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Grace Reeve



Kylis acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung peoples as the traditional custodians of the lands on which this journal was produced. We pay our respects to elders past and present, and thank Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders for caring for the lands and waters since time immemorial. We recognise that indigenous sovereignty was never ceded, and that this was, and always will be, Aboriginal land.



From the Krater to the Cup: Introducing *Kylix* Vol. 2

TAYLA NEWLAND

As the current Editor of *Kylix*, I am proud to present the second volume of our journal. *Kylix* was established at the University of Melbourne in 2023, with two aims in mind: (i) to publish outstanding essays submitted by undergraduate students of Ancient World Studies, in order to (ii) foster their future potential by offering insight into the academic publication process. Above all, the journal serves as a touchstone for students of classical studies, ancient history, and archaeology, providing a point of reference for the development of their writing and research skills.

Such skills are reflected in this publication, which presents a collection of nine H1-level essays ranging from first to fourth-year subjects. Of these, papers for the popular *Classical Mythology* course comprise the clear majority, with contributions from Genevieve Castles-Krusec, Vetle Raine Freistad, Cheyenne Hurley, Sophia Maggi, and Matthew Stalder. Though falling under the same broad thematic umbrella, they showcase diverse approaches to the interpretation of Graeco-Roman myths. This is best seen in Genevieve and Raine's papers, which examine the same text through varied theoretical lenses, with the former surveying the 'othering' of subaltern groups, and the latter offering a queer, feminist reading of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Where these authors examine Latin poetry, Cheyenne and Matthew study Greek tragedy in their essays, centering Sophocles' *Oedipus* and other literature through their respective explorations of intra-family violence, and inter-textual shifts in mythology across space and time. While her fellow contributors focused on literary analyses, Sophia worked to integrate textual and iconographic evidence in her essay on Hermes, arguing that *herms* were physical embodiments of the god's metaphorical liminality.

Studies of Roman social history are also well-represented via papers authored by Patrick Homes, Katherine Wen, and Rhiann Thomas, with all three submitted for different courses. Patrick draws clear links between economic fluctuations and increasing civil unrest in his essay, rejecting a top-down historical approach through an analysis of land ownership during the Roman Republic. The push-and-pull between social and economic status in ancient Rome is further reflected in Katherine's work, which shifts attention to the Imperial Period to assess the extent to which Petronius' literary allusions are indicative of life under Nero's rule. In a different vein, Rhiann Thomas' paper takes a broad anthropological approach to gender and grief as experienced in Roman Italy and the Provinces. Leveraging literary and epigraphic material, she presents a comparative ethnography between ancient Rome and contemporary Brazil to challenge scholarly perceptions of motherhood in antiquity. In departing from the Classical world, the final essay in this volume turns focus to Egypt and the Near East. Through a survey of various funerary texts, Jade Cotsanis offers a longitudinal study of mortuary practices amongst various social classes in ancient Egypt, from the Predynastic Period to the New Kingdom.

I am further delighted to note that the remit of *Kylix* has been expanded through the inclusion of four reports, spanning from museum reviews to fieldwork synopses and experimental works. Informed by a rich art-historical perspective, Alice Kirby's piece offers a personal reflection of her visit to the *Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze*. Using her father's advice as a motif, she asks her readers to follow in her footsteps by taking "special notice of the unfinished slaves", which are juxtaposed against the imposing *David* to capture Michelangelo's sculptural skills—and



fallibility—in new light. The volume also includes two co-authored field reports of projects conducted in Italy, both of which shape the contours of geographically, temporally, and culturally diverse archaeological sites. The first report traces the daily lives of three students on their first overseas excavation, the *Marzuolo Archaeological Project*, a Roman multi-craft production site located in central Italy. We follow the authors—Imogen Groenhout, Mary Nichol, and Ivana Skok—as they develop their skills in excavation and artefact analysis, and ultimately see their confidence blossom after a month spent working alongside an international team in the Tuscan countryside.

Moving further south to the region of Calabria, we encounter diverse archaeological contexts in Grace Reeve and Rocco Lombardo's report. Their contribution frames the broad methodologies of the joint *Plain of Gioia Tauro (PGT)* and *Nolio Excavation* projects, which utilise site survey and excavation to furnish insights into settlement development and burial practices in pre-Roman southern Italy. Viewing the project through Grace and Rocco's eyes, we gain an intimate understanding of the quotidian aspects of survey and digging, as well as an overview of each team member's specialisations. Last, though certainly not least, *Kylix* closes on a report written by Justine Walsh. Perhaps the most novel contribution to this volume, Justine's paper retells their experience manufacturing artefacts during an experimental archaeology course abroad. Weaving together various theoretical threads, from phenomenology to materiality, Justine grapples with the concept of object agency, providing an ontological reading of their experience which neatly bridges human and material agency.

The publication of the above papers was made possible by our dedicated editorial team, all of whom work for the journal on a voluntary basis. I extend my sincerest gratitude to my

colleagues for their assistance in producing our second volume, and for taking time away from their own research to do so. First, I thank Ruby Mackle for her efforts as Secretary/Junior Editor, and our Graphic Designer, Grace Reeve, who has created countless elegant visuals for *Kylix* since its inception. Thanks also to the other members of our design team, including Alice Wallis, our diligent and self-motivated Social Media Editor, and our Format Editor, Rory Lewis, who has devoted significant energy to the elaboration of our new template. Next, I thank our four peer reviewers: Alice Kirby, Christian Hjorth Bagger, Dr Laura Pisanu, and Viktor Linusson. Each of you not only provided valuable feedback to our student authors, but offered me indispensable advice in my role as Editor. Lastly, I thank the founders of *Kylix*—Dr Lieve Donnellan and Tom Keep—for affording me the opportunity to oversee this brilliant team, as well as SHAPS Head of School, Professor Margaret Cameron, for her continued support of the journal.

In sum, I hope our readers find merit in both the production and contents of our second volume. Each of the thirteen papers voice unique perspectives, working together to form a colourful mosaic of undergraduate research on the ancient Mediterranean world. It is my pleasure to present these studies to you in the following pages of *Kylix*, and to acknowledge those who brought this publication to fruition.

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EDITOR

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Tayla is an archaeologist and commencing PhD candidate at the University of Cambridge. She holds a BA (Hons. I) with a double major in archaeology and ancient history from the University of Sydney, and recently completed a Master of Arts in archaeology at the University of Melbourne. Tayla's research explores networks of identity and interaction in pre-Roman southern Italy, with a focus on burial goods and the integration of feminist and postcolonial theory. She has participated in both domestic and international archaeological projects, and has been the recipient of numerous awards, including a University Medal, research scholarships, and fieldwork grants. Tayla previously served as President of the University of Melbourne's Classics and Archaeology Postgraduate Society, and as a departmental student representative.



SECRETARY & JUNIOR EDITOR

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Ruby is a Master of Arts candidate in Classics and Archaeology at the University of Melbourne. She completed a BA (Hons.) in Anthropology and Classics at the University of Otago, New Zealand, in 2022. Her MA thesis examines depictions of Roman agricultural landscapes in literary sources, in comparison to the archaeological evidence. She is interested in landscape archaeology, investigating relationships between people and landscapes in the past, and works at the intersection between different fields of study. Ruby also holds other roles around the department, including Secretary for the Classics and Archaeology Postgraduate Society, tutoring, and writing for the SHAPS Forum blog.



GRAPHIC DESIGN

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Grace is a BA (Hons.) student majoring in Ancient World Studies. Her thesis involves the examination of interactions between Greeks and Egyptians during the Ptolemaic period through the domestic material record. Grace has excavated in Italy alongside others from the *Kylix* team and has also studied briefly in Greece. She currently works as an archaeologist in Melbourne, excavating and processing artefacts from both Colonial and Indigenous sites. Outside of archaeology, Grace has previously illustrated for Melbourne University's *Farrago* magazine. She is thrilled to combine her passions for art and ancient history in her design work for *Kylix* Journal.



SOCIAL MEDIA EDITOR

ALICE WALLIS

Alice is currently completing their Bachelor of Arts, focusing on all things ancient history. They love learning about anything and everything, but their passion lies primarily in architectural history and the history of propaganda. They love to draw, having made a range of ancient-inspired drawings, paintings, and pots for fun in their free time. They hope to continue pursuing this love of ancient history by getting involved with museum curatorship or artefact conservation in the future. They are excited to be on the *Kylīx* team with such an amazing group of academics and creatives, and look forward to continued engagement with the enthusiastic Ancient World Studies community.



FORMAT EDITOR

RORY LEWIS

Rory is a Juris Doctor student at the University of Sydney. He previously completed a BA at the University of Melbourne majoring in Ancient World Studies. His particular area of interest is Roman Law, and how it affected individuals at all levels of society. Rory hopes to continue his studies of the ancient world through a specifically legal lens and to pursue a new interest in typesetting, inspired by his work on *Kylīx*.



PEER REVIEW

ALICE KIRBY

Alice is currently completing a Diploma of Latin alongside a Master's of Creative Writing, Publishing, and Editing. She completed her undergraduate degree in Science, majoring in Physiology at the University of Melbourne. Her special interests include Classical mythology, gender studies, etymology, and both ancient and modern literature. Alice has been intensely fascinated by ancient cultures since her Dad read Greek and Roman myths to her as a child. She is excited to have contributed an alternative perspective to *Kylīx* through her scientific and linguistic backgrounds.

**PEER REVIEW****CHRISTIAN HJORTH BAGGER**

Christian is a PhD Candidate in Ancient History at the University of Melbourne. His research focuses on elite senatorial women in the Late Roman Republic (ca. 133–27 BCE) and their perceived and real influence on the socio-political environment in the times of civil wars, political unrest, internecine strife, socio-economic changes, and transitions. Christian is a former fellow of the Danish Institute in Rome, and is currently a junior-editor and contributor to the Danish online encyclopedia on the topics of Ancient Civil War, the Late Roman Republic, and Women and Power in Ancient Rome.

**PEER REVIEW****DR LAURA PISANU**

Laura is an archaeologist and holds a PhD from the University of Melbourne. She specialises in studies of the Mediterranean Bronze and Iron Ages, with a focus on the Nuragic Civilisation. She completed the *Scuola di Specializzazione in Beni Archeologici* (level 8 EQL), with Master's and Bachelor's degrees in archaeology from the University of Cagliari. She has taken part in numerous excavations, including at the UNESCO site of Su Nuraxi, and directed her own fieldwork activities for her PhD research, including pedestrian surveys in central-western Sardinia. Laura has extensive experience in the analysis of material culture, especially pottery and GIS-based studies.

**PEER REVIEW****VIKTOR LINUSSON**

Viktor is a PhD student at the Universities of Melbourne and Bonn, who specialises in ceramic petrography. His project concentrates on the pottery found during recent surveys in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, southern Italy. Viktor has previously held the major scholarship of archaeology at the Swedish Institute of Rome, and will continue his research there until the end of the year. Prior to his PhD, he completed his BA and MA degrees at Uppsala University, focusing on Etruscan archaeology.



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Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Marginality in Ancient Roman Mythology

GENEVIEVE CASTLES-KRUSEC

ANCW20015: Classical Mythology

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Personified by monsters, the presence of marginalisation is prevalent in Roman mythology with a purpose of crafting the notion of the 'other'. Serving as a narrative tool of mythology to highlight the grandeur and divinity of heroes and the gods, monsters can be interpreted as individuals who do not assume the norms of ancient Roman society, and therefore can only exist peripherally, as bystanders. Marginality is personified in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* by physical deformations of the human body where delinquency is an attribute, and often a cause, of grotesque hybridity. Born in 43 BCE, Ovid's teenage years were shaped by the materialisation of Augustan imperialist rule in Roman society which brought stability, security and expansion of the Roman empire following the conclusion of the civil war.¹

The Romanisation of mythology was a crucial tool to Augustus, as aligning himself with the gods and heroes from ancient stories reinforced the hierarchy and cultural norms he intended to establish.² The presence of peripheral beings can be seen as emblematic of Augustan imperialism, whereby populations were characterised as primal and subhuman as justification for their violent subjugation, reflecting the hegemony of divinity and monstrosity established through Roman mythology.³ The fluidity of the animal and human binary demonstrated by the process of metamorphosis also suggests the unstable nature of the Augustan political atmosphere. Despite the establishment of ubiquitous imperial authority, Augustus' rule was shrouded by social upheaval from the preceding civil war and dissonance as democratic systems were eroded.⁴ This period of

ancient Rome was defined by extensive efforts to restore cultural order, particularly through a renewed emphasis on religious cohesion and the creative arts, resulting in the conception of works in the Augustan poetic canon.⁵ Thus, animal metamorphosis communicates the cultural implications of Augustus' autocratic rule which fostered a sense of uncertainty and distrust, particularly in segments of society vulnerable to subordination.⁶ The completion of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* coincides with the exile of the poet from Rome, an act that was instigated by Augustus himself for reasons which remain inconclusive.⁷ Ovid's narration in *Metamorphoses* mirrors the divine authority depicted in his stories, exploring the role of language and self-expression in liminality as the audience themselves are confined to a peripheral view of the world he constructed.

Transformation of the human figure is a pervasive theme of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, whereby the marginalisation of individuals is orchestrated by the gods as punishment for some defiance or disobedience of their wishes. Perhaps most pertinently, the monsters or marginal beings of Roman mythology are characterised as deserving of their grotesque reality, one where the mind and body become disturbingly incoherent, resulting in a loss of human expression and agency.⁸ The inherent punishment of metamorphosis is confronting the 'other', entailing the degradation of the human figure into something without agency over itself, or within society.⁹ The 'other' is a sociological concept deeply embedded in the colonial framework; inferiority is dictated on the basis of a deviation from cultural values to justify violent exploitation or elimination.¹⁰ In the

1 Griffin 1977: 59.

2 Augustus depicted himself as a man and a god through his connections to the Gods, noted by Pandey 2013: 444.

3 Solodow 1988: 85.

4 Talbert 1984: 61.

5 The Augustan poets are Ovid, Virgil, and Horace, as noted by Orlin 2007: 76.

6 Particularly individuals defiant of the undemocratic system or Augustan mythology, per Grebe 2004: 42. Segal (1998: 36) describes animal metamorphosis as a reflection of cultural anxieties.

7 Goold 1983: 94.

8 Curran 1972: 73.

9 Gymnich and Costa 2006: 71.

10 Stets and Burke 2000: 225.



Augustan context, the 'other' applies to victims of imperial power (for example, outcasts or slaves) whose self-determination and agency is infringed upon.¹¹ Crucially, this process of dehumanisation is analogous to becoming an animal in the world of *Metamorphoses*, with the body becoming a visual object rather than an articulate vessel of action.¹²

In the story of Actaeon's transformation into the stag, Ovid explores how such degradation elicits fragmentation of the mind and body, as the individual loses their ability to control reality. Actaeon is metamorphised as punishment by Diana in retaliation for his "guiltless" voyeurism (Ov. *Met.* 3.142) which resulted in her own transformation into a sexual object. His reality quickly deteriorates into what Segal terms a *Kafkaesque* nightmare, where the binaries of humanity "decompose into chaos"¹³ as the hunter becomes the hunted. Actaeon is presented by Ovid as deeply disturbed by his inability to communicate, as a groan is "the only speech he has, and the tears run down cheeks that are not his own" (Ov. *Met.* 3.203-204). Actaeon's powerlessness becomes apparent here as the hunter conceivably sees doom in his reflection, realising he will become another voiceless target of his former companions. The detailed narration of Actaeon's maiming is accompanied by the portrayal of the brutality unfolding as a "good show" (Ov. *Met.* 3.253), suggesting that the hunter's mind remains an enjoyer of the violence as he objectifies himself in a final effort to avoid the reality of his transformation. "Fearful" (Ov. *Met.* 3.198) of the animalistic 'other' he now confronts, Actaeon's metamorphosis emphasises a crisis of identity that comes about through marginalisation as he grapples with his warped reality. It is not his mutilated body that makes Actaeon an Ovidian monster but instead, his distorted sense of self which instils the most terror in this story.

Uncertainty is a significant motif of the stories of *Metamorphoses*, as Ovid strays from the fated order of Greek mythology and explores the volatility of divine power, which is often impulsive and cruel. Many of the transformations in *Metamorphoses* are not founded in prophetic principle and instead

highlight the disturbing exploitation of power employed by the gods. An appreciable sense of this erratic power is imparted in the story of Arachne as she foolishly humiliates Minerva, resulting in her metamorphosis into a spider. Ovid's tale establishes the young woman as "no one" (Ov. *Met.* 6.9), only gaining acceptance through the development of her "famous skill" (Ov. *Met.* 6.14). Arachne's only crime appears to be her defiance of Minerva's authority and, while she is "boast[ful]" of her weaving" (Ov. *Met.* 6.7), the young woman is undoubtedly talented. Minerva is threatened by this challenge to the sanctity of her craft, but she is also displeased by Arachne's depiction of the "crimes of the gods" in her tapestry (Ov. *Met.* 6.132). It is interesting to note that Arachne never states an intention to portray the gods negatively and this interpretation is imposed upon her work by Minerva and the narrator, who spin a narrative of Arachne as antagonistic.¹⁴ Through her metamorphosis, Arachne is resurrected from a deceased human figure into the body of a spider, forcing her to "hang forever" (Ov. *Met.* 6.137) in permanent liminality. Arachne's transformation into a spider suggests that she possesses a lack of self-restraint in her weaving as she embodies this supposedly animalistic trait, evocative of the objectification of dissident individuals as bestial in literature.¹⁵ Intriguingly, Ovid himself also became a peripheral being, only able to observe ancient Rome from a distance and through his own constructed mythological world, similarly bound to his art as Arachne became perpetually bound to her web.

The narration is made further unreliable through centuries of translation and differing interpretations, as the words of Ovid have themselves undergone a process of metamorphosis, excluding the poet from control over his own words.¹⁶ In the competition between Arachne and Minerva, Ovid draws attention to the deceptive nature of storytelling through meta-poetic awareness. Through the enjambment¹⁷ "blending, so the eye could never detect the boundary line" (Ov. *Met.* 6.61-62), Ovid emphasises that the seamless 'rainbow' of yarn (Ov. *Met.* 6.60) is distorted by its observers, as the

11 Bradley 1988: 492.

12 Segal 1998: 23.

13 Segal 1998: 10.

14 An example of Ovid actively reinforcing marginality, noted by Oliensis 2004: 291.

15 Desblache 2005: 381.

16 Harries 1990: 75.

17 I.e. one line of poetry carrying over to the next line without punctuation.



stories of the kaleidoscopic tapestries are codified by the narrator and the audience. The intentions of both Arachne and Minerva are consequently debatable, as their identities are warped by Ovid and then reconstructed through adaptations of the text. Originally written in Latin, the “versatility” of Ovid’s stories becomes apparent when translating *Metamorphoses*.¹⁸ Many Latin terms are not specifically suited to any one English word or phrase and therefore, translators possess influence over the sentiment and attitudes conveyed.¹⁹ Therefore, the thematic concerns of a time period directly influence the translations and understanding of the poems, resulting in literature that is teeming with inconstancy.²⁰ Similarly, the third-person narration of *Metamorphoses* resonates as fragmentary, as Ovid dictates what can be seen by the reader as the creator of this world.²¹ This relationship parallels that of Arachne and Minerva, and Actaeon and Diana, as the gods construct the realities of their subordinates, forcing them into docility. Thus, the distorted identities of Actaeon and Arachne as depicted by Ovid translate to both his own identity and to the identity of his works, constructing an idea of the self and the ‘other’ as oscillating concepts.

To conclude, in Roman mythology, marginal beings function as symbols of transformation in reference to both social positioning, and Augustan culture. As established in the tales of Actaeon and Arachne in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*, animal metamorphosis reverberates the *mise-en-abîme*²² of political turmoil in Augustan Rome and the internal transformations of the poet, particularly in relation to his influence on an audience. Ovid divulges the crisis of identity that is experienced when social isolation occurs, by exploring the power dynamics of the mythological world as an allegory for Augustan imperialism. The peripheral beings of *Metamorphoses* represent a facet of the self that fears a loss of agency, but also anxieties in the socio-historical context in which Ovid wrote his poetry, highlighting the unpredictable nature of reality. Marginality is therefore contrived by Ovid and the gods in *Metamorphoses*, alluding to

an understanding of the ‘other’ as an ephemeral construct of language and social norms, acting to obscure anomalous perspectives.

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18 Anderson 1963: 2.

19 The diversity of possible English translations of Latin terminology used to describe metamorphosis is highlighted by Anderson 1963: 2–5. The poems have also historically been used in reinforcing social norms, such as in Renaissance or the Middle Ages, summarised by Griffin 1977: 58.

20 Harries 1990: 64.

21 Claassen 2013: 35–7.

22 Or the notion of being placed into the abyss.



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The Significance of Funerary Texts in Ancient Egyptian Mortuary Practice

JADE COTSANIS

ANCW30011: Underworld and Afterlife

Keywords: Ancient Egypt • Archaeological • Funerary Texts • Mortuary • Ritual

Ancient Egyptian mortuary practice has captured the public's fascination from the earliest waves of western Egyptomania in the 1920s to the present day.¹ In particular, Egyptian funerary texts such as the *Book of the Dead* have remained present in the public eye, with reprints of E. A. Wallis Budge's translation continually appearing into the 2020s.² However, though certain Egyptian funerary texts have remained a large part of the public's interaction with the civilisation's mortuary practice, they were not always a substantial part of funerary proceedings. Rather, their significance fluctuated from the Predynastic Period to the New Kingdom.

Before pharaonic rule, funerary texts were insignificant in the wider scope of mortuary practice since the Egyptian hieroglyphic script was not yet fully developed. However, this Predynastic Period did lay the foundations of ritual practice and the Egyptian people's concerns regarding the deceased and afterlife, which funerary texts would later come to encompass and address. The mortuary practices of the Old Kingdom indicated the growing importance of funerary texts in Egyptian traditions, since pharaohs of the late fifth dynasty onwards were entombed surrounded by the *Pyramid Texts*. However, the Middle Kingdom and New Kingdom saw funerary texts reach the peak of their significance in mortuary practice, becoming a necessity in a greater number of burials regardless of royal status.³ The prevalence of the *Judgment Text*—and the multiple variations of it within the archaeological record—exemplifies the importance that funerary texts eventually reached in the mortuary practices of

ancient Egypt.

Funerary texts in ancient Egypt were written on a variety of surfaces, from inscriptions on tomb walls or on coffins, to being written on papyrus which was subsequently buried or entombed alongside the deceased.⁴ There was rarely a definitive full 'version' of any one funerary text, as there were often hundreds of spells or writings which could appear in varying combinations and on various surfaces.⁵ Hence, while this paper may refer to them by their modern titles, it should be noted that these were not static texts which had a standardised form. The intention of this paper is to highlight the evolution of funerary texts and their prevalence over the course of ancient Egypt, demonstrating that they are only one limited facet through which Egyptian mortuary practice can be understood.

