In loving memory of Grace Rett, ‘22
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Dear Reader,

We’re back! After a yearlong hiatus and a period of time spent considering a completely digitized Classical edition, the *Parnassus* staff is very pleased to be publishing our seventh print volume in our eighth year of existence.

Although our “gap year,” so to speak, did not ultimately result in a complete conversion to digital, *Parnassus* nonetheless returns with a slightly different feel than in years past. This year, first- and second-year students have taken up the traditional role of the Muses and breathed new life into both our submissions and our editorial board. That these students dominate both the scholarly and creative content of this year’s edition is a testament to not only their budding academic abilities, but also their deep and immediate enthusiasm for everything Classics. The future of the Holy Cross Classics Department is bright!

In addition to an injection of youth, we have seen an increase in the variety of majors of students who submit to and are published in this Classics journal. We are especially delighted to see this change as it was one of our staff goals to make a concerted effort to widen the pool of students who submit to *Parnassus*. To meet this goal, our staff made visits to courses in Mythology, Roman History and even Montserrat in order to spread the word about the journal to students of all majors who do exceptional work in Classics courses. As you will see in the table of contents, we are thrilled that this year’s volume includes, in addition to Classics, the work of students whose majors range from Physics to Psychology to English!

Increased accessibility and diversity of submissions have long been aims of this journal. Among those less familiar with the discipline, misperceptions abound about the work of classicists. Whether “classics” conjures thoughts of Moby Dick, AC/DC, dusty books or “dead” languages, we hope that even a quick look through *Parnassus* will demonstrate to the world outside of Fenwick 4 why we classicists feel so passionately about the languages and cultures we study.
In its capacity as a literary ambassador for Holy Cross Classics and the discipline as a whole, we believe that this year’s publication presents a fresh, diverse array of perspectives and topics representative of the current landscape of work in Classics. Several works highlight the problematic representations of women in ancient texts, while many others compare and connect the ancient world to other time periods, including today. Of course, a few pieces are grounded in the dissection of ancient Greek or Latin texts, and even these contain themes that still resonate in the present. Our creative pieces, too, are proof that the ancient world can (and should!) continue to be re-imagined and brought to life. It is our sincere hope that this combination of topical, creative and scholarly content will be enjoyable to professors, friends and family alike.

Finally, I would be remiss not to mention the extenuating circumstances surrounding the publication of this edition. Holy Cross, along with peer institutions across the country, closed campus and transitioned to online learning in early March in response to the outbreak of COVID-19. With help from modern technology, work on Parnassus continued remotely. We are immensely pleased to have produced a finished product we would be proud of regardless of the circumstances. COVID-19 has affected the Holy Cross community and life across the world in previously unimagined ways. In these days of uncertainty, working on this journal has provided myself and the rest of the staff with a distraction, a sense of normalcy, and even a glimmer of hope. For that, we are grateful. We hope that you, the reader, can find this journal to be a source of comfort, too.

It has truly been a pleasure working to awaken Parnassus from its brief slumber. I cannot thank the rest of the editorial board, our advisors and our readers enough. You can also find a digital edition of this and past issues of Parnassus at https://crossworks.holycross.edu/parnassus/. We are glad to be back, and we thank you for staying with us on this journey. Happy reading!

Liam O’Toole, ‘20
Editor-in-Chief
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Free Will and The Purpose of Man in Nature

Helena Lyons, ’21

Throughout On the Nature of Things and the Georgics, Lucretius and Vergil argue that nature is innately tended toward a worse state and the implementation of free will allows the temporary reprieve from nature. Lucretius comments on the nature of free will in On the Nature of Things, 2.263-277 by stating “When the starting gate swings open at the races, don’t you see how the horses’ energy, champing at the bit, cannot burst free as quickly as the mind itself desires?...motion has its impetus in Thought, we find, first rising from a whim of spirit, then travelling all through the flesh, and through the limbs.” Free will, as explained through this excerpt, is what establishes motion in an otherwise unchanging universe and begs the question of how much physical forms limit the potential of existence. Here, a great force of will is required to make a simple choice—to move forward. Free will grants the potential to implement this motion and change into the environment. It further suggests that an even greater force would be required to affect change not only on ourselves, but in nature.

Vergil’s analogy of the horse offers a greater scope to this line of thought while only modifying a small aspect of it. He writes; “It’s as when from the starting line at the track the
chariots break loose. Lap after lap, around and around, and the driver pulls on the reins and it’s no use, and the chariot rushes on, all out of control…” (Georgics, p.43). Here, humans are likened not to horses, but to charioteers. Where control over thought and action is shown by Lucretius, the opposite is shown here as the driver is unable to control the chariot which seems to be representative of life. The desires of the driver do not surmount those of the horse, so man is not able to affect his change on the horses. This quote also brings forth the idea that nature, when left to its own devices, is not a place of peace. The uncontrolled horses bring unbridled chaos to the driver.

This concept of the earth as being a place where evil exists is addressed in On the Nature of Things. Lucretius says that “The earth does not obstruct our view of everything below: All in the void beneath our feet lies open to our sight…Nature everywhere in every part lies open; all her secrets laid bare” (On the Nature of Things, 3.26-30). This is said when speaking to the good and perfect nature of heaven as juxtaposed against the poor nature of earth. The aspects of hell don’t remain hidden from man, as the void of such existence exists among man. Nature here is portrayed as innately possessing evils.

This idea is further explored in the Georgics as Vergil specifically addresses the nature of things stating “All things
by nature are ready to get worse, lapse backward, fall away from what they were, just as if one who struggles to row his little boat upstream against a powerful current should but for a moment relax his arms, the current would carry him headlong back again downstream” (Georgics, p.17-19). This passage presents the earth as an unchanging regression toward a worse state which man will constantly try to work against. If nature is defaulted to not create goodness, then this must come from man. Only through interventions against this natural order are reprieves from this poor state achieved.

The arguments made by both philosophers encapsulates this innate pessimism about the world and the role man plays within it. Despite their difference in opinion to the origins of such evils and hardships plague the earth, both agree upon an intrinsic setting towards bad in the earth. The implementation of free will works actively against the natural preordinance of the universe. Perhaps the pessimistic approach is not meant to inspire disheartenment in its readers. Such a view on the world could allow people to enjoy the small good that can sometimes be brought into this world, despite the great effort of spirit it would take to enact such change in an earth which otherwise rebels against this state.

Even so, this interpretation of the texts may only create a feigned purpose outside the monotony of human existence within nature, creating an illusion of peace for
readers in an otherwise meaningless existence. Both Lucretius and Vergil describe the earth, by its very nature, as being both a place which possesses known evils and a natural tendency towards badness. This unchanging regression to a worse state is what will forever be worked against, much like Sisyphus and his eternal task of rolling a boulder up a hill. The fate of man is to push ceaselessly against the nature of the earth to affect free will and put good into the universe, only to inevitably be conquered by life in the end.
The Pantheon

Approx. 2nd century CE. Rome, Italy.
Maternal Love Shown Through Punishment

Megan Donaty, ’22

Ceres, the goddess of agriculture and grain, has control over how fertile a land is. In addition, she is also “the goddess of the love a mother bears for her child” (“Ceres, The Goddess”). Being associated with maternal love correlates well with the motherly instincts and nature Ceres displays in Ovid’s *The Story of Erysichthon* (*Erysichthon*) myth and Pluto’s Rape of Proserpina myth (found in Ovid’s *Minerva Visits the Muses* myth). In these two myths, Ceres demonstrates her natural ability as a mother to not only her own daughter, Proserpina, but also to her woodland nymphs. As a mother, Ceres places her children above herself, going to extreme measures to ensure their safety and well-being. Moreover, Ceres is not afraid to avenge her children and punish anyone who improperly treats her daughters; the punishments she instills on others correlates well with the crimes they have committed. One could say that Ceres takes her role as a mother very seriously. In the *Erysichthon* and Pluto’s Rape of Proserpina myths, Ceres’ maternal instincts and love come through clearly, since she does everything in her power to protect her children, ultimately revealing how Ceres shows her love to her daughters through affliction on others.
In the *Erysichthon* myth, Erysichthon blatantly ignores the warnings about how the grove he is in is sacred to Ceres. Erysichthon violates Ceres’ revered grove by violently and ruthlessly chopping down one of her trees, which is actually a woodland nymph. This act was so cruel that “all the dryad sisters...went mourning” (Ovid, *Met.*, 205). The effects of Erysichthon’s selfish act were intensely felt by the whole grove. One nymph prays to Ceres and asks her “to punish this impious Erysichthon” (Ovid, *Met.*, 205), and Ceres silently nods in agreement. When Erysichthon’s act is brought to her attention, Ceres does not disregard it and fully believes it without needing more evidence or seeing it in person, displaying that even though the nymphs are not Ceres’ biological daughters, she trusts them and respects them like a mother would respect and trust her own daughters. This also shows the strong bond Ceres has with her nymph daughters, a bond full of immense love and unwavering trust. Additionally, Ceres does not have any issues with punishing Erysichthon because by inflicting pain on him, she is defending and avenging her nymphs since he violated a mother/daughter relationship. Ceres is more than willing to punish Erysichthon for taking one of her daughters’ lives and putting her other nymph daughters in extreme grief and pain. Through Ceres’ actions and love towards her nymphs, Ovid
highlights how Ceres expressed her motherly love for her “daughters” by inflicting pain on others (like Erysichthon).

As a punishment, Ceres decides to make Erysichthon forever ravenous. Erysichthon can continuously eat food, “enough to feed a city, enough to feed a nation” (Ovid, *Met.*, 207); however, that mass amount of food will never be able to satisfy his hunger. Erysichthon is so selfishly desperate to end his starvation that he tries to sell his daughter in order to buy more food for him to eat. Eventually, Erysichthon eats himself in an attempt to satisfy his never-ending hunger. Overall, Erysichthon rightfully deserved this punishment from Ceres. Because Erysichthon was extremely greedy and placed himself over others, seen through how he disrespects Ceres’ grove and tries to sell his daughter, Ceres needed to punish him in a way that would cause him to understand how one should not be greedy or selfish and that it is wrong to deny one’s own daughter. Ceres’ punishment causes Erysichthon to exhaust the one thing he most cared about: his riches. This can be seen as an act of revenge on Erysichthon because he destroyed something she cared about—her sacred grove and nymph daughter—so Ceres will in turn take away what he cares for. Ceres’ punishment of Erysichthon fits the crime he committed as she slowly and painfully takes away his most treasured possession and makes him forever live in a greedy state of mind that he can never truly satisfy until he eats
himself. Moreover, since hunger makes a person deprived of something, this punishment on Erysichthon fits his crime because he took one of Ceres’ nymph daughters away from her; therefore, Ceres forced Erysichthon to also feel deprivation by taking away his hunger, which is something he will always long for, just like how Ceres will always long for her dead nymph. Additionally, Erysichthon’s reaction to Ceres’ punishment on him highlights the parental differences between Erysichthon and Ceres. As Erysichthon is willing to sell his daughter for his own benefit, Ceres avenges her nymph by potentially risking her reputation in order to punish the man who killed her nymph and caused immense grief on her other nymphs, whom she sees as her own daughters. Erysichthon and Ceres can be seen as beings who both act in a rash ways out of love; however, Erysichthon acts rashly out of love for himself while Ceres acts rashly to express her love to her daughter-like nymphs.

When it comes to Ceres’ own daughter, Proserpina, Ceres’ maternal instincts are heightened. In the Rape of Proserpina myth, Pluto takes Proserpina “in a rush of love” while she is innocently playing outside (Ovid, Met., 119). Like any child, Proserpina is immensely scared and “called for her mother, her comrades, but more often for her mother” (Ovid, Met., 119), thus showing the strong and trustful connection between Proserpina and Ceres.
Proserpina’s kidnapping ultimately deprives Ceres of her only biological daughter, the one daughter Ceres must have the strongest connection and bond with.

