχεε ψυχὴν, καὶ προσέθηκε τέως
οὐδὲ γρῦ προσέτ', οὐδ' ὀτιοῦν πτερὸν ἄψ ὑποκινῶν,
μέχρις ἔφην κᾶγωγ'· «ὥσπερ ἀποπτάμενοι
πρόσθε φίλοι τε καὶ ἐλπίς, ἐς αὔριον αὐτὸς ἄπεισιν,
ὡς ὁ πρὶν σύρφαξ.» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ. 60

καίριη οὖν ὑπολείψει ἐγὼ πεπληγμένος εἶπον·
«τοῦτο μὲν ἐστὶν ἔπος μοῦνον ὅπερ δύναται
φθέγγεσθαι, ληφθὲν δὲ πάλαι ποθ' ἀπλῶς παρ' ἄνακτος
οὐλομένου δεινῶς, ὃν μάλα θᾶττον ἀεὶ
δύσφορ' ἄτεγκτ' ἐδίωκεν ἕως τὴν ἐλπίδ' ἄθυμος 65
ἐθρήνει, θρυλῶν <οὐκέτι, > πᾶς ἀπορῶν.»

προσγελάσαι δ' ἔτι θέλγοντος Κόρακός γ' ἐμὲ σύννου,
πρὸς τ' ὄρνιθα θύραν τ' εἰκόνα τ' εὐθὺ ἐγὼ
στρέψας τὴν ἀπαλὴν κλισίαν, μαλακῶς ἐκαθίζον,
εἶτ' ἐφρόντιζον τοῦθ' ὅ τι ἂν προλέγοι 70
φρικώδης καὶ δύσφημος καὶ δύσχιμος ὄρνις·
εἰ φέρει ἀγγελίας, «Οὐκέθ'» ἐκάστοτε φάς.

ταῦτα μὲν οὖν τεκμαιρόμενος σιγῇ ἐκαθήμην,
οὐδὲ γρῦ φράζων ψυχαπάτη πτερίνω,
ὃς πυρόεν διὰ παντὸς ἐδέρκετο κόλπον ἐμοῦ γε· 75
λύχνω δ' ὑψηλῶ τῆδ' ὑπολαμπόμενος,
ἔκλινον κεφαλὴν ἐς ἀλουργές προσκεφαλαίον—
κλίνει δ' ἡ ἀφανὴς οὐκέτι, νῦν δ' ἀναφής.

πυκνοῦσθαι δ' ἐδόκει πνεῦμ' ὡς θειούμενος ἀήρ 80
πρὸς τινος ἄττοντος δαίμονος οὐ φανεροῦ·
καὶ πρὸς ἐμαυτόν· «ιδού, τάλαν, ὡς ἐπίληθον ἔπεμψε
νηπενθὲς Παιάν· δὴ γὰρ ἔνεστιν ἄκος.
πῖνέ νυν ἐμπίπτων εἰς λήθην σῆς Λεονώρας,
ὥστ' ἀπαθῆ καθάπαξ.» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ.

«μάντι,» ἔφην, «κακέ, μάντις ἔτ', ὄρνις ἢ κακοδαίμων,
ἢ χειμάζομενός γ' ἢ σὺ θεήλατος ὦν·
ἔνθα μόνος περ, ἄτρεστος ἐν οἴκῳ δείματ' ἔχοντι
νυκτίπλαγκτα μένεις· εἰπέ μοι, ἀντιβολῶ,
ἄρα που ἄλλοθ' ἔχει μῶλυ, ψυχοσσόον ἄνθος,
ἀμβρόσιος λεῖμας;» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ. **85**

«μάντι,» ἔφην, «κακέ, μάντις ἔτ', ὄρνις ἢ κακοδαίμων,
ναὶ μὰ θεοὺς φιλίους τ' οὐρανίους τ', ἐλέει
τὸν βαρυδαίμονα τόνδε καὶ εἰπέ μοι εἴ ποτε μακρὰν
ἐν μακάρων νήσοις καὶ πάλιν ἀσπάσομαι
παρθένον αἰγλοφανῆ μίαν οὔσαν ἀεὶ Λεονώραν·
ἄρα λέγεις μοι ἄπαξ;» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ. **90**

«τοῦτο δ' ἔπος διαλύεσθαι σημαινέτω ἡμῖν,»
στάς δ' ἐγὼ ἔκραγον· «ἔρρ' εἰς ζόφου αἰγιαλὸν
εἷς τε θύελλαν ὄθεν σὸν ἀπέπτατο δυσχερὲς εἶδος·
μὴ δῶς ὡς τέκμωρ ἐν πτερόν, ἀλλ' ἀφελοῦ
κόλπου ἐμοῦ σὸν ἔπος μόνιμον ῥύγχος τ' ἀπατηλόν·
εὐράξ, ἔρρε, πατάξ.» «Οὐκέτι,» φῆ ῥα Κόραξ. **100**

ἀλλὰ Κόραξ πτερόν οὐχ ὑποκινῶν ἐμμένει αἰέν,
ἔνθα καθιζόμενος τ' ἠδ' ἀτρεμῶν μάλ' ὁμῶς
Παλλάδος εἰκόνι· χῶσπερ ὄνειροπολῶν κακοδαίμων
ὄμμασιν ἀστράπτει· καὶ σκιά ἐν δαπέδῳ
ὀρνίθειος ἐμὴν καταδεῖ ψυχὴν γε χαμᾶζε,
ἧ δὲ τὸ ἐγχωρεῖν οὐκέθ' ὑπεκπροφυγεῖν. **105**

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in black and white. It frames the text on the left and top, and continues along the bottom.

GIRLHOOD

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she makes it look easy – the men,
thirsty for gore, lap up the look on her face
then sit until nightfall in tents, recalling
again and again how her father led the blade,
spilled blood that time will never wash away;
they pull apart and re-thread the story, now familiar:

Iphigenia motionless
wide, rabbit-brown eyes,
proud chin tipped,
mouth gagged, curses unheard,
cold face drained of blood
un-shuddering, a passive sigh.

before the plunge, a last glance at the sky

last wisps of translucent cloud
last touch of mid-day breeze
last lick of languid sunlight:

a golden glow on her head as she crumples –

like a diver fishing for oysters on a crystalline sea
her body pitches forward

a lazy grace, a slow arch
into the waiting crowd

in the pitch black of midnight, wind
swirling through the encampment, few (though
they are disbelieved) whisper of the horns

how they burst from her scalp,
the dappling of fawnskin, teenage
limbs furring, clack of frenzied hooves,
stag-screaming, blood rushing,
a brief shadow against the sky.



A decorative border with a repeating floral and scrollwork pattern, rendered in black and white. It frames the top, bottom, and left sides of the page.

GESTURES OF LIMINALITY: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DEXIOSIS IN CLASSICAL ATHENIAN FUNERARY ART

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INTRODUCTION

In the study of ancient burial practices, rituals, and funerary iconography, it is often easy to forget that the real object of study is, in fact, other humans: fragile, emotional, and complex, just as we are. The line between ancient human and historical artifact grows ever thinner with time, but it bears mentioning that our subject of study is of our very own fundamental essence, if for no other reason than to provide the most basic of conceptual frameworks for this study of ancient funerary art.

Late Classical and early Hellenistic Attic grave *stelai* form a unique corpus of ancient artwork — beautiful and melancholy, quiet yet proud, *stelai* from this period number among the most well-preserved and abundant pieces of extant ancient art from Greece. Despite their undeniable art-historical significance, these enduring memorials have long resisted (perhaps with good reason) a concrete and permanent analysis from scholars. They have been subject to prolonged speculation about the nature of their iconography, their socio-political circumstances, and, most importantly, how they may (or may not) help the modern scholar to understand classical conceptions of death and the afterlife. The iconographical and memorial significance of these *stelai* is, of course, uniquely difficult to extricate due to their implicit private associations and simultaneous formulaic production — this may indeed be one reason for the scrutiny they have sustained at the hands of

classicists and art historians. Inevitably, and often at the center of formal and iconographical analyses of Classical funerary art, is the exploration of the handshake gesture, or *dexiosis* [δεξιουσ], the most common motif on Classical Athenian funerary *stelai* [1].

Picking up where past and present scholars have left off, I aim to approach a multidimensional understanding of the significance of the *dexiosis* in its original gravesite context, which itself lies at the center of the complex temporal and spatial simultaneity of life and afterlife in ancient Greek art and *mythos*. In the course of this paper, I will argue that the *dexiosis* motif is the hermeneutical key to understanding the liminality and ambiguity inherent in Classical Athenian grave *stelai*, and that it is a valuable motif through which to consider ancient conceptions of the borders between life and death at the gravesite. After first discussing the necessary socio-historical context of the material culture and the relevant scholarship, my argument will be quadripartite: The first section will consider the spatial and temporal frameworks implicit in grave *stela* reliefs as well as a discussion of the uses of gesture, involving both formal analyses and a reflection on broader conceptual frameworks for modes of representation. The second section will examine the uses of the *dexiosis* within other representations and contexts, considering the work of previous scholars as a basis for understanding the gesture, generally aiming to reveal the importance and ubiquity of this gesture in ancient funerary art and beyond. The third section of my paper will consider the site of the grave more broadly, as a liminal space positioned between two worlds and as a critical locus for multidimensional social interactions. The fourth section demonstrates the importance of the *dexiosis* for understanding funerary art as a genre, and the multivalent meanings of the gesture which hold special significance within the liminal space of the gravesite.



Classical grave *stelai*, like their Archaic predecessors from around 750–480 BCE, were always made of stone, usually marble or (more rarely) limestone, and appear in four major styles, each defined by its unique architectural qualities (marble *loutrophoroi* and *lekythoi* are not included in these categories) [2]. Despite their differences, each of these four styles usually included space for epigram (which, if present at all, tended to be only two or four verses in the Classical period) [3] and some form of relief, either high or low — the emotionality, extravagance, and depth of relief becomes particularly noticeable towards the beginning of the Hellenistic era [4]. Due to their relatively high labor costs, *stelai* were available to fewer people than was pottery [5], but the wide disparities in quality of masonry and artistry seem to indicate their obtainability by many social classes. Differing stoneworking techniques and levels of mastery also suggest that these grave markers were created by a variety of sculptors and workshops. It is generally accepted that grave *stelai* were stock-produced, or at least based on prototypical forms from which the commissioner could choose, rather than being created anew for each individual — This explains the notably precise formal similarities between various classical *stelai*, such as between fig. 1 and fig. 8 [6].* The lack of “portrait features,” or identifying characteristics, on grave *stelai*, as Nathan Arrington notes in his article “Touch and Remembrance in Greek Funerary Art,” made them useful in a wide variety of grave precincts and suitable for a diachronic usage — the figures could represent any family member, and the names of deceased family members could be added in epigram over time while the actual relief itself remained unchanged [7].

The first, and perhaps most important dilemma to consider in the production of private figured *stelai* in Athens is the sixty-year interruption between around 490 BCE and 430 BCE, in which no private *stelai* were produced. The earliest example of a private grave *stèle* in Classical Athens (that is, after 480 BCE) appears around 430 [8], whereas the last figured Archaic *stèle* is made at the beginning of the 5th century, probably around or just before the end of the first Persian invasion in 490 [9]. The cause for this cessation has previously been attributed to a law later recorded by Cicero in

40. *For full descriptions, please see "Image References."

De Legibus (in the 1st century BCE) [10]. If this legislation ever really existed, it is thought to have been put in place by Kleisthenes, Themistocles, or, as Cicero determines, Solon [11]. The evidence for this (hypothetical) law is precarious at best, and seems to provide more problems than solutions in understanding the artistic hiatus of the early 5th century [12]. For that reason, many scholars have put forth other theories, the most prominent of which include: the idea that the rise of Classical *stelai* in 430 corresponds to the re-assertion of individual aristocratic power by wealthy Athenians after decades of democratic suppression [13]; that Classical *stelai* are a direct reaction to the disruption of burial customs caused by the plague of Athens in 430 (and perhaps the ongoing Peloponnesian war of the same period) [14]; or that the adoption of public burial grounds in Athens after the battle of Marathon (490) precluded the use of private figured *stelai* [15]. All of these circumstances likely had profound impacts on what seems previously to have been a rather linear artistic progression.

The Archaic predecessors to Classical grave *stelai* (c.750–500 BCE) are important in considering the iconography and artistic significance of the latter. It is evident to any viewer that “Classical Athenian grave monuments look altogether different” [16] from their Archaic precursors (figs. 2, 3), in only sixty years’ time. It is important to not only consider these differences, but also the relevant residues of the Archaic funerary artistic tradition. Archaic *stelai* tended to be taller, and usually only involved a single-figure or double-figure relief, whereas Classical grave *stelai* were often squatter in shape, and almost always utilized two or more figures in the representation, with single-figure reliefs being exceedingly rare. Perhaps one of the most confounding differences lies in *stela* iconography: in Archaic *stelai*, it is immediately obvious which figure represents the deceased, and which the living; in Classical *stelai*, there is often no distinction between the deceased and the living, even with the observation of the extant epigraphical clues [17]. There is, however, a sepulchral inheritance which Classical gravestones receive from Archaic works. Knud Friis Johansen, in his seminal work *Attic Grave Reliefs of the Classical Period*, particularly emphasizes this point; the notion of depicting an interaction between the living and dead, which he

argues evolves from Archaic ideals of hero-worship to Classical communion among equals, (usually family members) is one of the most important of these sepulchral residues [18]. The *dexiosis* is completely absent from Archaic grave *stelai*, and first appears in Athenian funerary art around 430 (see fig. 5); Johansen, however, maintains that the *dexiosis* in its funerary context may itself have evolved from Archaic depictions of worshippers devoting offerings to the heroized deceased, a common motif on seventh and sixth-century *stelai* (see fig. 4) [19].

A preliminary understanding of Classical Athenian burial practices is necessary to reveal the significance of grave-reliefs in their role as markers of identity and sites of ritual practice for Athenian citizens. At the most basic level, private Athenian burial ritual was a three-part process to be completed by the family of the deceased, consisting of the display of the body (*prothesis*), the bearing of the corpse to the gravesite (*ekphora*), and the internment of the body [20]. Contemporary conceptions of the process of death and dying itself were likewise tripartite: the stages, As Robert Garland records in *The Greek Way of Death*, were 1) dying, 2) being dead and uninterred, and 3) being dead and interred [21]. While the intricacies of Athenian burial practices are not as important in this presentation, it is worth noting the significance of touch and haptic involvement in each stage of the burial ritual [22]. In the *prothesis*, the deceased body was adorned, anointed, bathed, and clothed by living members of the family (primarily women) [23]. In the *ekphora*, the body was held and carried to the site of burial or cremation by each of the closest family members. During internment, the body was adorned with and positioned among various funerary objects, including pottery vessels, metalwork, jewelry, and (likely) food, textile, and other organic materials [24]. This emphasis on haptic connection works its way into funerary iconography, particularly on grave *stelai*; the *dexiosis* is perhaps representative of the continued importance and symbolic value of physical touch not only in burial practice, but in maintaining and expressing the closeness of everyday social relationships. Arrington emphasizes this point, stating that the “*Dexiosis* contributed to practices and images representing, facilitating, and implicating the sense of

touch in order to create powerful, effective, and comforting memorials” [25]. While the *dexiosis* constitutes only a small part of Arrington’s central argument, it will serve for us as the primary exegetical tool.

The importance of proper burial ritual, and thereby physical connection to the dead, in Classical Athens is hard to understate, as attested in Athenian tragedies such as Sophocles’ *Antigone* [26] and Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* [27], in which suitable care for the deceased and gravesite visitation are central themes. It seems believable, then, that events which might take away from the individual interaction with the deceased, such as the Athenian plague of 430 [28], and/or the adoption of public burial rites in 490 (which substituted family burials for public processions and orations) [29], may be some of the key influences for the rise of figured *stelai* in 430 and their iconographic emphasis on individual, often tangible, connection between family members. Private familial connection, displayed publicly, underlies the very tone of Classical funerary *stelai* and burial rituals as a whole; as Donna Kurtz and John Boardman write in their book, *Greek Burial Customs*, “it was essential that the dead receive the customary rites of burial, but it was equally important that he receive them from the proper hands” [30].