The Predynastic Period c. 4000–2900 BCE

The archaeological record of the Predynastic Naqada culture, often divided into Naqada I, II, and III, shows little evidence of a developed writing system. As such, funerary texts are absent from the burials and mortuary practices from this period.⁶ Rather than written texts, Predynastic pit and tomb burials incorporated pottery, basic tools, food, and precious objects, such as metal beads.⁷ The inclusion of such burial goods, which could be utilised by a living person, suggests there could have existed a rudimentary belief in life after death, a concept that written texts would later come to help facilitate the journey to.⁸ Hence, despite writing having yet to develop to the point

1 Fritze 2016: 10.

2 For example, in 2024 Arcturus Publishing Limited released a version of Budge's translation edited by John Baldock.

3 Barbash 2017: 75.

4 Hays 2012: 139.

5 Romer 2008.

6 Murray 1956: 86.

7 Petrie and Mace 1901: 35; Murray 1956: 93; Hikade 2010: 2–3.

8 Murray 1956: 93.



of expressing complex ideas, the groundwork of what funerary texts would come to encompass in later periods was likely already established.⁹ That is not to say that funerary texts completely replaced the need for physical objects to be entombed with the deceased, as the provision of tools, food, or representative objects of the former continued throughout Egypt's existence.¹⁰ An early example of this concern for the dead can be identified in the *Pyramid Texts*, the primary funerary texts of the Old Kingdom, which were written on tomb walls at Saqqara.¹¹ In Utterances 12–9, the primary concern appears to be the restoration of the corpse, and the presentation of food and water to the deceased.¹² It is clear that funerary texts were absent and thus insignificant in the mortuary practices of the Predynastic Period. However, when funerary texts came into greater use in the subsequent periods of Egypt, they directly addressed the needs of the afterlife that were seemingly established in this Predynastic Period, thereby cementing themselves as important parts of funerary practice.

The Old Kingdom c. 2543–2120 BCE: The *Pyramid Texts*

The Old Kingdom marked the first period in Egypt to have a textual tradition incorporated into the burials of pharaohs. However, funerary texts were still absent and hence inconsequential in the graves of non-royals during this time. The *Pyramid Texts* were found inscribed in the sarcophagus chambers of the Saqqara pyramids, detailing the king's ascension to the afterlife, but were not incorporated into the basic burials of the average Egyptian.¹³ These inscribed utterances which make up the *Pyramid Texts* are evidence of a direct use of text within mortuary practice, but it is the information and purpose behind these texts which exhibit the extent of their importance. In their explicit reference to the king's journey and ascension to godhood, the *Pyramid Texts* are overtly interlinked with the divine and the afterlife.¹⁴ Utterance 218 exemplifies this, where

the king "...comes indeed [as] an imperishable spirit, who surpasses [Osiris]".¹⁵ The Egyptian beliefs regarding the power of effective and creative speech, which was seen to help cause or invoke whatever was stated, intertwines with this description in an effort to manifest what should happen after the pharaoh's death.¹⁶ The *Pyramid Texts* also include instances of warning, such as Utterance 213, "O King, beware of the lake!"¹⁷ Again, this effective speech with its protective properties appears to act as a buffer to the dangers the pharaoh would otherwise face on his journey to the afterlife.¹⁸

The name of the hieroglyphic script itself demonstrates the growing power and importance of funerary texts in mortuary tradition, acting as a way to ensure the safety of the dead. The name the Egyptians gave their script, transliterated *mdw-nTr*, translates approximately to "Speech of the Gods", demonstrating the overt connection created between the written word and divine power.¹⁹ Considering the pharaoh himself was seen as an incarnation of the god Horus, it is reasonable to see how this earliest "Speech of the Gods" was used almost exclusively to ensure the pharaoh would return to his rightful place amongst the divine after his death.²⁰ Furthermore, death itself has the implication of being impermanent in the *Pyramid Texts*, thus contributing to the resurrection of the deceased. Utterance 666A begins with "Rise up, O Sleeper!", associating death to the temporary state of sleep and thus further necessitating complex ritual protection to keep both the physical and immaterial form safe.²¹ Yet, as evidenced through the language used to refer to the deceased in Utterance 214, "O King", it is clear that this particular funerary text was limited to use with the pharaoh himself. Burial goods such as plain and decorated pottery, typically filled with provisions, still took precedence in the burials of the masses during the Old Kingdom as in the Predynastic Period.²² Furthermore, the provision of food to the deceased was not wholly absent in royal burials during this period either, though it was partially encompassed by Utterance 223: "O

9 Ray 1986: 309.

10 Grajetzki 2014: 137.

11 Lichtheim 2006: 29.

12 Faulkner 1969: 2–3.

13 Lichtheim 2006: 29.

14 Faulkner 1969: 45.

15 Faulkner 1969: 45.

16 Allen 2014: 195.

17 Faulkner 1969: 41.

18 Allen 2014: 41.

19 Allen 2014: 521.

20 Allen 2014: 521.

21 Faulkner 1969: 278.

22 Murray 1956: 93; Faulkner 1969: 51.



King... sit down to a thousand of bread [and] a thousand of beer...".²³ The Old Kingdom saw funerary texts drastically increase in their presence in royal mortuary practice, but they were still infrequent when it came to the burials of most other individuals.

The Middle Kingdom c. 2040–1648 BCE: The Coffin Texts

Following the First Intermediate Period (c. 2120–1648 BCE), funerary texts became of greater significance to non-royal mortuary practice.²⁴ With the destabilisation of central power during the First Intermediate Period formerly inaccessible aspects of funerary texts, such as the protective spells they contained and their incorporation into mortuary practice, became available to a greater part of the population and thus grew in prevalence in non-royal burials.²⁵ This dissemination of funerary texts and the information they held is made evident in the explicit links between The *Pyramid Texts* and their successor, the *Coffin Texts*, in the Middle Kingdom.²⁶ Named for the fact they were often written on the wooden coffins of the deceased, it is likely they were also written on papyrus and other materials included in the tomb.²⁷ With the *Coffin Texts*, it was no longer only deceased royalty who required and had access to spells that could protect them on their journey after death. Instead, as a result of greater accessibility to practices previously reserved for royalty, a greater number of Egyptians saw a need for magical protection through funerary texts.²⁸ This shift has, at times, been referred to as democratisation of the afterlife; however, there are debates as to how accurate this term is and if it accurately reflects the gradual transition of funerary texts from being solely associated with royal burials, to being utilised by other parts of society.²⁹ Regardless, some shift in the target of the *Coffin Texts* can clearly be seen in the language used

in comparison to the *Pyramid Texts*. In particular, the text forgoes the use of 'King' and instead refers to the deceased using more general terms like 'you' or 'your'. In Utterance 214 of the *Pyramid Texts*, the deceased is referred to "O King" compared to Spell 10 of The Coffin Texts in which it states "The portal is opened for you...".³⁰

However, the *Coffin Texts* still retained several aspects of the *Pyramid Texts*, both in the case of death being treated as a temporary or transitional state, and in the case of protecting the deceased from any challenges they may encounter. In Spell 112 of the *Coffin Texts*, the passage states that its intention is to "...not let a man's heart sit down against him...". In essence, this particular spell ensured the actions of the deceased during their lifetime would not be counted against them when facing the scrutiny of the gods.³¹ Another example can be seen in the Ritual Opening of the Mouth Text, which Bjerre Finnestad understands as having given instruction on how the body, or a representative statue, could be given a semblance of life.³² When performed on a statue, Finnestad argues, the ritual created a conduit: a way for the living to communicate with the deceased.³³ In both instances, at least for those who could afford the funerary text or object, those still living were given an avenue to have an active role in ensuring the care of the deceased by aiding them in gaining safe passage, and through leaving them offerings.³⁴

This shift in the accessibility of the afterlife, and the details on how to arrive there safely, seemed to allow funerary texts to grow far more significant in Egyptian society during the later kingdoms. Regardless of one's status in life, funerary texts began to allow more individuals to access the afterlife through spells which could protect and guide them. Furthermore, it created another avenue for the deceased to have a continual presence in the lives of their remaining family.

23 Faulkner 1969: 51.

24 The Intermediate Periods were typically characterised by a destabilisation of central power, accompanied by a fragmentation of Upper and Lower Egypt.

25 Smith 2009: 2.

26 Smith 2009: 2.

27 Faulkner 1973: vii.

28 Hays 2011: 116.

29 Hays 2011, 116; Smith 2009: 2–3.

30 Faulkner 1969: 41; 1973: 10.

31 Faulkner 1973.

32 Finnestad 1978: 121.

33 Finnestad 1978: 126.

34 Finnestad 1978: 126.



The New Kingdom c. 1540–1096 BCE: The *Book of the Dead*

The *Judgment Text* from the *Book of the Dead* is in some ways a culmination of the growing accessibility of mortuary texts and their importance in Egyptian burials. Copies of the text are prevalent in the archaeological record, with several in the holdings of the The British Museum and The MET, as well as multiple other museum collections.³⁵ Again, like the previous iterations of funerary texts, the *Book of the Dead* addresses many of the same concerns which were established in the Predynastic Period and Old Kingdom. As Alice Stevenson suggests, one of the greatest concerns for the Egyptian people regarding death was the journey the spirit was required to take to its destination, and the ease with which the journey could be navigated.³⁶ Predynastic burial goods addressed these concerns through material goods, while the *Pyramid Texts* began to explicitly warn the deceased king on what he may encounter on his journey.³⁷ The *Coffin Texts* had similar intentions to the preceding texts, but for a larger portion of society, and began specifically illustrating the importance of passing a form of judgment.³⁸ The *Book of the Dead* is a culmination of these concerns, and the extent to which such written safeguards became a significant part of Egyptian mortuary practice. The *Judgment Text* exemplifies this, in that it was one of the most prolifically copied and widespread portions of the *Book of the Dead*.³⁹ Part of the text reads as follows, “There hath not been found any wickedness in [the deceased]...while [the deceased] was upon the earth.”⁴⁰ Coupling this phrase with the Egyptian belief in the power of their script, through recitation and physically writing out such claims they were effectively rendered true.⁴¹ Despite the economic differences between the people who purchased or commissioned scrolls containing the *Judgment Text*, a common denominator of many New Kingdom and Third Intermediate Period

burials was the inclusion of a piece of the *Book of the Dead*, like the aforementioned text.⁴² These texts seemed to move from being an optional addition whose mere presence denoted higher status, to being a necessity in what were deemed ‘good’ burials.⁴³ As such, the New Kingdom, and the Third Intermediate Period which followed it, marked the moment in Egypt where funerary texts appeared to grow to their greatest prevalence, and significance, in mortuary practice and funerary traditions.

Conclusion

From the Predynastic Period through to the New Kingdom, mortuary traditions developed and eventually included texts as a key component to ensure the safety of the deceased. However, the prevalence of funerary texts in the later periods should not result in an assumption that they were equally as prevalent and important in the earlier stages of Egyptian civilisation. The *Pyramid Texts*, *Coffin Texts*, and the *Book of the Dead* all came to encompass many of the traditional beliefs and concerns surrounding the deceased that saw their beginnings in the early Predynastic burials. They are a facet through which we can understand the anxieties and concerns of the people who performed them, but they are only one small part of a larger and more complex system of funerary practices which combined both the written word, and physical objects like statues and offerings.

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35 Examples include the *Book of the Dead for the Chantress of Amun Nauny* recovered from the Tomb of Meritamen in Upper Egypt, and the *Book of the Dead of Khary Wesay*.

36 Stevenson 2015: 78; O’Rourke 2016: 25.

37 Faulkner 1969: 41; Stevenson 2015: 78.

38 Faulkner 1973: 106.

39 Stevenson 2015: 78.

40 Romer 2008: 21.

41 Allen 2014: 521.

42 Barbash 2017: 75; O’Rourke 2016: 13, 33; Taylor 2010: 13.

43 Barbash 2017: 75.



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Female Homoeroticism in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*

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Gender and sexuality in Augustan Rome were founded on a chauvinistic and phallocentric paradigm, where deviating desires were undermined and suppressed, a primary example being intimate relationships between women.¹ In his *Metamorphoses*, Ovid lends a voice to this idea in the story of Iphis (Ov. *Met.* 9.664–797), whose romantic desire for Ianthe is deemed unnatural and is hindered solely by their lack of a penis.² Furthermore, through the personal dynamic between Callisto and Diana (Ov. *Met.* 2.401–507), Ovid displays an intimate relationship between women that exists outside of the normative sexual boundaries: homoeroticism between two women that functions without a phallus.³ Although both myths express a sexual desire between women,⁴ Iphis' love is restrained by the incomprehensibility of non-phallic intimacy,⁵ whereas the divine lovers hint at a more liminal desire that is interconnected with their virginity and divinity, and acts as an ideological contrast to Iphis' predicament of mortal desperation for marginal love. This essay will argue that the myths manifest two realisations of female-female desire in Augustan Rome: the mortal Iphis' desire, which can only come to fruition through their phallicisation, and the liminal huntresses' relationship, which represents an unattainable love removed from phallocentric Rome. Ovid solidifies the idea that two women cannot conceptually form acceptable sexual relationships, but he does so from inside a Roman framework in an attempt to foreground their voices.⁶ From an inability to understand his

characters' desires, he laments their burden of being women 'cursed' to love other women in a society that precludes it.

Iphis is one of the female-bodied figures in the poem that has been cursed to love a woman and who, in their inability to conceive a non-phallic resolution to their feelings, only finds salvation in receiving a penis and becoming a man. In a soliloquy of despair, it becomes evident that the target of Iphis' blame is not Roman society, but that of Nature itself (Ov. *Met.* 9.758–9), which reinforces the cosmological redundancy of non-phallic, romantic intimacy in Rome.⁷ As they lament the unnaturalness of same-sex desire, Iphis compares their situation to animals, even making a comparison to the mythic coupling between Pasiphae and the Cretan bull, which Iphis deems more natural because the bull had a penis, and they do not (Ov. *Met.* 9.726–41). While intimate relationships between women were not unknown in the Roman world,⁸ Iphis' predicament stems from their desire to fulfil the marital and filial obligations of a husband through consummation (Ov. *Met.* 9.755–63). In the few instances where ancient authors refer to intimacy between women, they usually do so scornfully, often abiding to terms such as *tribades*, employed by Roman authors from the beginning of the first century CE onward to express their disdain towards female homoeroticism.⁹ Such terms are frequently used to describe women who take a dominant, penetrative role during intercourse, such that they conformed

1 Clark 1981: 193; Oliver 2015: 281; Swancutt 2007: 2–11.

2 Moore 2021: 106–7; Walker 2006: 211. Though there are different approaches to understanding Iphis' gender, discussions of it are too extensive to be evaluated here. As a result, gender-neutral, third-person pronouns are used when referencing Iphis in this essay.

3 Oliver 2015: 297–8.

4 Moore 2021: 95–101; Sharrock 2020: 50. Other valid interpretations of the myth align Iphis with transgenderism, but such a reading, while important, will not be discussed in this essay.

5 Oliver 2015: 282; Swancutt 2007: 46; Walker 2006: 207.

6 Moore 2021: 111–2.

7 Moore 2021: 107–8; Oliver 2015: 282; Walker 2006: 210–1; Williams 1999: 7, 18.

8 Auanger 2002: 216–22; Moore 2021: 104–6.

9 Auanger 2002: 213–22; Boehringer 2021: 189–90.



to the phallogocentric ideals of penetration.¹⁰ Ovid circumnavigates the possible contempt towards Iphis by having them condemn their own feelings and yearning for a male body (Ov. *Met.* 9.442–3), such that the audience and Iphis spurn the same thing. Thus, as Iphis laments Nature for the curse it brought upon them, the scorn shifts from Iphis to the nature of love and attraction, evoking sympathy for the girl who did not choose to love. Despite the marginality of Iphis' desire in accordance with Roman ideology, the poem attempts to release and express it through its sympathy and pity for Iphis,¹¹ to give a name to a desire that could not be conceived.¹²

While Iphis is female-bodied with masculine characteristics, they manage to escape the contempt of the stereotypical *tribas* by conforming to the androcentric values of Rome. They were raised as a boy which resulted in an androgynous look that successfully disguised their female body, and were described as handsome: a masculine adjective (Ov. *Met.* 9.711–14).¹³ Despite the masculinisation of Iphis, *tribas* describes a purely sexual activity which does not align with Iphis' romantic love for Ianthe, such that this label does not fit. Alongside the elusive myth of Callisto, Iphis might be the only representation of female same-sex desire in Classical myth,¹⁴ which means that Ovid most likely did not build upon a precedent of female homoerotic representation in myth. Thus, Ovid's portrayal of Iphis can be viewed as a conscious effort to remove them from contemptuous attitudes toward same-sex desire, instead metamorphosing scorn into sympathy. He presents his audience with the emotion of homoerotic love framed in an androcentric Roman context such that both the innocent love and structure of Roman ideology remains unsullied; only Nature is to blame. Through Iphis, Ovid presents the audience with a notion of love between two women in the form of an idea; an expression of what such a desire might look like, and its inability to exist in Roman society. Essentially, Ovid upholds the Roman values of phallogocentric sexual relationships by confining

Iphis' desire to them, while simultaneously expressing a love deserving of commiseration, doomed by the very society of its time.

Ovid also depicts an intimacy between women through Callisto and Diana, with the implication that they enjoyed this intimacy removed from the phallogocentric paradigm of ancient Rome. The myth tells the tale of the Arcadian nymph Callisto—part of Diana's retinue—who is seduced and raped by Jupiter while disguised as Diana. Ovid describes Callisto as Diana's dearest companion (Ov. *Met.* 2.415–6), which is complemented by Callisto's rejoicing in the beautiful sight of who she believes to be her goddess (Ov. *Met.* 2.428–9), establishing their mutual appreciation for each other. The nature of their relationship then starts to unfold as Jupiter, disguised as Diana, kisses Callisto in a manner without "the restraint becoming to a maiden's kisses" (Ov. *Met.* 2.431).¹⁵ Callisto reciprocates his advances as she appears neither surprised nor uncomfortable and begins to tell of her hunt as if their intimacy is ordinary; only when Jupiter reveals himself does Callisto reject their endeavours (Ov. *Met.* 2.432–7).¹⁶ The implication is that Callisto and Diana enjoyed a sexual intimacy prior to this event—which Ovid does not elaborate on—instead leaving the idea in the liminal spaces beyond the narrative, with their intimacy introduced at the moment it falls apart.¹⁷ The moment when Callisto reunites with Diana and her retinue is significant:

*She remained silent, and by her blushes gave
clear indication of the wrong she had suffered.
If Diana had not been a virgin goddess, she
could have perceived her guilt by a thousand
signs; the nymphs perceived it, so men say.*
— Ov. *Met.* 2.451–4

Ovid makes it clear that the reason Diana does not notice is because she is a virgin, which implies that the other nymphs who did notice Callisto's suffering were not virgins. The stark insinuation employed by Ovid is that amongst all the virginal

10 Auanger 2002: 213; Moore 2021: 106; Swancutt 2007: 13–3, 21–34; Walker 2006: 11.

11 Moore 2021: 100.

12 Moore 2021: 107–8; Walker 2006: 208.

13 Moore 2021: 102; Swancutt 2007: 26.

14 Kamen 2012: 21; Walker 2006: 205.

15 Boehringer 2021: 209.

16 Oliver 2015: 288.

17 Boehringer 2021: 212; Oliver 2015: 286, 289, 302–4.



nymphs, only Callisto (before Jupiter) might have been an actual virgin, which in turn means that the only virgins in Diana's retinue were Callisto, and Diana herself. Virginity in ancient Rome was a physical construct and was determined based on whether a woman had been penetrated by a penis, and whether the hymen was broken, or still intact.¹⁸ Thus, if Diana and Callisto enjoyed sexual intimacy, but were still virgins, it could be that their chastity was not compromised by their intimacy, and their union was freed from the chains of phallocentrism¹⁹ via a homoerotic relationship realised without a penetrative phallus. Perhaps this reflects a Roman idea through Ovid's eyes that virgin women could enjoy homoerotic intimacy while retaining their chastity. Yet he framed this relationship around divine, not mortal beings.

Hidden in obscurity, the liminal desire between Diana and Callisto is purposefully unnameable to demonstrate its mortal impossibility and incomprehension.²⁰ However, it also imagines an unreachable space beyond Roman contentions where non-phallic female intercourse can exist. Although both Callisto and Diana possess masculine features such as hunting and, for Callisto, rejection of feminised activities (Ov. *Met.* 2.411–2), they also retain their feminised traits of being desirable by mortals and gods alike, being virgins, and generally not aligning with the features of the androgenised *tribas*.²¹ A Greek contemporary of Ovid was Parthenius, who in his work wrote of the mythical man Leucippus who disguised himself as a nymph to seduce Daphne, another nymph (Parthenius, *Love Romances* 15).²² Although from two distinct spheres—Greek and Roman—the parallel between the nymphs' erotic inclinations suggest a mythological tradition whereby nymphs are viewed as sexually inclined towards women. Ovid and Parthenius are two extant ancient sources that could demonstrate a notion of homoeroticism interconnected with the Dianic nymphs, which becomes significant in viewing the historical portrayal of the nymphs. It is only in the Hellenistic and Roman periods that they are primarily framed alongside Diana and

other divinities, whereas previous depictions favoured them as localised, natural deities.²³ However, the bond between Diana/Artemis and Callisto/Kallisto is prevalent in all versions of this myth, even back to 4th century BCE Athens in the comedies of Amphis.²⁴ This indicates that Ovid's depiction of Callisto and Diana might not have been as alien to a Roman audience as it first seems. In fact, several female groupings might have had homosocial/homoerotic connotations, such as the Muses.²⁵ This suggests that the sexual tendencies of virginal, mythical women might already have been socially established as a liminal homoerotic behaviour removed from the phallocentric paradigm of Roman gender, one that is unnamed, but still recognisable to its audience.

Through Ovid's depictions of female same-sex desire, he effectively removes the possibility of its existence in Roman society, while lamenting those cursed with it. Ultimately, he creates a gendered spectrum that, because of Roman perceptions of gender and sex, ranges from the acquisition of a male body and penis as a resolution to unnatural female desires, to the unattainable and incomprehensible love between divine female virgins. This leaves a central vacuum where deviant sexual behaviours and labels such as *tribas* exist within its phallocentric construction. In order to evoke sympathy for these figures, Ovid portrays Iphis with desires that align themselves with Roman values, and Callisto with desires that operate outside of them. Because Iphis is a mortal female within the physical boundaries of the Roman world, their love must also exist within the same established boundaries. In comparison, the love of the liminal (and borderline divine) Callisto has no place in Roman society, so it exists within the divine realm; it is beyond mortals to understand the physical intimacy of Callisto and Diana. Furthermore, Ovid may have been constructing these desires from a preexisting tradition of homosocial virgins and bands of women, expressing their obscured voices through his stories. Thus, by manipulating and stretching Roman ideologies of sex and gender to its limits,

18 Sissa 2013: 68.

19 Oliver 2015: 295–8.

20 Swancutt 2007: 32.

21 Oliver 2015: 294–5.

22 Oliver 2015: 308.

23 Larson 1997: 249–57.

24 Boehringer 2021: 207–210.

25 Auanger (2002) provides an extensive analysis of homosocial and homoerotic depictions of the Graces, Muses, and Aphrodite, and more.