The kidnapping of a child is the worst thing that can happen to any mother; additionally, it is incredibly cruel and disrespectful, especially when the child is the daughter of a powerful goddess. Cyane, a nymph, is the first to learn about Proserpina’s abduction. Cyane becomes extremely frustrated, emotional, and “grieved for both violations” (Ovid, Met., 120). This ultimately shows that Proserpina was not only like a sister to her, but that Cyane respects Ceres so much because of how kindly Ceres treats her and the other nymphs, as seen in the aforementioned Erysichthon myth. Either way, Cyane sees Ceres like a mother to her and knows that Ceres will be completely distraught over the disappearance of her biological daughter.

Ceres partakes on a long journey to try and find Proserpina where she “was looking for her daughter, in every land, on every sea” (Ovid, Met., 121). Throughout this search, Ceres shows her dedication to her daughter and preserves through challenges to try and find Proserpina. Additionally, while searching, Ceres does not rest or drink, since she is too focused on finding Proserpina. This highlights how Ceres willingly puts her daughter before her own basic needs, like rest and hydration. Ceres sacrifices her biological needs so she
does not waste any time in searching for Proserpina, therefore displaying Ceres’ extreme maternal instincts. Unlike Erysichthon, Ceres is able to ignore her bodily cravings because she loves her daughter so much: the safety of Proserpina occupies Ceres’ mind and makes her ignore her basic needs. Meanwhile, Erysichthon can only think of his basic needs (his hunger) instead of the safety of his daughter as he tries to sell her, again displaying how he does not have the same parental instincts Ceres has as he cannot place his daughter before himself.

When Ceres ultimately finds evidence of Proserpina’s fate, she is emotionally distraught. Upon seeing Proserpina’s girdle lying on the surface, Ceres immediately “beat her breast in sorrow, and tore her hair” (Ovid, Met., 122). This reaction emphasizes how knowing her daughter was raped almost destroys Ceres. Because of her rage of seeing how her daughter was definitely taken away from her and violated, Ceres curses the land of Sicily by taking away its ability to be agriculturally rich (Ovid, Met., 122) since that was the place where she found the hardcore evidence of Proserpina’s kidnap. The nymph Arethusa comes across Ceres during her time of despair and tries to calm her down and tells Ceres to not be angry with Sicily and slightly explains what actually happened to Proserpina. During this interaction, Arethusa calls Ceres “mother” (Ovid, Met., 122). This conversation
between the two again shows Ceres’ motherly impact on the nymphs even though they are not her biological daughters. Because of their variation of a mother-daughter relationship, Arethusa feels comfortable enough around Ceres to call her mother, try to calm her down, and reveal the truth to her. Without that motherly influence Ceres has over her nymphs, this would probably not have been possible; therefore, Ceres would not know the truth behind Proserpina’s fate and Sicily may have been punished more harshly.

In order to get Proserpina back from out of the Underworld, unfortunately not forever, Ceres must strike up a deal with Pluto. In this agreement, Ceres is forced to agree to split up Proserpina’s time between the two of them as Proserpina will spend the winter with Pluto in the Underworld and then be reunited with Ceres for the rest of the year. Despite her power to agriculturally destroy any land, like Sicily, Ceres does not have enough power to usurp Pluto; leading to her own personal punishment: having to share Proserpina. Sadly, strong maternal love cannot always prevail over strong, powerful forces. However, Ceres will always have the power to strongly love Proserpina. Even though this is a harsh punishment for Ceres because she is not permanently reunited with Proserpina and must give her up for a season, Ceres is willing to do this because any time with her daughter is worth it. Ceres missed Proserpina so much and
thought she lost her daughter for a long enough time that she would ultimately not skip out on the opportunity to be with her daughter even though it is for a limited time. This shows Ceres’ motherly nature as she is willing to agree with anything in order to see her daughter again.

In the Pluto’s *Rape of Proserpina* myth, Ceres shows how love can be a demonstration of power and punishment on others. One could argue that Ceres loves Proserpina so much because she has an intense desire to be reunited with her and punishes others (the people of Sicily) when Proserpina is taken away from her. Additionally, because of her strong love for Proserpina, Ceres afflicts a harsh punishment to both the Sicilians and the Sicilian environment. Innocent people, who may have no idea what is going on with Proserpina’s disappearance, suffer because of how distraught Ceres is over losing her only biological daughter. Oddly enough, Ceres expresses love in a violent way by hurting others emotionally and physically, as if her love is too powerful to control within a caring and delicate manner. Ultimately, this myth shows the negative side of love, specifically maternal love. Ceres’s actions showcase how love is connected with affliction and that love sometimes cannot really stand on its own, it must be shown in a powerful way through violence.

The *Erysichthon* and Pluto’s *Rape of Proserpina* myths highlight how powerful Ceres is as a maternal figure,
since she demonstrates how much she loves her biological and nonbiological children (the nymphs) by punishing others. Moreover, the two myths discuss how love is an irrational emotion, as Ceres shows love by acting impulsively with her punishments to mortals in both myths. As seen in these two myths, love, especially maternal love, can be so overwhelmingly powerful that it causes some to act in rash ways. Despite how these myths were told thousands of years ago, people in modern society still act strangely and punish others because of love. For example, mothers still violently defend their children, people give up vital organs for dying family members, and there are stories where humans (especially mothers) willingly sacrifice their lives to save their loved ones. Thus, love, especially maternal love, is such an overwhelmingly powerful force that it is able to control mortals and even immortals.
Bibliography


Perseus and Medusa

Vatican Museums, July 2019
The Student’s Quest
Anne-Catherine Schaaf, ’22

Of homework and or the tired student I sing, trying to swim in a sea of books and notes. O caffeinated beverage, permit me to speak, of the gloom of the Dinand basement, of the wails and moans of the restless students, the heavy-eyed procrastinators, resisting the gleaming temptations of Behemoth Facebook, Siren SnapChat, Labyrinthine Instagram, in the hallowed quest to find the sacred wisdom of Wikipedia and SparkNotes. Let me speak of the ghostly mist, hanging over the high-hilled campus, the uncertain stairs, the weighted backpack, the student who must brave it all to study.

And so the tired student left her dorm, loaded with heavy books and the determination to have all of her homework done before the weekend. But alas! What intrepid young learner can brave their way through declensions, through participles, through readings long and short, without sustenance? The shining halls of Cool Beans beckon, rays of light and sumptuous scents of sweet pastries and milkshakes stand against the gloom of a grey afternoon.

It was the Golden Croissant the tired student sought, the blessed creation of carbohydrates for quick energy that students rely on. And so up through the heights the student trudges on. The wise sophomore behind the counter could
hand over the long-sought croissant, but could offer no
Sibylline wisdom in the hungry one’s studies—such knowledge
comes at a higher price than Massachusetts’ minimum wage.

Onward then, by the driving hands of fate, those far
off figures who expect academic competence in exchange for
tuition money. Renewed by calories more empty than a
student’s head after finals, the student prepared to cross the
Hoval far-stretching, like a coracle against the wide waters of
the fathomless seas. Through the gaping doors, then past
work-study student’s piercing eye! The student hurries down
the stairs! No time to waste! The world turns, the homework
must be done! A moment’s abeyance turns ardent desire into
flickering velleity! The cavernous chambers await!

Yet, every soul who descends into the stacks of Dark
Dinand shall rise into the empyreal light, as long as they
silence their devices before the ears of the prowling librarians
prick. A Fury would be a friendlier fate to those who wrong
the bastion of bibliophiles. Let us continue on, wandering
through the rows of books like plowed fields, where the wasp
like whispers of the tomes provide an ominous promise-
midterms, projects, papers, yet to come! Hence, the tired
student must wander through, find the rare, unsullied desk,
sink slow into the depleted chair, let white leaves multiply
until ancient coffee stains and impressed pencil marks of
labor’s level space are but distant memory. Silent are the
stacks of Dinand, save the mild footfall of a wandering soul. Hark! A young Sisyphus passes by, a tragic figure, the poor math major who shall practice their theorem one hundred times, but whose memory shall grow murky when the final sits before them.

Not the young student though, who toils like prolific bee, as flashcards tower and highlighters stain dreary text with brilliance. Arduous the work may be, but the mind is clever, and the will is great. When the effort most reasonable has been made, let the student rejoice. To the winding halls of knowledge, where old sages sit, on Monday, she will take her lingering pestiferous queries. For tonight, they shall find sleep before the moon shines bright in the vast sky. The spirit rises, and so too the body, out of the gloom and into triumph!

Onward, exalting student, down the uncertain stairs, the uneven steps, a hazard mild but fear inducing. To Kimball, victorious, for the feast of champions! Or, should the line for champion’s feast stretch like the necks of fearsome Scylla, perhaps stir fry.
Ceres Holding Staff and Grain

Vatican Museum, July 2019
Why Does Love Always Feel Like a Battlefield in Actium? 
An Investigation of Battle Influences in Propertius 
Kendall Swanson, ’22 

Propertius creates a persona of a man in love when writing his Elegies. His character as the narrator grows increasingly more complex as he includes strategic diction and allusions. This essay seeks to investigate the impact of specific military terms and allusions Propertius utilizes in his poetry. The existence of military language is quite strange at first, since he wrote love poetry. However, as one continues to see the historical context of his writing, the military terms seem to actually enhance his condition as a man who fights for his love. Propertius’ use of military language, a product of the contemporary emphasis on war, is used to emphasize the masculine nature of himself and his work. In the wake of Actium, Propertius and his contemporaries were writing in a time where war and masculinity were directly related. Thus, writers found a habit in relating war to daily life. This is seen when Propertius applies military themes to both his love and his friendships, driving the point home that only a true man could be happy in a warlike love. Next, there is a heavy emphasis on emptiness, which has significance in the critical end to the Battle of Actium. Therefore, Propertius channels his feelings into yet another war motif: desertion. Finally, Propertius falls into the habit of comparing himself to other
men and his writing to other works. Notably, these references circulate around war or some form of domination. Thus, Propertius uses this allusion to show how his writing can be reflective of masculine ideals, while being love poetry.

Actium was a naval battle fought in 31 BC. Its end came from the decisive surrender of Marcus Antonius when the vast majority of his men deserted and he was left with few resources. As a result, Augustus Caesar, then Octavian, won the battle and Rome acquired Egypt.¹ This battle is especially significant for Propertius, because authors speculate that he may have fallen victim to the land seizures during this war.² Because of this, he may have a distaste for the civil war. Stephen Harrison explains a specific reference that Propertius makes to Actium: “Civil war continues to play a role: one of Propertius’ first allusions to Actium is not encomiastic, but rather an ironic observation that if everyone led the like of love and luxury there would be no civil wars and consequent grief.”³ The very nature of his poetry circulates around Actium, given that it was the relevant event to write about at the time. His indirect reference to this shows how his poetry is influenced by what is current, as it contributes to the subject

³ Ibid.
matter. Thus, he proves to be more of a man by showing his knowledge of what is popular.

In addition, he makes more direct references to Actium, especially in Elegy 2.1. After listing off, quite thoroughly, the topics which he refuses to write about, Propertius goes into detail about his desired writing topics. Instead of writing about Remus’s kingdoms and the high spirit of Carthage, Propertius would choose to write epic poetry about,

\[ eversosque focos antiquae gentis Etruscae [...] \]
\[ regum auratis circumdata colla catenis, \]
\[ Actiaque in Sacra currere rostra Via, \]

“The overturned hearths of the ancient Etruscan race [\ldots] The king’s necks circled by golden chains, and Actian beaks (of ships) running the Sacred Way,”

(2.1.29-34)

He would rather write about the tragedy behind war, speaking first in the context of the Perusine War. While it was ten years earlier than Actium, he juxtaposes this tragedy with his perceived tragedy of Actium. It is clear that the Perusine War resulted in many deaths, which shows how cruel Octavian needed to be in order to win. Actium is a little more murky, because the victory was fairly beneficial to Rome. However, Caesar places overturning the Etruscan race right next to Actian ships running the Sacred Way, and it makes Actium
appear as cruel as Perusine. Propertius shows his manhood in this set of lines by giving his opinion on a matter that is relevant. Whether his thoughts are supported or not, Propertius takes a risk in publishing his political opinions. He gives his audience an opportunity to criticize him for writing an opinion that they do not agree with. Thus, his bravery in publishing about Actium shows how it was popular at the time, and how Propertius is masculine.