1) FORMAL ANALYSES

The representations of space and time (or the lack thereof) in Classical grave *stelai* display the complexities of meaning inherent in this type of funerary art. The following section involves my own formal analysis of a few particularly important examples of Classical funerary *stelai*, a discussion of time and space as they are represented or referenced in the relief and accompanying epigram, and a survey and critique of some earlier interpretations of these reliefs. The *stèle* of Aristylla (fig. 5) is one of the earliest, if not the earliest, surviving examples of a Classical figured funerary *stèle*, dated to just after 430 BCE. The architectural features on this *stèle* are minimal, with a simple pediment and lintel above, and a protruding base below which supports both figures. The architectural features of this grave *stèle* (which falls into the category of type IV) are minimal, and the

primary focus is on the two figures and their interaction. The base bears an inscription, which is simple and brief [31]:

ἐνθάδε Ἀριστυλλα κεῖται	Here Aristylla Lies
παῖς Ἀρίστωνός τε καὶ	Daughter of Arisston and
Ροδίλλης	Rodille
σώφρων γ' ὧ θύγατερ	Prudent indeed [you were], O
	Daughter

This *stèle* exhibits a typical two-figure composition, with one figure standing and the other seated. Here, though the identity of each figure is not made explicit in the epigram, we may determine which character depicts Aristylla and which Rodille using iconographical clues. Both figures are clearly female, wearing the traditional short-sleeved *chiton* (tunic) of free women (as opposed to slaves, who would likely wear a long-sleeved *chiton*) [32]. The standing woman is identified as younger by her short hair, and the bird she holds in her left hand, common indications of youthfulness and childhood in funerary relief [33]: Aristylla she must be, then. Aristylla's seated mother, Rodille, is veiled, though only in the background — her face is clearly visible. She is seated on a chair, and her feet rest on a footstool. The figures gaze in different directions: Rodille straight ahead, past her daughter, while Aristylla looks downward toward her mother. Rodille's left hand rests on her leg, while the right joins with Aristylla's in the center of the composition, in what may be the earliest extant example of the *dexiosis* motif on an Athenian funerary *stèle*. I wish to spend a few moments on this motif alone, knowing what we do about the rest of the composition. Here, as elsewhere, the *dexiosis* is a useful artistic tool to bring a sense of cohesion to the relief, uniting what would otherwise be two figures bonded only by gaze.

The *dexiosis*, in this example, unites the figures in a way that no other gesture could; the viewer can observe still the imbalanced gaze shared between the two figures, which seems to be given freely by Aristylla yet not returned by Rodille. Where this unreciprocated gesture of sight might betray coldness or indifference otherwise, the uniting handshake offers a new interpretation: Rodille mourns, or perhaps does not even register her

own daughter (an *eidolon*, or soul, already?), but the connection between the two is emphasized by the fateful clasping of hands. Rodille is forever bonded, united with her daughter, whether or not sight permits it, whether or not Aristylla is dead. The gesture of the *dexiosis* allows both figures to transcend and transverse the border of death, an achievement particularly significant at the place where life meets death and the membrane between two worlds is permeated: the grave.

The epigram itself indicates this permeability. Presumably being spoken by the parents, Arisston and Rodille, the vocative ὦ θύγατερ signifies a direct address to their daughter, Aristylla. Hence why I (and Clairmont, in his book *Gravestone and Epigram*) have included “[you were]” before the vocative in brackets. The direct and explicit inclusion of discursive language [34], the “confrontation between the deceased and Living” [35], as Clairmont puts it, is a new invention of Classical gravestones, apparently unseen on Archaic *stelai*. The connection between deceased and living is not only emphasized in relief through the *dexiosis*, but in the epigram itself, which mimics an (admittedly dispassionate) conversation between parents and their departed daughter. While the use of this type of language in funerary epigram is by no means common, even in the late Classical period, its inception and use here signify the ever-growing importance of finding and maintaining connection between the world of the living and the world of dead.

The chair upon which Rodille sits is our only indication of finite space within this relief. As Ruth E. Leader argues, the chair present in this *stèle*, and many others of similar type, may be viewed as a “signifier of the feminine interior,” and therefore also of a real interior space [36]. The chair and accompanying footstool in this interpretation indicate the domain of the *oikos*, or household, to which the female presence is resigned in Athenian law and culture; the exterior, public spaces of the *polis* were reserved almost exclusively for male interaction. The presence of these domestic signifiers perhaps serves to reinforce the feminine qualities of both of the figures represented, complementing the epigram where

Aristylla’s “prudence” is praised. The identification of an interior space may at first seem to contrast with other scholarly views, such as Glenys Davies,¹ that “on *stelai* there is no indication of time or place” [37]. I believe, however, that both interpretations may coexist simultaneously; that the indication of space is intentionally ambiguous and multivalent, just as the motif of the *dexiosis* itself is [38]. The flexibility of space and time in these funerary motifs is what lends them their lasting effect on the viewer: figures, deceased and living, are immortalized not through deification, as in the Archaic age [39], but through timeless and eternal connection. The tangible, symbolic, and metaphorical bond between the living and deceased depends on the ambiguity of space within the *stèle* itself: the connection is not limited by the walls of the *oikos*, nor by the borders of the *polis*, not even by the earth that lies between Hades and the world of the living — the unifying gesture of *dexiosis* may just as well take place in the underworld as in the household of Rodille. The chair and footstool in this interpretation, then, are rather markers of identity and retrospective commemorations of distinction rather than indications of finite and restricted space. The space depicted on funerary *stelai* is not confining or limiting, but rather ambiguous and purposefully indeterminate, just as the *dexiosis* gesture itself is.

Another Classical Athenian grave *stèle* of the late fifth century, the so-called “Stele of Philoxenos” (fig. 6), depicts another way in which disparate spaces and identities are effectively united by the *dexiosis*. This grave marker, much like the *stèle* of Aristylla (fig. 5), conforms to category IV, with a protruding base and lintel, and consists of a two-figure composition. The epigraph on this *stèle*, unlike that of Aristylla, provides no context about any of the figures, and records only the names, each one presumably written above their respective portraits. It reads, briefly, as such:

ΦΙΛΟΞΕΝΟΣ | ΦΙΛΟΜΕΝΗ

Philoxenos | Philomene

Again, the figures are united by the *dexiosis*. Unlike the *stele* of Aristylla, Philoxenos and Philomene (presumably husband and wife) meet in the composition as equals, upright, each stepping toward the other with feet half raised in motion and hands slightly outstretched: the presence of both names on the grave *stele* suggests that both Philoxenos and Philomene were deceased at the time of its commission [40]. Gaze joins the figures as much as the clasping of hands does, and unlike the static, unreciprocating composition of Aristylla and Rodille, the handshake here seems to be only the first signs of touch; the *dexiosis* seems to be the prelude to an imagined embrace between wife and husband. This *stele* also illustrates the joining of the “masculine” exterior and the “feminine” interior. Each figure is distinguished primarily by their clothing: Philoxenos wears the traditional hoplite armor, shield instinctively raised to his left, while Philomene wears the *chiton* and hair bound above her neck. Each figure displays the signs of their respective worlds: the man as the warrior dedicated to the protection of the *polis*, and the woman as the representative of the domestic interior of the household. In this *stele*, the distinct worlds of gendered space (men and *polis*, women and *oikos*), so often separated in Athenian culture, collide in the familiarly indeterminate plane of relief, and yet are inextricably bound by the uniting handshake. In the *stele* of Philoxenos, the *dexiosis* is the connecting force that joins lovers beyond and despite their separate spheres of influence, beyond the space and time that divides them, uniting them, presumably, in the afterlife.

Stelai of the family group type (figs. 1, 7, 8, 10), which are often more elaborate than others and tend to bear the architectural features of type I [41], emphasize touch beyond the simple *dexiosis* by incorporating other gestures of haptic connection. Fig. 8, for instance, involves multiple gestures that implicate the viewer’s visual awareness of physical (dis)connection: as Arrington might describe it, “the handshake is but one gesture among others that evoke the sense of touch” [42]. While the hands of the standing woman and the seated meet familiarly in the center of the composition, the viewer’s eyes are drawn towards a more visually expressive and evocative gesture: the child on the left side of the standing woman, a young

girl who characteristically holds a small bird in her left hand, reaches up towards the body of the seated woman, but is unable to touch her. Through the gesture of innocent longing, we may suppose that the seated woman is the young girl's mother, now deceased, and the standing woman another member of the family, or perhaps a female slave. The girl's extended arm, unfulfilled and unable to grasp her mother, seems to contradict the comparably easy gesture of the *dexiosis* which unites the two more mature figures. In this case, the *dexiosis* perhaps acts as a symbol of a decisively imaginary connection, which, as Johansen posits, "serves solely to express that the dead and the surviving are firmly united across the boundary of the grave" [43], while the "denial of touch" [44], exhibited by the child's unreciprocated gesture of pleading confirms that the deceased mother's human body, her physical and active presence in the *oikos*, is tangibly absent from the mortal world. In this way, through multiple gestures and meanings, through the acceptance and denial of touch, family groups convey a multiplicity of meanings having to do with not only the *dexiosis*, but the very nature of the deceased themselves.

2) USES OF THE MOTIF

As stated at the outset, it is well-accepted that the *dexiosis* is the most ubiquitous and abundant motif on late Classical grave *stelai* [45]. As a simplistic yet expressive gesture, it originated in both funerary and non-funerary contexts as far back as the early Archaic period (according to the extant literature and a few extant grave *stelai*, such as fig. 11), and likely farther. The gesture extended into Etruscan and Roman funerary and non-funerary art as the *dextrarum iunctio* [46]. The meaning of this superficially banal gesture has been fervently debated in the past century: it is the purpose of this section to shed light on a few of these arguments, and extract from each the most useful formulations for understanding the full significance of the *dexiosis* within the context of the gravesite, while considering how the gesture was used in other contexts. One of the first comprehensive studies of the *dexiosis* lies at the heart of Johansen's *Attic Grave Reliefs of the Classical Period*. Johansen begins his analysis by

surveying previous interpretations of the gesture, and names three earlier theories that dealt not only with the *dexiosis*, but with the interpretation of Classical multi-figured compositions as a whole: 1) the *dexiosis* gesture and “family-group” composition as symbols of (prospective) reunion between the living and the dead, 2) symbols of (retrospective) departure between the deceased and living family, or 3) as a purely imaginary expression of unity (neither reunion nor leave-taking) between the deceased and the living [47]. Each of these older theories implies a certain view of the nature of the represented deceased; for instance, the “reunion” theory suggests that the relief portrays the deceased after they have made their journey into the underworld, and depicts them in communion with other family members or ancestors who have already died. The “leave-taking” theory conversely suggests that the dead are portrayed as though they were still alive, leaving their still-living family to begin their journey to the underworld. Another of these older theories, which goes unmentioned in Johansen, is that the relief depicts a communion among family members at the tomb. Many of these theories have been dismissed because, as discussed above, the setting on *stelai* remains purposefully indefinite, suggesting neither the underworld nor the finite space of the household; furthermore, some *stelai* seem to explicitly depict all figures as deceased (such as fig. 9), while many others apparently depict some figures as living, and others as dead (for example, fig. 5). The difference is often revealed by the epigram: fig. 9, for example, shows only two figures, both of whose names are inscribed (and therefore presumed to be dead); the *stèle* of Aristylla (fig. 5), on the other hand, distinguishes the living parents from their deceased daughter. In short, as Davies explains, “[these theories] do not adequately explain all occurrences of the *dexiosis* on the grave *stelai*” [48]. Considering the sepulchral inheritance that Classical *stelai* receive from their Archaic predecessors, Johansen similarly argues that each of the above theories does not accurately define the meaning of the *dexiosis*, and that the gesture should be considered as a remnant of Archaic depictions of hero-worship to the deceased [49]. According to Johansen’s formulation, the union between the represented figures, signaled by the *dexiosis*, is essentially an evolution from the archaic worship: he refrains from applying a specific meaning to the

gesture, but is content to consider it an expression of imaginary and internal connection, evolved from cultic practices for the dead [50].

In Davies' influential work dedicated to the diachronic study of the *dexiosis*, "The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art," she contends with Johansen's argument, citing the absence of the *dexiosis* on white-ground lekythoi [51], which were common sepulchral items in the cult of the dead [52]. She argues that rather than being restricted to an imaginary union alone, the "motif may be interpreted as the dead departing from his living family, or the reunion of the deceased with his ancestors in the Underworld" [53]. She does not reject the possibility that the *dexiosis* could be interpreted by an Athenian viewer as retrospective or prospective: the lack of a definite space (whether the *oikos*, underworld, gravesite, or anywhere in-between), according to her, allows the viewer to associate it with any of those particular spaces and contexts despite their variability. This "flexible" interpretation of the gesture is the best suited to understanding its wider context and significance in broader conceptions of death and the afterlife, and accounts for the ambiguity of space on *stelai* themselves — space that was purposefully left indeterminate by Classical artists and stonemasons to allow for a variety of interpretations, which were to be conferred exclusively by the Athenian citizen commissioning the gravestone. It is only when we recognize the multifunctionality and multivalence of gestures, particularly ones as ubiquitous as the *dexiosis* [54], that we can fully grasp its significance in funerary iconography and beyond. In this respect, the conclusion Davies reaches in her article serves as the perfect place to begin our own consideration of the *dexiosis* in other contexts. Where Davies and Johansen aim for an understanding of the meaning of the motif through an iconographical approach, I attempt to understand its significance in a broader context [55].

The question that underlies discussions of the meaning of the *dexiosis* remains unaddressed: why use the *dexiosis*? Perhaps the answer is relatively straightforward, but it nevertheless begs our attention. The *dexiosis*, it seems, is the most basic and universal gesture of haptic connection; there

are indeed many other ways to represent the sense of touch on grave *stelai*, but the *dexiosis* is undoubtedly the simplest. A handshake can be rendered by both the most professional and the least experienced stonemasons alike with relative success [56], and the gesture can unite people of any affiliation: lovers, ancestors, or acquaintances. Unlike the caressing of a cheek, cradling of a forearm, or the embraces of family members (displayed in fig. 10), the *dexiosis* is a simple gesture that performs its purpose as a symbol of connection in the most straightforward and direct, not to mention artistically pragmatic, way. Haptic connection is a crucial aspect of the funerary genre of *stelai* in the Classical period [57], and indeed such connection confers a range of symbolic associations for the viewer to consider: familial unity, harmony between independent parties, concord among equals, understanding between lovers, siblings, parents and children, and so on. The ubiquity of the *dexiosis* concedes that the viewer, who encounters the same gesture in a multitude of contexts and forms and who understands the sense of unity and connection implicit in the motif, was the most important element in the creation of Classical *stelai*—the viewer’s understanding and perception of the connection between the deceased and their living relative(s) was of primary importance. It is noteworthy that even the exact identity of the deceased, usually signaled only by the inscribed name, is seemingly not so important in this period as the viewer’s understanding of the deep familial bonds that bind individuals to their loved ones, even across the borders of death [58].

Other contexts in which the *dexiosis* was used reveal the multiplicity of meanings and uses inherent in the motif. The gesture appeared in disparate forms in the Archaic and early Classical period, frequently involving deities or divine heroes linking hands in concord [59]. Perhaps the very earliest depiction of the *dexiosis* on a funerary *stèle* appears on a gravestone from the island of Aegina around 500 BCE (fig. 11) [60], although it is not used in such a context in Athens until 430 BCE [61]. It is unclear whether or not the handshake motif was adopted in Athens from this Aegina *stèle*, but Johansen notes that “for the first time in Greek sepulchral art we here find this motif which becomes so popular in the group compositions of classical Attic

Grave-reliefs” [62].

Other visual forms of the motif appear in Classical Athens on red-figure vases from around 450–420 BCE, which typically depicted a warrior departing from his family [63]. The *dexiosis* also appeared on document reliefs and public monuments (including publicly commissioned civic grave *stelai*), apparently serving a political function to symbolize affirmation or agreement between two independent parties (fig. 12 above) [64]. In these public political or legislative reliefs, the function of the *dexiosis* is relatively simple: as Arrington notes, “on the public documents, the gesture seems to be a relatively straightforward indication of unity” [65]. The handshake was also associated with a central part of marriage rituals: the final aspect of Athenian wedding ritual involved the groom leading the bride into his household by the (right) hand [66]. Regarding extant literature, hand gestures and haptic connection frequently played a central role in Athenian tragedy, often being used as a way of displaying the connection and closeness of family members [67]. Votive reliefs, illustrating offerings or supplication to a patron deity, sometimes used the *dexiosis* or parallel gestures to reinforce the direct relationship between the divinity and a mortal worshipper (fig. 13). Although uses of the handshake in the ancient world, just as in the modern world, were vast and idiosyncratic — explicit mentions of it extend as far back as the Homeric tradition [68] — Davies suggests that “there was a general meaning which underlies all variations and which continued to be understood.” What she concludes, and what is most useful for our understanding of the *dexiosis* in its original context, is that the motif is inherently full of its associations with these other circumstances, such as political unity, separation from home, familial closeness, marriage rites, reunion of family members, connection to the divine, business agreements, and so on. As Davies writes, it is “precisely this multiplicity of associations that made the motif such a suitable one for monuments that were generally chosen from stock rather than made to an individual design” [69].