Ovid is able to create a narrative that upholds and promotes them, while also giving a voice to marginal feelings of love. Ovid was a poet after all, and poets are lovers; through Iphis and Callisto, he laments Roman women who might see themselves in these characters, yet cannot realise their desires.

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The Lessons of Populism: Putting Political Analyses of the Late Roman Republic in Socio-Economic Context

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Keywords: Ancient Rome • Economics • Populism • Revolution • Social History

Often when considering what lessons can be learnt from the Fall of the Roman Republic, there tends to be a focus on the democratic nature of the Republic.¹ However, in my view, such an approach tends to see the main causes of the destabilisation of the Republic—increasing political violence, and the increasing power of provincial generals—as issues which were almost self-generating. The people are often seen as gullibly misled into giving away their rights, for, as Juvenal puts it, “bread and circuses”.² Yet, their motivations are often not fully explored or considered. Indeed, studies of populism often focus on the Roman Republic as an exemplar, yet, in so doing, they frequently mistake symptom for cause.³ Populism arose because of the failure of the state to adequately fulfil the needs of its citizens. It is this lesson that has timeless relevance, from the French Revolution to more modern de-industrialisation.

One of the root causes of the Fall of the Roman Republic is the dramatic socio-economic shift in the Italian countryside. The Early and Middle Republics both had a large class of land-owning citizen peasants, from which Rome drew its primary source of manpower for the army, and who were the mainstay of the Roman economy.⁴ The importance of small and medium-scale holdings is evident in the fact that, as recorded by Varro, a specific law was passed limiting the maximum holdings of one man to 500 *iugera* (“land

units”).⁵ The centrality of this kind of one-man, hands-on farming to the Roman mind can even be seen in Roman mythical history, when the great statesman Cincinnatus is recalled from ploughing his farm of only four *iugera* to be made dictator in a time of crisis.⁶

This economic reality underpinned and complemented the Roman constitution. In fact, the key mediator between the people and the aristocracy was not necessarily an entrenched democratic system of checks and balances, but rather, economic clout. For example, the series of *secessiones plebis* (“successions of the plebs”) from 494–287 BCE extracted several concessions from the aristocracy, including a fundamental principle of the constitution: the Tribunes of the Plebs.⁷ These were almost entirely non-violent and relied on the economic sway of the plebeians to affect change. In this way, the Roman constitution grew organically, and thus, in a large part relied upon these fundamental economic conditions.

However, with the rapid expansion of Rome’s empire, and the enrichment of the Roman élites—and principally, the senatorial class who orchestrated these campaigns—the Italian countryside underwent a fundamental re-ordering, one which, as Roselaar puts it, “caused problems for those who were unable to benefit from the favourable economic climate”;⁸ namely, the small citizen farmer. One view of this shift⁹ posits that

1 Unless otherwise cited, all translations are the author’s own.

2 Juv. 10.81

3 Jankowski: 2021; Urbinati: 2013.

4 As argued in Hopkins 1978, Roselaar 2010, and Rosenstein 2004.

5 Varro, *Rust.* 1.9, referring to the *Lex Licinia Sextia* from the 4th century BCE.

6 Liv. 3.26, although it should be noted that Livy was writing after the Fall of the Republic, and, as argued in Kay (2014), later authors tended to over-emphasise the importance of this small-holding farmer in the context of the even greater proliferation of *latifundia* in the Principate.

7 Liv. 2.33, during the first succession of the plebs.

8 Roselaar 2010: 146.

9 See especially Hopkins 1978.



the influx of wealth from war spoils and slave labour changed the economic conditions, and enabled the élites to gradually accumulate expansive estates, termed *latifundia*.¹⁰ Appian states that this was because they could “employ slaves instead of freemen as agricultural workers.”¹¹ This view seems to be supported in some modern demographic reconstructions, which show a disproportionate increase in the slave population from 150–28 BCE.¹²

Furthermore, archaeological evidence attests to the stark contrast between peasant farming and these new intensive, slave-run, farms. Peasant farms tended to be disparate and small-in-scale, with seasonal housing allowing for a kind of itinerant farming in response to changing seasons.¹³ They were not necessarily subsistent but were far less intensive and concentrated than *latifundia*. *Latifundia*, on the other hand, were more centralised, based around a singular, year-round residence, and operated on a more intensive regimen of farming that truly emerged only in the Late Republic.¹⁴ For example, the *latifundium* at Garanaccio seemed to specialise in oil production, with multiple presses, a mill, and other specialised equipment.¹⁵ This almost monocultural approach thus represented a stark shift from small-scale peasant farming for livelihood, to profitable businesses.

This shift had a series of knock-on effects that gradually destabilised the Republic. First, the decline of the peasant class, and the swelling of the urban poor, had serious political implications. Structurally, the urban mass was the most

politically minimised of any class of Roman citizen.¹⁶ Additionally, the small farmer, as has recently been shown, was an active voter with some influence, especially when compared to the urban poor.¹⁷ Thus, the expansion of the urban poor meant that more and more citizens became progressively less politically influential, and hence, disillusioned.

This, combined with the gradual loss of their economic clout, laid the foundation for a growing class of restless poor. The power of the mob, and their increasing vigour and radicalism can be seen in the attempted land reforms of the Gracchi. The fact that they were willing to dispense with ancient principles to impeach M. Octavius, in order to pass Ti. Gracchus’ land reform bill of 133 BCE, is testament to their desperation to be allotted land.¹⁸ Moreover, his eventual murder only served as a further catalyst in the intensification of political violence. The traditional historiographical view that this was caused by the changes in socio-economic conditions outlined above¹⁹ has recently been questioned in contemporary scholarship. For example, Rosenstein contradicts the view that the *latifundia* began in earnest in the Middle Republic, instead positing increased death rates as the cause of landlessness. Thus, the Gracchi reforms could not have addressed the displacement of peasants by *latifundia*.²⁰

Furthermore, he claims that the *suburbium* became progressively desolate in the wake of the closure of small farms, rather than *latifundia* taking their place.²¹ This may be accurate in the Middle Republic, but archaeological evidence has found

10 The term *latifundium* is a contentious one. I use it to mean an intensive farming operation, owned by a member of the élite, much like in White 1967. Marzano (2007) uses the more general term *villa*, but often describes what White classifies as a *latifundium*; I thus call these also *latifundia*.

11 App. *B Civ.* 1.31.

12 Kay 2014: 182.

13 Bowes 2020.

14 As described in Marzano, 2007 and White 1967.

15 Marzano 2007: 104. This type of intensive farm largely accords with the literary descriptions, and particularly Cato’s (*Cato, Agr.* 3).

16 Cic. *Rep.* 2.40 states that the *proletarii* (proletarians) were approximately ninety-six times larger than the entire First Class. See also Hall (1964) for a comprehensive study of the Roman voting system.

17 Rafferty (2021) demonstrates that the rural middle class and peasantry were far more active in elections than previously thought.

18 App. *B Civ.* 1.11–2

19 Cf. Brunt 1972: 77.

20 Rosenstein 2004: 20.

21 Rosenstein 2004: 7.



that several villas of *latifundium* size were founded or expanded in the *suburbium* in the Late Republic.²² Thus, despite the motivations of the Gracchi reforms being placed in serious doubt, the traditional view in its overall interpretation of the socio-economic changes in the Late Republic remain largely accurate and insightful.

Consequently, the influence of increasing food shortages, and a growing class of urban poor, created ideal conditions for the radicalisation of the poor urban population. The demagogue Clodius played off this reality in 59 BCE when, freshly elected as tribune of the plebs, he proposed a similar series of laws to the Gracchi focused on providing affordable grain to the people.²³ This proved a critical destabilising influence, most clearly seen in the aftermath of Clodius' murder.²⁴ The fear from the level of violence caused the Senate to rely upon Pompey to garrison troops and restore order, a very unusual decision during peace-time.²⁵ This not only further militarised the Italian peninsula, but placed the Senate firmly in Pompey's camp, presaging and contributing to the eventual outbreak of the Civil War between Pompey and Caesar (49–45 BCE), which finally spelt doom for the Republic.

Studies of populism, usually operating from a political science framework, often begin at this point, viewing, as Urbinati does, the power of the mob—in its undermining of supposedly sacred and permanent constitutional norms—as anti-democratic.²⁶ Urbinati then generalises from this example to declare that “populism blurs the [sic] constitutional and representative democracy”, and is therefore dangerous, both in ancient Rome, and today.²⁷ This view of Roman history, and of the Roman constitution, in particular, is decidedly myopic; it fails to consider the underlying factors that led to the creation, and constant evolution, of the Roman constitution.²⁸ In particular, the drawing of parallels between the Roman

constitution and modern democracies overemphasises the democratic elements of the Roman constitution; indeed, in her systematic analysis of Roman voting systems, Hall explicitly declares “I have not been able to find genuine parallels...”²⁹ Likewise, Jankowski's positive view of the Roman constitution³⁰ as essentially fit for purpose—focusing primarily on Polybius' praise-filled consideration of the constitution—also fails to consider the constitution in its proper socio-economic context, a flaw particularly evident in his credence of the now largely disproven Marian reforms.³¹ Thus, the view that populism destroyed an ancient democracy, while not completely unfounded, is an overly narrow one. The far more poignant lesson is that once people become disillusioned by government action (or more often, inaction), and have their traditional mode of life disrupted, they become radical and increasingly violent.

This dynamic has reverberations throughout history, supporting its relevance. One of the key factors in the breakout of the French Revolution was an underfed and disillusioned class of urban workers. This radicalism was primarily exacerbated by the King's refusal to tightly control the price of grain, thus abandoning one of his perceived ancestral duties, and eventuating in food shortages, as in the Late Republic.³² These food shortages, caused in part by weather, but also by the King's pro-free trade policies—a fundamental shift from the previous protectionist policies—³³ were key factors in causing mass unrest, and, eventually, the Storming of the Bastille; thus igniting the revolution.³⁴ Similar dynamics can even be seen in more recent history, in the context of de-industrialisation. Again, a large socio-economic shift leaves a large section of the population poor and disillusioned.³⁵ For example, in the Miners' Strike of 1984–5 in Britain, miners launched violent action because their traditional economic patterns and livelihoods had been fatally

22 Marzano 2007: 103.

23 The *Lex Clodia Frumentaria*. See Tatum 1999: 112–4.

24 The conservative partisan Milo encountered Clodius on the Appian Way. A battle ensued, and Clodius was killed by Milo's servants (Cic. *Mil.* 29).

25 Plut. *Cic.* 35

26 Urbinati 2013: 152.

27 Urbinati 2013: 152.

28 This constant evolutionary state has been emphasised in more recent scholarship, such as that of Flower (2010), who argues that there were multiple, constitutionally-distinct republics.

29 Hall 1964: 267.

30 Jankowski 2021: 218.

31 Jankowski 2021: 225. Most comprehensively disproved by Cadiou (2018).

32 On the perceived duty of the King's government to maintain the stable prices for (and distribution of) grain, and this being gradually and sporadically abandoned in favour of free trade, see Doyle (2017: 21).

33 See Doyle (2017: 87) for the deleterious effects of free trade with Britain.

34 For the critical role of food shortages in the Storming of the Bastille, see Doyle (2017: 109).

35 Harvey 2005: 45.



threatened by the economic rationalisation of Margaret Thatcher's government. Unlike the prior examples, the miners failed in their aims, but it nonetheless shows how socio-economic shifts promote radicalisation and violence.³⁶

In short, there are still lessons to be learned from the fall of the Roman Republic. However, I would posit that what matters most is how we draw from those lessons. Simply taking a Juvenalian view that the people gave away their ancient rights for "bread and circuses", without fully considering why they did so, is to tell only part of the story. By taking a wider view, the truly eternal lesson emerges: a state which fails to meet the needs of its citizens will ultimately contribute to its own downfall.

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³⁶ Turner 1985.



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Murderous Relations: Fate and Intra-Family Violence in the Houses of Laius and Atreus

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ANCW20015: Classical Mythology

Keywords: Familial • Fate • Greek Mythology • Tragedy • Violence

The stories of Oedipus and Agamemnon were well-known throughout ancient times, and remain famous to this day. Known from earlier oral traditions, both characters appeared in writing during the late 8th to early 7th centuries BCE, with Agamemnon a prominent character in Homer's *Iliad*, and the fate of Oedipus told to Odysseus in *The Odyssey* (Hom. *Od.* 11.272–77). Agamemnon and Oedipus became potent models for the Greek tragedians three-hundred years later, continuing to be characters of interest to the Romans and through to this day. Despite centuries worth of criticism of these plays, the role of familial violence itself has not been fully explored. The motifs of prophecies, curses, and the inevitability of fate are key aspects of both the House of Laius (Oedipus' family) and the House of Atreus (Agamemnon's family), though these themes are more prevalent in the former.

Analysing ancient tragedies about the families—primarily Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* (429 BCE) and *Oedipus at Colonus* (406 BCE), as well as Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* (458 BCE) and *Eumenides* (458 BCE)—this essay will argue that intra-family violence is used as a tool to fulfil an inevitable fate meant to punish these families. In the House of Laius, intra-family violence is used to try to prevent the fulfilment of a deadly prophecy, but it is also used to bring one about; in both cases, the lack of power mortals have over divine will is highlighted. This will be explored first through Laius, and then by focusing on the centre of the tragedies: Oedipus. Lastly, this paper presents a comparison with Oedipus' son, Polynices. In the House of Atreus, intra-family violence invokes

divine wrath and subsequently serves to fulfil the gods' curse on the family, but its primary function is retribution. The history of Agamemnon's ancestors provides insight into the cycle of violence as each generation seeks their own revenge.

House of Laius

Laius tries to prevent the prophecy from coming true

Laius uses intra-family violence—the decision to murder his infant son, Oedipus—in the mistaken belief that fate can be prevented. He is told a prophecy that his son will grow up to murder him (Soph. *OT* 784–8) and thus he attempts to kill Oedipus to prevent this from occurring. The prophecy stemmed from a curse invoked by Pelops, after Laius abducted and raped his son Chrysippus (Apollod. *Bibl.* 3.5.5). Sir Richard Jebb has suggested that the prophecy serves to punish Laius for his actions, since the Thebans failed to do so.¹ Because the tragedy of the prophecy relies on the sacrilege of a son killing his father, Laius holds the 'right of retaliation' to take pre-emptive action against his son.² As Sophocles describes it, he “fastened [Oedipus'] ankles, had a henchman fling him away on a barren, trackless mountain” (Soph. *OT* 792–3). But Laius makes the mistake of not ensuring that Oedipus dies (Soph. *OT* 1286–1305). His son survives, unwittingly bringing the prophecy to fruition years later. Oedipus and Laius respond to their fates differently: one runs away, one faces it and acts. Unlike Oedipus, who runs from the prophecy he receives, Laius attempts to directly prevent his fate,

1 Sir Richard Jebb in Weineck 2010: 132.

2 Blundell et al. 1989: 227.



taking the most decisive action he can, short of committing infanticide with his own hands. Yet, fate prevails anyway, and Oedipus lives to fulfil the prophecy; Laius' violence against his son is redundant.

Oedipus unknowingly fulfils the prophecy

Trying to escape his fate, Oedipus unknowingly commits the very act of intra-familial violence he was hoping to prevent, emphasising fate's inevitability. After receiving the prophecy that he was "fated to couple with [his] mother... [and] will kill [his] father" (Soph. *OT* 873–5) Oedipus flees his happy life in Corinth for Thebes. This brings about his disastrous meeting with Laius, his real father, whom he kills after being insulted (Soph. *OT* 888–994). His defeat of the Sphinx that terrorised Thebes brings him the reward of kingship and marriage to the queen, Jocasta, his mother (Soph. *OT* 44). According to Christopher Nassaar, Oedipus' hubris in thinking he could prevent the prophecy is what brought this on so quickly.³ If he had acted rationally, and tried to find out more about his parentage, he might have delayed it, and its fulfilment may have been less disastrous.⁴ Instead, by blindly running away and recklessly killing Laius, Oedipus brings plague to Thebes and further tragedy to his family (Soph. *OT* 113–4). Of course, Oedipus cannot escape his fate; this is one of the main themes in Sophocles tragedy and in Seneca's later version: "many a man has come upon his fate just where he thought to hide from it" (Sen. *Oedipus* 993–4). In this case, it is irrelevant whether the killing was done willingly or unwillingly; the intra-family violence fulfils Oedipus' inevitable fate.

Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus* raise the question of Oedipus' free will when "fate and the will of the gods...loom ominously behind the human action."⁵ Bernard Knox argues that Oedipus' free will comes from his persistence to discover the truth, but the fulfilment of the prophecy is out of his control.⁶ Oedipus himself argues that the murder and his marriage to his mother occurred "against [his] will" (Soph. *OC*. 1127). As is common in Greek tragedy, Oedipus talks to the chorus, which consists of elderly men from the city of Colonus. He insists to them that

he exercised choice only in the decision to blind himself: "Apollo, friends, Apollo—he ordained my agonies—these, my pains on pains! But the hand that struck my eyes was mine, mine alone—no one else—I did it all myself!" (Soph. *OT* 1467–71). Unlike his son Polynices, or the members of the Atreus family, Oedipus is blind to his actions. This shows how little control a person has over their fate; one does not have to be aware for their fate to be fulfilled. It is arguably Oedipus' discovery of the truth that gives his story the dimension of tragedy, rather than the actions themselves.

Polynices knowingly fulfils Oedipus' curse

In contrast to Oedipus, when his son Polynices is told his fate, he runs towards it. This series of events begins when, after Oedipus' exile, Polynices comes to his father as a suppliant, seeking *soteria* (safety) and help in defeating his brother Eteocles, thereby claiming rule of Thebes for himself.⁷ Instead, Oedipus proclaims a curse upon him: "you'll fall first, red with your brother's blood and he stained with yours—equals, twins in blood" (Soph. *OC*. 1555–6). Polynices had come sincerely and with sympathy for his father's fate, making Oedipus' response in cursing him seem excessive and terrible.⁸ Despite knowing his fate, Polynices leaves to continue his campaign against his brother. Eteocles and Polynices both die, "cut down by one another" (Aesch. *Sept.* 1028–9). Once again, intra-family violence has been fated, and is inevitably fulfilled. What is important about Polynices is that, unlike Laius and Oedipus, he does not try to escape his fate or do anything to prevent it. He knows that he "must travel down that road, doomed by fate" (Soph. *OC*. 1626), unable to prevent the curse. As such, in opposition to the hubris of Oedipus, Polynices displays the adequate humility of a man who understands fate's power.

Furthermore, Oedipus' curse continues the familial violence begun with Laius, as the whole family is punished by fate. The myth ends with almost the entire lineage of Laius dead, with only one of Oedipus' children, Ismene, surviving (Soph. *Ant.*). It is ironic that after thinking himself more powerful than fate and insulting Tiresias—a blind prophet who appears in multiple Greek

3 Nassaar 2013: 148.

4 Nassaar 2013: 148.

5 Knox 1984: 134.

6 Knox 1984: 149.

7 Burian 1974: 423.

8 Burian 1974: 425.



myths, and reveals Oedipus as the murderer of Laius—Oedipus is then bestowed the power of prophecy, becoming another blind prophet himself (Soph. *OT* 380–507). He is given the power to ‘see’ how the annihilation of his house will be fulfilled, but, like his own refusal to listen to Tiresias, Oedipus cannot get Polynices to heed him.

House of Atreus

A history of violence in the family

A tragic cycle befalls the House of Atreus, and can be attributed to a divine curse on the family placed by the gods due to a horrific act of intra-family violence. “The great curse of the house” (Aesch. *Ag.* 1509) began when Tantalus—founder of the House of Atreus and great-grandfather to Agamemnon—murdered his son Pelops, and served him to the gods to eat (Sen. *Thy.* 171–5). The subsequent crimes within the family allude to the original crime, with an emphasis placed on the sacrifice of children;⁹ their destruction is their destiny. In *Agamemnon* and *Eumenides*, Aeschylus continually refers to the inevitability of their tragedy; Clytemnestra and Orestes—wife and son to Agamemnon—both say that their murderous actions are destiny (Aesch. *Ag.* 1692 and Aesch. *Eum.* 898). Seneca’s *Thyestes* emphasises that it is fate that causes the tragic actions,¹⁰ with the divine will of the furies exacting vengeance on Tantalus’ descendants (Sen. *Thy.* 86–9). Furthermore, Orestes is commanded by Apollo to avenge his father (Aesch. *Eum.* 274–5). With the will of a god prompting him, he must murder his mother, or risk violating the divine command.¹¹ In *Eumenides* the chorus says, “there is a curse in the house and not outside it, no, not from others but from *them*, their bloody strife” (Aesch. *Eum.* 458–61), highlighting that the family brings about their own brutal destruction. Urged on by divine will, it is their violence against each other that fulfils the family’s curse. In their respective tragedies, both Aeschylus and Seneca refer to the predecessors’ crimes, serving to remind their audiences of the curse instigating the tragedies unfolding. However, it is not only fate that motivates violence in this family.

Intra-family violence as retribution

A primary motivator for intra-family violence in the House of Atreus is retribution. Throughout Greek mythology it would be difficult to find a family more racked with generational retributive violence than the House of Atreus. This begins with the twins Atreus and Thyestes—Agamemnon’s respective father and uncle—competing to be king of Mycenae. Atreus wants revenge against Thyestes after he usurped his throne and seduced his wife (Sen. *Thy.* 247). Atreus’ murder of Thyestes’ sons sets the precedent of murderous revenge, which passes through the bloodline. The murder of the sons for a cannibalistic feast is reminiscent of Tantalus’ crimes. In *Agamemnon*, Clytemnestra is empowered by the “revenge ghost of Thyestes” that “lives within [her]” to seek revenge on Atreus (Aesch. *Ag.* 1529).¹² The involvement of Aegisthus (Clytemnestra’s lover and son of Thyestes) in Agamemnon’s murder is also, in part, retribution for Thyestes (Aesch. *Ag.* 1611–43). Here, vengeance afflicts the whole family, almost as if it were a genetic disease.

Agamemnon’s sacrifice of his and Clytemnestra’s daughter, Iphigenia, precipitates the divine wrath incurred by Tantalus, even as he is trying to appease another god’s anger.¹³ The resulting murders create a “spiral of violence” as Aegisthus, Clytemnestra, and Orestes each seek retribution.¹⁴ This destructive spiral throughout *The Oresteia* reflects that retaliation by means of bloodshed cannot bring about a peaceful resolution.¹⁵ Similar to Polynices, Orestes is aware of his fate if he murders his mother: “the hound of a mother’s curse will hunt [him] down” (Aesch. *Eum.* 911–2). However, unlike Polynices, Orestes expresses reservations about killing Clytemnestra (Aesch. *Eum.* 886). Nevertheless, he has an obligation to avenge his father and is thus incapable of breaking the familial cycle of retributive violence.¹⁶ It can be concluded, then, that violence against family is the driver of vengeance in the House of Atreus. Its members are doomed to tear each other apart until Athena and Apollo’s direct intervention in *Eumenides* finally brings the cycle of violence to an end.