Propertius utilizes several military terms in lieu of a term that is more applicable to daily life. As a *militia amor*, he treats several elements to their love as if they are war actions. Whether they are having sexual intercourse, or he is spending time with his friends, there appears to be a significant use of military language in his daily life. In the fifteenth poem of his second book of elegies, released sometime after 29 BC, he utilizes military language. He relates his pursuit of Cynthia to Endymion and Phoebus:

*Nudus et Endymion Phoebi cepisse sororem*

*Dicitur et nudae concubisse deae.*

“And Naked Endymion is said to have snatched the sister of Apollo [Selene]

and to have lain with the naked goddess.” (2.15.15-16)

His use of the word *cepisse* shows how he views the actions of Endymion: he hunted Selene, the woman that he was
pursuing. Rather than describing his actions in a more romantic tone, Propertius chose to use a military term. This makes the conquest of Endymion appear more manly, since his language makes it seem that he was able to win a spoil of war, rather than win the affections of a woman. This places a woman’s love in a more masculine context, because a true man would rather win a battle than a woman’s hand. This analogy also has an interesting fallacy, because according to the myth itself, Selene was the one in pursuit of Endymion, not the other way around. This reversal of roles in comparison to Propertius’ romantic efforts again makes him appear more manly because he “captured” his girl, and was not captured by her. Had Propertius maintained the true actions in the myth, his Endymion would not appear as manly, because he would have surrendered to Selene. This way, Propertius asserts that the man holds the control in these relationships, and that the woman is viewed as something that can be won.

From battlefield to bedroom, Propertius makes frequent use of his military skills. When Propertius and his girl find themselves alone, his description of their bedroom times become warlike. According to Megan O. Drinkwater, “The poem opens with the poet’s delight at having finally spent the night with his girl, when they engaged in a great conflict (rixa, Prop 2.15.8), and his girlfriend fought with him […] but threatens his puella [girl] with violence for coming to
bed clothed.” Propertius calls his bedroom activities a *rixā*, or quarrel. Considering that he rejoices in this *rixā*, one could imagine that he would call his sleepover something more joyful than a quarrel. Rather, he asserts his dominance as the male, as Drinkwater states, by threatening his girl. Again, he returns to his default manly descriptors: relating all things to war demonstrates how he views his own manhood. By making it known that he enjoys fighting in the bedroom, he shows that it requires a true man to love a battle-like girl.

Combat continues to show its connection to love in Propertian Elegy. On a smaller scale, he relates his bedroom time to naked wrestling. He refers to his time with his girl as fighting in the opening few lines of poem fifteen in book two by saying,

\[
\text{Nam modo nudatis mecum est luctata papillis,} \\
\text{Interdum tunica duxit operta moram.} \\
\text{“For she wrestled with me sometimes, with nipples} \\
\text{having been laid bare,} \\
\text{she, having been covered with a tunic, lead delays.”} \\
(2.15.5-6)
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As they are together, he wrestles with her, naked. While this is not quite as warlike as a capture or a quarrel, Propertius still reinforces the idea of combat. In this scenario, he joys in

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surrendering to her for a night, for she is the one who leads. In this context, the surrender appears to be purposeful, as he surrenders to the delays she leads. These delays are the “pillow talk” that they share after having wrestled in the bed. In this, his surrender is benefitting him because it means that he gets to spend more time with his girl. Thus, Propertius explores the fascinating of relinquishing power and maintaining masculinity. From an initial reading, he appears to be controlled, or “whipped” by his woman. It is only after seeing the context of their bedroom times that he shows that he is still in charge in his relationship. Thus, manhood is defined as selective submission in Propertian standards. This is seen how he controls who has the physical power in the relationship, by letting Cynthia lead the delays.

Finally, his role as a soldier extends beyond the bedroom. In the eighth elegy of book three, Propertius describes how he is proud of his violent girl. In fact, he wants everyone to see the love bites on his neck that indicate his status as a taken man. He declares,

*Hostibus eveniat lenta puella meis!*
*In morso aequales videant mea vulnera collo:*
*Me doceat livor mecum habuisse meam.*

“The slow girl comes out to my enemies!
let my comrades see my neck wounded in bites:
the bruise shows that I have my [girl] with me.”
(3.8.20-22)

He wants his audience to be varied: both his enemies (hostibus) and his comrades (aequales) should see his girl and her love bites. His word choice is peculiar in this context: rather than calling his “enemies” inimicae and his “comrades” amicae, he employs language that conjure up military themes. Describing his sexual actions in a battle context was fairly relevant, both Ovid and Catullus had been employing that method, but his choice to extend the battle motif to a platonic context shows how strongly he relates war with masculinity. His self-image has changed so drastically that he views his friends as comrades, and the people he does not like as his enemies. Thus, Propertius makes a clear effort to maintain his masculinity, as he relates quite a few aspects of his life to war.

An important military term that Propertius utilizes is the concept of desertion. A large influence that decided the fate of the Battle of Actium was the mass desertion of Marcus Antonius’ men. As a result, Antonius was viewed as a woman by the Roman people, and he surrendered to Augustus. In Propertius’ Elegies, Cynthia threatens his manhood by deserting him. This desertion is seen in how often he utilizes words to characterize emptiness. In fact, Propertius applies emptiness to his surroundings in order to reflect how he feels.

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5 Ibid.
David O Ross writes that in the eighteenth elegy of book one, “The setting of the poem (lines 1-4) is an empty grove (vacuum nemus), deserted and silent (Haec certe deserta loca et taciturna quarenti), where the desolation corresponds to the lover’s abandoned solitude (hic lice occultos proferre impune dolores /si modo sola queant saxa tenere fīdem).”

Propertius would rather conceal his feelings than outwardly describe them. Thus, he presents a contrast between manhood and emotions. While his poetry does include plenty of emotion, found in the several times he refers to himself as misera, the emotion tends to be shrouded in violence. Thus, one can decipher Propertius’ true emotions through how he describes his surroundings, he is lonely. This shows his manliness in how he does not truly describe his emotions; he would rather put up a front and describe his surroundings as deserted. This makes the reader empathize with the woods rather than Propertius. Furthermore, he conceals his emotions by complaining about his love in complete solitude. Thus, Propertius shows his manhood in the way that he handles his emotions.

Cynthia, by deserting Propertius, threatens his manhood. This is evident because he consistently calls her a perfida or periura, both meaning oath-breaker, when

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discussing her potential new man. In the eighth elegy of the Monobiblos, Propertius says,

*Sed quocumque modo de me, periura, mereris,
Sit Galtea tuae non aliena viae:
Utere felici praevecta Cerauina remo,
Accipiat placidis Oricos aequoribus.*

“But in whatever earned way of me, oath breaker, may Galatea be not hostile to your way: use a lucky oar as you sail past the Ceraunian rocks, may the placid sea of the Oricos accept you.” (1.8.17-20)

His use of this insult among the calm words of the sea only highlight the harm he intends. As she is sailing away, he gives her a backhanded wish of safe travels, punctuated by this term of broken oath. In battle, the concept of *fides*, loyalty, is very important to soldiers. Therefore, as Cynthia sails away from Propertius to her new man, she commits treason by deserting him. This acts a threat to Propertius’ beloved manhood, as he becomes more like Marcus Antonius when he is deserted. In Actium, his reputation as a strong male figure became disparaged as the Roman public begin to refer to him as a woman. In this scenario, Propertius’ manhood is also threatened. In this case, Propertius is Antonius, and this new unnamed man is Octavian. As previously stated, the concept of a strong Roman army lies in manhood. In fact, the Latin word meaning virtue, *virtus*, finds its root in the Latin word
vir, meaning man. Historically, armies that did not perform their duties correctly were seen as confused in gender. Thus, relating Propertius back to a soldier, he is seen as confused in gender when his fellow soldier, Cynthia, deserts him. As a result, Propertius treats his woman with casual violence in order to try to keep his manhood intact.

Finally, Propertius asserts his manhood through constant comparison. As a poet, he wishes to attract a learned audience. He does so by referencing obscure exempla, examples, from myth and history. His references, like his language, are selected very carefully. For example, he relates himself to a friend of his, Gallus. In his writing, he makes it clear that Gallus is a womanizer. According to W.R. Johnson, “His suggestions center on Gallus’ need to learn to be tactful, considerate, submissive, loyal—to be more like Propertius himself.” These adjectives are reminiscent of a certain set of behaviors required from a soldier. By comparing his “loyal” self to a womanizer like Gallus, Propertius highlights his nature as an ideal, masculine Roman soldier. Also, his need to advise Gallus on the way to behave emphasizes how he is the more manly one of these two men: he is compelled to teach Gallus the ways of manhood. Thus, he selectively wrote his

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friend Gallus in such a way that he can compare himself to his friend. Again, his manhood shows in the way he acts like a true Roman man, and he has mastered this ability to an extent that he can teach others the way of true manhood.

Following this theme of submission, Propertius uses this feeling to distinguish his work from other poetry. By doing this, he shows the unique nature of his poetry and how it can be compared to other notable works. In his work, Clarence Mendell writes, “These elegies of Propertius breathe a wholly different atmosphere from that of the *Odes*, the *Georgics*, or the *Aeneid*. In the first place, the poet admits and seems to glory in his surrender to carnal love.”⁹ Mendell juxtaposes the *Elegies* with other notable works by Horace and Vergil. Therefore, scholarship shows that Propertius’ talent is on a similar plane to famed works that are contemporary to him. This literary glory further emphasizes his masculinity by giving him power in knowledge, as well as power outside of the bedroom. Also, it shows that his work is comparable to epic poetry, which is the peak of manly poetry.

Not only is his work compared to epic by scholars, Propertius himself takes the liberty of comparing his poetry to the *Iliad*, several times. In the first poem of his second book, he writes,

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Then in truth we build long Iliads;” (2.1.14)

As well as,

*Si memini, solet illa leves culpare puellas,*

*Et totam ex Helena non probat Iliada.*

“If I remember, that girl was accustomed to blame light girls, and she did not approve of the whole Iliad from Helen.” (2.1.49-50)

This poem that he writes to Maecenas includes two occurrences of Homer’s Iliad, yet another example of famous epic poetry. In this, it is clear that he is trying to win the favor of Maecenas, who was a famed patron of the arts. In this, he shows off his masculinity as a means to increase in status. This time, he uses this method of comparison to show that his poetry is quite similar to the Iliad, despite the difference in subject matter. Furthermore, his reference to the Iliad specifically connects his work to warfare: the Iliad mostly concerns war. Therefore, Propertius again reminds his readers that he is masculine, and he does so by planting images of warfare into the mind of his reader. From this reference, one now has a consistent connotation between Propertius’ *Elegies* and war. Thus, Propertius re-establishes his manhood which was once threatened.