3: GRAVESITE LIMINALITY

The *dexiosis*, as a marker of unbreakable familial connection, was exceptionally important at the physical site of the grave, which itself was uniquely positioned between the dichotomic worlds of life and death, and at the intersection of *polis* and *oikos*. The gravesite was a unique space for ancients, just as it remains so for us. It was a site of recollection and embodied experience, in which the living interacted with the dead through various forms of mediation. As a part of Athenian funerary ritual, grave *stelai* were regularly visited and frequently adorned with various goods and offerings [70]. Indeed, the funerary responsibilities of the deceased's family were relatively extensive (even beyond the customary mourning period of one year), involving a visit to the grave every year on the anniversary of the death, as well as during the annual Athenian festival for the dead [71]. Offerings to the gravesite were made at specific intervals after the death: for these, it was common to bring physical goods to leave at the gravesite, including drink offerings, ribbons, myrtle branches, and occasionally hair [72]. These ceremonial offerings and adornments centered around the ritually and memorially significant locus of the gravesite. The preeminence of ritual visitation and embodied practices at the gravesite hint at the crucial significance of burial grounds in Classical Athens, and reveal the most important framework for considering Classical *stelai*, one which is all but lost on contemporary viewers: the very place where they stood. It is the purpose of this section to consider the nuanced liminality of the Classical Athenian gravesite, and the multidimensional interactions that took place therein.

The very process of creating what we know as a gravesite, of transforming a natural landscape into a communal burial ground, necessitates not only the physical re-structuring of land but the conferral of a profound new meaning upon the space itself [73]. Michel Foucault's notion of Heterotopia and Utopia may grant insight into what this new meaning entails. Foucault's Heterotopia, a "kind of enacted utopia in which the real sites...found within the culture are simultaneously represented, contested,

and inverted” [74], is perfectly suited for understanding gravesites (in fact “the grave” is one of the most common examples he provides throughout his discussion of the Heterotopic principles) [75]. Foucault’s definition of Heterotopia consists of six principles, the fifth of which is most important for our purposes; it is as follows: “The Fifth Principle. Heterotopias always presuppose a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable” [76]. As a space separate from the city, neither sacred nor ordinary, neither wholly inviting nor exclusive, what better way to describe the Classical grave precinct? Presumably, citizens entered such a precinct for only one purpose: to interact with the realm of the dead, or with the deceased themselves, in some capacity. As discussed above, the most common form of interaction was gravesite visitation, which played a particularly significant role in the lives of Athenian women [77]. Gravesite visitation was a deeply personal and highly embodied activity for mourners, one which illustrates perfectly the capacity for interchange between the living and the dead, and the permeability (or “penetrability,” as Foucault puts it) [78], of the perceived barriers that lay between the world of the dead and the world of the living. One of the most important roles of the *stele* in visitation ritual was to embody the dead themselves, as the very incarnation of their memory: in fact, the *stele* was often at the center of these visitations. As Arrington describes, “They [the mourners] engaged intimately with the stone *stelae*, touching them, wrapping fillets around them, and anointing them with oil. The stones became substitutes for the body and tactile outlets for grief, with the fillets recalling the garlands wrapped around living limbs and draped over the corpse” [79]. With the physical body of the deceased being absent, the grave *stele* was a tangible presence that could be adorned, anointed, and embraced, just as the deceased body itself was during the *prothesis* ritual [80]. The grave *stele* not only depicted the physical presence of the dead through relief, but also stood as a physical representation of the deceased, around which the living could practice funerary acts of remembrance. Acts of gravesite visitation display the possibility of intimate and embodied connection between the living to the deceased, even when the corpse is no longer present; this complex interaction is enabled by the mediating function of the grave *stele*.

It is the placelessness of the funerary *stèle*, its position, as Leader puts it, “between civic and domestic, public and private” [81], that signifies the liminality of the gravesite and facilitates the mourners’ complex interaction with the deceased. The liminality of burial precincts is evident in many ways: Greek conceptions of death and the afterlife, as Garland records, necessitated the liminality of the dead; the deceased’s journey from the realm of the living to that of the dead was long, lasting at least to the end of the “thirtieth-day burial rites” performed by the mourners [82]. Even after the deceased person was thought to have arrived in Hades, the corpse itself remained in a kind of liminal space. Garland explains: “the corpse is taboo because the corpse is sacred, and it is sacred because the dead person, in the initial period after his decease, lacks a proper social identity in either world” [83]. William J. Gavin, in his article “Plato: on Death and Dying,” speaks similarly of Plato’s conception of the dying process, stating, “the essential quality of dying is its ambiguity” [84]. It is fitting, then, that the site which houses the corpse, during and throughout its liminal stages, be itself an ambiguous, liminal space equally indebted to and intended for the dead as for the living. Leader describes the conceptual liminality of the gravesite and the Classical grave *stèle* as occupying the space “between the worlds of the *polis* and the *oikos*” [85]. The emphasis on “domestic contexts” in *stèle* iconography, she argues, sits in tension with the very public nature of the *stelai*, which were situated in public spaces for open viewing, and which undoubtedly drew upon the civic artistic style [86], a conundrum which further embodies the ambiguous and dichotomic nature of the gravesite. The Athenian grave precinct was as much a social space as it was a private one, a place of individual interaction and communal, a space dedicated equally to the dead and the living. In every way, the Classical gravesite embodied liminality.

Nikolas Dimakis’ article “Ancient Greek Deathscapes” expands on Foucault’s notion of the heterotopic gravesite [87], and roots its application firmly in Classical antiquity. Dimakis describes the term “Deathscapes” as “a mental construct that is comprised of ideas about and representations of death in the landscape together with their social significance” [88]. The

notion of the “Deathscape” is useful for our consideration of grave *stelai* because of the seamless way in which it links landscape, representation, and death in the same conceptual space. Landscape and spatial positioning are particularly important (and often overlooked) aspects of the Classical gravesite, as inherently liminal spaces at the border between realms. The Classical Athenian gravesite, continuing a long tradition from beyond Mycenaean times, was often located extramurally but close to the city for accessibility, with occasional exceptions that saw burial sites placed within the walls of the *polis* [89]. The Kerameikos cemetery was one such extramural cemetery, located just outside the “sacred way” in the western part of Athens [90]: it was one of the most important burial grounds in Athens, and remains the most complete in terms of archaeological findings [91]. It is a good (if not exactly typical) example of the way funerary space was constructed and utilized in Classical Athens, and a suitable place for the application of the idea of “Deathscape.”

The Kerameikos cemetery was an important locus for the Athenians in the fifth century, as it was the primary location for the state tombs to fallen soldiers and the accompanying public orations [92]. At the end of the fifth century, however, it became a site for the individual tombs and conspicuous familial or personal grave *stelai* so familiar to us. The terraced levels of the Kerameikos cemetery, newly constructed in the late fifth century (at the same time as the momentous artistic shift) [93], deliberately implicated the viewer as the primary agent within the cemetery, demanding not only ritual practice at the physical site of the *stèle* in the form of gravesite visitation, but now also visual interaction, either from passers-by on the “Sacred Way,” or by visitors to the gravesite. Perhaps this new emphasis on visual interaction at the gravesite explains some of the more drastic changes in funerary iconography in the late fifth century: harsh, heroized, and two-dimensional (male) warriors replaced by soft, domestic interiors and families in perfect harmony, and holding each other lovingly; stoic, unaccompanied figures replaced by parents and children reaching for each other, emphasizing their somatic and extra-somatic connection. Communal acts of memory and memorialization had long been a part of Athenian burial

ritual, legislation, and custom, particularly notable in the early and mid-fifth century with the public burials for the Athenian war dead [94]. The reassertion of private burial rites (indicated by the rise of private figured *stelai*), however, necessitated a new kind of interaction with the dead, beyond (though certainly still involving) communal mourning. The heroized and deified men of Archaic *stelai* gave way to naturalized, animated, and domestic scenes of women, men and children on Classical *stelai*, just as public funerals and orations gave way to private mourning. The direct acknowledgement of the viewer in the late-Classical Kerameikos, enacted through the deliberate (re)construction of the burial precinct, illustrates the importance of “Deathscapes” in the Classical world: the gravesite was a space for direct, personal, and tangible interaction with the dead, actions that were only possible in such a liminal space.

Gravesites not only served as “active repositories of collective memory and value” [95], but as spaces for tangible, physical connection to the dead; a “theater for all the senses” [96] that engaged touch and sight, body and mind equally and in the same landscape. The sepulchral locus of the gravesite was designed for palpable and meaningful connection between the corporeal and the incorporeal; this connection was emphasized not only in ritual, but also visually. We may recall now the symbolic, tangible, and metaphorical bond that the *dexiosis* symbolizes on the vast majority of the *stelai* which populated the Classical Athenian grave precinct. The *dexiosis* scene, in fact, was not isolated in its iconographical emphasis on the somatic, as the majority of relief scenes depicted on extant *stelai* display some sort of physical contact between the living and the dead [97]. The gravesite, denoted by the *stelai* themselves, was a liminal space of paramount commemorative importance, where the deceased could be recalled and remembered physically as well as mentally.

CONCLUSION

Having considered the formal aspects of Classical grave *stelai*, the origins and uses of the *dexiosis*, and the liminal space of the gravesite, we may once

again return to the *dexiosis* as the hermeneutical key to understanding not only funerary iconography, but also burial ritual and broader conceptions of death and the afterlife in Classical Athens. The *dexiosis*, as we have come to see, was laden with different meanings and associations throughout Classical antiquity that lent it a universal character and broad applicability. The multiplicity of associations the handshake gesture carried, combined with its representational function and artistic simplicity, imbued it with a unique visual force. Though the motif was commonplace, it carried a significant weight for viewers and represented figures alike: the *dexiosis* situates its participants in timeless and eternal connection, connection which persists not only in everyday social and ritual interactions [98], but across the very membrane between worlds. The handshake's effect is accentuated in its pictorial placelessness — the perpetual unity it signifies necessitates its own spatial and temporal liminality, hence its pervasive use in the most liminal of spaces, the gravesite. The continued existence of the deceased, referenced by their physical presence alongside the living in *stele* relief, is of utmost importance in the Classical era. The dead are remembered visually, physically, and internally, as mourners view and interact with the deceased at the site of the grave. Though our discussion has focused primarily on one type of funerary *stele*, it should be noted that even in the Classical era, family group, two-figure and single-figure reliefs, even aniconic *naiskos stelai* and funerary *lekythoi* and *loutrophoroi* are regularly displayed next to one another and in much the same space. The ancient experience of life and death coalesced in the heterotopia of the Athenian grave precinct, where the memorials of ancient ancestors shared temporal and spatial proximity with the recently deceased, and where mourners performed rituals of connection, supplication, and appeasement. Where *polis* and *oikos* were united, present and past no longer divided, the living and the dead shared eternal unity across the intractable boundary between worlds: connection enabled, facilitated, and embodied, inevitably, by the *dexiosis*.

IMAGE REFERENCES

[Fig. 1] Attic funerary relief for Lysistrate, ca. 350–325 BCE. Marble, h. 113.7 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 06.287 (artwork in the public domain; access provided by the Rogers Fund, 1906).

[Fig. 2] Attic funerary relief for unknown youth and little girl, ca. 530 BCE. Marble, h. 423.4 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 11.185a–c, f, g (artwork in the public domain; access provided by the Frederick C. Hewitt Fund, 1911; Rogers Fund, 1921; and Anonymous Gift, 1951).

[Fig. 3] Aristokles, Attic funerary relief for Aristion, ca. 510 BCE. Marble, h. 202 cm. National Archaeological Museum, Athens, 29 (artwork in public domain; photograph by Erin Babnik).

[Fig. 4] Laconian votive relief from Chrysapha, ca. 550–540 BCE. Marble, 87 x 65 x 7 cm. Antikenmuseen, Berlin, 731 (artwork in public domain, access provided by Perseus Tufts).

[Fig. 5] Attic funerary relief for Aristylla, erected by her parents Ariston and Rodille, ca. 440–430 BCE. Marble, h. 87 cm. National Archaeological Museum, Athens (access provided by Oxford University Press, 2022, photograph by Allan T. Kohl/AICT).

[Fig. 6] Attic funerary relief for Philoxenos and Philoumene, ca. 430–390 BCE. Marble, 102 x 44 x 16 cm. The J. Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, California, 83.AA.378 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Getty Open Content Program).

[Fig. 7] Attic funerary relief for an unknown man, ca. 375–350 BCE. Marble, 142.3 x 81.3 x 20.3 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 59.11.27 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Fletcher Fund, 1959).

[Fig. 8] Attic funerary relief for an unknown woman, ca. 375–350 BCE. Marble, h. 137.2 cm. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 65.11.11 (artwork in the public domain; access provided by the Harris Brisbane Dick Fund, 1965).

[Fig. 9] Attic funerary relief for Hippomachos and Kallias, ca. 390–350 BCE. Marble, dimensions unknown. The Archaeological Museum of Piraeus, Piraeus, 386 (artwork in the public domain; photograph by George E. Koronaios 2018).

[Fig. 10] Attic Funerary relief, ca. 330 BCE. Marble, 194 x 118 cm. National Archaeological museum, Athens, 870 (artwork in the public domain; photography by Hans R. Goette).

[Fig. 11] Funerary relief from Aigina for an unknown woman, ca. 550–500 BCE. Marble, 87 x 70 cm, Archaeological Museum of Aigina, Aigina (artwork in public domain; access provided by University of Oxford Classical Art Research Centre cat. D019).

[Fig. 12] Attic relief of the financial accounts of the treasurers of Athena and of the

other gods, 399–398 BCE. Marble, 70 x 53 x 11.5 cm. Acropolis Museum, Athens, EM 7862 (artwork in public domain).

[Fig. 13] Attic votive relief for Athena, ca. 470–460 BCE. Marble, 58 x 38 x 8 cm. Acropolis Museum, Athens, 577 (artwork in public domain).

CITATIONS & TEXTUAL NOTES

- [1] Janet Burnett Grossman, “Funerary Sculpture,” *The Athenian Agora* 35 (2013): 3, 39, 51. See particularly tables 5 and 11 (women’s and men’s graves respectively).
- [2] See Christoph W. Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram* (Phillip von Zabern, 1970), 46–8.
- [3] Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 50.
- [4] See, for example, figs. 3, 7, and 14.
- [5] Ruth E. Leader, “In Death Not Divided: Gender, Family, and State on Classical Athenian Grave Stelae,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 101, no. 4 (1997): 687.
- [6] Nathan T. Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance in Greek Funerary Art,” *The Art Bulletin* 100, No. 3 (2018): 9, and Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 62–3.
- [7] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 9.
- [8] Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 42.
- [9] Gisela M.A. Richter, *The Archaic Gravestones of Attica* (Phaidon Publishers, 1961), 53.
- [10] Cicero, *De Legibus*, 2.64–65
- [11] Richter, *Archaic Gravestones*, 53, see also H. A. Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning in Athenian Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 95, no. 4 (1991): 647; Knud Friis Johansen, “The Attic Grave-Reliefs of the Classical Period; an Essay in Interpretation” (Copenhagen: E. Munksgaard, 1951), 120; and Wendy E. Closterman, “Women as Gift Givers and Gift Producers in Ancient Athenian Funerary Ritual,” in *Approaching the Ancient Artifact: Representation, Narrative, and Function*, 171.
- [12] Donna C. Kurtz, John Boardman, and H.H. Scullard, *Greek Burial Customs* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1971), 90.
- [13] Ian Morris, *Death Ritual and Social Structure in Classical Antiquity* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 155, and Richter, *Archaic Gravestones*, 53.
- [14] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 19. See also Elizabeth G. Pemberton, “The Dexiosis on Attic Gravestones,” *Mediterranean Archaeology* 2, (1989): 48.
- [15] Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning,” 647.
- [16] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 7.
- [17] *Ibid.*, 7; Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 68.
- [18] Friis Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 149.