9 Dodson 2019: 31.

10 Dodson 2019: 35.

11 Hawk 2003: 81.

12 Dodson 2019: 29.

13 Hawk 2003: 77.

14 Hawk 2003: 74.

15 Fiamingo 2023: 169.

16 Fiamingo 2023: 171.



Conclusion

In the families of Oedipus and Agamemnon, fate prevails. Prophecies and curses foresee tragedy as a result of intra-family violence, serving to punish these families for multi-generational transgressions. Divine wrath ensures that, no matter what they try, death will not cease until the almost complete destruction of the family is brought about; or, in the case of Electra and Orestes, divine intervention saves them. In the House of Laius, none can escape their fates; not Laius, who orders the murder of his son, or even self-sacrificing Oedipus, who flees his life in Corinth in hope of escaping the prophecy. Perhaps that is why Polynices—having observed the previous generations' attempts and failures to evade fate—marches towards the fulfilment of his own destiny. In the House of Atreus, the curse triumphs throughout the generations as the family members murder each other to enact their vengeance. Fate is unavoidable, and the violence these families display ensures its consummation.

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Conduit Divinity: Evaluating the Role of Hermes as a God of Liminality and Boundaries

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Keywords: Greek Mythology • Hermes • Iconography • *Katabasis* • Liminality

The depictions of Hermes in ancient Greek myth and material culture indicate that he was understood as a liminal deity, a guardian of boundary crossing. He engages with humanity to an extent that is unique among the Olympians. Above all, he is the mediator between life and death, between mortals and the divine, between nothing and everything. He is the bridge, the messenger, the conduit to humanity. This representation begins in the *Homeric Hymn to Hermes*, in which he partakes in a number of coming-of-age rituals which allow him to cross the boundary from social outcast to god. His role as boundary intermediary takes physical form through *herms*, which will be examined here as representative of Hermes' patronage over transitional spaces such as roads and thresholds, as well as his mediation between humanity and the divine in sacrificial contexts. Finally, his position as guide to and from the Underworld will be investigated through an analysis of a krater depicting the ascension of Persephone. This essay will further evaluate passages from Homer's *Iliad*, and argues that Hermes acts as psychopomp in Priam's journey to retrieve the body of his son Hektor, a journey which is itself to be understood as a heroic *katabasis*.

Outsider to Olympian: Crossing Social Boundaries

The *Homeric Hymn to Hermes* establishes Hermes as a liminal deity, which is crucial to understanding his depictions in mythology and material culture. The hymn explores ancient Greek coming-of-age rituals; as such, he is represented as presiding over

the movement across the boundary from youth to adulthood. It also details Hermes' transition from a social outsider to a member of the Olympians, seeking renown for himself, and his mother, Maia.¹ Hermes achieves this by intentionally stealing from Apollo in order to later make peace with and befriend him. This conciliation takes the form of oaths, in which Hermes agrees "never to steal the Far Shooter's possessions" again, and Apollo swears that "no other among the immortals would be dearer to him [than Hermes]" (*Hom. Hymn* 521–526). By the two exchanging oaths, they entered a formal bond of friendship, *philotês*.² This social ritual would have been known to an archaic audience, as it features in other epic poetry, for instance in the meeting of Trojan Glaucus and Achaean Diomedes in the *Iliad* (*Hom. Il.* 6.234).³ Likewise, this exchange ends in the exchange of gifts and an oath of friendship, an interaction almost identical to that of Hermes and Apollo.⁴ Such ritualistic establishments of friendship were an aristocratic convention and thus represent Hermes' step across a social boundary, becoming a member of the Olympians.⁵ A further social ritual Hermes engages in during his *Homeric Hymn* is cattle raiding (*Hom. Hymn* 73). Cattle raiding was frequently documented in Greek myth, and was considered demonstrative of a young man's ability to provide and defend the wealth of his family, as well as indicating his strength, bravery, and ability to become a warrior.⁶ In practice, it took the form of retrieving cattle that an outsider had stolen.⁷ Though Hermes' tale is the inverse—he is the thief himself—his raid nonetheless brings him honour in the eyes of his father, Zeus, and brother, Apollo, giving him

1 Fletcher 2008: 25.

2 Fletcher 2008: 26.

3 Fletcher 2008: 27.

4 Fletcher 2008: 28.

5 Fletcher 2008: 28.

6 Johnston 2002: 112–113.

7 Johnston 2002: 112.

Conductor of Souls: Crossing the Boundary of the Underworld



Fig. 2: Krater featuring the ascension of Persephone from the underworld.

Ancient Greek understandings of Hermes as a liminal deity are exemplified in his role as a guide to the Underworld, as noted in both material objects, and textual evidence. A piece of material culture which indicates Hermes' role as guardian of boundaries and the liminal is an Attic red-figure krater depicting the ascension of Persephone (Fig. 2). She rises from the earth, guided by Hermes, who retrieved her from Hades.¹⁸ Also depicted on this krater are Hekate—lighting the way out of the dark with her torches—and Demeter, who awaits reunion with her beloved daughter. Of all the figures present, Hermes is unique in his physical positioning: while the faces of the other deities are in the traditional profile view, engaged with the scene at hand, Hermes is facing the viewer directly. The effect of this is uncanny, and gives the overwhelming impression that Hermes is engaging with the viewer directly, as if he could cross the

boundary between art and life at any moment. It is possible that this choice was made to evoke Hermes' liminal attributes so as to give emphasis to the role he plays in the myth depicted. While Hekate lights the way, Hermes is the one who descends into the space between deepest night and life itself to retrieve Persephone. It is a reminder of the attribute that, among the Olympians, belongs to Hermes only, and is forbidden to all others: the right to enter the Underworld at will.¹⁹ It has been contended that the possession of this trait is an extension of his role as a messenger and a manifestation of his transmissive nature.²⁰ Hermes, in many of his forms, is called to transmit things of both tangible or intangible nature from one person or location to another, whether this manifests itself as bringing the word of Zeus to a mortal, or guiding a hero on a quest.²¹ In this context, Hermes essentially transmits both mortals and deities to and from Hades, as a conductor of souls.²² He facilitates the crossing of the most fundamental of boundaries: the one between life and death.

Helper of Humanity: Hermes as Psychopomp in Priam's *Katabasis*

Hermes not only guides the souls of the dead but also aids heroes on journeys of *katabasis*. A striking instance of Hermes' guidance takes place in Book 24 of the *Iliad*. While this scene is not explicitly a *katabasis*, it has been argued that it is intended to be understood as one.²³ This example embodies Hermes as guide to Priam, both literally as a patron of travel, guiding him into the Trojan camp, as well in his role as psychopomp, through the emotional *katabasis* of retrieving the body of his dearest son, Hektor (Hom. *Il.* 24.340–470). Priam's journey fulfils the three most recognisable traits of the descent into the Underworld: the river, the night, and Hermes' company.²⁴ Priam is described as crossing a river on his way to the Achaean camp (Hom. *Il.* 24.350–1) and crosses it

18 Kidron 2006: 36.

19 Versnel 2011: 327.

20 Allan 2018: 58.

21 Allan 2018: 58.

22 Rubio 2018: 316.

23 De Jáuregui 2011: 39. This is argued on the basis that Priam's journey features mythical and ritual overtones which figure it as a descent to Hades, drawing on established conventions. For instance, his departure from Troy is framed as a funerary procession, and Hermes' guidance recalls a journey through the netherworld.

24 De Jáuregui 2011: 44.



again upon his return to Troy (Hom. *Iliad*. 24.691–2). Here, it is interpreted as the traditional movement across the River Styx required of a *katabatic* hero. When examining the textual evidence regarding Hermes' involvement in Priam's journey, what Zeus says about his son should be noted above all: Hermes is described as finding much joy in "[acting] as man's companion" (Hom. *Il.* 24.334–5), gladly assisting humanity in the movements between boundaries they make. This depiction is significant in that it indicates the care and closeness Hermes has developed with humanity, and the dedication to his domain that the ancient Greeks perceived of. His protection extends beyond social boundaries, such as the divide of warfare. Thus, despite siding with the Achaeans, it is in Hermes' nature to oversee the safe travel of Priam.

In summary, Hermes was understood by the ancient Greeks as a mediator of boundaries. He is represented as overseeing the transition from youth to adulthood in his Homeric Hymn. The physical manifestation of his role is to be found in *herms*, which were not only used for his own worship but were also the meeting point between humanity and divinity. Finally, in his role as psychopomp and guide, he is depicted as assisting the entry and exit to the Underworld for both gods and mortals, traversing this boundary and guiding any soul who may have required his divine help.

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Fig. 1.

Attic red-figure column krater, attributed to the Pan Painter, c. 480–70 BCE. The obverse depicts offerings at an altar and herm. *The J. Paul Getty Museum*, object number: 83.AE.252 . Photograph courtesy of the J. Paul Getty Museum, distributed under a CC0 1.0 Universal Deed.

Fig. 2.

Attic red-figure bell-krater, attributed to the Persephone Painter, c. 440 BCE. The obverse depicts the ascension of Persephone from the underworld. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, object number: 28.57.23. Photograph courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, distributed under a CC0 1.0 Universal Deed



Oedipus at Athens: Contextualising Authorial Divergence in Sophocles' *Oedipus*

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ANCW20015: Classical Mythology

Keywords: Greek Mythology • Oedipus • Social • Sophocles • Tragedy

Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus* and *Oedipus at Colonus*¹ constitute the earliest extant copies of the Oedipus myth, though fragments and references to older stories have survived. This essay will examine how and why Sophocles varied from these earlier stories, drawing on work from Homer, Aeschylus, and Euripides. These differences will be evaluated through analyses of significant historical events of the time—estimated between 426 BCE and 425 BCE—to mark a parallel between historical and narrative change, highlighting specific events as catalysts for the evolution of the myth under Sophocles' authorship.² This essay prioritises a close and critical reading of the original texts, using contemporary perspectives and ancient mytho-historical sources to ensure a consistent analysis of Sophocles' *Oedipus* in dialogue with modern scholarship.

Though Sophocles' *Oedipus* exists as the oldest wholly surviving telling of the myth, fragments of older texts and references to the character of Oedipus can be found as early as the *Odyssey*. The most complete of these—those of Homer (Homer, *Od.* 11.271–82) and Aeschylus—paired with the Euripidean account written a decade later,³ suggests Sophocles' *Oedipus* varies significantly from older versions. The most important example of this variance is the narrative significance of the god Apollo, influencing both the Theban plague and the Delphic oracle. Though Apollo never appears in corporeal form, he speaks through his Oracle at Delphi, delivering the two prophecies regarding Oedipus that serve as the primary drivers of the narrative (Soph. *OT*

556–9, 1182–6). It is also a force under his power, the introductory plague, that punishes the people of Thebes and provides the circumstances under which Oedipus' "pollution" (Soph. *OT* 281) is revealed. Conversely, in both Aeschylus⁴ and Homer's versions, the gods act as a more passive narrative force. Rather, the "supernatural agency [of the Furies]"⁵ drives the story instead of the plague, and while the gods "[reveal] the truth [of Oedipus' pollution] to humans", (Hom. *Od.* 11.274–5) they do not directly inflict the chaos that causes such a revelation to be sought, as in Sophocles' texts. The use of the word pollution is also peculiar. In Homer, Oedipus is suffering from "pain" (Hom. *Od.* 11.277) or "agonies" (Hom. *Od.* 11.281), whereas in Aeschylus' he simply suffers from a curse or "Erinyes" (Aesch. *Sept.* 887). The Sophoclean use of pollution, also referred to as *miasma*, conceals a far greater breadth of sin. Oedipus is not cursed by external forces, but polluted by his very nature. This alludes to a similar moral and religious defilement as the Homeric 'curse', but connotes an additional, more physical aspect mirroring the environmental 'pollution' of the Theban plague. To Sophocles, Oedipus is not merely a cursed man; he is a man so fundamentally polluted that the land itself rejects him.

The helplessness that this pollution entails manifests less obviously in other areas of Sophocles' tragedy, both in the structure of the text and the events within. Most apparent is that the events of the story are realised in reverse chronological order, a narrative choice absent from both Aeschylus⁶ (Aesch., fr. 186) and

1 Referred to throughout the essay as Sophocles' *Oedipus* for brevity.

2 Knox 1956, 133.

3 Liapis 2014, 333–70.

4 Jebb 1897, x.

5 Jebb 1897, xi.

6 Aeschylus' fragment 186 attested to Oedipus, written in first person, present tense.



Euripides' narratives,⁷ which unfold linearly and in the present tense. Within Sophocles' *Oedipus*, as noted by folklorist Vladimir Propp, "all of the important events of [Oedipus'] life are in the past",⁸ which is unique not only with regards to earlier Oedipus myths, but to the genre of Attic tragedy.⁸ Sophocles' was the first version of *Oedipus* that included self-exile, absent in both Homer's and Euripides' versions.⁹ Homer referred to his continued rule of Thebes even after the gods revealed his sin (Hom. *Od.* 11.262–277), and in Euripides a similar story is present: Jocasta does not commit suicide, Oedipus does not self-exile, and together they remain in the palace.¹⁰ The introduction of self-exile, paired with the authorial choice to present Oedipus' life in the past, present Sophocles' Oedipus as a figure far more "helpless"¹¹ to the ravages of fate than Homer's, Aeschylus', or Euripides'. To Sophocles, Oedipus is as much a spectator as the audience, witnessing his own story rather than experiencing it. Although these differences and the implications afforded by them may seem minor, they lay the foundations for further socio-historical analyses of the context and intentions behind Sophocles' *Oedipus*.

In the time of Attic tragedies, Thebes played a very specific role. Whether it be divine madness, cursed bloodlines, or the pollution of *Oedipus Tyrannus*, Thebes was the setting that allowed Athenian audiences to view the depravities of life at an arm's length.¹² However, both socially, and materially, the myths of tragic Thebes paralleled the real-life Athens in a number of ways. When the Theban chorus of *Oedipus Tyrannus* pray to rid Thebes of the plague, they "[first call on] Athena the immortal" (Soph. *OT* 191), the patron of Athens rather than Dionysus, her Theban counterpart. To provide an example outside of *Oedipus*, the autochthonous origins of the Thebans of Attic mythology closely mirrored the Athenian's mythology of their own origin, the native 'sown men' of Thebes emerging from dragon's teeth, founding the city just as the half-

snake Cecrops emerged to found Athens. In each case, the tragic Thebes is positioned as a functional anti-Athens,¹³ a space of otherness where the rules of the *polis*, sin, and divine supplicancy could be broken, and where the effects of sin could be demonstrated without requiring the act to be committed. With these qualities, it was able to serve simultaneously as a setting for entertainment and a setting of social criticism, allowing Athenian values to be justified whilst their subversion was punished in a mythological setting in full view of the Athenian population. To claim that the performance of Attic tragedy served to append social values onto extant myths and histories could draw the charge of anachronism, but to agree with Bernard Knox: "The term 'anachronism' [when applied to contemporary details in mythological material] is completely misleading; in Attic tragedy of the fifth century anachronism is not the exception but the rule."¹⁴ The values present in mythology reflect the values of its society of origin, and the evolution of myth similarly paralleled the evolution of values through the history of that society. Thus, the key to understanding Sophocles' evolution of the Oedipus myth lies in understanding the socio-historical link between Athens and Thebes as we follow Oedipus to Colonus.

If the mythological Thebes was analogous to the Athenian reality, the mythological Athens as portrayed in *Oedipus at Colonus* was analogous to the Athenian ideal. Where Thebes is portrayed through its godlessness and suffering, Athens is portrayed through its military might, in Theseus, and its relationship with the divine. As the chorus in *Oedipus at Colonus* says, the gods are "[their] country's greatest boast" (Soph. *OC* 818). This notion is affirmed when Oedipus speaks to Creon, referring to Athens as "the one city that understands how to respect the gods" (Soph. *OC* 1195) and connecting that respect to their "well-governed [statehood]" (Soph. *OC* 1193). In saying this to Creon, Oedipus positions the mythological Athens in opposition to Thebes, with divine

7 Liapis 2014, 310.

8 Propp 1983, 82.

9 Liu 2010, 8.

10 Liu 2010, 55.

11 Liu 2010, 4.

12 Hilton 2015, 1.

13 Zeitlin 1990, 144.

14 Knox 1956, 61.



supplicancy the stated point of difference. Within the narrative, Athens is presented by Oedipus as an ideal state, but though it shares the name of its real world counterpart, Thebes is more similar by character. The implication is clear: should a state aspire to an ideal version of itself, it should first seek to instil respect for religion and rite in its people. By understanding the roles of Thebes and Athens in Attic tragedy, the peculiarities of Sophocles' work, and the role of Oedipus within the story take on a new form.

The aforementioned plague of Thebes drives the story in Sophocles' version, transforming Thebes into a "barren, godless, ruined land" (Soph. *OT* 295), of which Oedipus' sin is revealed as the cause. As Tiresias said to Oedipus: "the accursed polluter of this land is you" (Soph. *OT* 421). This echoes the real Athens of the time, beseeched by a plague in 430 BCE that led to an "unnatural depression"¹⁵ (Thuc. 2.62) of the people. Thucydides, a contemporary historian of the time, states that there was a breakdown of adherence to religious and moral law, "because [the Athenians] concluded it was alike to worship or not worship [as regardless] they all perished, [and] because no man expected that [his life] would last till he received punishment" (Thuc. 2.53). This threefold connection of religious decay, moral decay, and physical decay shows remarkable similarities to the pollution as described in *Oedipus Tyrannus*. Oedipus' polluted nature derives from a fated immoral act, the revelation and punishment of which is brought on by divine power, which is made manifest by a plague upon the land. Moral, religious, and physical decay follow Oedipus as they followed the historical Athens. This connection is further strengthened by the causal similarities between the two. According to Thucydides, the plague of Athens was prophesied by the Oracle at Delphi who, when consulted by the Spartans on whether they should make war with Athens, stated that "they should have the victory, and that [Apollo] himself would take [a part]" (Thuc. 2.54). Though war is not explicitly

mentioned in *Oedipus Tyrannus*, it can be inferred. There is a distinct lack of men of fighting age amongst the cast, with the chorus made up of Theban elders, and Oedipus referring to supplicants as "children, latest generation born from Cadmus" (Soph. *OT* 1) and to the "old man" (Soph. *OT* 9) in the opening scene. Furthermore, the prayer of the Theban chorus to rid themselves of the plague (Soph. *OT* 221–48) references Ares as "ravenous Ares[...] who now consumes me" (Soph. *OT* 224–5) and as a "god dishonoured amongst gods" (Soph. *OT* 248). In his capacity as the god of war, it is uncommon for Ares to be referenced in conjunction with plague,¹⁶ so the mention can be read in two ways: textually, with respect to the inferred war at Thebes, and to the Athenian audience as referring to the Spartan Delphic prophecy. In Sophocles' *Oedipus*, as in Athens, the prophecies of the Delphic Oracle precede plague, war, and the threefold blight experienced by both Oedipus and the historical Athenians.

If we consider the relationship between Attic Thebes and real-world Athens, it becomes clear that Sophocles can be read as using Oedipus as an analogue for the effects of this blight upon the Athenian people, manifesting a similar moral and religious pollution to Athens that Oedipus brings to Thebes. This view can be substantiated with reference to the words of Plutarch, who states that "the plague was the result of the [...] unwonted manner of living" (Plut. *Vit.* 3.6.4) experienced by the Athenians during the war. This extends the connection between the Athenians of the time and Oedipus to one not limited to the symptoms of plague—moral and religious—but also the weight of causal responsibility. The declining adherence to religious rites amongst the Athenians brought with it declining moral standards, both of which contributed to the damages wrought by the plague, brought by Apollo. This may seem like a tenuous connection, but if we consider the tradition of contemporary criticism in Attic tragedy,¹⁷ the unique qualities of Sophocles'

15 "Unnatural depression" is ἀτοπία, which seems to implicate rejection of the natural order.

16 Knox 1998, 10.

17 Griffin 1998, 44,



Oedipus, and the historical events connected to these qualities, what is apparent is either a truly extraordinary coincidence or a finely woven thread of intentionality.

Sophocles' *Oedipus* is undoubtedly influenced by the events of his time. Drawing from historical narratives, and in dialogue with modern scholarship, Sophocles' *Oedipus* can be seen as a mirror of fifth century BCE Athens. Reflecting the historical experience of the city, Sophocles in equal parts captures the character of a city in turmoil and imparts a prescription to heal it: a return to religion. Though the historical record is fragmented, the accuracy of Sophocles' *Oedipus* against extant records shows a clear and intentional evolution of the myth, emerging as a social critique, and performed as a spectacle for a people whose values were not fully reflected in earlier myths.

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Indifference to Child Death as Social Production: Reading Grief Between Roman and Brazilian Mothers

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ANCW40012: The Roman Way of Life

Keywords: Ancient Rome • Brazil • Ethnographic • Grief • Motherhood

‘Did the Romans grieve the deaths of their children?’ has been a highly speculated question in archaeological scholarship. However, the early theorisation of the impacts of child infant mortality must have had on early to mid-Imperial Roman society has resulted in a line of inquiry that presents Roman parents—and mothers in particular—as indifferent towards and unmoved by the deaths of very young children.¹ As a product of feminist theory, contemporary scholars attempting to tackle this question have retaliated against the idea of ‘indifference’ to present Roman mothers as immobilised by their grief. Consequently, both perspectives have polarised the experience of grief as, on one hand, cruel and distant, and, on the other, emotional to the point of hysteria. Neither of these positions fully conceptualise the nuances of indifference, or recognise indifference as a product of social expectations, structures, or environmental factors. Through a comparison of Roman epigraphical material and ethnographic analogy, it can be suggested that subversions of socially acceptable indifference highlight genuine acts of parental grief when mourning the loss of a young child.

This article proposes a method of comparative reading between Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ ethnography, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, and the analysis of Roman infant and child burial sites.² While the voices of Roman women will never be accurately reconstructed in their entirety, the lived experiences of Brazilian mothers navigating infant mortality in a highly stratified, impoverished society may assist in this reconstruction. By

comparing how women in both contexts tackle social conventions to imagine their child beyond the grave, it becomes possible to hear the voices of mothers across the Roman Empire, from the early first to late third centuries CE. Moreover, the comparative examples of these Brazilian women directly challenge the negative argument for indifference, and allow Roman mothers to be perceived in a humanising and compassionate light.