Propertius wrote his *Elegies* with more than one intention in mind. While he wants to show his creativity and
knowledge as an author, he also wants to exhibit how he can be a masculine Roman mand while writing love poetry. He does so through his constant use of military terms and references. Roman masculinity was deeply connected to warfare, as seen in the way soldiers behaved, and in the definition of virtue. In his poetry, it is evident that he was impacted by the Battle of Actium. This is visible in his constant references to this battle, both directly and indirectly. Again, he makes it clear that war is constantly on his mind by utilizing military terms in lieu of a more commonplace word. When one’s friends turn into their comrades, it is clear that they view themselves as a soldier. The most striking of these terms that appears is the presence of desertion. Desertion devastated Marcus Antonius’ army in Actium, and Propertius returns to this idea of devastation by desertion when talking about his love. The issue he has with Cynthia’s departure for another man is that his manhood may be threatened, like that of Antonius in Actium. Finally, Propertius uses comparison to show his masculine work, and his own masculine nature. Both Gallus and the Iliad work as a means to emphasize Propertius’ virtue, the former is a contrast, and the latter is a comparison. Thus, Propertius build a strong yet varied case for his own masculinity, both as a writer and as a lover.
Bibliography


David by Michelangelo

Suicide According to Socrates and Camus

Meghan Gavis, ’22

The never-ending philosophical questioning of the “meaning of life” often yields doubts whether meaning can be distinguished, if it even exists. This uncertainty can incite contemplations of suicide to free oneself from an undefinable world. Socrates and Camus approach the urgency of suicide from different angles, but both condemn its practice. They do so in different ways; Socrates cites a necessary respect for the gods while Camus believes that meaning is intertwined with life. Socrates’ and Camus’ arguments against suicide reveal the dissenting ways that they perceive earthly life and its meaning.

Socrates triggers the question of suicide in his belief that the body hinders comprehension of meaning. In the final hours before his execution, Socrates preaches that philosophers should not fear death because philosophy is the “practice [of] dying” (Plato, Phaedo). Proper philosophers should renounce earthly distractions such as bodily pleasure, pain, and riches, to purely pursue reason. This rejection of earthly life stems from the notion that the body and senses are inherently inaccurate. The body distracts the soul from the pursuit of reason, as it innately must be nurtured before higher contemplation can be attempted. The senses are unable to
provide information about abstract concepts central to philosophical reasoning, like strength and justice. They can only perceive the physical world which, Socrates argues, contains no information of the “truth.” The body not only impedes the soul’s efforts to acquire knowledge, but it is inherently unable to reason and, therefore, cannot pursue a philosophical life. The body’s hindrance of the soul’s comprehension necessitates a separation of the two in order to perceive only with the soul. As Socrates defines death as “the separation of the soul from the body,” he asserts that death is the only process by which humans can understand abstract concepts (Plato, Phaedo). This prompts contemplation of suicide as it would seemingly allow philosophers to attain uninhibited comprehension more quickly.

Though Socrates claims that meaning can only be understood after death, he condemns suicide out of religious commitment. Socrates renounces the practice out of belief that humans are under the jurisdiction of the gods. By his reasoning, humans are possessions of the protective gods: “We humans are in a kind of prison and one must not release oneself or run away from it…It is the gods who have regard for us and… we humans are the gods possessions. and should not die before a god wills it” (Plato, Phaedo). Though they can free themselves from earthly life, to do so without permission would likely incite punishment from the gods. Socrates is
challenged by his companions as they believe one devoted to the gods would cherish protection from them: “[T]he wise would resent dying, whereas the foolish would rejoice at it” (Plato, Phaedo). This presents contradiction between Socrates’ welcoming of death and supposed reverence for the gods’ government. Nevertheless, he maintains that if one reveres the gods’ jurisdiction in his earthly life and waits until his necessitated death, a future of meaning and goodness awaits him: “I’d be wrong not to be disturbed at the idea of dying. But as it is, be fully aware that I expect to go to men who are in fact good… I expect to go to the gods who are very good masters” (Plato, Phaedo). Though Socrates desires the freedom brought on by death, a reverence for something greater restrains him.

Camus prompts the issue of suicide in his assertion that life is absurd. Camus defines life as “absurd” because of humans’ incessant attempts to assign order to a world which refuses to be organized. Our insistence on fixing meaning to earthly life stems from human self-awareness. Hyper self-awareness leads to a mundane familiarity with the world. Self-questioning humans vehemently try to distinguish meaning behind life but are met with inconclusion. It seems that the more aware we become, the more stubbornly meaning evades us: “[T]he mystery was increasing with our knowledge” (Return to Tipasa). To cope with this lack of meaning, humans
may assign characteristics of their own life, like tiredness or inadequacy, to their environment, leading to an overwhelming sense of homogeny and stagnation. Underactive self-awareness, however, incites a crushing sense of foreignness of the world. If humans do not strive to find purpose in the universe, they lose connection with earthly life. Without a semblance of meaning, the world feels alien and hopeless. The constant warring of self-consciousness against an indefinable universe makes human life absurd, prompting the thought of taking one’s life as an escape.

Camus argues against suicide because he believes that we can find balance and happiness in an absurd world. The philosopher asserts that “happiness and the absurd are two sons of the same earth” (The Myth of Sisyphus). They are intertwined and inseparable, meaning that happiness can and should be found in an absurd world. Camus strives to achieve this by restraining self-awareness to maintain a simultaneously familiar and foreign environment. By maintaining both positions, we can recognize the strangeness of life without feeling alienated or desensitized; we can uphold a “will to live without rejecting anything of life” (Return to Tipasa). In this way, we embrace our uniquely human self-consciousness for, even though it causes absurdity, it also affords us happiness. Humans will continually assign meaning to a meaningless world, but since
there is no distinguishable purpose to life, we can approach
the universe with whatever perspective we choose, without
fault. In a master-less universe, each person can become his
own master of purpose — finding ultimate personal fate in
whatever absurd life he experiences. It seems absurdity is
wholly intertwined with the human condition, but so is the
happiness we can experience from it. Camus believes that
suicide is not only unnecessary but unjoyful compared to the
contentment with which humans can experience life. Those
searching for greater meaning in death will not find it; the
highest meaning we can grasp is the joy of present human life.

Camus’ and Socrates’ different contentions with
suicide reveal that the former reveres present life on earth,
while the latter considers it an obstacle to overcome, rendering
it insignificant. Socrates denies the distractions of earthly life
in order to purely reason without hindrance. He believes that
the body only inhibits the soul’s understanding of abstract
concepts. Though bodily desires can be ignored to some
degree, the soul can only purely comprehend once it is
separated from the body in death. In this way, Socrates
portrays humanity as a barrier to meaning, affording our
present life a certain insignificance. Camus, however,
believes that meaning and beauty can only be found in present
life. Our self-awareness creates the absurdity of life, but also
affords us happiness and beauty, by what we perceive alone.
While Socrates condemns our body as a distractor, Camus asserts that we only perceive beauty through our senses.

Though Socrates seems to afford significance to human life in its devotion to the gods, he does so in preparation for an afterlife, maintaining humanity as an obstacle, opposite Camus. Socrates’ devotion to the gods seems to emphasize present life. Humans use life to act in service of the gods and revere them; they refrain from committing suicide out of respect for religious commitment. Though this devotion to the gods seems to signify meaning, it is only a means to attain knowledge in the afterlife. Socrates urges against suicide to preserve the gods’ favor and future comprehension of meaning in a “good” afterlife. Preserving human life and honoring the gods’ does not signify meaning to life but a condition to acquire meaning. This belief opposes Camus,’ as he claims that those who require gods to perceive beauty are “poor” (Nuptials at Tipasa). He believes that all humans need to understand the beauty of life is an unembellished perception of the surrounding world. While Socrates considers earthly life a step to comprehending meaning, Camus asserts the non-existence of the ultimate truth for which Socrates longs. Human self-awareness is the master of meaning; we create it and can only perceive it in present life. Though he defines life as “absurd,” Camus
believes it contains the only meaning and happiness we will ever know.

While Socrates and Camus present opposing perspectives of earthly life, they agree on the significance of self-consciousness and human possibilities for higher perception. Socrates preaches that the unhindered soul can attain pure knowledge. Camus asserts that self-awareness allows us to paint life with meaning and find beauty in the world. Whether we comprehend ultimate meaning or create it ourselves, whether in life or death, Socrates and Camus agree that the human self-consciousness is capable of finding purpose and joy.
Theater of Taormina
Approx. 3rd century. Taormina, Italy
Jane Campion’s *The Piano* tells the story of a mute woman, Ada, and her attachment to her piano. What begins as an innocent enough film slowly turns increasingly sinister, culminating in a show of physical violence by a male character. This bears striking resemblance to the Procne and Philomela myth in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses*. Specifically, violence committed against females, female silence, and female imprisonment are parallel themes that make the telling of both the Procne and Philomela myth and *The Piano* so captivating. These themes manifest themselves in different ways, but both stories follow a similar structure that involves conflicting feelings of loyalty and subsequent vengeance. Despite the different introductions of conflict, Ada and Philomela are first and foremost the objects towards which males direct their anger, sexual desire, and revenge. In this paper I will argue that after attempting acts of defiance in response to male violence, these female characters become victims and thereby transform into sympathetic characters for viewers and readers alike.

The idea of “giving” a woman to a man is present in both this myth and this film and works to showcase blatant female oppression at the hands of men. In both stories, the
central female is “given” by their father to another male figure. Philomela is only permitted to go with Tereus to see her sister once her father gives permission. Likewise, Ada lives with her father and daughter in Ireland until her father arranges a marriage to a man named Stewart in New Zealand. While both instances of exchange are not inherently violent, they do lead to a cascade of events that end with the women becoming victims of aggression. Implicit in this giving is the belief that whoever receives the woman then owns her. This is plain to see in both Tereus’ and Stewart’s actions, as Tereus believes he can rape, punish, and imprison Philomela because she has become his property. Stewart does the same. While he is not sexually violent, he expects that as soon as Ada becomes his wife, she should immediately be affectionate towards him. Thus, there is a latent sense that possession equals affection: Tereus is allowed to rape Philomela because he owns her while Stewart can expect affection after he marries Ada. Here, the men show that the women’s wishes and desires are not important—this is a more understated way to silence women. Stewart also expects Ada to be receptive to his affection, which is exemplified when he tries to hold her hand at the play they attend. Tereus assumes the same, that Philomela has reciprocated his desire, which is something Ovid indicates in the Metamorphoses: “Philomela is eager to go, wants the same thing, or seems to” (1.485). Both Stewart and Tereus
make assumptions about their partner’s desires because of their expectations surrounding “ownership” of women.

Lack of speech is another aspect of both stories that contributes to the imprisonment of women. After Tereus rapes Philomela, he cuts out her tongue, removing her ability to express herself verbally and thereby imprisoning her in her own mind. Ada (who is mute) can communicate by signing, but expresses her true self by playing her piano. Because Stewart is insistent on not keeping the piano Ada has traveled with from Ireland, he thereby withholds a very meaningful form of expression for her. Their lack of speech forces both women to find other ways of expressing themselves. Philomela turns to her loom and uses it to convey to her sister that she was raped. Ada, on the other hand, turns back to the piano. In so doing, she falls in love with another man in the village, Baines, who is the only man who tries to retrieve her lost piano for her. This alienates her from Stewart, as she sees him as an adversary to getting her piano back. She also uses the piano in a different way to express herself: physically removing a key and expressing her love for Baines by writing a message on it. Male characters try to use silence to imprison the female characters, but this only allows the women to showcase their resourcefulness, as they are able to find means of defying their captivity and overcoming their silence. This, however, does lead to a cascade of much more serious events.
Women asking favors of their husbands becomes another important theme associated with this myth and this film. In the Procne and Philomela myth, Procne asks Tereus to get her sister so that Procne may see her again. There is a similar occurrence in *The Piano*. Because Stewart leaves Ada’s piano at the beach, she is forced to ask Baines for a favor: to take her to the piano. The trouble begins when Baines goes to great lengths to bring the piano to his home and allows Ada to “teach” him. Inherent in the asking of a favor is agreeing to a covenant of repayment. For instance, by bringing Philomela to Procne and doing the favor asked of him means, Tereus thinks he has the right to seek repayment, namely by having sex with Philomela. The same goes for Baines: for every time Ada comes, he gives her one key of her piano so she is able to slowly win back ownership of it. Thus, he completes his favor, but this is not to say their relationship is completely centered around her playing the piano. Baines is extremely sexual with Ada the first time she comes, and he gets more sexually aggressive as time goes on. Ada no longer owes Baines piano lessons, but he still asks her for repayment: to play without her dress on, to take off her clothes, and to come lay in his bed with him while he is completely naked. Ada does become scared at first, just like the description of Philomela after her rape, “She shook and trembled/As a frightened lamb which a gray wolf has mangled/And cast
aside (*Metamorphoses* 1.531-533). More interestingly, because Ada had asked the same favor of her husband, Stewart, and he refused, she does not owe him anything. Her debt is to Baines, which she pays back in a mostly sexual way. These favors put men in a position of power and give them justification for taking what they want, as they are the only ones capable of completing the favors asked by the female characters. While the favors are innocent in nature (Procne’s asks to see her sister, Ada’s asks for her piano) they become extremely sinister after male characters use their authority to complete the favors. When the male characters complete both Procne’s and Ada’s favor, the two women end up owing the males sex.