- [19] *Ibid.*, 138.
- [20] Robert Garland, *The Greek Way of Death* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2001) 21, and Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 144.
- [21] Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 13.
- [22] *Ibid.*, 43; Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 14.
- [23] Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 143.
- [24] See Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 14. See also Closterman, “Women as Gift Givers,” 162.
- [25] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 9–11.
- [26] In which the central issue is the proper burial of Polynices, and the sense of obligation to the deceased. See in particular lines 891–928.
- [27] Particularly the gravesite visitation of Elektra and Orestes at the tomb of their father; see lines 1–194.
- [28] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 19 and Pemberton, “The Dexiosis on Attic Gravestones,” 48. See also Thucydides 2.52.4 for the primary account of disrupted burial customs within Athens.
- [29] Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning,” 647, and Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 19.
- [30] Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 143.
- [31] The translation of the epigram is my own, but the identification and transliteration of the original Greek was aided by Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 98.
- [32] Grossman, “Funerary Sculpture,” 31.
- [33] *Ibid.*, 34.
- [34] For further discussion about the grave *stèle* as a form of discourse, see Leader, “In Death Not Divided,” 699.
- [35] Clairmont, *Gravestone and Epigram*, 99.
- [36] Leader, “In Death Not Divided,” 691.
- [37] Glenys Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif in Classical Funerary Art,” *American Journal of Archaeology* 89, no. 4 (1985): 629.
- [38] *Ibid.*, 629, 639.
- [39] Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 82.
- [40] See the similar *stèle* of Hippomachos and Kallias (fig. 13), discussed in Kurtz and Boardman *Greek Burial Customs*, 140.
- [41] Though not always; see, for instance, the Attic funerary relief for Thrasynos [ca. 3750 BCE, marble, 139.1 × 38.7 × 3.8 cm. The J Paul Getty Museum, Malibu, CA, 72.AA.120 (artwork in the public domain; photograph provided by the Getty Open Content Program)].

- [42] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 11.
- [43] Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 139.
- [44] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 11.
- [45] Grossman, “Funerary Sculpture,” 3.
- [46] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 630-637.
- [47] Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 58-60. The last of these is closest to Johansen’s own interpretation of the gesture.
- [48] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 629.
- [49] See p.5 above, and Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 138. Johansen considers the similarities to the Chrysapha relief (fig. 4) in particular.
- [50] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 629.
- [51] See also Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 68.
- [52] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 629.
- [53] *Ibid.*, 629-630.
- [54] We may also consider the multifunctional uses of the handshake in modernity: it can just as easily symbolize a greeting as a parting, a formal business meeting or reunion of distant family members.
- [55] A subtle but important distinction. I am not concerned with the iconographical problem of identifying the exact symbolism of the *dexiosis* gesture, or what exact type of “connection” it represents, but rather with understanding the motif within its context and the underlying associations of its use.
- [56] This is not to say that mistakes don’t work their way into some *stelai*. See, for instance, what seems to be an extra finger added to the hand of Rodille in fig. 5.
- [57] As opposed to the often single-figured reliefs of the Archaic period, in which physical contact between two figures is very rarely represented (see figs. 2, 3, & 4).
- [58] On Classical *stelai*, the identification of the deceased is not always made explicitly clear, even in epigram; see Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 7.
- [59] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 628. See the votive relief from the acropolis (fig. 11), which links Athena to a mortal man through a gesture of touch very much parallel to the *dexiosis*.
- [60] Lucia Novakova and Monica Pagacova, “Dexiosis: a Meaningful Gesture of the Classical Antiquity,” *ILIRIA International Review* 6, No. 1 (2016): 210, and Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 137-139.
- [61] See fig. 5
- [62] Johansen, “Attic Grave-Reliefs,” 139.
- [63] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 628.
- [64] Novakova and Pagacova, “Dexiosis: a Meaningful Gesture,” 208, and Pemberton, “The Dexiosis on Attic Gravestones,” 49.

- [65] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 12.
- [66] The *dexiosis* is invoked in a dichotomic reference to both marriage and death in Euripides’ *Alcestis*. See in particular lines 915 and 1112–1116, when Admetis takes the hand of his revived wife to lead her back to his home.
- [67] For example, in Sophocles’ *Oedipus the King*, lines 1480–1. See also Nancy Worman, “Electra, Orestes, and the Sibling Hand,” in *The Materialities of Greek Tragedy*, ed. Telo and Mueller (England 2018), 185–201 for a broader discussion of this topic. See also the reference to the *dexiosis* in *Iliad* XXIV.671.
- [68] E.g. the agreement between Priam and Achilles over the eleven-day truce in *Iliad* XXIV.671–2.
- [69] Davies, “The Significance of the Handshake Motif,” 639.
- [70] Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 115.
- [71] John Howard Oakley, *Picturing Death in Classical Athens: The Evidence of the White Lekythoi* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 13.
- [72] Sarah Iles Johnston, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (University of California Press, 2013), 51–52.
- [73] See, for instance, what Cicero quotes to Plato in *De Legibus* 2.67: “Do not use, as a burial place, any portion of land which is either cultivated, or which may be so; but such a soil as nature has adapted for receiving the bodies of the dead, without detriment to the interests of the living. As to the field, which is capable of bearing fruit, and nourishing us with its maternal exuberance of vegetable stores, let us by no means injure it either living or dead.” (Translation by Francis Barham, in *The Political Works of Marcus Tullius Cicero: Comprising His Treatise on the Commonwealth and His Treatise on the Laws* (London, 1842).
- [74] Michel Foucault, “Of Other Spaces: Utopias and Heterotopias,” trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Architecture/Mouvement/Continuité* (October, 1984): 3.
- [75] *Ibid.*, 5–6.
- [76] *Ibid.*, 7.
- [77] Shapiro, “The Iconography of Mourning,” 634–5, 651.
- [78] Foucault, “Of Other Spaces,” 7.
- [79] Arrington, “Touch and Remembrance,” 21.
- [80] Molly Evangeline Allen, “Visualizing the Afterlife in Classical Athens,” in *Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World*, ed. Juliette Harrison (Routledge, 2019), 26.
- [81] Leader, “In Death Not Divided,” 688.
- [82] Garland, *The Greek Way of Death*, 39.
- [83] *Ibid.*, 47.

- [84] William J. Gavin, "Plato: On Death and Dying," *Journal of Thought* 9, no. 4 (1974): 239.
- [85] Leader, "In Death Not Divided," 699.
- [86] *Ibid.*, 688.
- [87] Nikolas Dimakis, "Ancient Greek Deathscapes," *Journal of Eastern Mediterranean Archaeology & Heritage Studies* 3, no. 1 (2015): 28.
- [88] *Ibid.*, 27.
- [89] Dimakis, "Ancient Greek Deathscapes," 28; see also map 4 from Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 337.
- [90] Kurtz and Boardman, *Greek Burial Customs*, 93.
- [91] Leader, "In Death Not Divided," 685.
- [92] *Ibid.*, 685.
- [93] *Ibid.*, 685.
- [94] See discussion above.
- [95] Dimakis, "Ancient Greek Deathscapes," 36.
- [96] Arrington, "Touch and Remembrance," 24.
- [97] Grossman, "Funerary Sculpture," 47.
- [98] Such as greetings, farewells, and marriage rituals.



MINOTAUR (Linoleum Print)

LILLY HAAVE, POMONA COLLEGE

Description: *This print is inspired by an Attic kylix stored at the National Archaeological Museum in Madrid, created in 515BC.*

A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, featuring grapevines and clusters of grapes, framing the text on the left and top edges.

PLEA TO DAEDALUS

MADDIE PAPPANO, MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE

Where are my wings, Papa?
Don't I deserve the chance to fly?
To leave behind the ground,
and take to the sky?
To feel the breezes Aeolus let loose
to chill the tip of my nose?
And see from a bird's view
Aurora's rosy fingers as she splits the horizon,
sea from sky,
to bring in the dawn?
Why, Papa,
can't I be free?
Have you run out of wax
and feathers?
What is your exception for me?
I don't mind to weather the weather.
I have my own Crete to escape,
my own tower,
my own fate.
I am strong,
and can prove it.
I want to lift myself up,
the wind through my feathers as my only help.
I want to refuse gravity
and mock those still chained to the ground.
I want the freedom to fly too close to the sun.
I want her to warm me,
and I want to feel so warmed and loved by her
That I burn.

Let me fall, Papa.
Let the wax melt my skin,
if it leaves scars of love.
Let me plunge into the ocean,
if it means I will have felt the sun
as a woman is embraced by her lover
for the last time.
No death could freeze me then.
My only wish for you,
Papa,
is that there is no splash,
and that your eyes will not see
the fatherless feathers floating
on the waves.
And remember:
you shall remain a father,
always.



A decorative border with a repeating floral and scrollwork pattern, rendered in black and white. It frames the text on the left and top edges of the page.

HORACE, ODE 2.20

ALAYNE ZIGLIN, RICE UNIVERSITY

Non usitata nec tenui ferar
penna biformis per liquidum aethera
vates neque in terris morabor
longius invidiaque maior

As a poet, I will be carried through the heavens
by neither common nor meager wing
I will tarry on earth no longer,
Far beyond worldly envies.

urbis relinquam. non ego, pauperum
sanguis parentum, non ego, quem vocas,
dilecte Maecenas, obibo
nec Stygia cohibebor unda.

I will abandon the cities.
I, born to poor parents,
and I, whom you call, dear Maecenas,
will not embrace the Stygian waves.

iam iam residunt cruribus asperae
pelles et album mutor in alitem
superne nascunturque leves
per digitos umerosque plumae.

Now, a rough skin covers my legs
and I am transformed into a white bird.
Light celestial feathers reach
from my shoulders to the tips of my fingers.

iam Daedaleo notior Icaro
visam gementis litora Bospori
Syrtsique Gaetulas canorus
ales Hyperboreosque campos.

Better known than Daedalus or Icarus,
I will see Bosphorus' resounding shores,
And Gaetulian Syrtes, bearing my melodious wings
over Hyperborean plains.

me Colchus et qui dissimulat metum
Marsae cohortis Dacus et ultimi
noscent Geloni, me peritus
discet Hiber Rhodanique poter.

The Colchians will know of me,
As will the Dacians who feign courage,
and the far Scythians will know of me;
Spain and drinkers of the Rhone will learn from my skill.

absint inani funere neniae
luctusque turpes et querimoniae;
conpesce clamorem ac sepulcri
mitte supervacuos honores.

Unightly sorrows and lamentations
will be absent from my funeral, void of elegies.
Resist the urge to mourn,
and refuse to honor me with a superfluous tomb.



A decorative border with intricate floral and scrollwork patterns, rendered in black and white, frames the page. It features repeating motifs of stylized flowers and leaves, creating a classic, ornate aesthetic.

**DECENTRALIZING THE MODERN VIEWER: REPATRIATION
AND RE-PRESENTATION OF ORPHEUS AND THE SIRENS**
JOHN FREEMAN, PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

ABSTRACT

Orpheus and the Sirens, three life-sized terracotta statues from the 4th century BC, were repatriated by the Getty Museum in 2022 after Italian officials discovered they had been removed illegally. The statues, purchased by the Getty in 1976, are now in the newly opened Museum of Rescued Art in Rome, where they will remain until they are returned to Taranto, their province of origin. This paper focuses on the intentional change in the presentation of these artefacts, facilitated by their repatriation. For the entirety of their 45 years at the Getty, the statues faced the modern viewer, whereas Orpheus now sits opposing the two sirens. In Apollonius of Rhodes' *Argonautica*, Orpheus' song repels that of the sirens, saving Jason and the sailors aboard his ship. The frontal positioning at the Getty centralized the role of the modern viewer and failed to capture both the mythical reference and the socio-cultural function of the artefacts as tomb monuments. The oppositional staging of Orpheus against the two sirens both evokes the musical clash in myth and reduces the involvement of the viewer, who looks from afar at the dynamic battle before them. Comparatively, the Acropolis Museum's presentation of the Parthenon Marbles also decentralizes the modern viewer by representing the original context of the artefacts in contrast to their presentation at the British Museum, where the Marbles are inverted and moved to eye-level for viewing ease. There thus seems to be a trend, through presentation, of imperialistic museums centralizing the modern viewer and

museums in the artefacts' original environment decentralizing the modern viewer, enabling the work to exist on its own.

ABSTRACT

The debate around repatriation, otherwise termed restitution or return, has existed for centuries, but it has recently made a resurgence as a hot topic in mainstream media. Alexander Herman, Director of the Institute of Art and Law in the United Kingdom, attributes the recent surge in returns to the aftermath of the coronavirus pandemic, a period of turmoil after which there was a greater effort to right previous wrongdoings [1]. Reparations are indeed central to repatriation. Countries of the artefacts' origins appeal for returns to right prior wrongs, calling attention to how the artefacts were taken from their culture of origin, whether illegally, forcefully, or otherwise immorally, as well as to the right of these cultures to have their artefacts back [2]. The emotional requests are opposed by museums' legal right to keep antiquities [3], and the argument that artefacts take on meaning beyond that which they had at their creation, and, indeed, cannot be returned to their culture of origin, distinct from their geographic origin [4]. In response to appeals for the British Museum to return the Parthenon Marbles, the most exemplary case of repatriation discourse to this day, a collective of museums signed a document in 2002 entitled "Declaration on the Importance and Value of Universal Museums," in which was written:

"Museums are agents in the development of culture, whose mission is to foster knowledge by a continuous process of reinterpretation...To narrow the focus of museums whose collections are diverse and multifaceted would therefore be a disservice to all visitors" [5.]



The common case against repatriation is the beneficial role of museums to spread knowledge among the public, made impossible were all their collections returned. Indeed, museums play a crucial role in raising world-wide awareness of ancient cultures through their display of antiquities, an awareness that prerequisites the repatriation debates today. Trustee of the British Museum and former Professor of Classics at Cambridge Mary Beard has written extensively on the Parthenon Marbles, and she notes the “uncomfortable conclusion” that, “if it had not been dismembered, the Parthenon would never have been so famous” [6]. Museums indeed play an essential role in the reception of ancient artefacts and cultures.

Within this debate surrounding repatriation, less attention is given to the presentation of antiquities. While some scholars are asking questions about how cultural artefacts are seen and received by the modern viewer [7], most discourse focusses on who the “rightful owners” of these artefacts are. This paper will analyze position as it affects the reception of artefacts, using *Orpheus and the Sirens* as a case study, three terracotta statues recently returned to Italy from the Getty Museum in California. Repatriation offered the opportunity for the intentional change in the statues’ presentation to more reflect their reference to Greek myth, announced by Director of the National Roman Museum Stéphane Verger. This paper will assess his claim. First, a complete history of the statues, and the circumstances under which they were taken and returned, will be given, followed by an analysis of their presentation in both the Getty and the Museum of Rescued Art in Rome. This analysis will consider ancient Greek and modern understandings of viewing and the ways in which the viewer is either centralized or decentralized through the presentation of the statues. Ultimately, this analysis supports Verger’s claim, while adding that the presentation at the Museum of Rescued Art decentralizes the modern viewer, while the presentation at the Getty centralized the modern viewer. Lastly, a comparison to the famous case of the Parthenon Marbles reveals a similar trend: the viewer is centralized in the British Museum in England and decentralized in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. This observation of the centralization of the modern viewer in imperialist and colonialist museums

and the decentralization of the modern viewer in the artefacts' country of origin should be kept in mind as debates surrounding repatriation continue to unfold.

HISTORY OF THE STATUES

The three life-sized terracotta figures, Orpheus and the two sirens, are dated to the late 4th century, 330–300 BCE, and are attributed to the Taranto region of Italy [8]. Tomb Robbers illegally excavated the artefacts in the early 1970s nearby the province of Taranto, within the region Puglia [9]. The statues came under the jurisdiction of Bank Leu, a Swiss private bank that has since gone out of business as of 2007, from which they were purchased by J. Paul Getty himself in the spring of 1976, soon before his death on June 6 of the same year. Getty documented the purchase in his archives — the following is from his Saturday, March 6 entry:

Bought the following objects [...] a group of 3 Greek statues made in Tarentum at the end of the 4th C. B.C. They represent a singer Orpheus seated and 2 standing sirens. \$550,000 from Bank Leu. All of these naturally were on Frel's recommendation [10].

Jiří Frel, a Czech-American archaeologist who served as antiquities curator for the Getty from 1973 to 1986, advised Getty's purchase, which would amount to around \$3 million in 2022 [11]. What Getty paid for the statues is less than half their current net worth of \$8 million.

In its new location at the Getty Villa, the statues were displayed in a ground floor gallery [12], a prominent position for these remarkable artefacts. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, Timothy Potts, the current Director of the Getty Museum as of September of 2012, expressed the immense value of this piece: “It is a very important work. I'd even say one of the most important in the [Getty Museum's] collection” [13]. The article goes on to say that Potts acclaimed the uniqueness of the work because of the rarity of its “scale, quality and subject matter.”