Academic Treatment of Perceived Indifference

The literature surrounding the speculated treatment of Roman child deaths by their grieving parents polarises the feeling of indifference. Previous studies on childhood throughout history have hypothesised a correlation between the emotional indifference of parents living in societies with high infant mortality rates. Philippe Ariès first suggested that as a response to the fragility of infancy, Roman societies practised a “feeling of indifference” and “callousness” towards the exposure or burial of very young children.³ By describing all aspects of parent-child relationships through varying degrees of ‘indifference’, indifference is transformed from a neutral reaction to a moral one.⁴ This hypothesis of apathy was later expanded upon by Lawrence Stone, who further characterised English parents as indifferent towards the lives of their children as “unpredictable...or cruel”.⁵ Keith Bradley’s contribution to the discussion argued that the popular use of wet nurses amongst elite Roman families “provided parents with a mechanism

1 This article defines ‘Roman mothers’ as women who lived in Rome or recognised Roman provinces, and adhered to Roman social conventions.

2 Scheper-Hughes 1992.

3 Ariès 1962: 39.

4 In his text, *Centuries of Childhood*, Ariès (1962) uses the word ‘indifferent’ 35 times to describe parental interest in young children.

5 Stone 1979: 294.



which operated against the over-investment of emotion in their children”.⁶ His argument of indifference consequently presented Roman parents as detached and emotionally avoidant towards infants and toddlers.

While the literature before 1988 locates indifference at the far end of the spectrum of emotional attachment towards young children, Mark Golden ostensibly presents indifference as a more neutral reaction.⁷ Golden’s concluding statement, “we should assume that the ancients cared when their children died”, appears to reasonably balance the hypothetical anthropological queries posed by earlier scholars with examples from antiquity that publicly endorse indifference as a reaction to infant mortality.⁸ However, his staunch rejection of the application of social science theory in reading historical material—citing that the position of a classicist is is not to “contribute much to anthropologist’s debate on the universality...of the emotions of different cultures”—limits the extent to which socio-cultural conventions of the ancient world can be questioned and re-interpreted.⁹ In doing so, Golden accepts ancient material regarding child death at face value, without considering the public nature of the source and the speaker’s adherence to social convention. While elite women are contributors to Roman civil life, the voices of non-elite women across the Roman Empire are less visible in the surviving epigraphical and archaeological material.¹⁰ However, as this article will discuss at length, the voices of elite and non-elite women across the Roman Empire do exist within epigraphical evidence by defying the social

conventions of indifference to express profound grief and loss.

In response to the notion of indifference, an emerging argument proposes that the grief of Roman men was more rational than their female counterparts. Valerie Hope separates the social practice of infant burial from the literature of grief. Her example of womanly grief is characterised by raw and uncontrollable emotion which often appears in Roman poetry; “Made mad with grief she rushed out, with a woman’s wail, and tearing her hair” (Verg. *Aen.* 9.477–83).¹¹ While this example does not depict the death of an infant, and instead illustrates the visceral grief of Euryalus’ mother, Virgil presents a common depiction of hysterical, female grief. Amy Richlin notes that this speculative reading reinforces the act of silencing that was begun by Roman authors in antiquity.¹² Thus, male depictions of female grief are characterised as loud, expressive, and almost performative in nature. Therefore, the historical commentary of Roman motherhood rests upon these embellished ideals. Susan Suleiman further criticises this perspective in academic scholarship, stating that “[Roman] mothers don’t write: they are written”.¹³ However, because Golden denounces the value of anthropological evidence in the archaeological interpretation of antiquity, there are no examples of comparative analogies that use non-Roman experiences to infer the realistic experiences of motherly grief in the event of child loss.

6 Bradley 1986: 220.

7 Golden 1988.

8 Golden 1988: 160. Golden’s conclusion is informed by the demographic determinist works of historians, such as Philippe Ariès, Edward Shorter, and Lawrence Stone, who have identified patterns of indifference towards infant mortality in pre-Industrial societies. Other notable anthropological works that have been mentioned include Melvin Konner’s ethnography about infant care in the Kalahari Desert and Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ ethnography of Brazilian motherhood. These examples are subsequently juxtaposed with public displays related child death from ancient Greek and Roman authors such as Euripides, Plato, Cicero, and Pliny. Public gravestone epigraphs have been cited twice in this work.

9 Golden 1988: 157-158.

10 Hallet 2002: 13; Hemelrijk 2015: 13-16.

11 Hope 2009: 145.

12 Richlin 2014: 271.

13 Suleiman 1985, cited in McAuley 2020: 26.



Ethnographic Analogies

The comparative reading of an ethnographic analogy alongside epigraphical evidence may provide a plausible voice for women across Roman antiquity, thus countering the polarising scholarship that favours the public, grieving experiences of Roman fathers. Sarah Tarlow's proposition for an 'emotional archaeology' critically highlights the significance of understanding emotions from non-Western, local perspectives that consider social and emotional values rather than individual experiences.¹⁴ While emotional archaeology seeks to understand the societal experience of emotions through decentring the researcher's expectations and understandings of a particular emotion, her approach is difficult to apply in the context of Roman mothers and grief. This is primarily due to the lack of women's writing explicitly stating their feelings of loss. Richlin does, however, suggest understanding mothers and grief from an expansive view of "'women' as a transhistorical category" to compare their experiences across cultural and temporal divides.¹⁵ Lambros Malafouris elaborates on this concept through the idea of ethnographic analogy.¹⁶ Ethnographic analogy—a form of participant-observation, interviews, and anthropological theory—produces a fixed comparative point in another society or moment in time.¹⁷ This type of data allows for nuanced understandings of social dynamics, cultural conventions, and individual responses. By juxtaposing ethnographic analogy with events in the historical record, a more comparable and nuanced understanding of the past can be interpreted. In this case, comparing the experiences of poverty-stricken mothers in Brazil with a comprehensive reading of Roman infant burials theorises and foregrounds the different socially produced reactions to grief in Roman mothers. However, it must be noted that the majority of surviving written evidence regarding infant burials was primarily commissioned by elite and wealthy families.

In comparison with Roman material surrounding the death of young children, Nancy Scheper-Hughes' ethnography, *Death Without Weeping: The Violence of Everyday Life in Brazil*, bridges the gap between the lived experience of women and Roman social conventions and literature. This ethnography stemmed from Scheper-Hughes' experiences working at a public hospital in Belém do Nordeste, Brazil. The text centres on her interactions while living and working alongside a series of local mothers from a poverty-stricken shantytown, known under the pseudonym Bom Jesus.¹⁸ The ethnography provides a nuanced study of the infrastructural and patriarchal inequalities that produce social indifference towards the deaths of Bom Jesus babies. Golden's article does mention Scheper-Hughes' study, but he argues that the ethnography's context enables mothers to "let some of their children die without feeling *very much* grief".¹⁹ This reading ignores the shifting definitions of grief and the underlying struggles of disempowered women in a rigidly patriarchal system. Furthermore, Golden questions the relevancy of such a comparison because of the initial differences between the poverty of Brazilian slums and the everyday lives of freedwomen in the Roman Empire.²⁰ Although poverty is commonly understood as absolute, and is characterised by an individual's inability to access the basic needs for survival, poverty may also be a measurement of social exclusion, or one's capability to access employment, education, and healthcare.²¹ While poverty in Roman antiquity is predominantly characterised as a social value, Morley defines Roman poverty as a population's vulnerability to resource shortages, exclusions from full social participation, and social shame or stigma.²² By adopting these parameters, it can be estimated that 95–99% of the Roman urban population lived in varying degrees of poverty.²³ With the exclusion of women from extremely wealthy and elite families, the majority of women in the Roman Empire would theoretically meet some part of Morley's criteria for poverty.

14 Tarlow 2012: 179–180.

15 Richlin 2014: 268.

16 Malafouris 2023: 175.

17 Hammersley & Atkinson 2019: 2–3.

18 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 1–5.

19 Golden 1988: 160.

20 Golden 1988: 160.

21 Wagle 2002: 156–158.

22 Morely 2006: 33–35. Tacitus distinguishes between the poor and the elites based on virtuous leisure activities (*Hist.* 1.4).

23 Morley 2013: 40; Scheidel 2006: 44.



Inside the Private Lives of Roman and Brazilian Mothers

In the polarising argument of indifference in Roman grief, the role of convention has been labelled as an automatic social response to death. Brent Shaw has been a prevalent voice in Roman family scholarship; however, he has contributed to the assumption of indifference by describing the dedication of a tombstone as “a practice with nothing natural or biologically necessary about it, it is a distinctly artificial and cultural act”.²⁴ This positions Roman scholarship to engage with inscriptions and funerary practices with a perspective devoid of social or human emotion. However, by comparing the outward pretence of convention with the silent tears of Nailza, a Bom Jesus mother, to the deviations from Roman funerary inscription practices, it may be possible to theorise the unseen devastation a Roman mother felt after the loss of her child. Ronald Cohen, a leading social psychologist, contends that the appearance of indifference exists as a reflection of an individual’s responses to varying levels of social injustice.²⁵ In this context, the prevalence of Shaw’s interpretation of indifference that appears in works related to Roman infant and child mortality suggests an interpretation of grief that is devoid of personal attachments to the deceased.²⁶

The ethnographic analogy of Bom Jesus commemorative practices begins with the lack of interest in administrative data of child deaths in the area, with the staff citing the proper recording procedure to be of no interest, as the “deaths of these children, like their brief lives, are invisible and of little or no account”.²⁷ This detail is seemingly corroborated by Scheper-Hughes’ experience of attending a child wake. The baby’s coffin was painted sky blue as per Bom Jesus convention, “balanced precariously on a simple, straight-backed kitchen chair...a small knot of barefoot children played dominoes”, who very nearly knocked over the vessel.²⁸ Here, the experience of death is situated in the experience of mundane household life. Seneca also issues a

similar anecdote on the griever’s need to continue with the motions of everyday life: “...despite his great and recent grief a dear friend had held a full dinner party, Pollio wrote back: ‘I dined on the very day I lost my son Herius’” (Sen. *Controv.* 4.5).²⁹ However, Scheper-Hughes captures a moment of private grief that contradicts Nailza’s flippant comments in line with the indifference required by Brazilian social convention. Publicly, Nailza’s reaction to a stillborn was to be “free and unburdened, thanks be to God!”, conveying a nonchalant air.³⁰ But later in the evening, Scheper-Hughes overheard the mother talking to a photograph of her deceased two-year-old daughter, Joanna, asking “‘Why did you leave me? Was your patron saint so greedy that she could not allow me one child on this earth?’”.³¹ The tearful duality of Nailza’s understanding of her grief and loss alludes to the convention of indifference as a façade for women to conceal their socially unacceptable experiences of grief.

Contrastingly, the mother’s voice in expressing her grief over losing her child remains absent in the public space of Roman philosophy and social practice. Numa Pompilius was reported to have imposed limits to mourning periods based on a child’s age: “For instance, a child of less than three years there was to be no mourning at all” (Plut. *Num.* 12.2).³² These regulations have been interpreted as a signifier of cold indifference towards the lives of young children. Both Dixon’s chapter, *The Roman Mother and the Young Child*, and Hope’s discussion on *Mourning the Dead*, introduce the topic of infant funerary practices with Numa’s early stipulations.³³ Although these authors argue that parents must have felt some emotion akin to grief at the passing of their children, the historical reading of mothers and infant deaths has been irrevocably coloured by Plutarch’s writings.

Similarly, Cicero also corroborates the practice of shortened mourning periods, but, beneath his stoic expression of ‘equanimity’, he highlights the danger of infant mortality (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.39). His juxtaposition of ‘young child’, ‘infant’ and

24 Shaw 1987: 34.

25 Cohen 2002: 194.

26 For citations of Shaw 1987, see Golden (1988) and King (2000). Rawson (2003) also draws heavily on Shaw’s work regarding children and death.

27 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 291.

28 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 271.

29 Emerson 2020: 5.

30 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 269.

31 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 268.

32 Schorn 2009: 340.

33 Dixon 2014: 104; Hope 2009: 123.



'survivors' demonstrates that Roman families were acutely aware of the high likelihood of child death.³⁴ Cicero's writing tends to only be represented in scholarship as a shortened excerpt to demonstrate the practice of hardening one's heart to premature death, however, the following line is rarely represented as providing additional context; "If an infant in the cradle, there must not even be a lament. And yet in this latter case nature has called in her gift with greater cruelty" (Cic. *Tusc.* 1.39). In the last phrase of this passage the birth of the child is celebrated as a blessing or a gift, yet its untimely death is ultimately an outcome decided by greater-than-human forces. It must be noted that while public displays of paternal grief should ideally have upheld the values of stoicism, Cicero's personal correspondence suggests he struggled with the loss of his adult daughter in the privacy of his home (Cic. *Fam.* 5.14.1–2, 4.5.2).³⁵

Based on the epigraphical data gathered by King's comprehensive survey of 250 inscriptions from the *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum VI*, there is a clear emergence of language convention that is preferred for the tombs of infants and young children. Concentrating on a subset of 634 funerary inscriptions belonging to infants of 3 years and under, *dulcissimus* ('sweetest') appeared in 46.1% of epithets. Other popular epithets were *carissimus* ('most beloved') and *benemerens* ('well-deserving').³⁶ Although King and other scholars have argued that the frequency of these epithets was used to express conventional feelings of affection between the adult commemorator and the deceased child, this reading removes the epithets from the context of the inscription.³⁷ The epigraph for one-year and three-month-old Cornelia Anniana conventionally describes the child as the "sweetest daughter", with the parents also tailoring the inscription to comment "our daughter who was already" (CIL 14, 2482 = ILS 8448). King does note that there are occasionally epithets that were used only once or twice, such as *amantissimus* ('most loving'), *innocentissimus* ('most innocent') and *optimus* ('greatest').³⁸ By incorporating new or unconventional epithets into

funerary inscriptions, the grieving Roman parents deviated from the required impartiality of Roman convention to share their genuine sorrow over the loss of their child.

While King's study does provide statistical insights into the conventions of funerary inscriptions, it examines and comments on the intentions of infant epigraphs without the inscription's full context. The isolation of epigraphs from the physical monument and archaeological context proves difficult to capture the full intention of the erection of the tombstone and its relation to the commemorators. A mid-second century CE inscription for the death of an unnamed one-year-old girl again uses the epithet *dulcissima* to describe the child, further likening her to "a rose she flowered and immediately withered" (CIL 13, 7113 = CSIR D 2, 6, 88). While this epigraph follows the conventions laid out in King's study, the accompanying inscription on a *stèle* places a huge emphasis on the mother. She is the only person named, "Telesphoris and her husband", with her name presented first and inscribed with much larger letters. Moreover, the sandstone relief features a sweet image of a chubby baby playing with a basket of flowers under the shade of a laurel tree (CIL 13, 7114).³⁹ The details of this tombstone emphasise the tender love and care Telesphoris held for her child, going beyond the requirements of convention to express these emotions for her child's final resting place. Similarly, the excavation at the infant and child-only burial site at Poggio Gramignano has provided context-specific information that is unavailable through text-based publications like the *CIL*.⁴⁰ Through zooarchaeological research, the burials revealed mortuary treatments that incorporated animal bones and charred honeysuckle. It is theorised that these ingredients may have either been used in a ritual performed by the mother, or part of the wet-nurse's medical treatment of the corpse.⁴¹ Regardless of who performed the funerary ritual, the person cared for the infant enough to perform a procedure.

34 Schorn 2009: 340.

35 Wilcox 2005: 267–8.

36 King 2000: 118 and 142.

37 King 2000: 141.

38 King 2000: 142.

39 Hemelrijk 2020: 53.

40 See Wilson (2022) for the infant burials at Poggio Gramignano, Italy.

41 Wilson 2022: 237.



Imagining the Child in Death

Although to an extent, the portrayal of Roman children in both funerary art and epigraphy is dictated by convention, the imagining of the infant beyond their physical capacity may demonstrate the mother's attempt to recreate the lost future of the child. In the communities of Bom Jesus, the experience of maternal love is divided into the mother's imagining of the child's metaphysical departure from earth and understanding death as a blessing. By thinking of the infants as "little winged angels flying off to heaven to gather noisily around the thrones of Jesus and Mary, bringing...hope for us on earth", the Brazilian mother transforms her child's physical body into a religious vessel to cross from one life to the next.⁴² In another conversation, a mother describes the lost infants "like little birds".⁴³ Thus, the babies are gifted freedom through death, as they possess the ability to soar above the slum and suffering. Similarly, divine association appears frequently in the commemorative art of young Roman children, depicting them as happy, healthy, and blessed by the gods.

The sleeping figure of the child Eros was a common artistic motif. However, its appearance in the funerary contexts of young children during Macedonia's Roman period may have been a materialisation of parental grief. Although Eros' origin was firmly rooted in sexuality through the depiction of the god on Homeric funerary pyres in the mid-8th century BCE, Eros became associated with death.⁴⁴ Georgia Aristodemou's study of the frequency Eros appeared as a marker on Roman-Macedonian children's tombstones indicates that while this motif became more widely used during the 2nd and 3rd centuries CE, it did not feature in common funerary practices for young children.⁴⁵ The most common depiction was of a distinctively child-like Eros, accompanied by the figure of Nike. While the presence of Nike may symbolise victory over death, the representation of Eros is manipulated to

correspond to the buried child's age. In comparison to the infantilised Eros, who adorned the tombstone of a very young Roman child, the Eros depicted on the tombstone of fifteen-year-old Nikagoras highlights a much older Eros with a more developed, adult body.⁴⁶ Therefore, this suggests that the parents of the deceased lovingly customised the memorial for their children, ensuring their sentimental vision of childhood corresponded to the lived experience of the child.

Like the Brazilian mothers who imagine their children as carefree birds passing into the afterlife, Jean Sorabella's reading of lizard depictions in the context of the sleeping Eros uses a similar metaphor of nature to represent the grieving process of letting go.⁴⁷ The idyllic sleeping body of Eros comfortably snuggled against a dog and lizard positively presents children in a state of calm and contentment, as if taking a nap after an exhausting day of play. Sorabella argues that the presence of animals is integral to comforting the grieving mother, assuring her that her child—protected by the divine image of Eros—will have eternal companionship.⁴⁸ Moreover, the ornate sarcophagus belonging to a young child represents the deceased accompanied by Prometheus, Minerva, Mercury, and other figures related to the Roman symbology of life and death.⁴⁹ The sarcophagus relief depicts Prometheus as a clay modeller to illustrate the life cycle, with the image of the deceased child pictured to his left. By locating the child's death as a divine action dictated by the gods, their passing is made natural and rationalised as part of the life course. Like the depictions of the infantile Eros in Roman Macedonia, this artistic motif commemorates a young child's life as the step before reaching a divine-like status and moving into the afterlife.

Additionally, the imagined futures of Roman children in commemorative art and inscriptions indicate an avoidance of confronting the reality of the child's death. Returning to the experience of Nailza and the passing of Joanna, Scheper-Hughes suggests that the removal of her daughter's

42 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 364.

43 Ibid.

44 Aristodemou 2021: 37.

45 Aristodemou 2021: 26.

46 Aristodemou 2021: 27.

47 Sorabella 2007: 353-354.

48 Sorabella 2007: 367-368.

49 Allen 2022: 183-184.



photograph and refusal to acknowledge the child's history as a former family member is a bid to maintain a façade of social indifference. In the ethnography, the first mention of Joanna's photograph describes the image of the two-year-old child after her death, and its presence in the household remains a stark reminder of the recent tragedy.⁵⁰ Contrastingly, an early to mid-second century CE portrait of seven-month and nine-day-old Sextus Rufus Achilleus depicts the infant with the body development of a toddler.⁵¹ The *stele* of Quintus Fabius Proculus, a nine-month-old child at the time of his death, is carved with the body of a much older child, wearing a *chlamys* (cloak) that was typically associated with adult military dress.⁵² While Maureen Carroll argues against popular scholarship to assert that Roman sculptors were able to depict infants' ages correctly, she does not provide a reason as to why a conscious decision was made to commemorate infants in later life stages. In comparing the experience of Nailza—who was terrified to be reminded of her daughter's moment of death and the imaginative realities that commemorate deceased children as interacting with Jesus or Mary—the decision to alter the depicted ages of Sextus Rufus Achilleus and Quintus Fabius Proculus might indicate the mother's desire to avoid her painful reality.

Voice of the Roman Mother

Like that of the Brazilian mothers, the emerging voices of women across the Roman Empire grapple with the social conventions of indifference towards infant deaths and genuine parental grief. A late first-century epigraph from Rome, dedicated to eight-month-old Flavia Athenais, was erected by her mother, and her father, a slave (*servus peculiaris*).⁵³ The verse inscription prioritises the mother's visceral experience of loss as her daughter was "snatched from her mother's breast". Furthermore, the image of "the grieving father and mother [who]

cried over" Flavia Athenais illustrates the poignant grief the parents experienced after her death, and imagines the mother bent over the grave crying for all eternity (CIL 6, 34114). Due to the low literacy rates of women in Roman antiquity, it is rare to have epigraphical sources written by women.⁵⁴ However, Stevenson contends that epigraphic poetry can be written in the imagined voice of the woman.⁵⁵ The sarcophagus inscription from Imperial Rome, dedicated to three-year-old Silvia, embodies the voice of her mother, Aphrodisia, in its endearing reference to the child's parents; her 'daddy' (*tata*), and Aphrodisia, her 'mummy' (*mamma*) (CIL 6, 36353 = ILS 8548). While epigraphs remain a public document, the intentional slip into the mother's voice, perhaps to comfort the spirit of her daughter, provides a glimpse into the tender and private relationships mothers had with their children.

While outside the scope of infant burials, a *graffito* on the urn accompanying the second century CE tomb of 22-year-old Gaius Vestorius Priscus written by his mother encapsulates her need to share her inconsolable sorrow over his death: "Mulvia Prisca, who frequently pours out her grief here and has no peace" (CIL 4, 9160).⁵⁶ By using the verb 'pour', the author characterises her grief as overwhelming, with no relief to the point that it spills over from the private domain into the public space of the tombstone. The blurring of public space and private mourning is similarly recognised in Statius' poetry. While the funerary inscription does not use epithets attributed to children, or parents burying their children, Mulvia Prisca's *graffito* expresses a similar longing for a deceased child as with other burials for infants and young children (CIL 6, 34114; CIL 9, 4255).

Amongst all the Roman poets, modern scholars have recognised Statius's the *Thebaid* and the *Achilleid* as the most sympathetic towards women, and the most representative of their voices.⁵⁷

50 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 268 and 269.

51 Carroll 2018: 216-217.

52 Carroll 2018: 218.

53 Hemelrijk 2020: 51.

54 Stevenson 2002: 25.

55 Stevenson 2002: 25-26.

56 Hemelrijk 2020: 50.

57 Newlands 2006: 203-204.



Although Thetis' relationship with her son is distant, the thought of his death metaphorically and physically disturbs her. Her cries, "O this pain! O fears that came too late to a mother's heart" (Stat. *Achil.* 1.42) vocalise an embodied experience of grief, despite her relative coldness towards her son in life.⁵⁸ The desperation in both Mulvia Prisca and Thetis' voices is reflected in the universal and pained cries of Nailza, "Why did you leave me?", some two thousand years later.⁵⁹ Through the comparison between these Roman and Brazilian mothers, it is undeniable that there is an act of indifference upheld in the formal proceedings of mourning. Nevertheless, this does not negate the heart-wrenching grief that these mothers experienced.

frequently missing in surviving historical material. Thus, through comparison, ethnographic analogies may allow scholars of Roman history to imagine antiquity through an intimate, and empathetic lens.