Loyalty and vengeance become two central themes that cause conflict between the male and female characters. In both myth and film, one specific instance of loyalty leads to a subsequent act of vengeance. In the Procne and Philomela myth, Procne’s loyalty is to her sister when she finds out her husband, Tereus, raped her. Her loyalty causes her to become enraged at what Tereus had done, so much so that she was willing to kill her own son in an act of vengeance towards her husband. Procne takes revenge for the violation and captivity of her sister in a way she knows will disturb and disgust her husband the most: by literally cutting up their son and feeding him to Tereus. This loyalty between sisters is similarly present.
between mother and daughter. Flora, at the beginning of *The Piano*, is fiercely loyal to her mother Ada, even stating that she would never call Stewart “Papa.” She communicates her mother’s anger at having to leave the piano at the beach and remains attached to her throughout a large portion of the film. Once she catches her mother and Baines becoming intimate, however, Flora immediately shifts loyalty to Stewart, even calling him “Papa.” Flora begins the cascade of events leading to Ada’s eventual punishment. She betrays her mother by giving Ada’s love note on a piano key to Stewart, as she knows they have been forbidden from seeing Baines. The conflicting and changing loyalties make both the film and the myth extremely poignant, as betrayal and disgust become central themes. It is a difficult point for both the reader and the viewer, as we are not sure who to sympathize with. Both Flora and Procne lose loyalty to their loved ones and subsequently kickstart horrifyingly violent acts of vengeance.

Philomela and Ada are both physically punished by men for their defiance and intention to disobey. After Tereus rapes her, Philomela tells Tereus that she plans to tell everyone what he did to her; he retaliates by cutting out her tongue so she physically cannot. Ada also acts in defiance of Stewart, causing him to cut off one of her fingers. These males not only punish the female characters, but do so in a way that causes the most damage. Without her finger, Ada cannot play
the piano as before. Stewart knows this, which is why he chose that as her punishment. Tereus also punishes Philomela in a way that will do the most damage: directly inhibiting her plan to tell people of her rape. The nature of the punishment remains the same between myth and film: Philomela and Ada are not brutalized or physically beaten, but victims of calculated injuries. Stewart’s punishment for Ada is especially calculated. He knows how attached to the piano Ada is, and that the piano has been the basis of her relationship with Baines. Moreover, Ada’s hands are a very important part of the film: she uses them to sign, to write, and to play. As punishment for her disobedience, he, too, chooses a sinister course of action. By cutting off one of her fingers and threatening to cut off more each time she attempts to see Baines, Stewart effectively chooses the most damaging injury he could have given her. Physical punishment was not enough to satisfy the male characters. It needed to be something more personal, more damaging than a broken bone or a bruised body. This takes the brutalization of female characters to another level: they are not simply beaten to make a point, but are punished in a way that makes it much more difficult for them to heal--both physically and emotionally.

Tereus and Stewart not only punish the female characters in sinister ways but do so solely motivated by pride. Tereus, upon meeting Philomela, describes his infatuation
with her, but punishes her for her disobedience and defiance because of their potential effects on him. The only reason he does not hurt her is to protect his good name; he feels no compassion for Philomela. Stewart has the same motivation. Throughout the film, Ada is less than compassionate to him. Though he asks why she will not become intimate with him and waits for her to warm up to him, it is plain to see that Stewart does not deeply love Ada. He is hurt when he finds out that she has been unfaithful to him, but it is just his pride that is hurt. This hurt pride harkens back to the aforementioned point of ownership. Because Ada is Stewart’s wife, he believes himself to be her keeper. It seems that it is not Ada herself that he wants, but rather compassion and intimacy from any woman. That being said, when he finds out she has been intimate with and trying to see Baines, he retaliates--because of her disobedience, not heartbreak. Stewart’s pride is hurt because he has lost his possession to another man. In his retaliation, he attempts to prove to Ada and himself that he is still her owner. This show of masculinity and ownership is seen in both Stewart’s and Tereus’ actions. Pride motivates these punishments: both Tereus and Stewart refuse to be emasculated by Ada and Philomela and take actions to prevent further disobedience, prove their masculinity, and maintain their pride.
Both Ada and Philomela are subjected to violence at the hands of their male counterparts. This violence is motivated by a series of factors: pride, anger, and revenge, all of which are responses to ensure female submission. *The Piano* and the Procne and Philomela myth are by no means uplifting and light-hearted stories, but they nonetheless convey important messages about female imprisonment and female agency. Issues of females as “possessions” and male-imposed female silence are also central to the film and the myth, as they work to show the masculine desire to maintain a dominant position in relationships. Violence in the film and myth stem from machismo, or aggressive male pride, and the sole victims are the women. In the end, both female protagonists are able to escape their oppressors and flee to freedom. Both *The Piano* and the Procne and Philomela myth examine these issues in the context of male-female relationships in a way that sheds light on the complex nature of love, lust, and rejection.
The Acropolis Through the Temple of Olympian Zeus

Athens, Greece.
Lucretia and the Language of Purity

Anne-Catherine Schaaf, ’22

hoc illud est praecipue in cognitione rerum salubre ac frugiferum, omnis te exempli documenta in illustri posita monumento intueri: inde tibi tuaequae rei publicae quod imitere capias, inde foedum inceptu, foedum exitu, quod vites.

“This is what makes the study of history particularly advantageous and fruitful, that you might look upon every known lesson in the illustrious memorials of the past. From these examples you and your state can choose what to imitate, and what to avoid that is disgraceful in the design or disgraceful in result”

*Ab Urbe Condita, Praefatio* 10-12

Early on the preface to Titius Livius’ *Ab Urbe Condita*, the ancient historian tells the reader his goal: not just to describe the past, but to illustrate its moral teachings. Livy is deeply troubled by the events of his modern day, particularly with the rise of avaricious individuals, and hopes that by providing examples of strong and virtuous historical figures, *exempla*, the Roman readers of his day can become better people and citizens. For men, the goal is to gain the trait of *virtus*, synonymous with strength, self-sacrifice, discipline,
and bravery, exemplified in stories such as that of Romulus, Horatius, and Cincinnatus. For women, the ideal virtue is *puicitia*, associated with chastity, modesty, and purity. No figure in Livy’s history serves as a better *exemplum* of this *puicitia* than Lucretia, the woman whose tragedy in chapters 57 through 59 of Book I of *Ab Urbe Condita* would lead to the foundation of the Roman republic. This paper will analyze the nature of *puicitia* how Lucretia exemplifies it, how it drives the narrative forward, and how it relates to a greater understanding of Roman social values around gender.

Rome in 510 B.C., as Livy describes, was in a state of moral failure. The Tarquini ruled extravagantly and unjustly, violating basic social mores. Their reign began in wickedness, according to Livy, as Lucius Tarquinius overthrew and murdered his father-in-law, the king, and then his wife Tulla runs over the body, angering the gods in Chapter 48. Following his description of the early Tarquini activities, Livy foreshadows that, as their reign began with a crime, it will end in one equally horrific, *quibus iratis malo regni principio similes prope diem exitus sequentur*, “by this anger, the evil beginning of the reign, very soon a similar end would follow.” In the succeeding chapter, after Lucius Tarquinius refuses to bury his father in law, he becomes known as Tarquinius Superbus, or Tarquin the proud. As his reign continues, Tarquinius Superbus uses trickery to defeat the Gabii in
chapters 53 and 54, postremo minime arte Romana, fraude ac dolo, adgressus est, “at last he resorted to the tactic so unlike that of a Roman, using fraud and deceit,” war tactics that Livy considers dishonorable. Livy also describes in chapters 56 and 57 how Tarquinius Superbus forces the plebeians to provide labor for his building projects, arousing their resentment. Tarquin, as the reader can conclude, lacks virtus entirely.

However, in the face of moral decay, Livy will continue with his theme that just individuals can lead society on a better path. From Lucretia’s first appearance in I.57, wherein Collatinus brags about the virtues of his wife, sua Lucretia, in comparison with the royal daughters in law, Livy, using the language of purity, establishes her as an exemplum who along with her family stands in contrast to the immoral Tarquini. The exemplum for Roman women was a modest mother and wife who deferred to her husband’s and father’s authority. Our first encounter with Lucretia is Livy’s depiction of her staying up late to work spinning wool with her maids, a traditional vision of a good Roman wife (I.57). In this scene, Lucretia demonstrates pudicitia as she engages in a traditionally feminine activity to provide clothing for her family, and works long hours doing so. Livy deliberately contrasts her against the daughters of the king who stay up late with their friends in convivo luxuque, partying in luxury, implying that they lack pudicitia. Moreover, in earlier
chapters, Tulla, wife of Tarquinius Superbus, willfully drives over her father’s body in an act of shocking disrespect to filial piety and another display of the lack of *pudicitia* among the women of the Tarquini. When the men in I.57 compare the value of their wives’ virtue, they unanimously agree that Lucretia is the winner of the contest. Later, the men arrive at Lucretia’s house, where she and Collatinus welcome them graciously. While Livy mentions her beauty, it is this *pudicitia*, her proven chastity, that Livy describes as overwhelming Sextus Tarquinius, son of the tyrannical king Tarquinius Superbus, with the urge, *mala libido*, to violate her (as well as possibly anger over his family losing the contest of the wives). The narrative continues to emphasize her *pudicitia*, as she later welcomes Tarquin, unknowing of his evil plans, with perfect Roman hospitality when he returns alone as a guest in chapter I.58. Lucretia, later that evening, awakens in her bed to Tarquin standing over her with his sword at her throat, his other hand on her chest, and she shakes with terror. He urges her to be silent or he will kill her. When he attacks, after resisting his every entreaty, to which Livy implies a woman with lesser virtue would have succumb, she unwillingly submits to Tarquin to avoid the greater crime against her honor. Tarquin’s threat to murder and place her with a dead naked slave in the implication of what was to the Romans the worst kind of adultery. In this instance Livy
subtly reminds the readers of Lucretia’s *pudicitia*, as she submits not merely to save her own life, but to avoid the defamation of her and by correlation her family's honor.

In the narrative of Tarquin’s attack, Livy uses masculine and feminine language to deliberately contrast Tarquin and Lucretia. After raping Lucretia, Livy describes Tarquin with the phrase *victrix libido*, a state of glory over his “conquest” the unyielding virgin, *obstinatam pudicitiam*. Tarquin violates Lucretia, and Livy clarifies, violates Rome’s most essential social mores. Lucretia, on the other hand, is powerless and terrified. After the attack, she does not try to hide her suffering and shame, but immediately calls her close male relatives, her husband and father, for aid. Lucretia, as all the men who listen to her experience agree, is blameless. Yet she, the perfect Roman woman, cannot bear to live if other women may justify adultery or immoral behavior by her example. So, motivated by the honor and shame of *pudicitia*, she commits suicide, forever enshrining herself as the perfect *exemplum* for all Roman women.