Terracotta, the clay from which the figures are made, was commonly used in the ancient world for pottery, but statues of this magnitude are extremely rare. The museum thus experienced a tremendous loss when on August 11, 2022 it announced that the stolen artefacts would be returned to Italy.

The museum did not relinquish the artefacts without proof of illicit activity. Although the Getty has repatriated several other antiquities, they have held on to others despite court rulings demanding the contrary [14]. At an event celebrating the return of these artifacts to Italy, General Roberto Riccardi, Head of the Italian Carabinieri Command for the Protection of Cultural Heritage (Carabinieri TPC), disclosed that in March 2021 a suspect confessed the statues had been excavated and removed illegally, a fact which had not previously been known [15]. According to Massimo Osanna, the Director General of Museums for Italy's Ministry of Culture, a dialogue with the Getty regarding the repatriation of this piece began in February of 2022 when museum officials visited Rome. In April 2022, the statues were confiscated by the Antiquities Trafficking Unit of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office in cooperation with Homeland Security as part of an investigation into Italian antiquities smuggler Gianfranco Becchina. Mathew Bogdanos, Head of the Antiquities Trafficking Unit, reported that the museum cooperated when notified [16], and on August 11 the museum announced the removal of the piece from display in preparation for its return. The statement from the Getty Museum quotes Timothy Potts: "Thanks to information provided by Mathew Bogdanos and the Antiquities Trafficking Unit of the Manhattan District Attorney's Office indicating the illegal excavation of Orpheus and the Sirens, we determined that these objects should be returned." As a representative of the Getty Museum, Potts assured the museum's cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Culture in returning the stolen antiquities, which included four additional objects which "recent research by Getty and independent scholars also determined...[was] appropriate to return." *Orpheus and the Sirens* was thus repatriated along with a colossal marble head of a divinity and a stone mold for casting pendants from the second century AD, an 1881 oil painting by Camillo Miola entitled *Oracle at Delphi*, and an Etruscan bronze

thymiaterion from the fourth century BC [17].

Orpheus and the Sirens was exhibited just one month later in September 2022 at the Museum of Rescued Art in Rome. Here they are under the jurisdiction of Stéphane Verger, the Director of the National Roman Museum, who manages the Museum of Rescued Art. The Museum, inaugurated just three months prior on June 15, contains an impressive collection of repatriated artifacts, and has thus been described as a tribute to the Carabinieri Command for the Protection for Cultural Heritage, who has worked tirelessly to recover these pieces. Verger has called the museum “a museum of wounded art, because the works exhibited here have been deprived of their contexts of discovery and belonging” [18]. *Orpheus and the Sirens* was situated amongst these recovered antiquities in the museum’s first exhibition, which ran until October 15. The advertisement for the exhibit remains on Rome’s official tourism website [19].

REPRESENTATION

In a statement published in a *New York Times* article about the pieces, Verger claims that the decision to rethink the presentation of these three figures was intentional and grounded in myth [20]. In Greek mythology, the sirens, each half woman and half bird, led sailors to their death with their singing. In Apollonius of Rhodes’ *Argonautica* IV, 891–921, Jason and his Argonauts encounter the sirens on their quest for the golden fleece, but are saved by Orpheus’ song, drowning out that of the sirens. The reference to myth that Verger calls attention to is indeed noted in the the Getty’s description of the statues from 2015 [21], demonstrating the importance of the myth in the interpretation and reception of the statues. Put simply, “the sense of the work” as Verger sees it is to evoke the musical clash between Orpheus and the sirens in myth, and while the oppositional position of Orpheus against the sirens accomplishes this, the side-by-side positioning at their former placement in the Getty does not. Inspired by Verger’s comment, this section will closely analyze the positioning of the statues in the two locations and how this impacts their reception.

Before embarking on visual analysis of sculptures from Classical antiquity, it is important to recognize that the way in which these antiquities are viewed in a modern museum is fundamentally different from how they were perceived in the ancient world. The concept of the modern museum did not exist in Ancient Greece, and, in the words of Art Historian Mark Stansbury-O'Donnell, “no ancient artwork in a museum was ever meant to be in such a place” [22]. Instead, art had a functional use and was present in ancient Greek social life. Professor of Classical Archaeology Tonio Hölscher concludes: “Accordingly, the basic attitude regarding images was not to inspect them and interpret them with exclusive intensity but to ‘live with’ them and to ‘participate’ in their sphere” [23].

A museum can never fully recreate the socio-functional context that ancient Greek art inhabited in antiquity, nor can it recreate for the modern viewer how an ancient Greek would have engaged with the work. Museums, by nature, are spaces that isolate artifacts from their original context in order for them to be appreciated for their own aesthetic value. Through decontextualization, viewers are encouraged to engage with pieces of art with imagination, and to adapt interpretation to their own lives and socio-cultural context [24]. The artefact, rich with socio-cultural history, is reduced to “an object of ‘art’ in a strict sense” [25]. The modern experience of viewing thus invites the modern viewer, empowered by the fact that these artifacts have been put on display specifically for them, to appreciate artistry and to interpret an artifact through the lens of their own life experience, largely isolated from the socio-cultural context of ancient Greece.

Although the space that museums curate is inherently detached from the original context of artefacts, there is value in remembering and conveying this original context to the modern viewer through presentation. The curator must choose between emphasizing functionality or visibility [26], whether to display the “ancient Greek viewing” as a functional presence in a social space or the “modern viewing” as a visible object to interpret. Although the choice to configure a presentation that remains as true as

possible to the original context is more accurate, it poses numerous difficulties, the most prominent being a sheer lack of knowledge. For many artifacts, we simply do not know where they came from or what their use was, and for those which we do have information about, this picture is never complete. Despite these limitations, steps can be taken to represent what is known about the original socio-cultural function of an artefact through its display, whether it be cult statues for worship, votive offerings, or monuments for tombs or political purposes [27]. Knowing the intention of an object in antiquity and how ancient viewers would have engaged with it should inform the viewing of modern museum patrons. This is Hölscher's sentiment: "We cannot inhabit ancient viewers and cannot empathize with how they perceived their surroundings and their images. But we can at least try to reconstruct potential situations of 'living with images'" [28]. This ancient Greek idea of "living with images," art as a presence in daily life, which is so contrary to the modern conceptualizations of viewing in museums, will be explored in the visual analysis of presentation to follow.

Although not everything is known about the functional role of *Orpheus and the Sirens* in antiquity, the statues were excavated from a tomb, and this contextualization is important when considering their purpose. In Greek mythology, both the sirens and Orpheus are associated with preserving the longevity of the dead after they are deceased. In Book 12 of the *Odyssey*, the sirens captivate Odysseus on his homeward journey with tales about those who fought and died at Troy. Their voice is thus a symbol of remembrance, keeping alive the story of those who no longer walk the earth. Similarly, Orpheus is famous for almost bringing his wife Eurydice back from the Underworld, and although he failed, his association with a lively afterlife, potentially influenced by Egyptian religion, inspired Orphic cults that provided a better afterlife through their rituals [29]. Orpheus' death is also telling: although he was dismembered by the Maenads, his voice remained, and the continuation of Orpheus' voice after his death furthers this association with longevity post-death. Importantly, the association the sirens and Orpheus have with this longevity is through their music, relevant because Orpheus' statue plays a lyre (although the lyre itself does not

survive) and one of the siren statues has her mouth open in song. The musical clash between Orpheus and the sirens not only references the myth in the *Argonautica*, but also the associations each of these figures has with the longevity of the dead. In the context of a tomb, this would have likely been a symbol of remembrance for the deceased.

The presentation at the Museum of Rescued Art (fig. 2)* evokes these mythological references more than the presentation at the Getty (fig. 1). At the Getty, the three statues are positioned side-by-side, facing the viewer. Orpheus sits between the two standing sirens, as if they are his protectors and not his combatants. With Orpheus' lyre unpreserved, the only indication of singing is the gesture of one of the sirens, who has her lips pursed in song. This gesture is not immediately recognizable, thus muffling the imagined auditory output of the statues. By contrast, the oppositional facing at the Museum of Modern Art conveys a more dynamic scene of musical combat, and thus produces a nearly audible musical clash of song. By foregrounding the musical combat, this orientation interweaves its viewing with the mythical reference to the *Argonautica*, and the song produced in turn references the music of both the sirens and Orpheus individually, important for the statue's role in perpetuating memory as a tomb memorial. Even though the tomb-setting is impossible to recreate in a museum, the evocation of song is a step towards its original purpose.

In evoking this musical clash, the presentation at the Museum of Rescued Art not only works more closely with mythology and original context, but it also decentralizes the modern viewer. As the figures engage in a choral battle, the viewer is reduced to the sidelines, a mere fly on the wall for this dynamic moment. In contrast, the presentation at the Getty centralizes the modern viewer: because the figures are all facing forward, the audience engages with them directly (fig. 3). The statues are on display for the purpose of their audience and thus interact with these modern viewers instead of each other. They stand at the center of the room and are what visitors see when they walk in, positioned for their viewing pleasure as if to greet them. Returning to fig. 1, we better see how Orpheus' gaze is directed

forward, the left-hand siren has her face tilted to the right, and the right-hand siren to the left, thus effectively centralizing the forward gaze of the three statues. The left-hand siren, whose gaze is slightly downward, is even positioned on a higher platform than her counterpart to compensate for the tilt in her line of sight. As a result, she gazes down at the heads of the audience, rather than at their waist were she at Orpheus' level. Combined, the modifications have the effect of addressing the modern viewer with greater focus and clarity, centralizing their role in the reception of these statues.

The centralization of the viewer aligns with notions of viewing within the modern museum and against ancient Greek conceptualizations of viewing. As mentioned before, museums decontextualize and isolate artifacts from their socio-cultural function. This is often unavoidable: given the fragility of these objects, it is impossible to “use” them the same way they were used in antiquity, and for them not to be separated from viewers by a thin layer of glass for protection. However, given these inherent limitations and the fact that modern museums fundamentally put objects on display for modern viewers to see, the presentation of *Orpheus and the Sirens* at the Museum of Rescued Art demonstrates the ability for presentation to combat this centralization of the modern viewer, at least to some degree. The result mirrors ancient Greek understanding of viewing as the presence of art in social life. Through decentralization of the modern viewer, the piece of art takes on its own meaning and is merely in the presence of the viewer rather than being so blatantly on display for them. The modern viewer no longer takes on an essential role in the ability of these statues to generate meaning, and through being reduced to the sidelines the statues become magnified for their mythological reference and original function. The musical clash creates a story, a reference to myth, that the modern reader gets the privilege of peering at from a distance. Thus, a world is created which represents and emphasizes the original socio-cultural function of the objects rather than their display in a modern museum, interacting with the gaze of the modern viewer.

In addition to modern conceptualizations of viewing, the centralization of the modern viewer is also a reflection of the imperialistic and colonialist roots of these early museums. Centralizing the modern viewer is egocentric, shifting the importance of the work to how it is being looked at now rather than how it was looked at in its original context. It is not a coincidence that this form of presentation was on display at the Getty. What is intriguing, though, is the shift towards decentralization brought upon by the repatriation of the statues. In bringing the statues back to their original environment, there is a shift in presentation that prioritizes the role of art in antiquity rather than its role in a museum display. Furthermore, this is not an isolated case: one also observes this phenomenon, the centralization of the modern viewer in museums of imperial powers and the decentralization of the modern viewer in museums of the original country, in the most famous case of repatriation today, the Parthenon Marbles.

THE CASE OF THE PARTHENON MARBLES

An academic paper discussing repatriation to any degree would be remiss should it fail to mention the most prominent, contested, and longstanding case of repatriation, namely that of the Parthenon Marbles: the pediments, metopes, and frieze blocks that once decorated the exterior of the Parthenon. Through the first decade of the nineteenth century, Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin and British ambassador to Constantinople between 1799 and 1803, procured permission from the Ottomans, who occupied Athens at the time, to famously remove close to half of the Parthenon Marbles and send them to Britain. In 1816 he sold them to the British government: 75 meters of the frieze, 15 of the 92 metopes, and 17 pediments [33]. These continue to be housed in the British Museum, whose website emphasizes the legality of their acquisition, determined by a Parliament investigation in 1816, and acknowledges requests made since 1983 to return the Marbles to Greece [34]. Indeed, the British Museum is prevented by law from removing objects from its collections, a law which the government has no indication of changing. Whether or not these Marbles should be returned has been the subject of great scholarly and political

debate for decades, but recent developments suggest that a solution might soon be within reach. Secret negotiations have been reported between Museum Chair George Osborne and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis which may lead to either a return or a “partial return,” a quasi-loan of the Marbles [35].

Beyond being the primary case study for repatriation debates, the Parthenon Marbles also serve as a useful case study of presentation since they are currently being displayed in two places at the same time: the British Museum in England and the Acropolis Museum in Athens. These two museums have taken vastly different approaches to how they represent the priceless artifacts. Fortunately, significantly more is known about how an ancient Athenian audience would have viewed the Parthenon frieze, metopes, and pediments, which aids in understanding how the different approaches taken through these two presentations are either referencing or modifying the original socio-cultural function of the artefacts.

Many scholars have attempted to provide an explanation for the so-called paradox of the Parthenon frieze. This paradox refers to the frieze’s staggering detail in depicting the ceremonial Panathenaic procession in tandem with the fact, now agreed upon amongst scholars, that its view was obstructed in antiquity. Stillwell in 1969 was one of the first scholars to point out the steep incline angle at which the frieze must have been viewed, and he was the first to investigate how this forced viewers to see the frieze in chunks, separated by columns, when scholars had previously been treating the frieze holistically [36]. Osborne expanded upon Stillwell in 1987 by analyzing how the viewer played an active role in creating what they saw, moving around the Parthenon to follow the story and uncover what was formerly obstructed from view [37]. While Stillwell and Osborne focused on how Athenian citizens would have interacted with the obstructed frieze, later scholars such as Hölscher and Marconi in 2009 began with the assumption of the frieze being nearly invisible. They then sought other purposes for the frieze other than being on display for the mortal viewer: Hölscher put forth the idea that the frieze, as architecture, was meant to add

aesthetic beauty and semantic meaning to the building [38], and Marconi, who noted the lack of sunlight under the ceiling of the pteromata, similarly saw the frieze as an ornament to the temple, expressing power and wealth as both a gift to the gods and a memory for generations to come [39]. Neer, the most recent scholar to write on the invisibility of the Parthenon frieze, argues that the frieze's true audience were the *epistatēs*, the officials who oversaw its construction, not the Athenian citizenry [40].

The progression of scholarship exemplifies the increasing recognition among scholars that the viewer was decentralized in antiquity. Whether the “true” audience was the gods or the *epistatēs*, or whether the frieze was intended merely to add architectural decoration to the magnificent temple, the fact remains that the average ancient Athenian viewer would only barely have been able to see the frieze. That said, the ancient viewer would certainly have recognized the content of the frieze and been familiar with the formalities of the Panathenaic procession [41]. Even so, any significant detail would have been impossible to see from a minimum distance of 19.5m (64 ft) — for reference, the frieze blocks are 1.16m (3 ft 4 in) high [42].

Despite all evidence of the frieze's invisibility and the general agreement amongst scholars concerning this fact, its invisibility in antiquity might not be clear to the public, which now observes these artifacts in museum displays. Marconi voiced this concern of the “ideal spectator” posited by the museum gallery setting:

“In truth, mentions of the issue are often found in literature, but the fact that for the ancient visitor to the Acropolis viewing the frieze would have been very difficult has rarely been built into the general interpretation of the frieze. This attitude found in modern literature undoubtedly depends on the projection of modern gallery practices onto the interpretation of the original reception of the frieze” [43].

The scholarly discourse surrounding the invisibility of the Parthenon frieze is indeed valuable, but what weight does it carry when most modern viewers

are simply unaware of this fact? Museums play a shockingly large role in the reception and understanding of antiquity. The rest of this section will investigate how the presentation of the Parthenon frieze and the rest of the marbles in the British Museum and the Acropolis Museum impact the “general interpretation” of these artifacts.