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Conclusion

In both Scheper-Hughes ethnography and the epigraphical data of Roman infant burials, there is the presence of funerary and grieving conventions that are suggestive of a socially produced indifference to child death. The comparison between the ethnographic analogy of Brazilian mothers who feign indifference to mask their sadness—to the conventions of Roman infant burials and the subversion of epigraphic practices—demonstrate the similar ways in which child deaths are mourned. Through the grieving arguments between Nailza and her deceased daughter Joanna, it is possible to distinguish moments of genuine grief and loss expressed by Roman mothers. Male experiences of grief, like Cicero's, are thoroughly documented in the historical record, but there is a gap in the firsthand accounts of maternal loss. Although circumstantial, ethnographic analogies may be useful comparative tools in identifying patterns of behaviour in marginalised communities with similar social conventions. In particular, the observational and narrative structure of ethnographic research provides humanising insights into highly personal and emotional events. This insight from marginalised perspectives is

58 Pyy 2021: 93.

59 Scheper-Hughes 1992: 268.



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“Neronian Fakery is the New Real”: Petronius’ *Cena Trimalchionis* as a Reflection of Neronian Rome

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Petronius’ *Satyrica* is often seen as nothing more than fiction, a figment of the creator’s imagination, and is said to reveal little about Neronian Rome. Yet, for a man as involved in the Neronian court as Petronius—one of Nero’s courtiers appointed with the title *arbiter elegantiae* (advisor of luxury) and who was later consul—it is near impossible to overlook aspects of social life from around 60 CE.¹ Indeed, the “Neronian context...informs us not about reality, but about the ways of representing reality in a given period.”² In the early stages of the Roman Empire, social and economic status were not one and the same, creating a “status dissonance” where one could be economically—but not socially—well-off, as illustrated in the character of Trimalchio.³ This essay argues that a writer cannot escape the customs and *mores* of their time, and that elements of societal influence are inherent in their work, whether recorded consciously or subconsciously. Through a close examination of the language, literary allusions, and historical context of the *Cena Trimalchionis*, it will be demonstrated that a closer look at the *Satyrica* reveals multitudes about life during the reign of Nero.

From the diversity of speech utilised in the *Cena*, it becomes obvious that Petronius’ work touches upon the mixture of social classes of his time. This ranges from the well-versed narration of the elite Encolpius, to the pretensions of Trimalchio, as viewed through the lens of freedmen and their supposed vulgarity. Boyce expresses that our only

sources of spoken Latin come from writers who attempt to imitate popular modes of speech or literary modes of writing during their period.⁴ Horsfall also notes that archaeological evidence from Pompeii and Puteoli attests to the authenticity of the freedmen’s language.⁵ The behaviours and attitudes in the *Cena*, as outlined by Petronius, coincide with inscriptional evidence found at these archaeological sites. Dama’s speech, for example, is said to contain the highest number of vulgarisms of all the freedmen speeches.⁶ He uses the masculine form instead of the neuter for common words such as *vinus* (‘wine’) and the truncated *matus* (‘drunk’, Petron. *Sat.* 41.12).⁷

Throughout the text, Petronius also borrows many Greek words, revealing the Greek influence on the southern Italian setting of the novel. Hence, the hapax legomenon *staminatas* (Petron. *Sat.* 41.12), coming from the Greek for wine jar: *στάμνος* (*stamnos*).⁸ Horsfall agrees that in using Graecisms, Petronius is “keeping with the localisation of the *Cena* and with the servile, Eastern origin of the participants: a necessary and realistic element... in their representation.”⁹ It is clear that Petronius understands the registers of speech used during his time, as demonstrated through his use of specific vocabulary, which would have been difficult to achieve unless he had direct knowledge of the lower classes’ modes of speech. Adding to the frequent use of Graecisms and Greek-derived terms in the novel, the one instance of Greek text *Σίβυλλα*,

1 Völker and Rohmann 2011: 661.

2 Vout 2009: 102.

3 Weaver 1967: 3.

4 Boyce 2018: 3.

5 Horsfall 1989a: 76.

6 Boyce 2018: 76.

7 All translations by author, unless otherwise stated.

8 Smith 1975: 98.

9 Horsfall 1989a: 78.



τί θέλεις;... ἀποθανεῖν θέλω (“Sibyl what do you want? [...] I want to die”, Petron. *Sat.* 48.8) references a well-known tale of that period. It is evident that Petronius mentions this with the assumption that his reader knew what it meant, thus revealing the literacy levels of his intended audience. In fact, Trimalchio and the freedmen’s levels of Greek are limited to everyday expressions, and this commonplace saying lets Trimalchio show off his learnedness in Greek.¹⁰

Likewise, the use of idiomatic metaphors and similes in Seleucus’ speech furthers this argument.¹¹ The simile of the weakness of flies, *minoris quam muscae sumus* (“we are lesser than flies”, Petron. *Sat.* 42.4) is expressed in the work of the historian Suetonius.¹² The metaphor of inflated bladders in the simile *utres inflati ambulamus* (“we walk as inflated bladders”, Petron. *Sat.* 42.4) is evident in earlier imperial authors such as Horace and Varro.¹³ Further, the concept of the death-dealing doctor *medici illum perdiderunt* (“the doctors destroyed him”, Petron. *Sat.* 42.5) was a social motif that circulated during the time.¹⁴ It is evident that these phrases reveal common societal sentiments in Petronius’ Rome, and thus, Seleucus’ speech provides valuable insight into the popular beliefs of the mid first century CE.

In a similar vein, the speech of the destitute freedman Ganymedes may express Petronius’ concerns over current affairs. Ganymedes complains about the state of the poor, the price of grain, and the moral degradation of society with a sense of “frankness and class consciousness” that looks back upon a better era.¹⁵ While the other guests are intoxicated, this freedman speaks with a sobriety that cuts deep into the truths of society. His characterisation is evident in the double vulgarisms in *urceatim plovebat* (“it rained by the bucket”, Petron. *Sat.* 44.18). Such phrases have been preserved in contemporaneous graffiti

from Pompeii, supporting the case that Petronius’ work can be read as a window into his Rome. Complaints about the price of food is yet another realistic element incorporated into Ganymedes’ speech: *nemo curat, quid annona mordet* (“nobody cares how much the price of corn pinches you”, Petron. *Sat.* 44.1). Parallels can be drawn from this phrase to the “bread and circuses” of Juvenal’s tenth satire, as well as similar complaints recorded by Tacitus in his *Annals*.¹⁶ The characterisation of the freedmen thus serves to comment on the class disparities that pervaded Nero’s reign.

In the same fashion, the use of metaphors to contrast the upper classes as jaws, *isti maiores maxillae* (Petron. *Sat.* 44.3) and those who defend the lower classes as lions, *leones* (Petron. *Sat.* 44.4), reveals long-standing class tensions that were likely present before Petronius’ time. He criticises the *aediles* for colluding with bakers, *aediles...qui cum pistoribus colludunt* (Petron. *Sat.* 44.3), a sentiment that appears again in the work of Tacitus, who also wrote during Nero’s reign.¹⁷ The appearance of analogous ideas in both Petronius and Tacitus is not only indicative of social issues at this time, but underscores Roman life as viewed through the eyes of elite male authors. Therefore, the so-called language of the freedmen is clearly not a Petronian invention, and instead offers a snapshot of the language of various social and economic classes of his time.

Naturally, for an author as intimate with Nero as Petronius, we can infer that some elements of the *Cena* have been influenced by his time in Nero’s court. Notably, Petronius was involved in the inner circle of Nero’s company, chiefly appointed as *arbiter elegantiae*, meaning he had knowledge of the inner life—and tastes—of Nero.¹⁸ Before Petronius’ suicide, he allegedly sent to Nero a “systematic account of the emperor’s perverse sexual practices.”¹⁹ For example, Nero’s sexual

10 Horsfall 1989a: 77.

11 Horsfall 1989b: 200.

12 Suet. *Dom.* 3. 1. cf. Schmeling 2011: 165.

13 Varro, *Ling. Rust.* 1. 1. 1. Hor. *Serm.* 2. 5. 98. cf. Schmeling 2011: 165.

14 Mart. *Spect.* 1. 47. Schmeling 2011: 166.

15 Boyce 2018: 80.

16 Juv. 10.81. Tac. *Ann.* 2.87. cf. Schmeling 2011: 173-4.

17 Schmeling 2011: 174.

18 Courtney 2001: 7.

19 Rankin 1971: 90.



intricacies with catamites and women, as well as his “nocturnal orgies.”²⁰ This was not an outright condemnation of the emperor’s actions, Highet argues, but a detailed description from which the reader could infer the character of Nero through Trimalchio.²¹ The sexual deviances of the characters in the *Cena* allow Petronius to draw parallels with the emperor and enlighten his audience about the issues circulating within the Neronian court.

Another allusion to the socio-political climate of the Neronian age can be seen when Trimalchio rides from the baths to his home, with the scene openly likened to a Roman triumphal procession. Slaves similar to Trimalchio’s *phaleratis cursoribus* (“slaves wearing metal ornaments”, Petron. *Sat.* 28.4) appeared in Nero’s entourage, according to Suetonius.²² Likewise, the whispering of the *symphoniacus* (‘musician’) into Trimalchio’s ear (Petron. *Sat.* 28.5) is similar to the behaviours exhibited by triumphant Roman generals. These historical allusions to imperial Rome crafted by Trimalchio reveal aspects of life within elite political circles. To be sure, Nero himself paraded out in a chariot followed by attendants in a “try-hard” attempt to be like Augustus.²³ Indeed, there is no empirical evidence that Petronius intended to make direct reference to Nero in his depiction of Trimalchio, and such similarities could merely be coincidences. However, even if Petronius was not making commentary on the emperor through the motif of Trimalchio’s procession, the common practices of Roman emperors conveyed by historians, or through common knowledge, patently influenced Petronius’ writing.

This can be further observed in the fall of an acrobat preserved in the text, which recalls an almost identical incident which occurred in Nero’s court: *puer...delapsus est* (Petron. *Sat.* 54.1)²⁴ Nero was allegedly splattered with the acrobat’s blood (as if *he* himself were injured)

and Trimalchio’s pretence of injury in the simile *bracchium tamquam laesum incubisset* (“nursed his arm as if it were hurt”) is so similar that it cannot have been unintentional (Petron. *Sat.* 54.2).²⁵ Crum also highlights other similarities between the two, such as a taste for scarlet and purple furnishings, the wearing of an *aurea armilla* (‘golden armlet’) and a love of music.²⁶ Further references also speak to the actions of prior emperors, which are juxtaposed against Trimalchio’s lofty claims and attempts to elevate his social standing. The pretentious air that he adopts, for example, in claiming to have three libraries, when he can only name two, *II bybliothecas habeo, unam Graecam, alteram Latinam* (“I have two (three) libraries, one Greek, the other Latin”, Petron. *Sat.* 48.4), is said to allude to the actions of the emperor Augustus, who established a library in the temple of Palatine Apollo.²⁷ Petronius incorporates elements of reality and history into the *Satyricon* to aid in his characterisation of Trimalchio, for “realism is essential to Petronius’ impact,” and the chaotic world of the *Satyricon* is an exposition of one man’s interpretation of reality.²⁸

The arguments outlined above come to a head in the infamous dinner scene, where a *larvam argenteam* (‘silver skeleton’) is brought into the dining room (Petron. *Sat.* 34.8). This is a custom noted by Herodotus that reinforces the sympotic²⁹ platitude of *carpe diem*, and serves as a reminder of the fragility of life.³⁰ Trimalchio adheres to the stock features of classical dinner parties, as found in *convivia* or *symposia* featured in Horace and Plato, to assert his—or perhaps society’s—concern with human mortality.³¹ The *convivium* functioned not only to display one’s luxury, but was “crucial to aristocratic self-representation,” which underscores Trimalchio’s own luxurious banquet as inspired by reality.³² Archaeological evidence from Pompeii, including models of skeletons and the remains of *triclinia* (dining rooms), further provide insight into the nature

20 Courtney 2001: 6, 10.

21 Highet 1941: 188.

22 Suet. *Ner.* 30.3, cf. Vout 2009: 101.

23 Vout 2009: 106.

24 Suet. *Ner.* 12. 2, cf. Schmeling 2011: 222.

25 Crum 1952: 162.

26 Crum 1952: 163-4.

27 Horsfall 1989a: 80.

28 Horsfall 1989a: 76.

29 With reference to dinner parties hosted by wealthy individuals.

30 Hdt. II.78, cf. Smith 1975: 7.

31 Shero 1923: 138.

32 Stephenson 2016: 60.



of Roman *convivia*.³³ Again, features of Trimalchio's feast in contemporaneous writing, as well as archaeological findings, indicate that elements of the *Cena* must be derivative of real life. The *Satyricon* being "an embroidered patchwork of influences"³⁴ means that the text is not mere fiction, but a pastiche of historical and literary sources.

From historical references, to language distinctive of particular social classes, Petronius' *Satyricon* abounds in complex interpretations of Neronian Rome. As outlined in the introduction of this paper, there is contention between scholars regarding the nature of social commentary in the *Satyricon*.³⁵ Yet, the ambiguity that pervades the narration of Encolpius is precisely due to the turbulence of the time; the chaos in the book reflects the chaos of the world Petronius writes in.³⁶ With the similarities between the *Satyricon* and other contemporaneous works, this paper establishes that snippets of real life can be gleaned from Petronius' writing. Indeed, whilst many scholars argue that the *Satyricon*, its characters, and its scenarios are too outrageous to be real, it is naturally this outrage that allows Petronius to parody the havoc that characterised Nero's reign. For "Neronian fakery is the new real",³⁷ and Petronius *arbiter elegantiae* is just another writer caught up in the times.

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33 Schmeling 2011: 124; Stephenson 2016: 62.

34 Rimell 2005: 172.

35 Highet 1941: 186

36 Zeitlin 1971: 645.

37 Freudenburg 2017: 109.



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Field School Synopsis: The *Marzuolo Archaeological Project*, Tuscany

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Keywords: Archaeological Fieldwork • Experiential • Roman • Personal • Tuscany

During July 2024, three of us undergraduate Ancient World Studies majors—Imogen Groenhout, Macy Nichol and Ivana Skok—participated in the final excavation season of the *Marzuolo Archaeological Project*. The project investigates the Roman-period site of Podere Marzuolo in rural southern Tuscany, Italy.

This wonderful place became our home for a month, during which time we participated in excavation, worked with artefacts, and engrossed ourselves in the daily rhythms of field archaeology alongside professionals and likeminded students from around the world. Our time in Cinigiano, a town seldom touched by tourists, was an unforgettable experience, being both challenging and rewarding in ways we had not expected. It deepened our passion for archaeology and gave us a clearer sense of what working in the field truly involves. More than anything, it made the idea of a future in the archaeological profession feel both exciting, and attainable.

Since 2016, members of the *Marzuolo Archaeological Project*—an international research project directed by researchers from Radboud University Nijmegen, the University of Melbourne, and Denison University—have been excavating at the site of Podere Marzuolo.¹ The site had a productive function since its establishment in the late 1st century BCE. It might have been founded as a *villa rustica*, active in agricultural production (such as wine) and the manufacturing of *terra*

sigillata pottery, the emblematic fine tableware of the early Imperial period. Within a generation it developed into a rural centre, providing a range of goods and services for the surrounding population.² This second phase, recognised during the excavation through the changing stratigraphy, centres around a large complex in the northwestern part of the site that existed for only a few generations before it burnt down, and was abandoned. The complex consists of a sequence of large cells dedicated to artisanal production, which opened onto a portico that may have flanked a central courtyard. Features excavated in previous years include a combined blacksmith and woodworking workshop (with all the original features and a complete set of tools and instruments preserved)³ and a storage room containing collapsed piles of approximately 400 vessels in *terra sigillata*, most likely constituting a consignment in transit, awaiting further distribution.⁴

During the four-week excavation, we helped highlight the occupation history of the site as we participated in all aspects of the dig, including targeted excavation, geo-spatial analysis, finds-processing, and in-depth analyses of a variety of materials. Throughout our time at Podere Marzuolo, we worked on excavating part of a blacksmithing workshop, a pottery dump, and a kiln, gaining intensive practical experience while also immersing ourselves in the local culture.

1 MAP; permit D.G. ABAP 11747. See: <https://fastionline.org/s/excavation/item/64875>.

2 See van Oyen 2023.

3 van Oyen et al. 2022.

4 Tol and van Oyen 2024.



The Excavation Process

Each day on the field followed a consistent schedule for ourselves and the other students. We woke up at 4:45am in our shared accommodation, which became surprisingly easy after only three days. Following a light breakfast, we would dress in our dig clothes, and, while still half-asleep, prepare our equipment, including a trowel, sunscreen, and two essential 1.5-litre water bottles that had been chilled overnight. By 5:30am, we were ready and headed to the cars. We made brief stops at a local café close to the site—which mostly served trade workers at that early hour—for a truly excellent cappuccino, before arriving at the excavation site.

Podere Marzuolo is situated on a small hill overlooking the Tuscan countryside. To begin, we would set down our belongings under a shady olive tree, applied sunscreen, and did some morning stretches while the staff assessed the excavation's progress and outlined the day's work. Each group of two to four students and a supervisor then went to their respective trench, picking up the pick-axes, shovels and buckets on the way. Work commenced around 6:30am, and fortunately, the sun did not rise for another hour, allowing us to work in the shade. A light morning tea was provided at 9:00am on site, after which we resumed work until 1:00pm, often in 35-degree heat.



Fig. 1: Pickaxing on site. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

Fieldwork: Practical Skills and Important Takeaways

On our first day on site, we received a brief demonstration on using a pickaxe, before slowly beginning to remove the first layers of soil. That day, many of us decided that pickaxing was not for us, and we were more the shovelling type. However, with lots of practice and guidance, pickaxing grew on us, and by the end of the second week we could swing with accuracy and efficiency, finding the process quite cathartic (Fig. 1). This learning curve, though a small part of the overall excavation experience, perfectly sums up the broader process of adapting to fieldwork. Initially, each of us felt somewhat unsure and hesitant, afraid of making mistakes. Yet, as we gained skills our confidence grew, and we quickly felt valuable to the team and to the project.



Fig. 2: Trowelling near the kiln. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

We began by mastering essential skills such as using trowels and the GIS prism (fondly nicknamed the 'Staff of Ra'), site surveying, and learning how to successfully 'clean' the dirt, something which was achieved by sweeping the loose pebbles and soil off the worked area, revealing a compact layer which was easier to photograph, and often showed signs of structural patterns or changes in composition (Fig. 2). Then, with the help and patience of our wonderful supervisors, we delved into the specifics, such as recognising an iron nail, learning how to record it

as a ‘special find’, label it, and store it in a proper manner. As we uncovered remarkable finds—from bronze *fibulae* to coins, ornate pottery to animal bones—our recording skills became increasingly efficient and precise. We quickly developed the ability to recognise new archaeological contexts, based on the subtle differences in soil matrices. We also learnt to prepare and take trench photographs, and we certainly became experts at setting up tarps to shield ourselves from the harsh Italian sun. Throughout the excavation we continually revised our working theories regarding the use and significance of the areas we were excavating as new discoveries were made. For example, the continual stream of slag found in one of the trenches—situated just outside an earlier excavated smithy—reinforced the theory that blacksmithing activities not only occurred inside the workshop, but also outside in the courtyard.



Fig. 3: An assortment of washed pottery sherds. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

Summarising everything we learned on site is almost impossible, not just because of the sheer amount, but because many of the skills became

second nature by the end, making it difficult to imagine never having known them to begin with. While we developed a strong foundation in the theories and methodologies of archaeological excavation, from using GIS to recording special finds, perhaps the greatest impact was the confidence we gained, not only in our technical abilities, but also in our capacity to learn and adapt.

Lab-Work

Upon returning to our accommodation after excavation each day, we had an hour to collect ourselves before an afternoon of lab-work. The time was generally filled with an efficient shower rotation (one bathroom between eight dusty excavators requires a lot of communication and patience), an unfussy lunch of toast or a sandwich, and, for some, a quick nap to recharge. At 3:00pm we would move outdoors to our ‘lab’, comprising buckets, tooth/nail brushes, and an outdoor tap situated at the rear of one of our accommodation properties. Despite being berated by the Tuscan summer sun, these afternoons allowed us to unwind, listen to music together, and reflect on our day of fieldwork while cleaning, investigating, and sharing the bone and pottery remains we had uncovered in the morning.

The collected materials were transported back from site each day in designated bags so that their original context could be recorded. As a result, part of the washing process included ensuring that once artefacts were cleaned, they could be matched to their stratigraphic unit and labelled for later analysis and cataloguing. We all quickly developed a preference for washing *terra sigillata*, as its smooth, slipped surface made it much faster and easier to scrub dirt from compared to the coarse ware that made up the remainder of our pottery finds (Fig. 3). As the excavation went on, we also became more selective with the material we were bringing back from site, sorting excavated pottery sherds by whether they were large or diagnostic enough to process (and by extension, wash).

As 2024 was the final excavation season, and a decision had been made to send some previously

archived material off for specialist analysis, most days a couple of students would stay back from fieldwork to work through a backlog of faunal remains that still needed cleaning. By the final week, all students that were interested got the chance to record and photograph excavated metal artefacts (mostly nails) and to take part in a guided potter-drawing lesson. Even with everyone's dedicated efforts during the two to three hours of lab-work on field days—as well as extra volunteer work on weekends—it took a last-ditch effort to get all of the uncovered artefacts cleaned, sorted, and catalogued by the last day of the season (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Processing and boxing special finds. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

Aspects of Daily Life

Our accommodation for the duration of the project was at a comfortable *agriturismo* situated in the rural Tuscan town of Cinigiano, overlooking picturesque rolling hills adorned with signature cypress trees and farming properties. It consisted

of five sweet villas—one for male students, one for female students, and the remaining three for the staff—as well as a pool that we were grateful to relax and cool off in whenever we got the chance. Local shops and restaurants were within walking distance, and the locals enjoyed seeing us at the bar, which we frequented during our free time. The staff at the local bar even set up an outdoor projection screen for us so that we could watch the European soccer finals. Rooms were shared between two to four people, with one bathroom per house. The three of us shared a house with five other girls from the Netherlands and the United States. We had a kitchen where we prepared breakfast and lunch, and a common area where we played card games such as the Italian game, *Scopa*, and the Dutch game, *Beverbende*, both of which became crowd-favourites.