Livy takes exacting effort to describe Lucretia as the perfect wife, the matron, the emblem of the chaste and modest Roman woman. She, ultimately, represents Livy’s theme of the pure, chaste, moral *exemplum* for women. Her blood is described as *castimissium* by Brutus, a superlative for the Latin term for chaste, a term that is encompassed by *pudicitias*
She, like Rome, has been abused by the Tarquini and must be defended by noble, exemplary men like Brutus and Collatinus. It is her defining pudicitia that makes her what would be called today a “righteous victim”. Livy’s language, and the historical context, is essential to understanding the nature of what has happened. By the language Livy uses, readers can understand how Livy details the severity of this crime. It is a crime against hospitality, the Roman hospitality repeatedly praised by Livy, as Tarquin, the guest, committed a crime against his host. It is a family crime, an insult to Collatinus’ role as the paterfamilias, or head of household. The term for the crime we today would understand as rape was raptum, from rapere, meaning to seize or take. This word was associated more with abduction than with sexual assault in ancient Rome, for example Livy’s description of the Sabine women as rapienda virgines, abducted young women, in Book 1, Chapter 9. However, in both Livy’s time and Lucretia’s time, the act of violence against Lucretia would be considered differently. A woman in ancient Rome was not recognized by society as a fully autonomous human being who had the right to control her own body. She was the property of her husband, meaning Tarquin’s crime is not just an act of violence against Lucretia, which Livy describes with the term violare, but a kind of theft against her husband. It is a crime against chastity and pudicitia, as Brutus exclaims in
I.59 over Lucretia’s bloodied body, *castissimum ante regiam iniuriam sanguinem iuro* or I swear by this blood, most pure until sullied by the tyrant, creating her *stupro infando*, her unutterable bodily shame. It is certainly physical violence as well, as Lucretia speaks of her body being *violatum* or violated, as well as a demonstration of Tarquin’s belief in his social and political power to do as he pleases in a state of *amore ardens*, fierce passion (I.58).

Ultimately, this multifaceted crime becomes the downfall of the Tarquini. However, even if she kills herself, Lucretia is not passive. She tells the men gathered at her side *date dexteras fidemque haud inpune adultero fore*, “Swear with your right hands and your good faith that by no means shall the unchaste one go unpunished.” Lucretia demands that the crime not go unpunished, a demand that entails what is essentially revolution. To hold the Sextus Tarquinus accountable is a challenge to the entire order that has legitimized these violations of Roman morality. Although Lucretia is an *exemplum*, even though the actual end to the reign of tyrants is carried out by men, she isn’t powerless. Even as the ideal passive and obedient Roman woman, the model of *pudicitia*, she gets revenge, albeit indirectly. The men use her as a rallying point to overthrow the Tarquini. Brutus uses the idea of Lucretia’s *pudicitia* to rally the Romans, emphasizing how truly terrible this crime was.
However, it is not so much her personal vengeance, but vengeance for the entire wronged city of Rome. Her *pudicitia* was at the heart of the crime, and Sextus Tarquinius’ blatant violation of that *pudicitia*, as Lucretia professed before she killed herself, shows disrespect for the Roman household and the whole morality of Rome. Moreover, it through this violent crime against the model of a Roman matron that Livy impresses on his readers how evil the power hungry Tarquini are. Lucretia becomes a rallying point, defined by *pudicitia* in life and in death. The rule of kings, as Livy informs his readers, lasted for two hundred and forty-four years. The last of these kings was Lucius Tarquinius Superbus, a tyrant who ultimately would be the downfall of the Roman monarchy which led to the institution of the consulship, and Lucretia’s role cannot be minimized in this monumental change to Roman society.

Yet, the legacy is of her narrative is complicated to us as modern readers who can recognize there is something fundamentally twisted about a victim choosing to die rather than to live in shame, even if her rapist is ultimately stopped. However, in its rawest form, *pudicitia*, with all of its modern connotations of chastity, purity, fidelity, and modesty, is essentially shame. It demands that women hide themselves, that they accommodate others, but never draw attention to themselves, that they make themselves small. However, a
modern reader can still recognize there is a kind of power to her story. For it is this sadistic act of violence against Lucretia, and the response of the men in her life to her suffering, is ultimately the catalyst for the end of the tyranny of the Tarquins and the beginning of a new Republican era of government in Rome. This government, the reader can understand, is one that will return to the true Roman values, led by exemplary men. *Pudicitia* will return too, but there cannot be a female leader as *pudicitia* dictates that women behave in the opposite manner—passive and deferential. Instead, Lucretia becomes a remote ideal, a woman who cannot fail, because she has become the idea of virtue itself. Pudicitia was destroyed in an act of violence under Sextus Tarquinus, but with its return, more acts of violence will continue, only legitimized by Roman society. In Rome, as in the United States until 1993, marital rape was not a crime. *Pudcitia* will continue to serve as a justification for the right kind of violence, a cultural teaching for women that their only way to be deserving of honor is to sacrifice and suffer, to participate in the denial of their own individual and collective agency. Perhaps in the modern world, however, we can achieve what Livy and Lucretia couldn’t—to resist all those who abuse their positions of power, while also ensuring a future for victims where they are not weighed down by shame manifested by our culture, but rather empowered to fight back
against their abusers, as well as any system of shame and injustice that would play a role in silencing them.
Ancient Toledo
A panoramic shot taken of the small Spanish town with a 2000-year history.
Philosophers like Lucretius and Pythagoras in ancient Rome and Greece produced revolutionary ideas connecting numbers and geometry to the natural world. This new age of philosophers did not bend with the gods, rather they questioned previous beliefs about the universe and tried to answer these questions using logic. They proposed that the entire universe could be explained with numbers. This was an innovative way of thinking for their time and they were correct. Modern day mathematics agrees with this way of thinking; nature and the universe can be studied using numbers and geometry. Fractal mathematics studies the pattern of small recurring shapes that combine into a larger complete structure. These patterns are found frequently throughout nature. For example, jagged coastlines can be simulated by drawing infinite summations of triangles (Modeling Nature with Fractals). Pythagoras (570-496) and Lucretius (94-56 BCE) accurately described the universe using numbers and geometry, and were among the first to explore fractal mathematics in nature.

Pythagoras was a Greek philosopher who studied philosophy and mathematics. He was the founder of the famous Pythagorean Theorem that described the relationship between the three sides of a right triangle. He took his
understanding of mathematics and applied it to philosophy, he believed that he could use math to explain the world he lived in. Pythagoras is quoted to say “numbers, as I have said, constitute the whole universe” (A Presocratics Reader 3.18.) Instead of blindly following the current dominating belief that the structure of the universe was controlled by the gods, Pythagoras boldly turned to mathematics for answers. He understood that the geometric relationships he studied were not a coincidence, instead they were the laws that governed the universe. Pythagoras understood that there was a deeper meaning to his geometric proofs and he was correct, as modern mathematics is used to describe nature frequently. For example, the structure of a tree follows fractal mathematics very closely. The trunk of the tree rises out of the ground and from the trunk, branches spread out, and then more smaller branches in succession this creates a pattern of small repetitions (Branching Fractals.) Pythagoras could have noticed these patterns in nature and come to the conclusion that they are not random and could be explained using numbers and math. Fractal patterns of repetition similar to this are found naturally in the world, proving that numbers are the constituents of the natural world just as Pythagoras predicted many years ago.

Lucretius lived past the era of presocratics, but his thinking was similar, as he also approached questions
logically as he sought to find the truth. Lucretius theorized that the universe is made up of atoms. These atoms are pure and have no color, in order to produce color and different materials they had to be arranged into shapes. In *On the Nature of Things* 2.784-785 Lucretius states that a simple triangle of atoms can be used to create other shapes “Nothing about assorted different triangles would impair their union’s ability to form the outline of a square.” Triangles are a building block, as they are the most basic shape that you can make in two dimensions. Any shape can be created by combining any number of triangles. Lucretius argued that anything in nature can be formed from shapes of atoms, including foods such as olive oil (2.851), or animals like ravens and swans (2.822). This implies that anything in nature can be formed from triangles. This idea is used in modern day mathematics to simulate realistic natural landscapes, including mountains and planets. They are formed using the same ideology that Lucretius theorized, an infinite number of small triangles are added together in order to form the desired shapes in the landscape. This is the basics of fractal mathematics, since nature follows fractal patterns often, these simulated landscapes appear to be extremely realistic (Modeling Nature with Fractals.) It is incredible that this modern method of simulating nature with math was first
explored thousands of years ago in ancient Rome by Lucretius.

These theories by Pythagoras and Lucretius were likely not accepted by the majority of the citizens in antiquity. The two philosophers were proposing revolutionary ideas that directly conflicted with the current teachings from the religious authority and state. Ancient citizens in antiquity were comfortable with the traditional idea that the gods created the world that they lived in and that nature bowed to the will of the gods. However, some open-minded ancient citizens must have realized the importance of their work, because it was preserved and we are able to enjoy it today. Pythagoras understood that numbers constitute the universe, this can be seen when describing fractal patterns in nature such as tree growth. Lucretius theorized that anything in nature can be created with triangles of atoms, the same way that modern math simulates natural landscapes. At first glance, nature seems chaotic and uncontrollable. But in reality, just as Pythagoras and Lucretius theorized, nature can be described by using math and geometry.
Bibliography


Pornography and Poetry: The Humanity of The Performer

Zachary Tympaniak, ’23

Mia Khalifa: a name that sparks controversy in the eyes of the public and incites lust in the hearts of men. Both an adult film actress who has incited controversy and has been objectified by men and society for her provocative performances, and a woman with human traits who undergoes day-to-day challenges like everyone else. As a result of people knowing her primarily for her adult film career, they translate her performance identity onto her personal identity. Thus, people dehumanize her by treating her as an object of sexual pleasure and desire. We can associate Mia Khalifa the performer with Cynthia, Propertius’s *scripia puella* or “the written woman” because both are fictional constructs that men pursue in sexual ways. Through the dialogues and descriptions of Cynthia, Propertius fashions a *scripia puella* whose individual humanity is put into question by his poetry. By understanding the dehumanization of fictional women like Cynthia, we can learn how these ludicrous expectations negatively impact people with personal and performing identities.

For this argument, a *scripia puella* is one of the focuses of an elegiac lover’s poetry where she only exists on the page like how a performer only exists in their medium. When it comes to this trope for women in the works of
Catullus, Ovid, Tibullus, and Propertius, scholars have debated if these beloved girls were based on historical figures or were fictionalized from the poet’s mind. Although some scholars have denoted these written women to be pseudonyms for real people—for example, Clodia is to Lesbia as Hostia is to Cynthia—Maria Wyke combats this belief with the idea that “read[ing] [these women] as pseudonym[s] is to misread or disregard the narrative organization of the poems.”¹ In conjunction with this statement, many scholars have looked into the purpose of a *scripta puella*. Megan Drinkwater remarks that a “written woman” must keep the lover’s interest by teasing him in romantic and sexual ways like foreplay.² Sharon James elaborates on the notion of this trope by exhibiting that a *scripta puella*’s words are generic and are meant to reflect what the poet wants out of her and that she must “destabilize [the speaker].”³ Finally, Ellen Greene takes the written woman to the limit, arguing that the subordination of this female character reveals the devaluing of women, thus turning them into objects of male fantasies of erotic

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¹ Wyke (p. 49) argues that elegy has become such an integral part of Cynthia’s identity to the point where associating her with a “real” woman would diminish the literary movements P. makes with respect to her.

² Drinkwater (p. 329) discusses how the lover controls the beloved in his poetry.