At the British Museum (fig. 4), the marbles have been put on display specifically for the modern viewer. The marbles are inverted — rather than facing outward as they would have in antiquity, they now face inward, surrounding the viewer. As a result, the modern viewer is given a 360° panoramic view of the marbles, which are lowered to eye-level and well-lit for greater viewing ease. Visibility, a great problem for the viewing of these objects in antiquity, is not an issue in the British Museum, nor is any of this discourse around viewing and obscurity mentioned on the British Museum’s website [46]. There is merit in making the frieze and the rest of the marbles visible to the modern viewer, for it enables the public to see the magnificent artistic depictions thereon. However, the British Museum’s display adds visibility in a way that disregards the socio-cultural function of the marbles in antiquity and puts the museum patron at the literal center of the work. This presentation centralizes the modern viewer, actively forgets the history of the marbles’ invisibility, and perpetuates the tendency of analyzing the marbles as an autonomous masterpiece of art, in isolation from their socio-cultural function.

While in many ways a true reflection of the frieze’s former invisibility is impossible and illogical, the display at the Acropolis Museum in Athens exemplifies a presentation that conveys the original context of the Marbles, and, in doing so, decentralizes the modern viewer. At the Acropolis Museum, the Marbles face outward, reflecting how they faced in antiquity. This forces the modern viewer to walk around the frieze to view it, instead of being able to view everything at once from a central point. The frieze and metopes are displayed above eye-level, forcing the modern viewer to actively look upward to see them, as ancient viewers would have done. On the Museum’s website, they further clarify that the blocks of the frieze are

“mounted in the same position as they held on the monument, but at a lower height for better viewing” [47]. In addition to recognizing the invisibility of the frieze in antiquity, the Acropolis Museum’s description points out that the frieze blocks are positioned in the correct order, even completed with plaster copies of those pieces that are housed in other museum collections, mostly at the British Museum. The order is important given that the frieze depicts the Panathenaic procession, and this order is not maintained in the British Museum’s display, which mixes up the placement of the blocks. The Acropolis Museum’s display also intentionally uses an equal number of steel columns (seen in fig. 5) as the number of Parthenon columns. Indeed, it even has large glass windows from which to view the Parthenon itself [48]. This effect, impossible to achieve at the British Museum, aids the modern viewer in envisioning how these marbles would have been assembled and seen in antiquity as part of a larger monumental structure. Altogether, the environment curated by this presentation still enables visibility but does so in a way that reflects to a greater degree the original positioning of the marbles. This presentation decentralizes the modern viewer and enables the marbles to stand on their own instead of being intended for the museum patron to view. The modern viewer is not the focus: the Marbles, and their history as part of the Parthenon, are.

CONCLUSION

These case studies, *Orpheus and the Sirens* and the Parthenon Marbles, each exhibit two notable connections with reference to presentation: one being imperialistic museum curations and the centralization of the modern viewer, and the other being original geographic location and the decentralization of the modern viewer. Decentralizing the modern viewer in each case goes hand in hand with more authentically representing the socio-cultural function of the artifacts in their original context.

Recent discourse regarding the repatriation of the Parthenon Marbles reflects these observations about presentation. In a letter written by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, Professor of Classics at the University of Cambridge, to the

Times on December 7, 2022, he argues that both sides of the repatriation debate exhibit “bad arguments.” Instead, he propagates a “key argument” that has not yet been voiced:

“But the key argument of which nothing is said is that they belong together with the remaining fragments of the stunning frieze from which they are separated, and in the context of the building for which they were made. We should stop listening to politicians on either side of the dispute and listen to the marbles themselves.”

Professor Wallace-Hadrill calls for the pieces of the Parthenon to be reunited in the context of their original building. His argument focusses solely on recreating the presentation and socio-cultural function of the Marbles in antiquity, and this approach decentralizes the modern viewer: the question is not how or where they should be viewed, but how they can exist as their own entity, a presence telling its own story which a modern viewer can merely peer at from a distance. To “listen to the marbles themselves” is to put these artefacts first, and the needs and wants of people second. What should happen to these marbles remains up to debate, but it is notable that Professor Wallace-Hadrill’s call for the Parthenon Marbles to be reassembled is a call to decentralize the modern viewer, a sentiment reflected by the presentation of the Parthenon Marbles at the Acropolis Museum and *Orpheus and the Sirens* at the Museum of Rescued Art, and a sentiment that is rooted in ancient Greek conceptualizations of viewership.

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DREAMING OF EMPIRE: VISIONS OF ROME AND IMPERIALIST IDEOLOGY IN TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY CINEMA

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As the Germanic hordes emerge, fur-clad and whooping, from the dark, mist-shrouded forests of Germania Magna, General Quintus remarks sourly: “People should know when they’re conquered.” Russel Crowe, starring as the eponymous gladiator Maximus, retorts, his voice tinged with his hallmark melancholy: “Would you, Quintus? Would I?” [1].

This paints, as we shall see, a rather inaccurate picture of the historical events that inspired *Gladiator’s* action-packed opening. Yet the brief exchange between two generals in which arrogance meets empathy introduces a major theme of empire into the film. The way in which it depicts empire has led critics to call *Gladiator* an anti-imperialist work [2]. *Gladiator* (2000) would be followed by a slew of Greek and Roman epics trying to capitalize on the success of Ridley Scott’s blockbuster [3]. With the notable exception of Zach Snyder’s rabidly jingoistic *300* (2006), many of these cash-ins, such as *Centurion* (2010) and *The Eagle* (2011), are also viewed as anti-imperialist [4]. Critics have latched onto the clear parallels that Scott and other directors and screenwriters draw between Rome and America for the purpose of critiquing American imperialism in the twenty-first century. We should not, however, view these films as unqualified indictments of contemporary American imperialism. Their anti-imperialist impulses, even if intentional, are tempered by less explicit pro-imperialist ideological trappings and convictions which the works and their creators have been unable to shake. While

rejecting tyranny and militant imperialism, they turn to ideals of pluralism, cosmopolitanism, and republicanism that have been inherited from early visionaries of both the American Dream and “The Vision That Was Rome” [5].

This paper will explore the ways in which these films express tacit approval of imperialism. In the first place, it is necessary to review the parallel between Rome and the United States that these films explicitly draw. That done, any assumptions, criticisms, or claims the films make about Rome can be applied to America as well. I will then show how the films ultimately stop short of indicting the core institutions of Roman/American empire, opting instead to blame specific individuals or organizations within the system. I will also analyze the values the films extol, and how these are used to excuse imperialist practices. In the final section, I shall turn from Rome and its citizens and examine those who lie beyond Rome’s light – the barbarians – and demonstrate how these films either depict these barbarians negatively (as quasi-human brutes) or as noble savages, primitive but admirable, and ultimately doomed.

Scholarship that treats these films as anti-imperialist critiques of America can be broadly divided into two categories: that which focuses on critiques of the United States itself and that which focuses on critiques of its foreign policy. A scholar of the former category is Monica S. Cyrino, who analyzes the analogies *Gladiator* makes to American politics and culture. Cyrino highlights *Gladiator’s* introspection [6]. She contends that it critiques core elements of American society and advocates political reform and a cultural shift to make the United States worthy of its reputation. Chris Davies, on the other hand, is far more attentive to *Centurion* and *The Eagle* because they are set on the border of the Roman Empire, thereby allowing him to analyze the films’ treatment of



barbarians and Roman conquest [7]. Davies credits both films with critiquing American interventionism. He asserts that they depict barbarians as noble freedom fighters, not savage brutes, and that the films deliberately invite comparison between ancient barbarians and modern Third World nations subjected to American occupation.

Although Cyrino and Davies have hit on intentional anti-imperialist messages, it will be seen that they are too inattentive to equally strong (if less intentional) pro-imperialist themes [8]. Like Cyrino and Davies, I will follow the parallel between Rome and America, but I will show that these films often work against themselves. They excuse the institution of empire, depict imperialism as a good policy, extol martial virtue and conquest, and show non-Romanized barbarians as savages.

SETTING THE STAGE: AMERICA AS ROME

Part of the power that *Gladiator* and its kin have over their American audience is the cultural link between Rome and America. This link allows cinema to draw analogies between Rome and the present day. While a full account of America's adoption of the classical world as its patron ancestor is beyond the purview of this paper, it will be helpful to briefly trace this phenomenon's manifestation in cinema [9]. This will then allow us to examine the specific grapples these films cast back to Rome and then analyze their purpose and effect.

The post-war decades were the golden age of classical cinema in America. Lavish epics such as *Quo Vadis* (1953), *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Spartacus* (1960), and *The Fall of the Roman Empire* (1964) dazzled audiences with visions of a past that was hauntingly familiar. These films were part of a long tradition of invoking classical antiquity in reference to the United States [10]. To the chagrin of many pedants, these films made little effort to cleave to historical accuracy, despite their readiness to co-opt actual historical figures and events into their stories – something common to the historical film genre as a whole. Peter Bondanella asserts that classical historical

cinema traditionally “abbreviates history, compresses it, shapes it to diverse and sometimes contradictory purposes, and may even willfully distort it” to create meaning for contemporary audiences out of antique impressions [11]. Cinema felt no need to discard this tactic of warping history as it progressed into the twenty-first century when the classical epic experienced a renaissance with the inception of *Gladiator*. The financial success of Scott’s film encouraged a slew of cash-ins and reignited Hollywood’s interest in the classical epic [12]. *Gladiator* was followed by *Troy* (2004), *300* (2006), *The Last Legion* (2007), *Centurion* (2010), *The Eagle* (2011), *300: Rise of an Empire* (2014), and *Ben-Hur* (2016). The ancient world, and especially Rome, were back in force.

The resurrection of the genre by *Gladiator* signifies, to Anise K. Strong, a nostalgia not only for the golden age epics of the fifties and sixties, but a nostalgia for those decades themselves [13]. The cinema’s vision of Rome has always been a mirror held up to America. The audience sees a distorted, fictitious Rome that, intentionally or otherwise, speaks to its own values and critiques its society. Rome is an especially powerful image for this purpose because of its contradictory nature in the American psyche. Cyrino writes that in both its twentieth and twenty-first century periods of cinematic popularity, Rome has stood as “the ultimate symbol of both the sublime and the corrupt, and exhibits our own desires and doubts” [14].

Rome comes to us as both an ideal republic and a decadent empire. In constructing Rome, America projects its own conflicted identity – what Solomon calls the “schizophrenic paradox” of an imperial democracy– onto the antique state [15]. Cyrino posits that *Gladiator* explores the conflict between two contradictory visions of Rome and America: virtuous republic and corrupt empire [16]. One vision is a messy reality to be critiqued, the other a utopian ideal to be striven for.

Rome, then, is America. In *Gladiator*, Marcus Aurelius (Richard Harris) tells Maximus, who later repeats his words, that “There was a vision that was Rome.” This is a clear analogue to the American Dream – a nebulous but

powerful force in America's psyche. The dual ideal of Rome and America is a strong current in the films we will examine; it will rear its heads throughout this paper. The films' protagonists are champions of that ideal and exemplify the values of both Rome and America. This connection is critical in considering the anti-imperialist critiques these films espouse, and the pro-imperialist contradictions that underpin them.

THE GOOD EMPIRE

Gladiator, *Centurion*, and *The Eagle* all find fault with the Roman Empire. They do not, however, lay these faults directly at the feet of imperialist ideology. Rather, each film attacks specific people or policies, never critiquing the institution of empire itself. Cyrino's assessment of the battle between two Romes expresses this. *Gladiator* presents a dichotomy between the Vision That Was Rome and the Roman Empire. The former is republican, just, and peaceful; the latter decadent, corrupt, violent, and tyrannical. This binary is, of course, ridiculous. Rome was never a republic in the sense Americans use the term. Whenever it was not a monarchy, it was an oligarchy of several hundred aristocrats [17]. Nor was it ever anymore peaceful before it became an empire. The reformist, liberal attitude *Gladiator* and the other films adopt conveniently ignores the core issues with the empires of Rome and America.

"It takes an emperor to rule an empire," Commodus (Joaquin Phoenix) says to his sister Lucilla (Connie Nielsen), toying with the idea of dissolving the Senate. To American viewers, this idea is odious. Although they may not be familiar with the nuances of the Roman constitution, the average viewer will certainly identify the Roman Senate with the American Senate. Cyrino compares Commodus's dictatorial desires with various remarks by George Bush expressing exasperation with America's legislative body [18]. Although Bush's remarks came after *Gladiator*, Cyrino's broader point holds: Americans would probably react quite poorly if Bush – or anyone – suggested dissolving the Senate. By the end of the film, the dictator has been defeated. *Gladiator* ends with a change of policy that reinstates

“institutionalized trans-regional republican government” and purportedly ends tyranny [19]. While this may have ended Commodus’s dictatorship, it does not abolish the empire itself. On the contrary, by assuming that empire requires an emperor, *Gladiator* ultimately excuses both the Roman and American empires themselves. Although Octavian’s First Settlement in 27 BCE established him as the first de facto emperor, Rome was an empire long before the Principate. After the fictional empire of *Gladiator* loses its emperor, it is still, by any metric, an empire. The film denies this truth and consequently denies the existence of American empire based on the existence of a republican legislative body. Commodus’s false equivalence lets the institution of imperial Rome – and therefore imperial America – off the hook.

One of the commonly cited virtues of America is its pluralism. Likewise, the films show Rome as a multicultural state analogous to the American melting pot. But the proffering of this supposed virtue reveals the problems inherent in Rome’s multiculturalism. Maximus’s gladiator comrades include the Numidian Juba (Djimon Hounsou), the German Hagen (Ralf Möller), and the Scottish-born actor Tommy Flanagan as Maximus’s servant Cicero. The ragtag group of Ninth Legion survivors in *Centurion* is quite the multicultural band as well. It includes the Numidian Macros (Noel Clarke), the Greek Leonidas (Dimitri Leonidas), and the Hindu Kushite Tarak (Riz Ahmed), while Liam Cunningham lends his distinctive brogue to the veteran Brick. In doing this, the films emphasize the good, cosmopolitan aspects of the Roman Empire. Furthermore, they set up these peacefully coexisting cultures in opposition to the monolithic, barbarian other (Germans or Picts) [20]. But this overlooks the fact that Numidians, Greeks, Germans, and Celts live in Rome because that cosmopolis has conquered them all. Multiculturalism is achieved through empire, but that source is elided or even presented as good. The viewer is meant to approve of the many different colors, faces, and voices that represent Rome while ignoring how they came to be citizens of Rome in the first place. One might as well chalk up the presence of Native Americans, African Americans, and the descendants of Mexicans in what is now the Western United States to the

benevolent pluralism of the state rather than a history of systematic conquest and slave trading.

DEFENSIVE IMPERIALISM

Cyrino argues that *Gladiator* posits that Rome can be a just and positive force in the world [21]. When Maximus tells Marcus Aurelius about his estate and family in Spain, Marcus remarks that “It is a good home. Worth fighting for.” This suggests that Rome’s imperialism is defensive and necessary for the prosperity of its citizens, and that “the protection of the small family farm is one of the purposes of Roman military conquest” [22]. Without war, Maximus’s idyllic, agrarian life would be threatened. This advocacy of “defensive invasion” is a common American *casus belli*. From the Domino Theory of the Cold War to the interventionist rationales after the fall of the U.S.S.R., rhetoric has circulated about defending America’s freedom and interests. The closing lines of George Bush’s address in 2003, in which he announced the Iraq War, typify this attitude:

My fellow citizens, the dangers to our country and to the world will be overcome. We will pass through this time of peril and carry on the work of peace. We will defend our freedom. We will bring freedom to others and we will prevail [23].

Ironically, *Gladiator* is correct. Without Roman imperialism, Maximus’s civilian life would not be possible. Despite his depiction as a working-class hero, Maximus is a gentleman farmer, further identifying him with the Jeffersonian ideal of republican land ownership. His fields and orchards are almost certainly tended by slaves. He calls his estate on the outskirts of Trujillo a “very simple place,” but the set – a grand villa and vast grain fields – undermines this characterization. Even the land he owns would not be his without the Roman empire. Trujillo, or Emerita Augusta, as it would have been known then, was the capital of the Roman province of Lusitania, which was conquered after a fierce and protracted campaign in the second century BCE [24]. The goodness and prosperity that Rome contains can only be

acquired and maintained through war and conquest.