Fig. 5: Cleaning the bone while lounging. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

We had catered dinner on weekdays, which typically consisted of pasta, cooked vegetables, bread, and sometimes cheese. We also received fresh local stone fruits, and were glad to be saved from having to cook at the end of our long days of hard work. Our favourite meals, however, were at the local pizzeria *Rintocco* each weekend, which we eagerly looked forward to. We ate together each evening, often playing card games, table tennis, and swimming throughout the evening. The whole team—which consisted of around 30 people—also participated in a table tennis tournament, adding some much-needed friendly competition to

our downtime (Fig. 6).

One aspect we especially enjoyed about the project was making friends from completely different cultures. As we spent all of our waking hours together for four full weeks, we grew extremely close, and loved getting to know each other and our respective backgrounds. Our spare time by the pool was filled with Dutch lessons, American accent impressions, and marvelling at our different cultures, and our shared interest in the ancient Roman world.



Fig. 6: Afternoon table tennis tournament at the accommodation. Photograph: Authors, 2024.

On the weekends, we slept in, lounged by the pool and walked into town for gelato. Some students took day trips to Italian cities such as Rome and Pisa, but mostly, we decided to rest and enjoy each other's company after a long workweek. The three of us visited Siena—a medieval Tuscan city—during our stay, which made for a great day trip. It also gave us the opportunity to see the local archaeological museum, which allowed for a break from the intensity of the month-long work, and provided further context for our efforts.

Conclusion

We spent an unforgettable month in southern Tuscany, gaining practical experience in Roman archaeology that few of our peers, especially here in Australia, have the opportunity to acquire. In a short amount of time, this project allowed us to professionally develop our field skills, including

hands-on training in excavation strategies and techniques, spatial data recording and analysis, photogrammetry, artefact processing and conservation, and ceramic analysis. From there, each of us had the opportunity to seek out further skills depending on what sparked our interests, and to ask questions of professionals specialised in a range of areas, from drone photogrammetry, to stucco analysis, ceramic drawing, and coin processing. But perhaps most importantly, we saw firsthand the amazing team-management skills of the Marzuolo directors, hearing stories of how the project came together, and how these amazing archaeologists got to where they are today. Learning how much more efficient and effective the seasons became throughout the years was an inspiring and encouraging insight for us as aspiring archaeologists.



Fig. 7: (l-r) Imogen, Macy, and Ivana Photograph: Authors, 2024.

When studying Classical archaeology in Australia, it is often difficult to confirm that it is the path you



want to take with your studies and future career, as opportunities for practical experience can be limited. We feel so lucky to have participated in this project, which gave us tangible insights into the Classical archaeological discipline, and clarified our feelings about practical work. We now feel confident that we can direct our future studies in archaeology, as well as where we want to direct our specialisations, whether towards something more interdisciplinary like geo-spatial analysis or archaeobotany, or the classic route of pickaxing and pottery analysis. Our time in Italy also made Europe seem more accessible to us professionally. It is almost inevitable that most of our work in Roman archaeology will take place overseas, in some place with a preserved heritage of the related period. This seems less daunting and inconceivable now, with all three of us (Fig. 7) planning to complete our postgraduate degrees in Europe in the near future.

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“Take Special Notice of the Unfinished Slaves”: A Review of the Hall of Slaves in the *Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze*, Italy

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Keywords: David • Florence • Michelangelo • Museology • Sculpture

When people think of sculptural art they often think of Michelangelo's David: imposing, flawless, a masterpiece (Fig 1).¹ So it is no surprise that the first thing family and friends said when I told them of my visit to the *Accademia* in Florence was: “oh my god, David!” Everyone had something to say about David—whether they had seen him at the *Accademia* or as a replica—except my Dad. Instead, before I went, he told me to “take special notice of the unfinished slaves by Michelangelo on the way to David...people miss them”. The unfinished slaves in question were part of approximately 40 sculptures of prisoners and slaves initially planned to adorn the tomb of Pope Julius II.² Between 1519 and 1534 Michelangelo began carving them, except the original design for the tomb was later discarded, and Michelangelo's desire to finish four of the slaves ended with it.³

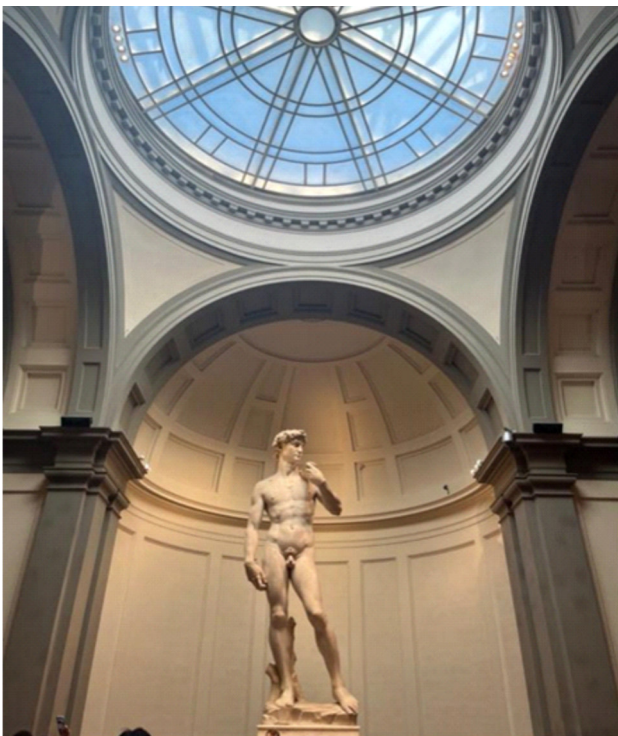


Fig. 1: Michelangelo Buonarroti, David, 1501-1504, Marble Sculpture, h. 517 cm, in the Tribune at Galleria dell'Accademia. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.



Fig. 2: Galleria dell'Accademia, Hall of Slaves. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.

In 1909 these unfinished slaves were moved from the Boboli Gardens and placed leading up to David in what was previously the ‘Hall of Ancient Paintings’ (now the ‘Hall of Slaves’). On the right side is the Young Slave, and the Bearded Slave behind; on the left is the Awakening Slave, then Atlas (see Fig. 2).

Even bearing in mind my Dad's advice, from the moment I entered the Hall of Slaves, it was hard not to be immediately drawn to David: haloed under the light-filled dome, and positioned in the apse of the Tribune, created specifically for him. David consumes the space, and since the slaves are placed along the sides of the hall—which was filled with visitors vying for David's attention—it is understandable how many just walk straight

1 Housed in the *Galleria dell'Accademia di Firenze* in Italy.

2 Armour 1994: 40.

3 Armour 1994: 41.

past, missing the slaves.



Fig. 3: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Bearded Slave, 1530, Marble Sculpture, h. 263 cm, located on the right side of the 'Hall of Slaves'. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.

Of the four, the Bearded Slave was the most resolved; he is almost fully-formed and free from the marble, yet still imprisoned with binding around the legs. The intricacy of the torso musculature is similar to David, though left unpolished, with chiselling marks still evident on the surface (see Fig. 3).

The upper form of the Young Slave has been revealed, whilst his legs are still confined within the rock (Fig. 4). By sculpting him in a *contrapposto* pose, which shifts the weight onto one leg, it conveys an innocent, naively relaxed demeanour. This, along with the face in its infancy—just beginning to develop from the marble—communicates the youth of the slave. The restraint comes from the angle of the arm as the figure buries his face and curls in on himself, as if binding himself.

In the Awakening Slave, not only does the configuration of its body contribute to it

appearing to be emerging from slumber, but also the depth of figure revealed from the rock; as it awakens it will shed the remaining marble to become free and conscious.

The final slave I viewed was Atlas; his figure half-defined and crudely carved. The struggle for freedom is evident in Atlas, simultaneously pushing back out of necessity and desire to escape from both the marble and his role: a prisoner to the weight of the world on his shoulders. The space removed between his thigh and torso highlights the exertion of the body, as it is weighed down and forced into this hunched position. The intensity of Atlas made it my favourite sculpture and I felt my reception of Atlas was enhanced by its incompleteness, similar to Anne Carson's perspective on the fragments of Sappho: "It's the reason I like to deal with fragments. Because no matter what the thought would be if it were fully worked out, it wouldn't be as good as the suggestion of a thought that the space gives you."⁴

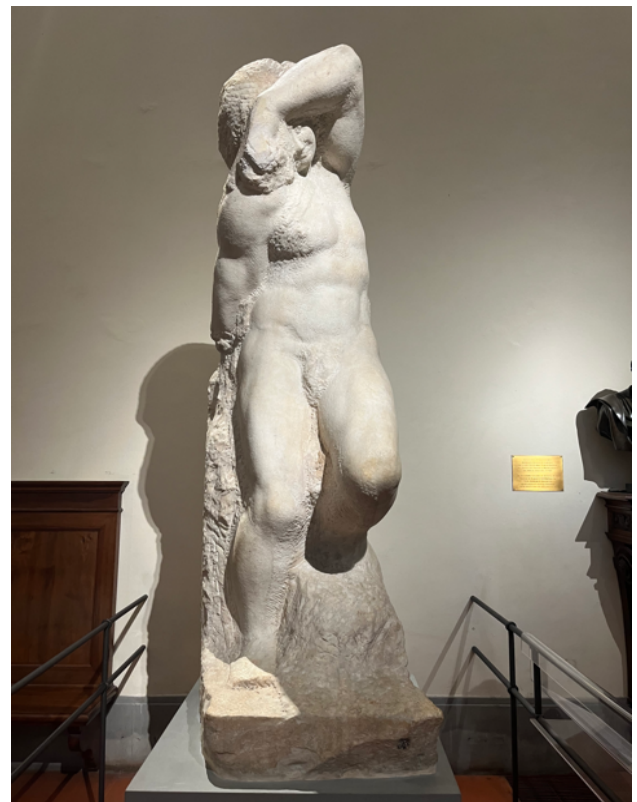


Fig. 4: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Young Slave, 1530, Marble Sculpture, h. 256 cm, located on the right side of the 'Hall of Slaves'. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.

I think the raw emotions expressed in Atlas would have been lost in a flawless rendering. As it is, the

4 Carson 2004.

fragmentary finish reinforces the feelings of unrest and tension in Atlas. It is as though Atlas' primordial power could not be tamed by chisel and hammer, so he was never freed by Michelangelo. Just like in Classical mythology he is punished to bear the weight of the world for eternity.



Fig. 5: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Awakening Slave, 1530, Marble Sculpture, h. 267 cm, located on the left side of the 'Hall of Slaves'. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.

Comparing the slaves with David is inevitable. This space between unfinished and completed works could be conceived as lacking. However, just like Carson with Sappho, in lacking there is a potentiality in these fragments; viewing the unfinished slaves allowed me to witness elements of Michelangelo's approach to carving which are not evident in the polished David. These figures, especially the Awakening Slave (Fig. 4), exemplify the front-to-back technique Michelangelo uniquely used when sculpting.⁵ Also, in Atlas (Fig. 5) and the Awakening Slave, you can observe Michelangelo's subtractive method, where pieces have been chiselled away whilst the rectangular sides of the original marble block remain. I was also able to discern the different chiselling strokes

he employed to reveal the hidden figure underneath. Deep carving marks are evident around the edge of Atlas from removing large pieces of excess marble to outline the body, and finer chisel marks—for attuning details—are visible on more resolved elements, like on the torso of the Bearded Slave.

More unexpectedly, seeing his works of art unfinished made Michelangelo more relatable. Like all of us, the slaves were works in progress: rough around the edges and restrained by perceived inadequacies, but still worthy of recognition even if not angels. Mirrored in the flaws of the slaves were the flaws in Michelangelo. He did not have magical powers; he was still human, and like all of us, did not finish things

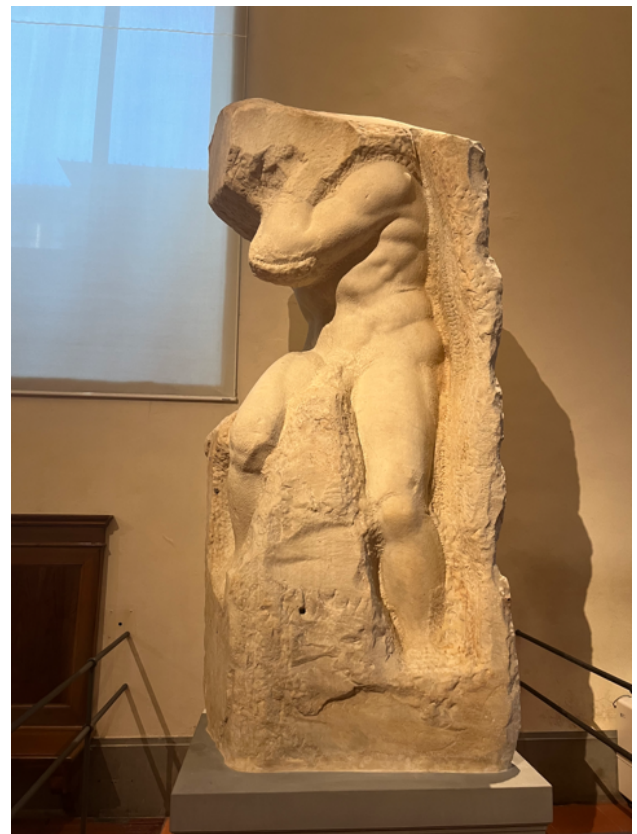


Fig. 6: Michelangelo Buonarroti, Atlas, 1525-30, Marble Sculpture, h. 277 cm, located on the left side of the 'Hall of Slaves'. Photograph: A. Kirby, 2024.

Standing angelically in the Tribune, it is hard to conceptualise David ever existing not fully formed. However, taking notice of the sculptures in the Hall of Slaves reminded me that he too came from a rough slab of marble, giving me a

⁵ Stones 1993; Carabell 1997.



greater appreciation for Michelangelo's genius; something that only came from following my Dad's advice. So, do not miss the slaves by becoming spellbound by David. Michelangelo's slaves are works of art in their own right, and possess a truthfulness that can resonate with visitors in ways the unattainability of David may not be able to.

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A Report of Fieldwork Conducted in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, Calabria

GRACE REEVE AND ROCCO LOMBARDO

Keywords: Archaeological Fieldwork • Cataloguing • Personal • Site Survey • South Italy

This report describes archaeological fieldwork conducted during 2024 in the Plain of Gioia Tauro, Calabria, in the south of Italy. In three short weeks spent on a farm in the mountains north of Rosarno, we surveyed the plain and broke ground on this project's first season of excavation. Led by Dr Lieve Donnellan of the University of Melbourne, we searched for evidence of the site of a known *necropolis*—an ancient cemetery—specifically looking for material culture relating to funerary activity. The broader project aims to place the Plain within the wider context of Mediterranean history by increasing our understanding of its development as one of the first cities in the region, and the dynamics of its interaction with others in the Mediterranean network. As first-time field archaeologists, we were lucky enough to participate in this project, and wish to share what our fieldwork experience taught us through this report.

Site Survey — Rocco Lombardo

On survey, our days started early at around 7am. I would drive from my family home to our camp to pick up the survey directors—Laura Pisanu and Viktor Linusson—and we would head towards a predetermined area to look for potentially viable fields. In such fields, we were manually searching for ‘shards’ or fragments of ancient pottery, from which important archaeological information can be derived. Our ventures took us to various locations, from river valleys to mountaintops and small isolated towns. As we drove, we paid attention to cues which may have indicated an area of interest for finding remains of ancient human activity. We would agree upon whether or not an area would be surveyed as a team. Initially, I abstained from the decision-making process, as I lacked sufficient experience to make such calls. However, as time went by—and I learned what to

look for in the field—I was progressively included more and more. I was also taught how to walk fields systematically, how to recognise fragments of ancient pottery, and how to tell them apart from modern fabrics and common stones. The latter is still a work in progress, but I have built a fundamental knowledge of these processes.

Apart from the practical parts of surveying, I learned about its technical side, familiarising myself with the GIS system and Smartsheet, both essential tools for recording finds and the progress made. We usually finished around lunchtime and wrote a field diary, outlining what we did, where we went, and our main findings and results. As is sometimes the nature of surveying, the findings were scarce; with the exception of rare instances, we mostly went back to camp empty-handed. But, as my mentors often said during our time there, “absence of results is a result in and of itself.”

Apart from the technical knowledge I acquired, I found survey to be an enjoyable activity, which has left me with fond memories and much personal growth and experience. We would spend our time immersed in nature, at times finding some picturesque panoramic views, or abandoned ruins of all sorts. We would chat about diverse topics as we looked for potential fields to survey, and stop for quick coffees in local towns. We interacted with the locals and got a glimpse into their everyday lives, some of them coming to recognise us as we passed by during our daily excursions. One of the many people we encountered along the way was a man called Peppe, or as the locals call him, *il Poeta* (‘the Poet’). He was known around town for being an amateur archaeologist—or rather, palaeontologist—who spent his days in the mountains collecting fossils, stones, and canes, which he used to make flutes and amulets (which he gifted to us). When we found out about his activity and asked him about it, Peppe invited us



into his home, showed us his finds, offered us some cold almond milk, and played one of his flutes for us. Although he hadn't found anything of interest for our work, the experience was an example of the often-unexpected roads survey can take you down, and is a great memory we made during fieldwork. Also, he did provide us with an interesting document about the stratigraphy of the land which he had acquired by sending a sample fossil to the local university; at times, important details can be found in apparently random places. Of course, there were more challenging aspects as well, such as climbing the steeper parts of mountains, or finding accessible points to reach our desired spots. But, as with most things, there is always a way to work around these challenges, and I believe it fostered in me a sense of adventure previously unknown.



Fig. 1: Scenic views on survey. Photograph: R. Lombardo, 2024.

In sum, I believe that the experience grounded me in the reality of archaeological survey, and taught me most of the fundamentals about the job. As

well as a set of transferable skills such as resilience, problem-solving, and quick decision-making, I have learned a lot about archaeology which simply cannot be conveyed through classroom learning, and can only be acquired through practical experience. It has also helped me gain a clearer vision for my future studies, and a better idea of my possibilities, while opening my eyes to the actual significance of what I had previously studied, and helping me better interpret the topics and readings for my current subjects.

Excavation — Grace Reeve

I began excavation as a shiny, brand-new archaeologist. This was my first project, and I had very little previous instruction as to the practical methods of excavation. As one can probably imagine, I was both incredibly excited and absolutely terrified. However, my anxieties were quickly assuaged; the team—led by Dr Lieve Donnellan—were nothing but friendly and encouraging, and were understanding of my position as the ‘newbie,’ graciously helping me whenever I needed it. I learned much throughout the season, and found the whole experience very rewarding.

Our first few days were spent establishing the site where we were to dig. Recently, the site had been occupied as a migrant refugee camp; piles of modern rubbish littered the area, and several cars lay abandoned by the road. Thus, we understood that there would likely be some level of interference with the ancient site. Local archaeologists gave us a tour and debriefed us on the area's history of activity, informing us that previous excavations had been conducted on the site but that, as far as they knew, the top of the hill remained untouched. Naturally, this is where we decided to pitch our trench. This required a bit of gardening; we spent two full mornings cutting down trees and tearing out roots. We revealed a very sandy surface which required little effort to dig through, but made maintaining our trench walls, and distinguishing between stratigraphic layers, fairly difficult. Keeping these layers distinct was important because each deposit demonstrated a new period of interaction with the ground, and



it was crucial that we understood where the artefacts we discovered fit into the timeline of the site's history. It was also important to keep an exact record of the geographic location and depth of the trench, for which we used a Total Station. This device is essentially a specialised GPS, and by the end of the season I could confidently operate it independently, thanks to the tutelage of Tom Keep.



Fig. 2: The stratigraphy of our first trench. Photograph: G. Reeve, 2024.

The team worked hard and relatively quickly. We built an absolute mountain of soil behind us as we carried bucket after heavy bucket of sand out of the trench. I learned fast that excavation is physically intensive, especially in the heat and humidity of an Italian summer. We would arrive on site early and leave by noon in order to combat the sun, but found ourselves covered in sweat and grime by 9am regardless. There is, however, a charming sort of solidarity that comes with feeling disgusting and exhausted together, and spirits were

kept high with an eclectic selection of music played on site.

Our find bags filled quickly with small fragments of ancient pottery, mostly of black-gloss ware. Unfortunately, we were also pulling up a large quantity of modern junk, such as tile, plastic, and even ball-point pens. It soon became clear that this area had in fact been excavated previously, and simply hadn't been recorded as such. This was proven when we uncovered small geometric patches in the sand that were clearly of a different soil, evidently tombs which had been dug up and filled back in. Upon this discovery at the end of the second week of excavation, we decided to start a second trench further down the hillside in an area where there was a higher concentration of surface artefacts. Unfortunately, we also found excavated tombs within this trench, which we hypothesise may have been excavated by *tombaroli*, or graverobbers. Thus, we concluded our excavation without having uncovered any intact tombs. This was very disappointing; we had all been rather keen to find some buried artefacts. However, this result was also highly informative; no data is data after all, and I don't believe anyone will complain about having a reason to return to Calabria. We intend to continue excavation next year by revisiting our trenches and digging further down in the hopes of finding more Archaic materials.

Laboratory and Post-Field Activities

We spent most afternoons assisting Viktor Linusson with his collecting of data for his PhD thesis on the ceramic production of the Plain of Gioia Tauro. This process involved cleaning sherds found in both survey and excavation, and then collecting data through visual analysis and the measuring of sherds. We learned how to use the Munsell system for recording clay colour, and became familiar with the slight differentiation between ceramic wares and what constitutes clay fabric. This information was used to build a database of different fabrics, laying the groundwork for subsequent analyses on a microscopic scale. In sum, the work involved tedious cataloguing of even the smallest fragments

of pottery, but by the end of the season we found our rhythm, and developed a great system to swiftly catalogue each item. We alleviated the working atmosphere by taking in the clean country air, sipping espressos, and listening to Italian music.



Fig. 3: Tom brushing surface artefacts. Photograph: G. Reeve, 2024.

The other postgraduate students dedicated their afternoons to independent work, and yet were kind enough to provide us with some insight into their projects. Tom Keep showed us his work in photogrammetry—which refers to the process of creating digital images of artefacts in three dimensions—and Laura Pisanu taught us both how to scientifically draw artefact fragments with her extensive experience. They mentored us in a very patient fashion, and overall, the environment at the farm was very friendly, relaxed, and productive.

Our accommodation (Fig. 5) was further populated by not only the loudest chickens you’ve ever heard and a pack of stray dogs, but also several friendly chefs. Calabrian local, Francesco—the owner of the farm on which we

stayed—and his German sous-chef, Daniel, provided the team with hearty, home-cooked meals at the end of each day. Our fieldwork was fuelled by local, homegrown fruit and vegetables sourced directly from the farm itself, as well as Francesco’s own community of like-minded farmers. Their diet emphasised organic wholefoods, but they even treated us to the occasional sponge cake, and plenty of local wine.



Fig. 4: Cataloguing ceramic sherds. Photograph: R. Lombardo, 2024.