³ James (p. 316) talks about how female speech in elegy is generic and reflects what the lover wants out of the girl.
domination.4 My reading of the *scripta puella* aligns greatly with Greene’s investigation into the misogyny of the poet and the speaker towards the mistress, but Greene omits how deep Propertius submerges his *puella* into the world of fantasy and myth. For this argument, I will first analyze poems 1.3, 1.11, and 1.15 for their descriptions of Cynthia with respect to various mythological women. Specific to 1.3, I will also look into how the author tries to bring Cynthia into the real world. These analyses in turn will explore the dehumanization employed by Propertius the poet. Then, I will connect the dehumanization of Cynthia to Mia Khalifa and other examples in order to highlight the persistence of such degradation in our modern society.

In poem 1.3, Propertius dehumanizes Cynthia by comparing her to sexualized mythological women in order to restrict her to a realm of fantasy and myth. To start out the poem, Propertius introduces three similes of mythological women, all of whom, according to Ellen Greene, provide some additional traits for Cynthia. The poet leads the poem with an allusion to the “weak Cnosian girl,” Ariadne, who “lied on the deserted shores when the Thesian ship was withdrawing” (*Thesea...litoribus*, *Prop.*1.3.1-2). Greene mentions that Ariadne represents Cynthia in this simile, and

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4 Greene (p.305) challenges the notion of poets empowering women in elegy by proposing that poets instead devalue those same women to objects of sex and desire.
Bacchus, who comes to take Ariadne with him later in their story, represents Propertius. We can confirm the link between the two sets of characters because in Cynthia’s speech later in the poem, she describes herself as “having been deserted” by Propertius, just like Ariadne by Theseus (deserta, 1.3.43). Greene then goes on to say that Ariadne’s description as languida illustrates her as a damsel in distress who lacks any sort of agency. Additionally, the poet places Cnosia towards the end of the simile after Thesea, which puts an emphasis on Theseus being the primary defining trait of this allusion even though Ariadne is the subject and thereby bases her characterization off of Theseus’s departure. By connecting Cynthia to Ariadne, a mythological character, Propertius sets up his scripta puella to be unlike anyone real, which dehumanizes Cynthia in the process.

In the next simile, Propertius mentions the story of “the Cepheian child, Andromeda, lying now beside in her first sleep” (accubuit...Andromede, 1.3.3-4). Again, as stated by Greene, Andromeda equals Cynthia and Propertius equates to Perseus in this simile. We know this because Andromeda’s primo somno connects with Cynthia’s mention of “Sleep [having] pushed [her]... on friendly wings” (iucundis...alis, 1.3.45). Through this simile, Propertius paints Andromeda as

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5 Greene, 307
6 Ibid
7 Ibid
restrained and helpless to any danger that comes her way. By equating Cynthia to Andromeda, Greene notes that the poet depicts Cynthia as a victim helpless to any impending monster. Although the speaker can be equated to the sea monster, Perseus is just as, if not more of a monster than the actual sea monster. In the story of Perseus, after he frees Andromeda from her chains, he then takes her as his wife for a reward (after petrifying her family’s entire court). Although Perseus releases Andromeda from the physical chains of bodily restraint, Perseus then immediately ensnares her character to the role of wife. This restriction of character in turn limits Andromeda’s traits as an individual. This situation then begs the question, “What is a worse fate: dying at the hands of a sea monster or living in the shadow of a hero?” With Cynthia, the latter fate is true where she cannot be thought of anyone other than Propertius’s scripta puella. Like with Ariadne, the poet pushes Andromede towards the end of the couplet and her characterization as “the Cepheian child” does not aid her in the realm of individual description.

Another simile Propertius draws on is “the [Maenad] weary from continuous dances” in the next couplet (1.3.5). Here, Greene equates Cynthia to the Maenad and this time, there is no direct male associate. She also remarks that from

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8 Ibid
9 Ibid
10 Ibid
Ariadne to the Maenad, the image of a girl shifts from a static girl without any inherent impurities towards a girl whom the speaker associates with a more drunken and scandalous state of being.\textsuperscript{11} In addition to that, the poet introduces the poem and each simile with \textit{qualis}, which the Oxford Latin Dictionary cites as a word that “introduc[es] comparisons, examples, similes, etc.”\textsuperscript{12} Through the connotation of introducing similes with mythological figures, the author denies Cynthia any reality by suggesting that the realm of fantasy and myth is very pivotal to her characterization. Thus, by equating Cynthia to mythological women, Cynthia’s personality is not only unrealistic but also not her own individual character. Later in the poem when the speaker shifts to “reality,” he notes how he looks at his beloved Cynthia just “as Argus was clinging to the unknown horns of Inachidos’s daughter” (\textit{Argus...Inachidos}, 1.3.20). Here in this simile, Argus corresponds to the speaker and Io to Cynthia. This territorial and possessive dynamic between Argus and Io mimics that of a \textit{custos}, which Propertius discusses later in poem 1.11. As the poet mentions, the \textit{custos} serves as a guardian to keep his woman in line (\textit{ut... meminisse}, 1.11.15-16). Although in the original myth, Argus had the intention of keeping Io safe from Jove, Propertius’s

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid
\textsuperscript{12} Oxford Latin Dictionary s.v. \textit{qualis}
custos dynamic corrupts the myth to put blame on Io rather than on Jove. In this way, Propertius displays his misogyny in order to characterize a female into the role of a seductress rather than a rape victim. Also, since Io is in the form of an animal, or property, the poet in turn objectifies Cynthia to be inhuman and not deserving of human traits. Like with Ariadne and Andromeda, the patronymic, Inachidos, denies Io any characterization outside of her relationship with her father. As a result of the sexualization of these fictional women, Propertius confines Cynthia to a world of male fantasy and thus denying her any sort of individual character development. Although the poet leads with his beloved in the mythical world of qualis, he attempts to illustrate her in the real world.

Although Propertius attempts to introduce Cynthia into reality, the poet dehumanizes her by continuing to deny any sort of individual development for her. Once the poet introduces the audience to the “real” world, he uses imperfect tense verbs like haerebam, solvebam, ponebamque, gaudebam, and dabam as he documents his actions with the sleeping Cynthia (1.3.19, 21-24). By using the imperfect tense in rapid succession for a few lines, he presents the situation as ongoing and in the moment as opposed to a recollection of past events. In addition to that, the implementation of the first person adds a sense of personality to events that the audience
can visualize in their mind. In turn, Propertius creates a seemingly real setting where readers should take all that is said in this poem as the truth. Although the poet presents the situation to be occurring in reality, Maria Wyke reminds us that realism is still a literary construct.\textsuperscript{13} During all of these actions, the speaker goes out of his way to put a “garland… on [Cynthia’s] temples” as well as “fixing her disheveled hair” and “to give stolen fruits” to her (\textit{corollas...dabam}, 1.3.21-24). Through this pantomime of the speaker’s actions, he decorates and readjusts Cynthia’s body as if she were a mannequin to him. As a result, Propertius objectifies Cynthia to be an object that he admires for the way he wants her to be. Looking into the “fixing [of] her disheveled hair,” Roman society has associated upkept hair with married women and purity. So, in contrast with the fantasy world where the poet builds Cynthia up to be a seductress, the real world has her as a socially accepted woman of marital chastity. Although the poet presents these two different places with opposing Cynthia, Wyke’s comment about realism puts these two \textit{scriptae puellae} on the same plane of existence. Thus, Propertius hypocritically restricts his beloved to be both a seductress of impurity and a wife of purity, which also denies her any personal development for herself.

\textsuperscript{13} Wyke (p. 196) looks into the relations between P.’s grammar and Cynthia existence on the page and how the “written woman” can be related to living women in the Augustan Age.
However, Propertius now gives Cynthia the opportunity to speak. During her speech, Drinkwater notices that Cynthia employs vocabulary common to Propertius’s elegy like *miseram, fallebam, fessa, deserta*, and *querebar* (1.3.40-43). Although the poet gives Cynthia a chance to speak for herself, she ends up mirroring his language and behavior, which James cites to be an aspect of a written woman. As a result, Cynthia has no meaningful vocabulary distinguishable from her lover, which makes her a reflection of what the poet wants out of her. As the beloved mimics her lover’s metaphors and tactics, Propertius essentially creates the illusion of Cynthia’s voice or an *imago vocis*. Even with this fake voice, Cynthia does not characterize herself as an individual human but as a parasite who “having been deserted complained with [herself] lightly [about] the long delays in external love” (*leviter...moras*, 1.3.43-44). This dependency on Propertius in turn dehumanizes her to a beloved who can only thrive with the characterization that Propertius gives her. Although the poet tries to convey a “real” Cynthia in the physical world, his attribution of stereotypes onto Cynthia prohibits such an idea to be plausible.

In Propertius 1.11, the speaker associates Cynthia with the characterizations of female stereotypes and of

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14 Drinkwater, 332  
15 James, 318
Aphrodite/Venus’s epithets in order to confine her to a realm of male desire and myth. As the speaker fantasizes about a rival sweet-talking Cynthia on a beach in Baiae, he remarks that “a girl is accustomed to slip while her guard is away, nor to remember her treacheries” (ut... meminisse, 1.11.15-16). Here, perfida can be either taken as a substantive direct object or a nominative modifying puella. By associating perfida with puella, the speaker creates a deceitful girl who is considered to be a true form of a woman since her custode keeps her in line. Also, the separation of puella and perfida where each one is on opposing sides of different lines suggests an initial opposition between the two words, but when reading the Latin, the words are right next to each other. Just like the true nature of a woman, the word order and word association regarding the puella is downright deceitful, which illustrates Cynthia’s characterization coming from Propertius’s poetic devices and thus his desires. In conjunction with labi having a sexual connotation for “falling,” this description of Cynthia aligns with Aphrodite Pandemos, the sexual and promiscuous epithet for the goddess, which attributes Cynthia to a mythical goddess sought after for sexual pleasure only.

Later in the poem, the speaker then goes on to equate the puella to a “dear mother” (carae matris, 1.11.21). Here, the use of carae instead of a word like dulcis to describe matris invokes the concept of storge (familial love) rather
than *eros* (sexual love). As Greene has noted, this association of Cynthia with a mother presents her as a source of dependency for Propertius with respect to his poetry.\(^\text{16}\) Thus, Propertius shifts his description of Cynthia from a treacherous mistress to a desexualized mother. Then, this keeps Cynthia constrained by another stereotype for women. This motherly association also connects Cynthia to Venus *Genetrix* because this epithet characterizes Venus in a motherly role as a founder of Rome just as Cynthia is the founder of Propertius’s inspiration. Finally, when the speaker closes out the poem, he describes the shores of Baiae as “unfriendly to chaste girls” (*castis inimica puellis*, 1.11.29). Here, *castis* completely nullifies the inherent nature of the *puella* that the speaker laid out earlier in the poem, which contradicts the previous two descriptions of Cynthia and restricts her to even more stereotypes. This final characterization of Cynthia connects with Aphrodite *Urania*, the heavenly and pure Aphrodite born asexually from the testicles of Uranus. Through this tricolon crescens of starting out with an impure woman to a woman of sustainability and finally to a woman voided from sex, Propertius reveals his own hypocritical desire to have Cynthia be all of these women, but primarily the pure one. Additionally, having the stereotypes of women correlating to the various epithets of Aphrodite/Venus confines Cynthia to

\(^{16}\) Greene, 314
the world of poetry and imagination, denying her any
humanity and individual characterization. Other than the
sterotypes of women restricting Cynthia, attributing men to
a woman’s character restricts any individuality that a woman
might have had.