The Eagle, *Centurion*, and *Gladiator* show the conflict between Romans and barbarians as arising from the efforts of the former to conquer the latter. This is part of the films' intentional critique of imperialism. But even this effort is undercut by certain narrative and cinematographic choices the films make. Even though the Romans are invading armies in all three, each film manages to maneuver them into a defensive position, with the barbarians on the offensive. This makes the Romans underdogs and, therefore, sympathetic to the audience. The Eagle's action ramps up with a Briton attack on the Roman *castra*, putting the supposedly occupying garrison on the defensive [25]. At the film's climactic battle, veteran legionaries rally to the protagonist Marcus Aquila (Channing Tatum) in defense of the eagle standard against the Seal People. In both instances, Marcus is defending against barbarian attackers, and the audience is certainly meant to root for the protagonist's success to some degree. Similarly, in *Centurion*, after the Ninth Legion is annihilated by the Picts, the eponymous centurion Quintus Dias's (Michael Fassbender) band is hunted through the wilds of Pictland by Etain's (Olga Kurylenko) warband. The defensiveness of the Romans is made explicit when Quintus exclaims, "They're [the Picts] not defending their land or their country anymore." Finally, the survivors mount a desperate last stand in an abandoned Roman fort. Once again, the audience hopes that Quintus will prevail and drive off the barbarians, which he does.

Gladiator is, perhaps, the most interesting case because the attacker-defender dynamic switches twice. Although *Gladiator*, in its effort to critique imperialism, portrays the opening battle as a Roman invasion of Germania, this is not historically accurate. On the contrary, the Second Marcomannic War which this battle concluded was one of those rare instances in which Rome was on the defensive against an invading force [26]. This historical inaccuracy would serve the film's anti-imperialist message, were it not neutered by a reversal of the reversal. At the battle itself, the Romans are put on the defensive, presenting shield walls, trenches, and

artillery emplacements to the attacking horde of Germans. And as in *Centurion* and *The Eagle*, the audience cheers when they see Maximus route the attackers and defend his position. Thus, although we are told that the Romans are invading, we are shown that they are being attacked. This weakens the anti-imperialist message at best and provides a tacit excuse for Roman invasion at worst. Invasion becomes an offense-as-the-best-defense against Rome's pugnacious northern neighbors. Wars of conquest are justified as defensive conflicts – a familiar note in American foreign policy, as we have already seen. Conquest is necessary to facilitate and defend the Roman way of life.

THE MARTIAL HERO

Although the films purport to condemn imperialism, they fetishize war and combat. The bellicose actions of Marcus Aquila, Quintus Dias, and Maximus are presented as commendable. Marcus, Quintus, and Maximus are all viewed as somehow rescuing or seeking to fulfil the wishes of their father figures, who, in turn, are symbols of the Roman empire. Marcus seeks the Eagle of the Ninth, which is identified with his father Flavius Aquila and is itself a symbol of Rome. The eagle is also a symbol of America, strengthening the analogy [27]. The name Aquila itself identifies Flavius with the standard, and he thus comes to embody America. After surviving the Pictish ambush, Quintus first seeks to rescue General Titus Flavius Virilus (Dominic West), who is “scholar . . . father . . . brother . . . [and] god” to his men. Virilus drinks and fights with his men and, in his resplendent purple and gold, becomes himself a symbol of Roman military excellence. When he is slain by King Gorlacon, the Ninth Legion's eagle standard is burned, as if he and the eagle – the symbol of Rome and America – were linked. Maximus seeks to fulfil Marcus Aurelius' wishes. “There was a dream that was Rome,” he whispers, dying in the Colosseum, “It shall be realized. These are the wishes of Marcus Aurelius.” Marcus Aurelius, Titus Flavius, and Flavius Aquila are all symbols of Rome and military might. Each is in some way the object of his respective protagonist's quest to restore the glory of Rome (and, by extension, America). Thus, despite the protestations of the

films, their protagonists seek to restore the legacy of great warriors. The films are nostalgic for war. It may be a different sort of war for which they are nostalgic; Quintus calls the campaign in Caledonia “A new kind of war. A war without honor. Without end.” But this implies that Rome once fought good wars – wars in which good soldiers were not silenced by bureaucrats to save face (as Agricola [Paul Freeman] attempts to do with Quintus), wars in which strong, virtuous men like Maximus are valued and do great deeds. The problem, then, these films argue, is not with the war itself, but with those who are running it.

Commodus, conversely, is depicted negatively as a weak, even effeminate man. *Gladiator* condemns Commodus on the grounds that he has not, like Marcus Aurelius and Maximus, expanded the borders of the Roman Empire. “He enters Rome like a conquering hero,” remarks Senator Gracchus (Derek Jacobi), “but what has he conquered?” Commodus arrives late to Germany, just in time to miss the bloody conclusion to the war. “Have I missed it? Have I missed the battle?” he remarks – a line certainly meant to engender contempt for him in the viewer. It suggests, as Peter W. Rose notes, that an emperor must be first and foremost a conqueror [28]. Cyrino singles out Commodus’s single anti-war remark [29]:

Commodus: My father’s war against the barbarians. He said it himself, it achieved nothing. But the people loved him.

Lucilla: The people always love victories.

Commodus: Why? They didn’t see the battles. What do they care about Germania?

Lucilla: They care about the greatness of Rome.

Cyrino sees this exchange as a scathing indictment of empire-building. But taken in the context of the film as a whole, it is insufficient to combat a far stronger impulse towards war. According to Lucilla, Marcus Aurelius’

victories demonstrate the greatness of Rome. “The greatness of Rome. Well, what is that?” asks Commodus. “It’s an idea . . . a vision,” replies Lucilla, echoing the words of Marcus Aurelius and Maximus. War is equated with the Vision That Was Rome. Thus, for Rome to be great, it cannot cease being an imperial power.

Commodus is shown as contemptible for not being a fighter. He fights only once in the film, and resorts to cheating to win. Maximus, on the other hand, is always fighting. The people of Rome – and the audience – love him for it. He imposes his vision of Rome, first on the battlefield, then in the arena, killing his way up to Commodus himself, after whose death, it is supposed, reforms can begin. Politicking is the realm of Machiavels like Commodus and the Senate, not brave, truly American (or Roman) men of action like Maximus. Strangely, James Russell claims that Maximus’s victory against Commodus conveys the message that might does not equate to right [30]. But Maximus’s might wins the day; his might makes his right prevail. The audience is reassured by Maximus’s ability to enforce an ideology by the sword. Similarly, while audiences may recoil from the overt idea of imperialism by conquest in *The Eagle* and *Centurion*, they are encouraged to cheer for the protagonists of both films – Marcus and Quintus, respectively – who are both officers in the Roman army. Quintus introduces himself as such: “I am a soldier of Rome.” This echoes Lucilla’s eulogy for Maximus: “He was a soldier of Rome.” Like Maximus, Marcus and Quintus exhibit martial prowess and military leadership, guiding their men and killing their enemies. These are seen as inherently good things. As already noted, Marcus’s goals are noble: he seeks to recover the eagle standard and avenge his father. Quintus’s goal is more practical: survival. But by casting him as the protagonist and causing the audience to root for his survival, *Centurion* implies that the Romans deserve to live, and they deserve to defend themselves against the Picts (who are themselves no longer defending their land) by force.

Although *Gladiator* was screened just before the September 11 attacks, its pro-violence message would certainly resound well with the bellicose

feeling following 9/11. *Centurion* and *The Eagle* follow this glorification of the martial hero uncritically. The conflict on Rome's borders may be seen as an imperialist evil, but it is simultaneously the opportunity for good men to do great deeds. Where would these martial heroes prove themselves if there were no war or conquest?

Ultimately, *Gladiator* excuses empire by blaming its symptoms. In its view, empire has fallen from a potentially good force to a state exhausted by the responsibility for empire and the "burden of imperial obligation" [31]. Thus, it is not any fault of Rome that it is corrupt. Rather, it is an inevitable burden of Rome's manifest destiny to civilize the known world and impose good Roman values upon its people. Both the American Dream and the Vision That Was Rome are positive and suggest that both states are inherently good. This ignores the fact that both states are, if not by necessity, then certainly by tradition and design, empires. By prescribing a strong dose of republican values, *Gladiator* asserts that Rome has simply lost herself. She is in need of Americanization and democratic reform in order to be made good once more [32]. Screenwriter Dave Franzoni intended a parallel between the Roman mob and contemporary American society, both of which are, in his opinion, easily placated by mass media [33]. In Rome's case this media is circuses and gladiatorial spectacles; in America's case it is television and the political spectacle. But, ironically, Franzoni ends the film with a moment of willful self-deception. At the end of *Gladiator*, Lucilla asks Senator Gracchus, "Is Rome worth one good man's life? We believed it once. Make us believe it again." Lucilla, speaking for all of Rome, asks the Senate to convince her that Rome is worth war. She asks to be deceived. By asking Gracchus to make her believe Rome is worth war and bloodshed, Lucilla willingly hails the placating spectacle of the Vision That Was Rome, which will excuse its continued existence as an empire.

BARBARIANS NOBLE AND SAVAGE

One of the core features of any empire is its subordination of certain collectives to the imperial community [34]. As has already been observed,

the Roman Empire encompassed many ethno-linguistic and cultural entities. During the Principate, when *The Eagle*, *Centurion*, and *Gladiator* are set, most of Rome's conquests and external conflicts (with the exception of the interminable rivalry with Parthia) focused on Germans, Dacians, and other peoples from northern and central Europe. Empire justifies its existence through constructing the inferiority of its subject peoples. Imperialist ideology depicts these subjects as others that are inherently different from, and inferior to, the dominators. Although these films intend their portrayals of barbarian peoples and their environs to contribute to an overall critique of imperialism, they still fall into imperialist tropes and assumptions about the barbarians, thus reinforcing a cornerstone of imperialist ideology.

Davies convincingly argues that American audiences are meant to see the Britons in *The Eagle* and *Centurion* as analogous to the victims of American imperialist efforts. He observes that both films' cinematography alludes to the Vietnam War [35]. *The Eagle*, with its establishing shots of fog-choked wilderness and green, misty rivers, draws inspiration from *Apocalypse Now* (1979), establishing Marcus's arrival in Britain as a journey into hell [36]. *Centurion* similarly harkens back to Oliver Stone's *Platoon* (1986) [37]. Both films clearly seek to evoke the spirit of their famously anti-war and anti-imperialist predecessors. But this analogy is problematic. It draws a sharp line between the civilized space of Rome and Romanized Britain and the inhospitable, wild space beyond. Hadrian's Wall, which features in both films, is the physical manifestation of this line. It demarcates what *The Eagle*'s opening crawl calls the "end of the known world," beyond which lies unconquered Pictland. *Centurion*'s opening crawl likewise calls Britain the empire's "farthest, most untamed frontier;" it is an "unforgiving land." The Roman soldiers occupying Britain share similar sentiments. The garrisons in both films call the land a "shithole of a country" (*Centurion*) and a "shithole" (*The Eagle*). To Quintus Dias, it is "the arsehole of the world." "Even the land wants us dead," he continues, introducing the idea that not only is the land worthless and uncivilized, it is also hostile. Governor Agricola, his superior, calls Britain the "graveyard of ambition" and "a lost

cause.”

Visual elements contribute to this impression. When Marcus Aquila arrives at his posting on the marches of Roman Britain, the fort stands alone at the edge of a dark forest. No town surrounds it – just a couple of huts, emphasizing the wildness of the land. When Marcus and Esca pass Hadrian’s Wall, they trek for weeks and see no farms or villages. They encounter only the odd sod-roofed hovel before reaching the crude village of the Sea People. Aside from these few signs of humanity, the land is steep mountains, bleak moors, and dark forests – a virtual wasteland. Indeed, this unflattering depiction of Britain is by no means new. Tacitus, in his *Agricola*, said that “the climate is miserable, with frequent rain and mists” [38]. These wild climes are contrasted with Romanized Britain. Marcus recuperates from a wound in his uncle’s villa in Calleva – modern-day Silchester in Hampshire, at the southern extremity of the island. Establishing shots show Roman order imposed on the British wilderness. Villas, gardens, and partitioning walls have tamed the land. The impression is idyllic – an intentional contrast to the North, which is rugged and savage, devoid of civilization or culture in any Western sense of the terms. It is believed that “No Roman could survive” north of the wall [39].

It follows, then, that the people who can survive must be inherently different from Romans. And the films do much to enforce this suggestion. Both *The Eagle* and *Centurion*, as well as *Gladiator*, depict Rome’s barbaric northern neighbors (Britons and Germans) as noble savages, both admirable and despicable for their difference. They are defined by their strangeness, inscrutability (*The Eagle*), savagery (*Centurion*), bellicosity, and technological inferiority.

The Celtic rebels that attack Marcus’s *castra* emerge from mist-shrouded woods to the sound of tribal drums and bestial whoops. They seem almost to be the angry spirits of the forest itself. Strangeness, savagery, and primitivity are central to the characterization of barbarians in these films. The Seal People in *The Eagle* fight with bone spears and stone axes, a

an historical inaccuracy that appears all the sillier in comparison to *Centurion*, which deigns to give its Picts well-crafted metal spears and armor. The Germans Maximus faces in *Gladiator* are covered in shapeless masses of brown and black furs and scraps of armor. They wield crude, heavy-headed weapons – hammers, axes, clubs – that demonstrate brute strength but not finesse. They charge wildly and without formation at the orderly Roman battle line. Similarly, the Celts in *The Eagle* attack like animals, flinging themselves onto the shields of the Roman *testudo* and wildly hacking with ineffective clubs. This is echoed at the end of the film when the Seal People ferociously but chaotically charge the thin but orderly line of Ninth Legion veterans. Formation fighting seems beyond the ability of the barbarians.

Celtic religion is similarly shown as exotic and strange. While destroying the Ninth Legion in *The Eagle*, the Britons conduct bodily mutilation and human sacrifice on pagan altars that are depicted as weird and foreign to both Romans and modern American audiences alike. The Seal People's shaman has a shrine in a murky seaside grotto worthy of an H.P. Lovecraft tale of ichthyoidal horror. In contrast, *The Eagle* presents Roman religion – which would no doubt seem just as foreign to modern audiences – in a more palatable form. At his *castra*, Marcus prays to Mithras. While this nod to the cult of Mithras that permeated the Roman military will no doubt delight historians, it also becomes a significant choice. Although communal dining was central to the cult, Marcus worships Mithras alone in a dark cell or chapel that is distinctly Christian and, therefore, familiar to the audience. Mithras, whom Marcus addresses as “Father of our Fathers,” is shown in a white marble effigy, devoid of the color it would have enjoyed in antiquity to conform to modern conceptions of classical art. This pristine pallor stands in contrast to the shadowy sacred space of the Seal People. Marcus's monotheism will comfort an audience that approaches the film from a Judeo-Christian context [40]. Maximus speaks to his soldiers of Elysium and hopes to see his family in the afterlife. This is a distinctly Christian view of the afterlife – a paradise in which loved ones are reunited. He even prays to effigies of his wife and son. These religious trappings – family, heaven, and a

single god – all invoke familiarity in the traditional American audience. In contrast, the Britons' wild druids and animalistic, cannibalistic shaman will intrigue or repulse.

There is also a racial component to the othering process. In *Centurion*, the huntress Etain is compared to a beast. Agricola calls her part wolf; Titus Virilus takes the analogy one step further, calling her a she-wolf. Her skill as a tracker must be connected to some bestial instinct. This identification of barbarians with savage beasts is especially pronounced in *The Eagle*. The warriors of the Seal People tribe are perpetually clad in grey warpaint from head to foot. They wear spotted seal pelts and are almost completely hairless, mimicking their tribe's eponymous patron animal. This has the effect of reducing them to beasts. Furthermore, it creates a racial distinction of skin color between Marcus and his loyal slave Esca and the Seal People – a distinction that is only partially undercut by the lack of paint exhibited by the women and children of the tribe. After Marcus kills the prince of the tribe, drowning him in a river, the man's body paint washes off. It is intended to be a poignant moment that humanizes the man, showing that he really looks just like the Romans beneath all the paint. This is problematic, however. The message seems to be that the prince (played by Franco-Algerian actor Tahar Rahim) is, after all, white like us.

Despite all this, the films do succeed in humanizing the barbarians to some degree. Etain's savagery is derived from her abuse at the hands of Roman soldiers. Esca is certainly a sympathetic character. But in these efforts to portray the barbarians in a positive light, the films veer dangerously into the territory of the noble savage – a trope which is itself used to justify imperialism. In *Gladiator*, close-up shots linger on the faces of Roman legionaries, showing looks of fear and tension. This establishes a connection between the viewer and the troops. No such shots are allowed for the Germans. They are anonymous monsters, while the Romans are depicted as a bulwark against the encroaching Germanic tide [41]. One exception is the Germanic chieftain (Chick Allan), whose berserk fury succumbs to many blows. The camera watches him as he falls, mobbed by

legionaries. He becomes a sort of Dying Gaul figure. This figure is connected, in the American psyche, with Native Americans, thanks to sculptures like Thomas Crawford's *The Indian* (1856), Ferdinand Pettrich's *The Dying Tecumseh* (1856), and Peter Stephenson's *The Wounded Indian* (1848-50) [42]. These statues depict the native men tragically, "doomed yet beautiful," "a consequence of . . . Indians' failure to conform to "civilized" customs" [43]. Crawford's chieftain is "broken and bowed before the progress of the civilized white man" [44]. Pettrich's Tecumseh and statues like it suggest "that his death and the rapacious expansion of the United States were inevitable" [45]. The same effect is achieved by the camera's contemplation of the German chieftain's corpse noble and savage, sprawled on the battlefield – a symbol of Rome's inexorable conquest.