Exploring Calabria

We spent our weekends further immersing ourselves in the culture of Calabria, both modern and ancient. The historical highlights included a small Graeco-Roman amphitheatre, which also overlooked a Medieval tower on the sea in Marina di Gioiosa Ionica; the picturesque borgo of Bova Superiore, a historic village where a dialect of ancient Greek is spoken to this day; the ghost town of Roghudi Vecchio (Fig. 6), destroyed by two landslides and abandoned in the 1970s for an unsettling (yet scenic) ambience; and finally, the impressive *Museo Nazionale della Magna Grecia* in

Reggio Calabria, home to the famous Riace Bronzes. Tayla Newland's research came in handy here, and she taught us much about the jewellery on display; if we could recommend anything from our experience, it would be to visit a museum with academics whose topic of research is a part of the collection. Truly, our weekends were just as educational as our fieldwork.



Fig. 5: Francesco's farm. Photograph: G. Reeve, 2024.

Nonetheless, we certainly made time for lounging on the beach, and sampling the local cuisine. We visited several smaller coastal towns, including the gorgeous Scilla, which is famous for its swordfish, but will mostly be remembered by us for its foosball tables. Tropea was another highlight, with its stunning beaches and red onion delicacies. Our weekend adventures allowed us to see an under-appreciated side of Italy which we certainly fell in love with.

Conclusion

Overall, we greatly enjoyed our time in Calabria. Fieldwork was intensive, and required hard yet rewarding work, allowing us to develop a strong basis of archaeological skills. This project was also a great cultural experience, as it allowed us to spend time in a less-celebrated part of Italy, and it was a pleasure to get to know the team and engage with the local community of Rosarno. Ultimately,



Fig. 6: The ghost town of Roghudi. Photograph: G. Reeve, 2024.

we did not uncover any complete tombs as expected, but hopes remain high that future seasons will prove more fruitful. We intend to revisit our previous excavations and examine the ground with electro-magnetic technology in order to confirm the existence of potential underlying structures. Additionally, with the survey now complete, the team's energy will be entirely devoted to excavation, meaning we can cover a lot more ground more quickly. We greatly look forward to returning to Calabria next season with our newfound knowledge.

Grace Reeve and Rocco Lombardo

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Experimental Archaeology and Materiality: Creating a Carved Stone Ball

JUSTINE WALSH

ARCH20500: Archaeology of Things (University College Dublin, Ireland)

Keywords: Experimental Archaeology • Materiality • Ontological • Poetry • Sensory

In this learning journal and discussion, I consider some of the threads of insight gained through making a Carved Stone Ball (CSB).¹ The result is non-linear and open-ended (much like my CSB-making attempts), weaving together journal notes, supporting research, poetry, and discussion. Predominantly discovered in North-East Scotland, Northern England, and parts of Ireland c. 3000 BCE, these artefacts do not fit neatly into archaeological categorisation, and there is much debate around their original purpose or function for the Neolithic peoples who created them. There are over 400 extant examples of CSBs, ranging from elaborately decorated to undecorated, and even only partially-formed. These artefacts are quite small in size (c. 70mm in diameter), and were made from a variety of materials.²

In this paper, I draw on my practice as an artist, working through material inquiry, academic research, and creative approaches to reflect upon the relationships between manufacturing processes and the 'purpose' of the CSB. I begin by discussing my sensory experience, my perception of an amplified 'web of connectivity', and the embodied knowledge of my sculptural fine arts practice. I then reflect on the fourfold hermeneutic that Associate Professor Rob Sands introduced in our class, as well as my socio-cultural context, and the possible individual and group significance of CSBs. I also consider the co-emergence of humans and things, looking at artist Giuseppe Penone's approach to material. I examine my visit to Shankill to collect stones, driven by a desire to understand the material and to explore the lines of knowledge transmission involved in the process of sourcing and making, analysing the memory responses this visit evoked. I conclude with a short discussion of flint

artefacts, and underscore the ways that manufacturing a CSB expanded my ideas about contemporary archaeology.

17/2/23

*The stone is 'active' - always moving in re-percussion.
The stone does not stay still while I work it.*

It has become warm - I feel close to it.

After:

My hands are soft, dust has settled into them

Soft but dry

Muscles a little tired

Body still echoing a bit

With the percussion.

During the first session working on the CSB at the Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC) at University College Dublin, I was absorbed by the sensory experience and effect. Journalling and drawing while making (see Fig. 1) led me to notice how active the stone was, hinting at its capacity to tie together human and material things.³ Considering matter "...not [as] a thing but a doing, a congealing of agency,"⁴ the CSB was emerging through the relationship between myself and material.

I recalled my experience of working with stone, a

1 The paper was written for the Experimental Archaeology subject, 'Archaeology of Things,' taught by Associate Professor Rob Sands at University College Dublin, which I attended on study exchange in 2023.

2 Marshall 1977, 40, 54–5.

3 Shanks, as cited in Hurcombe 2007: 6.

4 Barad, as cited in Jones 2020: 548.

sort of muscle memory.⁵ From this “intimate gestural and sensory engagement,”⁶ I sensed a familiar effect.

17/2/23

Any time I am working on a certain material for a length of time, the materials and tools leave a trace body memory in me for a little while. Angle grinding sort of buzzes on for a while after. Limestone carving, sensation of crunchy grinding scraping.

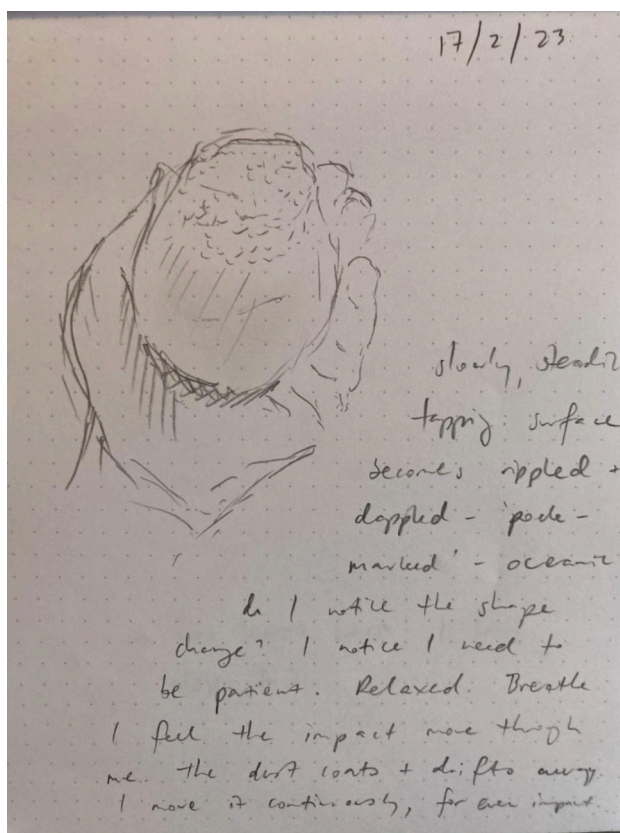


Fig. 1: Example of a journal entry and sketch from the course workshops. J. Walsh, 2023.

Being a sculptor depends upon relationships with material, just as being an archer does.⁷ That evening while walking, ducks quacking on the lake reminded me of the syncopated sounds of the workshop. I sensed loose associations occurring; in my experiences of being in Ireland, of learning a new place, meeting new people, and meeting myself anew through this process. To anchor these associations, I wrote a poem:

17/2/23

syncopation

percussive replication

the rise and fall of the wind

the density and sparseness of ducks quacking on the lake tonight

accordion push pull

in our breathing

patience, I'm trying to relax into it

let my body warm up.

let the muscles attend

and the bones listen for the echo.

For me, poetics not only emerge through language, but also the materials I work with: stone, plants, bronze, and sound. Writing poetically helps me to think through relationships and associations, and to observe them from multiple angles. A similar process occurs while making sculpture or sound works: I rest back, take time to notice what is happening; I am gathering perspective and letting my senses, thoughts, and feelings, lead me.

In writing this short poem, I began to perceive a web of connection between things: wind, breath, animals, body, rhythm. Yet, my understanding of sensory experience is never neutral.⁸ It emerges from socio-cultural constructs, and the sensorium of other people through time can differ greatly from mine.⁹ Two parts of the fourfold hermeneutic discussed by A/Prof Rob Sands in class are the society of the archaeologist, and the theories, methods, and tools available.¹⁰ My capacity to understand the experience of a Neolithic person is limited by my own context, and I struggled in seeking an appropriate place to continue making as a result of this:

1/3/23

I notice the sound ricochets off the buildings quite

5 Cipolla and Harris 2017: 88.

6 Ingold 2013: 29.

7 Cipolla and Harris 2017: 88.

8 Hurcombe 2007: 8.

9 MacGregor 1999: 264.

10 Sands 2023, via personal communication and a lecture at University College Dublin, 25th of January.

intensely... it is very distracting. I hear people yelling intermittently somewhere nearby - I don't know if it's anything to do with me? No one has approached me yet. I notice I'm feeling quite paranoid... weird.



Fig. 2: The stone cracking. Photo: J. Walsh, 2023.

My social awareness led me to move somewhere more isolated to continue making my CSB. At the CEAMC, the group of us with our hammerstones were very loud, but we were all together, in a place made for experimenting outdoors. When pecking away at the stone by myself, it felt uncomfortable and disruptive. However, once I did find a spot under an old conifer tree with afternoon sun, I found myself happily absorbed in the material and environment. I began to consider the 'purpose' of the CSB differently, aligning with the concept of entangled 'behavioural chains'—as articulated by Ian Hodder—where the process of making, using, and discarding things may inherently include a number of social, ritual, and ideological factors.¹¹ This helped me consider the CSB's importance for groups and individuals:

7/3/23

Makes me think they were very slowly made...I think of a possum-skin cloak, Wurundjeri/Bunurong. They start with a small one & a little story, when born. As they grow, they add more skins & more story to it. Maybe the CSB grows (reduces, really) - with a person. It feels very intimate, personal, companionable.

Each Aboriginal person in south-eastern Australia would traditionally have had a possum-skin cloak, as artist Maree Clarke shares.¹² Considering, as Hugo Anderson-Whymark says, that CSBs may have been made over many years and even generations,¹³ it is possible that these objects could have had a similar significance to communities. Dorothy Marshall mentions that they could have been family or clan possessions, and Alison Sheridan further considers CSBs to have been socially valorised objects.¹⁴

While working on my CSB one afternoon, it broke, as seen in Figs. 2 and 3.

23/3/23

The little ridge in the top is looking more like a potential crack. ...Balance between wanting to see progress (it's chipping easily there) and caring for the structure as a whole.

Well. It broke.

...I'm relieved & sad? I don't know if it was my method - I mostly worked from one side, that may have done it. Or it could have just been the makeup of the stone - written in the material - or both.

This desire to see progress may, in part, have emerged from the social structure that I was brought up in, with inherent biases towards continuous 'development' or technological 'advances'. Similarly, the structures that labelled archaeological age systems were products of the society, politics, and culture of the time in which they were devised by scholars, with even the 'Three Age System' used by archaeologists today underpinned by ideas of 'progress'.¹⁵ This urge for advancement—combined with my intense curiosity, my method of pecking unevenly over the surface, and the character of the stone itself—may have ultimately led it to crack (Fig. 2) and break (Fig. 3). However, its potential to crack may have already been present due to the object's own agency,¹⁶ speaking to a potentially more complex object biography.¹⁷

I eventually began working on the new stone:

11 Hodder 2011: 159.

12 Clarke 2021.

13 English Heritage 2008.

14 Marshall 1977: 63; Sheridan 2014: 309.

15 Bradley 2017: 106.

16 Ingold 2013: 31.

17 Joy 2009: 543.



Fig. 3: The stone breaking. Photo: J. Walsh, 2023.

2/4/23

4:39pm - I'm already enjoying the steady covering of the stone in light peck-marks - my method this time is more well-rounded (pun intended) - turning continuously but slowly, letting the 'sphere' emerge as I go.

4:55pm - It is like a continuum of choices. And the choices are informed by what I want - but what I want is informed by my world, my belief system, the society I'm a part of - and this society is basically all about 'Progress'. When I choose to keep turning, turning, around and around - I am actively disrupting the thought-condition of 'progress' in its linear sense.

5:12pm - I'm keen to maintain an approach here of curiosity, rather than attempting to exert my 'will' over the material...

There is a very important element I am noticing. Trust. In the material, the feedback it gives, in the sensory knowledge & experience...

Trust that it is changing, that it will change, if I just keep going. Rather than 'progress' now - change.

6:29pm - I am not exactly 'making' a carved stone ball, but I am participating in a process of change... I am curious to step a little out of the way and let the form emerge.

Morphogenesis describes the way form emerges from relationships.¹⁸ I began to acknowledge the stone as something I could trust, and to view making as a reciprocal process with the material. Realising how the "...starting point is neither fully human nor fully nonhuman",¹⁹ this marked a change in thinking: I began allowing the form to emerge, rather than projecting myself and my biases onto it. In turn, this afforded me insight into the way ideas can emerge through the "confluence of forces and materials."²⁰

While researching, a description of sculptor David Nash's work by Tim Ingold struck me: "...beneath the skin of the form the substance remains alive."²¹ This led me to remember the work of a contemporary sculptural artist I have been influenced by, Giuseppe Penone, whose sculptures evoke a similar response in me. Penone's work *Pelle del Monte* ('Skin of the Mountain', 2012), "reveal[s] the pulsating fabric of the mountain."²² Penone co-creates with material—in this case, marble—an example of sculptural morphogenesis where he creates art that is "...not a finished product but remains alive."²³ This felt akin to what I was learning with the second CSB, allowing myself to notice the vitality of the stone, and reminding me that "the experienced practitioner's knowledge of the properties of materials [...] is not simply projected onto them but grows out of a lifetime of intimate gestural and sensory engagement in a particular craft or trade."²⁴

During my CSB making process, I made a sketch sparked by a quote from my Sculpture and Spatial Practice lecturer: "Everything is material."²⁵ We are always "swimming in an ocean of material,"²⁶ and this recognition helped me consider more nuanced entanglements between humans and things.

18 Ingold 2013: 22–5.

19 Cipolla and Harris 2017: 97.

20 Ingold 2013: 22.

21 Ingold 2007: 11.

22 Penone, artist website, accessed 1st of May, 2023.

23 Jones 2020: 548.

24 Ingold 2013: 29.

25 Lambe 2023: personal communication, conversation, 2nd of May.

26 Ingold 2007: 7.



During the study break, I visited some Neolithic sites, subsequently desiring to learn more about the stone-collecting process:

21/3/23

After Brú na Bóinne -

Feeling & Hearing - two 'senses' most present.

Quartz from Wicklow, Granite from the coast (round)

I want to ask Rob about collecting our stones. When he/Brendan (?) collected them... what was it like? Weather, senses, etc. Can he remember the stones he picked up? Choices? Ideas, feelings that day, story.

While making, soon after this visit, a thought popped into my head:

9/4/23

...I do think it's possible that the CSB is a training tool, a way of understanding the material - it's mobile, you can test different rock types with it...

I wonder if the deposits in the Aberdeen area were because a training school was there.

While researching around this idea of the CSB being a training tool, I found suggestions that they may have been used to learn techniques of stone-working.²⁷ Marta Díaz-Guardamino and Andrew Meirion Jones note the limited proof of gift exchange, common use of local geologies, morphological variety denoting a sense of play, deposition often being in mundane contexts, and examples of CSBs at all stages of their *chaîne opératoire*.²⁸ They are easily transportable, being small, and according to Dorothy Marshall, their makers appeared undeterred by the hardness of the materials.²⁹

I emailed A/Prof Rob Sands and asked the questions that arose after visiting Brú na Bóinne. In his response, he shared his experience which was guided by Dr Brendan O'Neill.³⁰ I went to Shankill on the 20th of April, after checking the tides as A/Prof Sands had advised (he himself had learned from a previous mistake). I was relying on written description, gathering threads of knowledge from A/Prof Sands, Dr O'Neill, and my own embodied memory:

20/4/23

I feel like I also relied a bit on intuition and allowing myself to enjoy the process and be drawn towards stones... 'familiar' seeming stones.... Though they are damp at the beach! Which made them harder to recognise.

The combination of multiple memories and stories/ chains of information and experience have been passed around for me to know what to look for (somenhat)... There is a sort of web of information and experience that leads the way.

Coming across tiny stones... my first thought strangely was that the miniature stone balls were like larger CSBs but for children! Ha. ...It reminded me of being a child gathering precious materials from beaches - shells and stones.

I remember once when I was about 5 or 6 my older sister and I had a 'rock shop' at Dad's house on the weekend, where we 'sold' rocks we had collected to him. It's a very fond memory of mine.

This is telling me something quite significant... this material (see Fig. 4), these places, the beach or coast, the action of gathering, walking and seeking and bending down, picking up, testing, looking, touching, listening, choosing to keep or relinquish—then of course, the making itself—is all quite intimate, personal, and contingent upon relationships, memory, and feeling. It represents something very deep in my own humanity, in my sense of belonging, and the formation of who I am. This seems to raise these materials into

27 Díaz-Guardamino and Jones 2019: 120–1.

28 Díaz-Guardamino and Jones, 2019: 116–20.

29 Marshall 1977: 55–6.

30 Sands 2023, personal communication via email, 3rd of April.



valuable status; the stones in my little collection (which I feel extremely satisfied by, and oddly proud of!) have brought me back to the symbolic stability of my Dad, and the creativity of my childhood.

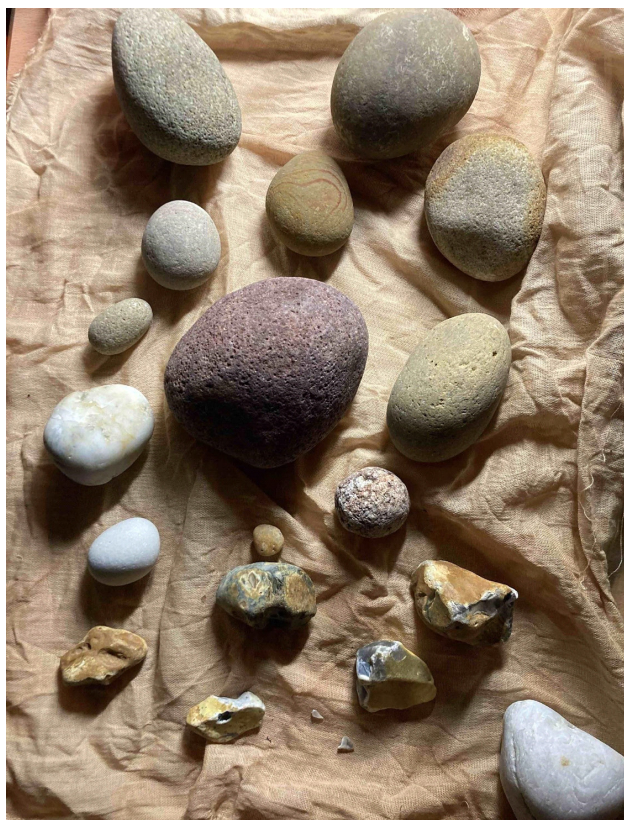


Fig. 4: Collected stones from Shankill. Photo: J. Walsh, 2023.

Through journaling about the trip and my collection, I directly experienced how “things make people”,³¹ and shifted my understanding of their potential meaning to people of the Neolithic Period. I felt the process anchor me to multiple points: the place I was in, threads of shared knowledge between myself and my teachers, my personal history, and the ancient history of people who have lived and gathered materials from the shore. The significance of water and thresholds in Neolithic society and culture has been evidenced, though the ocean is only touched upon briefly.³² Yet, the shore is a place rich with resources, and the experience of collecting from this place gave

weight and story to the flint and cobbles I took home with me. I was living in another place, one that some of my ancestors were from; I was in unfamiliar territory, and yet, the experience of being in places with these materials, and of making things from them, enriched my sense of belonging. “The things of the world have the function of stabilizing human life”,³³ and in considering this, I felt it possible that a similar experience may have resonated with Neolithic people gathering stones for their CSBs.

I found various secondary sources of flint/chert on the beach at Shankill after Dr O’Neill showed me some on our first day at the CEAMC, and shared that it was easily sourced on parts of the nearby coast.³⁴ I used some of these flint fragments to carve into a small stone (Fig. 5).

1/5/23

I do a little testing on the small CSB, carving a line with the flint, I am astounded at the sheer strength of it materially.

...I have a better understanding of the qualities of stone now... I wonder what the word, and therefore cultural power of this material would have been. What is the Irish word for flint? Cloch thine. Fire stone: tine (spark or fire or burning), cloch (stone).

There is a wealth of information about flint artefacts, being one of the most durable in the archaeological record.³⁵ Although flint tools are ubiquitous, highly variable, and have been thoroughly studied, there are nuances to their object biographies that contemporary archaeology is still articulating.³⁶

Flint requires highly-skilled practitioners to work it, with many choices made in the *chaîne opératoire*.³⁷ I also felt that making the CSBs entailed a series of choices. It is difficult to recognise all the possible uses for one flint tool,³⁸ but the CSB practice led me to explore flint and flint artefacts differently.

An earlier journal entry describes changes to my

31 Cipolla and Harris 2017: 88–9.

32 Bradley 2017: 184–6, 189.

33 Arendt, as cited in Hodder 2011: 159–60.

34 O’Neill 2023, personal communication via conversation, 17th of March.

35 Hurcombe 2007: 146.

36 Joy 2009: 552.

37 Hurcombe 2007: 159.

38 Hurcombe 2007: 162.

understanding of artefacts and archaeology:

14/4/23

I feel a sort of nuanced intimacy that has come up, like instead of just seeing the things in the cabinets at the museum as just objects, removed from me, distant and alien, I feel more close to them. Emotionally, psychologically? Spiritually? It's like the practice of archaeology is less of a practice of dealing with discrete objects and more about relationships with people, people through time.



Fig. 5: Small stone carved by flint fragments (in background). Photo: J. Walsh, 2023.

Just as CSBs, the flint artefacts are systems of relations.³⁹ They participate in the world's ongoing generation and regeneration.⁴⁰ As such, the making of things, the transfer of knowledge and skill, their effect, and their affordances—simultaneously practical, social and symbolic—constitute a wider “constellation of practice.”⁴¹

The experiment of making a CSB taught me how embodied material engagement can uncover

nuances about people through time. From inside this experience, I began to unravel biases, developing connectivity between a multitude of elements. This helped me perceive webs of connection, entangling me within the world of materials, objects, and artefacts, and expanding my ideas about contemporary archaeological theory and practice. I linked my sculptural research with archaeological studies in new ways, and will continue to carry this into my practice as an artist.

To conclude, material intimacy and sensory engagement changes our capacity to make connections between things. At the root of humanity is the material of our sensing bodies, which, in collaboration with other material, co-creates the world. This placing of humanity—as enfolded in the world—may lead us closer to understanding the people whose artefacts we study as archaeologists.

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³⁹ Jones 2020: 546.

⁴⁰ Ingold 2007: 9.

⁴¹ Díaz-Guardamino and Jones 2019: 120.



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