In an effort to add nuance to *Centurion* and *The Eagle*, the Romans are also shown to be savage. When the Britons attack Marcus's *castra*, their druid proclaims that the Romans have murdered their people, raped their women, and stolen their land. Esca informs Marcus angrily that Romans slaughtered his family. But *The Eagle* ensures that the Seal People do worse, practicing mass human sacrifice, indulging in cannibalism, and even eating babies [46]. In *Centurion*, Etain has become an inveterate killer of Romans because she was raped and had her tongue cut out by legionaries, but the audience's pity is tempered by her own savagery and her opposition to the protagonist. Thus, the audience may condemn the actions of other Roman soldiers who committed atrocities off-camera, but they react more viscerally to the atrocities perpetrated by the barbarians themselves: atrocities which are shown on camera. Whatever the Romans may have done in the past, it is the barbarians who are committing vile acts now. Therefore, the films seem to say, the Roman protagonists are perfectly justified in fighting and subjugating them.

CIVILIZED BARBARIANS

Barbarians who help the Romans are depicted in a more positive and human light. Both *Centurion* and *The Eagle* feature a Briton who aids and

In *Centurion* it is the healer Arianne (Imogen Poots); in *The Eagle* it is the Brigante slave Esca (Jamie Bell). Neither is othered in the same way as the rest of the Britons in the films because both aid the films' respective protagonists, who only succeed thanks to these natives' knowledge of local lore [47]. They become sort of Sacagawea figures, guiding the foreigners through their own land so that they may prevail. Neither are shown as bestial, savage, or even really foreign. While Etain is played by a Franco-Ukrainian actress and the Seal People Prince's actor is Franco-Algerian, both Jamie Bell and Imogen Poots are English.

Arianne and Esca are also the two most Romanized barbarians. Arianne has learned Latin through contact with the nearby Roman garrison. Unlike the other Britons in the film, who are savage and bellicose, she is peaceful and more civilized. She wears not heaps of furs and pelts, but modest, homespun dresses. Her hair is not painted in woad but curled in a distinctly modern fashion. She lives a sedentary life and possesses knowledge of herbs and woodcraft, but not in a way that others her as a witch. Her friendliness towards the Romans and her proficiency in their language marks her as more benevolent and civilized, especially in contrast to the other woman in the film, the Amazonian Etain. In *The Eagle*, Esca comes to love and admire Marcus for his courage, honor, and sense of duty – all martial, Roman values. In the end, Esca stays with Marcus, and Arianne becomes Quintus's lover. Both are co-opted into Roman society and, finding themselves there, choose to stay.

To Strong, the acceptance of Marcus and Quintus by their barbarian lover and friend, respectively, shows Roman culture as having more good than bad: despite corrupt leadership, the Romans these films call heroes win the hearts and minds of barbarians through their virtue [48]. In *The Eagle* especially, Esca and Marcus retain their own cultures while bonding with one another – a symbol of the ideal compromise between Roman and barbarian that elides the actual relationship of conqueror and subject [49]. At the end of *The Eagle*, Esca asks what they will do now, to which Marcus replies, "You decide." This indicates that Esca has been, or will shortly be,

freed, but it is also suspect. Rather than rejecting Rome entirely, Esca has come to appreciate the good it has to offer. He even helps Marcus against other Britons. Strong asserts that in these films Roman imperialism can be either repressive and authoritarian, or beneficial and civilizing [50]. The latter is seen in two civilized barbarians that the protagonists of *The Eagle* and *Centurion* encounter, who befriend Romans and adopt their customs. If Rome is more good than bad, as the films suggest, then it may have a duty to civilize.

Here again the films soften their anti-imperialist themes by alternately depicting barbarians as savage sub-humans, noble savages doomed to die, or good barbarians who accept the civilizing force of Rome. Romanitas is equated to civilization. It is alright for Marcus, Quintus, and Maximus to venture into the bleak wasteland the barbarians call home because their motives are pure. It is alright for the barbarians to die or be enslaved because it is only a natural stage in the inexorable march of Romanization – that is, progress. Is the violence regrettable? Yes. Is it ultimately noble and good? Certainly.

CONCLUSION

There can be no doubt that *Gladiator*, *Centurion*, and *The Eagle* were all created with some degree of anti-imperialist critique in mind. Cyrino and Davies argue this point very well. Yet it is important to critically assess these films. They contribute to popular knowledge of Rome, and in drawing a direct parallel between second century Rome and twenty-first century America, they invite a host of assumptions about modern American society and imperialism. These assumptions must be rigorously examined, else we risk complacency with the pro-imperialist ideological underpinnings these films express in spite of themselves.

The fact that intentionally anti-imperialist works of art can still so demonstrably buy into pro-imperialist sentiments speaks to the degree to which these sentiments are ingrained in our cultural assumptions and

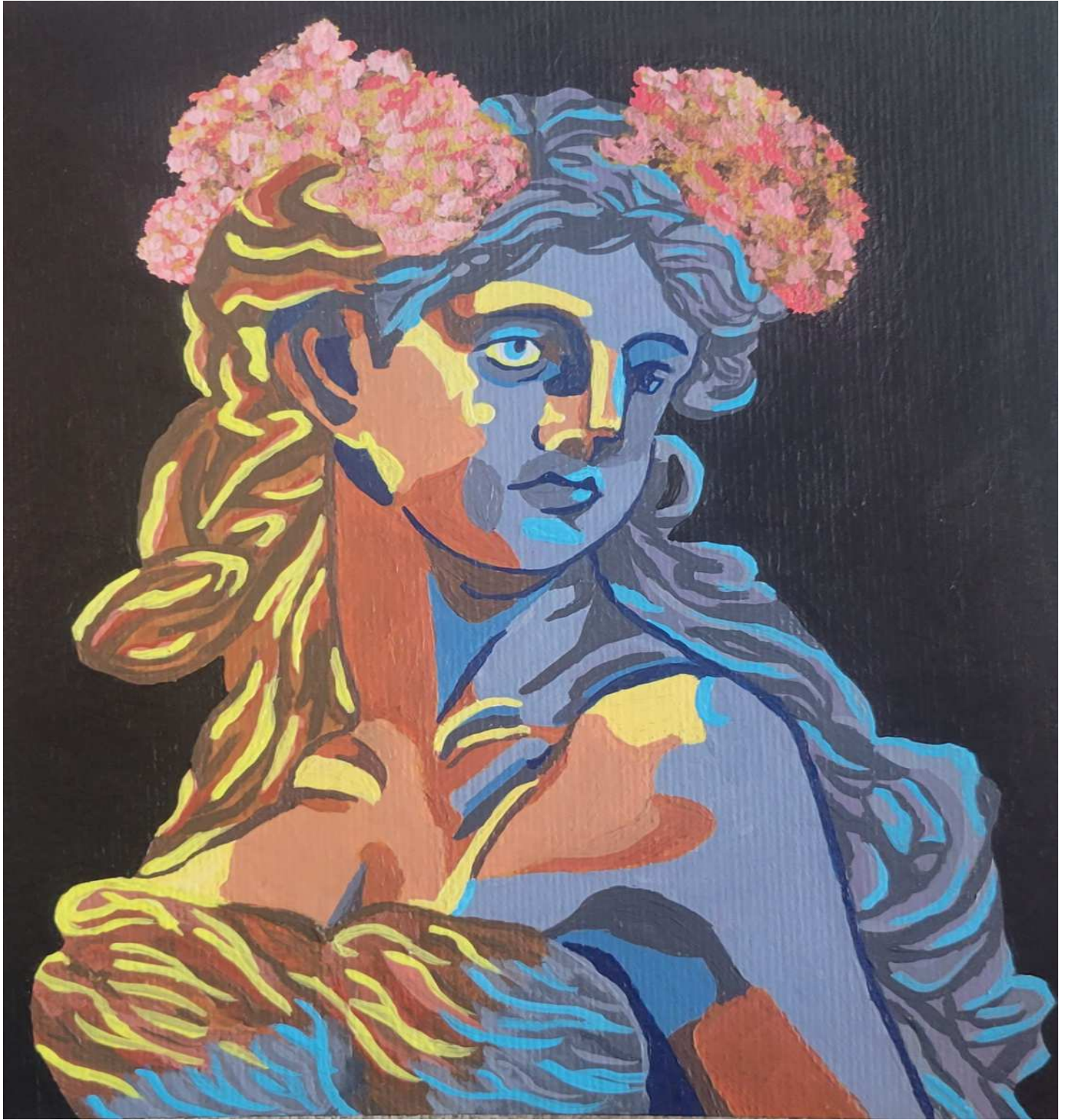
values. It is only through unapologetically revealing and analyzing these assumptions and values that we will reach a point at which the United States no longer invites comparison to the Roman Empire. It is all very well and good to decry empire, conquest, and war, but we must also divest ourselves of the belief that the Vision That Was Rome is also the American Dream. *Gladiator's* obsession with the Roman Republic belies assumptions about our own constitution, which takes so much inspiration from Rome. Deposing an emperor is no good if we retain the empire, and oligarchy is in no way preferable to tyranny. We must not, as Lucilla does to Senator Gracchus, ask for comfort and reassurance that everything will be alright; we must unabashedly gaze at what is wrong as eagerly as we watch these films.

WORKS CITED & TEXTUAL NOTES

- [1] *Gladiator*, directed by Ridley Scott (DreamWorks Pictures, 2000), Netflix.
- [2] Jon Solomon remarks that viewers of *Gladiator* “achieve catharsis through the defeat of the Roman Empire.” See “Ben-Hur and *Gladiator*: Manifest Destiny and the Contradictions of American Empire,” in *Ancient Worlds in Television and Film: Gender and Politics*, ed. Almut-Barbara Renger and Jon Solomon (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2000), 17–40. On p. 21, Monica S. Cyrino observes that, in the course of the film, Maximus awakens from the notion of Rome as “rightful conqueror and civilizing force over the world.” Also see “*Gladiator* and Contemporary American Society,” in *Gladiator: Film and History*, ed. Martin M. Winkler (Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2005), 124–149, at 36.
- [3] For an account of *Gladiator*’s stimulus of the ancient world epic film, see Alastair J.L. Blanshard and Kim Shahabudin, “The Return of the Epic? *Gladiator* (2000),” in *Classics on Screen: Ancient Greece and Rome on Film* (London: Bristol Classic Press, 2011), 216–237.
- [4] Another outlier is *The Last Legion* (2007). These films (excepting *300*) were far less popular than *Gladiator* and, as such, have received only a fraction of the criticism lavished on their forebear.
- [5] *Gladiator*, directed by Ridley Scott, (DreamWorks Pictures, 2000), Netflix.
- [6] See n2 above.
- [7] Chris Davies, *Blockbusters and the Ancient World: Allegory and Warfare in Contemporary Hollywood* (London, New York, et al.: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019).
- [8] This is especially the case with Davies, who, although he readily critiques other films (such as Doug Lefler’s *The Last Legion* [2007]), provides a very one-sided assessment of *Centurion* and *The Eagle*.
- [9] Retracing the thread to the neoclassical eighteenth century and even before that to the Renaissance itself would be too tedious here. For those interested in this well-trod subject, see Margaret Malamud’s *Ancient Rome and Modern America* (Malden, MA and Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009), which covers the late eighteenth to the late twentieth century. For an even broader overview of classical memory in the western world at large, see Peter Bondanella’s *The Eternal City: Roman Images in the Modern World* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987).
- [10] Maria Wyke, *Projecting the Past: Ancient Rome, Cinema and History* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 15.
- [11] Bondanella, *The Eternal City*, 1.
- [12] *Gladiator* grossed over \$450 million (Solomon, *Ancient Worlds in Television and Film*, 17).

- [13] Anise K. Strong, "The Golden Aspects of Roman Imperialism in Film, 1914–2015," in *Screening the Golden Ages of the Classical Tradition*, ed. Meredith E. Safran (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2019), 234.
- [14] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 125.
- [15] Solomon, *Ancient Worlds in Television and Film*, 21.
- [16] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 128.
- [17] Of course, the true irony of this lies not in the dissimilarity between the constitutions of the Roman oligarchy and the American republic, but in their similarities.
- [18] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 146–147.
- [19] Solomon, *Ancient Worlds in Television and Film*, 19.
- [20] Strong, "The Golden Aspects," 236.
- [21] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 132–133.
- [22] *Ibid.*, 141.
- [23] George Bush, "President Bush Addresses the Nation," March 19, 2003, The Oval Office, 4:00. I cite the transcript, which can be found here: <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/news/releases/2003/03/20030319-17.html>.
- [24] For an account of the difficult pacification of the Lusitani, see books 10–12 of Appian's *Spanish Wars*.
- [25] *The Eagle*, directed by Kevin Macdonald (Focus Features, 2011), DVD.
- [26] I say rare not because Rome was never under threat of invasion: by virtue of its extensive borders, it always was, but this fact is usually omitted from the common perception of Rome. Its status as the quintessential empire puts it, in the minds of many, including *Gladiator*, constantly on the offensive, and rarely on the defensive – at least, until the Dominate, when popular knowledge sees it as under constant threat from Goths, Vandals, Huns, and so forth. For a full account of the Second Marcomannic War and its predecessor, see Cassius Dio, the epitome of book 72.
- [27] Davies, "Blockbusters and the Ancient World," 139.
- [28] Peter W. Rose, "The Politics of *Gladiator*," in *Gladiator: Film and History*, 156.
- [29] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 148.
- [30] James Russel, *The Historical Epic & Contemporary Hollywood: From Dances with Wolves to Gladiator* (New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, 2007), 171.
- [31] Cyrino, "Gladiator and Contemporary American Society," 144.
- [32] Solomon, *Ancient Worlds in Television and Film*, 36.
- [33] *Ibid.*, 32.
- [34] See Michael Doyle's definition of empire in *Empires* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1986), especially page 30.

- [35] Davies, "Blockbusters and the Ancient World," 129.
- [36] Ibid., 138.
- [37] Ibid., 131.
- [38] Tacitus, *Agr.* 10, in *Agricola and Germany*, trans. A.R. Birley (New York: Oxford UP, 1999).
- [39] *Centurion*, directed by Neil Marshall (Warner Bros. Pictures/Magnolia Home Entertainment, 2010), DVD.
- [40] Realistically, Marcus would not be monotheistic. As far as the audience is concerned, however, he is.
- [41] Strong, "The Golden Aspects," 234.
- [42] These works are currently in the New York Historical Society Museum and Library, the Smithsonian American Art Museum, and the Chrysler Museum of Art in Norfolk, respectively.
- [43] See the description in the Chrysler Museum of Art's online catalog: <https://chrysler.emuseum.com/objects/27315/the-wounded-indian>
- [44] See the NYHS's online catalog: <https://emuseum.nyhistory.org/objects/17761/the-indian-the-dying-chief-contemplating-the-progress-of-ci?ctx=42755b0995554eace8b685349f2a4cce1aa419d4&idx=9>
- [45] See the Smithsonian's online catalog: [Sso.canvaslms.com/delegated_auth_pass_through?target=https%3A%2F%2Fcanvas.odu.edu%2F](https://sso.canvaslms.com/delegated_auth_pass_through?target=https%3A%2F%2Fcanvas.odu.edu%2F)
- [46] Strong, "The Golden Aspects," 236.
- [47] Davies, "Blockbusters and the Ancient World," 136.
- [48] Strong, "The Golden Aspects," 234.
- [49] Ibid.
- [50] Ibid., 225.



"APHRODITE OF DISCO" (Acrylic Paint)

LORELEI PETERSON, COLLEGE OF WILLIAM AND MARY

Description: *"I based this painting off of the Aphrodite of Knidos. This statue was a focus in my Greek art and archology class, so I decided to combine her image with the retro and disco styles that have recently become popular again. I also wanted to give her a softer look, so instead of painting her hair up in a bun, I painted it down."*