In poem 1.15, Propertius’s application of “The Male
Gaze” portrays women as dependent on a man for substantial
caracter development. When Propertius introduces Calypso,
the poet defines her “having been moved by the Ithacian
having departed” (Ithaci digressu mota, 1.15.8). The
description of Calypso provided by Propertius before
mentioning her actual name put emphasis on her relation to a
man rather than her own name, which illustrates her lack of
caracter without a man. Additionally, the emotional
implication of mota gives reason to her grief as the result of a
man. Next Propertius references Hypsipyle being distraught
with the departure of Jason. However, in the Argonautica,
Hypsipyle does not exhibit any sort of pain when Jason leaves
her, but the poet gives her the attributes of an “anxious”
woman “stand[ing]in an empty bedroom” (anxia, vacuo...
thalamo, 1.15.17-18). Through the modification of
Hypsipyle’s story, Propertius gives her emotional
development based on the absence of a man in her life. The
poet also mentions the story of Alphesiboea where the death
of her husband incites her to “break the chains of blood and
family” (*sanguinis* ... *rupit*, 1.15.16). The idea that her *amor* far surpasses her desire to uphold familial bonds, which Romans held with the utmost importance, illustrates the overwhelming influence *amor* has over family. However, this vendetta would not have transpired if it had not been for her husband’s death. After all of these descriptions of women, Propertius says that he would describe Cynthia as *nobilis historia* if she were to be like the fore-mentioned women (1.15.24). From what he has stated, in order to be considered *nobilis historia*, a woman must forfeit her independence. Despite the fact that Propertius wrote these poems over two millennia ago, the sexualization of individuals is still a prevalent issue in society.

One such individual that people sexualize is Mia Khalifa who can be equated to a *scripta puella*. As a result, this comparison illustrates the perpetuation of the dehumanization of women in society. For her brief four-month career as an adult film actress, she created an uproar in the Middle East for wearing a hijab during a sex scene. This controversy greatly increased her popularity on notable pornography website Pornhub to the top spot. On this site, her biography describes her as “small in size but not in sex appeal” and a “big brain to match those big boobs.”

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17 Mia Khalifa’s Biography on pornhub.com gives a lengthy overview of her as a porn star, highlighting her physical appearance and skills with respect to sex.
from these descriptions alone, the writer sexually objectifies her. However, in a podcast interview between her and YouTuber Philip DeFranco, she discusses her love of sports, comments on her regret of doing adult film, and even talks about herself at subsequent jobs when the men would recognize her.\(^{18}\) Here, instead of a sexualized woman, we see a woman with interests, regrets, and human problems. So, how could there be two conflicting identities for the same person? Well, here we can see a clear divide between Khalifa “the performer” and Khalifa “the person”: the performer is a fictionalized role for sexual pleasure while the person is a human who has problems and wishes to move on from her past. Looking back at how scholars defined a *scripta puella*, Khalifa’s performing identity eerily aligns with their descriptions. Just like a “written woman,” Mia Khalifa the adult film actress sexually teases her partner with foreplay, arouses his desire with generic language and moans, and submits to any erotic fantasy that men enforce upon her. Through the similarities between Cynthia and Mia Khalifa, we can see how the oversexualization of women has persisted through the ages.

\(^{18}\) Philip DeFranco conducted an interview with Mia Khalifa titled “Mia Khalifa On Her Past, Shady People, Rejection, Shadowbans & More (Ep. 12 - A Conversation With)” where they discuss all of the fore-mentioned topics in detail.
However, women in the adult film industry are not the only ones oversexualized. In today’s advertisements, we can see beer cans to be shaped like a woman’s body, perfectly proportioned women on billboards, and faces caked with so much makeup that a woman appears bruised. However, men are just as sexualized as women in advertisements where they have shredded abs, bulging muscles, and cheek bones that can cut glass. Moving away from the static fantasy, corporations involved with any kind of performance harp on the oversexualization of individuals to gain a profit. This notion is most prevalent with actors, sex workers, and athletes where they all appeal in some way sexually (intentional or not) to an audience. As a result of confining people to sexualized roles, consumers then view that person as something to be used for sexual pleasure, which degrades the consumer’s perception of the person behind the performer. In all of these situations, the oversexualization of a performer translates the audience’s perception onto the person, which dehumanizes them in the process.

Throughout these poems, the poet chains Cynthia to a world of fiction and fantasy where she becomes a puppet of desire and sex. Despite the apparent differences between a fictional Cynthia and a real Cynthia, both characterizations stem from Propertius, who removes any independent development from her. By expecting conflicting stereotypes
to be true for Cynthia, Propertius exhibits his unrealistic expectations for a woman, which denies her the humanity of being real. Through the allusions to mythological women whose lives the poet defines with respect to men, he prohibits individual development for his beloved, which keeps her in a realm of fantasy and myth. And finally, although Cynthia comes from the distant past, her legacy of sexual degradation lives on in our modern society, which needs to be addressed so audiences do not dehumanize performers further. Overall, by separating the performer from the person and by understanding the ethical impact of dehumanizing the performer (even when they don’t have a real person to relate back to), consumers can learn how to become empathetic to their friends and their fellow human beings.
Bibliography


Laocoön and His Sons

Uffizi Gallery. Florence, Italy. July 2019
The Achaean

Benjamin Kelly, ’23

I was inspired to write this while reading the Iliad because the vivid descriptions of warfare drew me into the scene. In my Montserrat, and Mythology classes we learned the Greek word κλέος (kleos) which is often translated as “glory.” After learning this word, I was inspired to write lines 6 and 7, and built the rest of the poem around that. In its entirety, the poem is about how glory is won in chaos.

Storming the walls
Hearing Achaean calls
Leaving none alive
Is the time I thrive
Using my skill
With sword or quill
Within this chaos
I’ll earn my kleos
The story of the bold
Will be told
Blood spilt
With no guilt
All for a story
With great glory
Mount Vesuvius
Fortune Favors the Prepared? τύχη in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*

Liam O’Toole ’20

Given how frequently Thucydides references τύχη (tuchè) in his *History of the Peloponnesian War*, it is clear that the concept, however he may define it, is essential for comprehending his narration of the war between Sparta and Athens. What, then, does Thucydides mean by τύχη? Are the most common translations of “luck,” “chance,” or “fortune” sufficient? Not so. After exploring different passages in which it plays a vital role, it is evident that Thucydides understands τύχη in a complex fashion. In this paper, I will examine a small subset of the passages in which τύχη appears in order to try to strike at the heart of Thucydides’ intent when employing this loaded word. Critically, τύχη does not often appear in isolation. In fact, Thucydides, in part, formulates his understanding of τύχη in relation to two other abstract ideas: παρα λογον (“contrary to expectation”) and γνωμη (“knowledge,” “opinion”). Through exploring the relationship between τύχη and these other ideas, it becomes easier to see how Thucydides thinks. This paper will explore Thucydides’ multilayered understanding of τύχη and its role in the outcome of the Peloponnesian War and human events more generally.
Thucydides was neither the first Greek historian, nor the first Greek author, to employ τύχη as an explanatory tool. In their works, most ancient Greek authors often brought τύχη into the equation when they were unable to explain an event as the result of human action. Others, like Hesiod, saw Τύχη as a divine force, a literal goddess born from Thetis and Okeanos\(^1\). Thucydides largely followed the former tradition. This becomes clear through the words of the Athenian orator Pericles in his first speech in *The History of the Peloponnesian War*. Therein, he speaks to the Athenian (and Thucydidean) notion of τύχη as an explanation for the inexplicable. He states that, “‘The movement of events is often as wayward and incomprehensible as the course of human thought; and this is why we ascribe to chance whatever is contrary to expectation’” (‘ἐνδέχεται γὰρ τὰς ξυμφορὰς τῶν πραγμάτων οὐχ ἦσσον ἀμαθῶς χωρῆσαι ἢ καὶ τὰς διανοίας τοῦ ἀνθρώπου: δι’ ὅπερ καὶ τὴν τύχην, ὅσα ἂν παρὰ λόγον ξυμβῇ, εἰώθαμεν αἰτιᾶσθαι’ 1.140.1). Here is the first instance that Thucydides connects τύχη to events that are παρὰ λόγον, or “contrary to expectation.” In this use, τύχη becomes the “ready-made scapegoat for the inexplicable events of history.”\(^2\) This is not the only time that Thucydides proves to use τύχη in this way. Section 2.85.2, for instance, describes

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\(^1\) Hesiod, *Theogony*, 336-370; Sorensen (2014), 26

\(^2\) Sorensen (2014), 26
the aftermath of the naval battle of Naupactus where the Spartans suffer a loss Thucydides terms “ὁ παράλογος.”³ The reason this loss was unexpected was because the Spartans had the superior number of ships going into the fight. Stunned, the Spartan generals attempt to boost their soldiers’ confidence before the next battle by claiming that this disastrous result came about because “‘fortune was in many ways unpropitious to us’” (‘ξυνέβη δὲ καὶ τὰ ἀπὸ τῆς τύχης οὐκ ὀλίγα ἐναντιωθήναι’ 2.87.2). By blaming τύχη, the Spartan generals make the same “scape goat” association between τύχη and παρα λογον as Pericles.

By far the greatest example of Thucydides’ impulse to connect events that happen παρα λογον to τύχη comes in the Pylos episode in Book 4. At one point during the fighting, the Athenians find themselves warding off the Spartans, who are attacking by sea, from Laconian land. Thucydides draws attention to this occurrence primarily because the Spartans “particularly prided themselves on being a land power supreme in infantry” while the Athenians were “seafarers who excelled in fighting with ships” (ἐπὶ πολὺ γὰρ ἐποίει τῆς δόξης ἐν τῷ τότε τοῖς μὲν ἡπειρώταις μάλιστα εἶναι καὶ τὰ πεζὰ κρατίστοις, τοῖς δὲ θαλασσίοις τε καὶ ταῖς ναυσὶ πλεῖστον προύχειν 4.12.3). Although not explicitly defined as παρα λογον, this situation was clearly unexpected and contrary to

³ Thucydides 2.85.2
expectation. What brought about this unusual situation? Thucydides claims that it was τύχη alone: “Fortune brought it round into this state” (ἐς τοῦτο τε περιέστη ἢ τύχη 4.12.3).

This is not the only time that τύχη comes into play during the Pylos episode. Indeed, τύχη is a factor from the moment a storm “happens” to force the Athenian troops to land at Pylos in the first place. τύχη later benefits the Athenians when they trap the Spartans on the nearby island of Sphakteria, for an accidental fire clears the forest and allows the Athenian general Demosthenes to make a bold attack. Demosthenes and the Athenians then surround the Spartans and force them to surrender. Such an outcome was entirely unexpected, leading Thucydides to describe the Pylos episode as “the biggest event contrary to expectation of the Greeks during the war” (παρὰ γνώμην τε δὴ μάλιστα τῶν κατὰ τὸν πόλεμον τοῦτο τοῖς Ἔλλησιν ἐγένετο 4.40.1). While he uses παρὰ γνώμην (“contrary to opinion”) in place of παρὰ λογον (“contrary to expectation”), the sense is the same. Considering their unexpected conclusion, it is unsurprising that Thucydides works so hard to demonstrate the critical role that τύχη played the Pylos episode.

4 “While they were objecting, it happened that a storm came up and forced them into Pylos (ἀντιλεγόντων δὲ κατὰ τύχην χειμών ἐπιγενόμενος κατήνεγκε τὰς ναῦς ἐς τὴν Πύλον 4.3.1)

5 “One of them accidentally set fire to a small part of the woods, and after this a wind came up, most of the woods burned down before they knew it” (ἐμπρήσαντός τινος κατὰ μικρὸν τῆς ὕλης ἄκοντος καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου πνεύματος ἐπιγενομένου τὸ πολὸ αὐτῆς ἔλαθε κατακαυθέν 4.30.2)
That he uses it to explain events that he cannot otherwise explain does not begin to encompass the entirety of Thucydides’ conception of τύχη. Despite its seemingly inextricable link to the inexplicable, Thucydides’ idea of τύχη still lies within the realm of human control—to a degree, that is. Specifically, Thucydides contrasts the idea of τύχη with words denoting preparation/skill (γνώμη, παρασκυη, τεχνη) in several episodes of his work in order to demonstrate that τύχη is a force that can be controlled, but only with the proper tools. Pericles gives credence to this idea when he tells his soldiers, “‘Maritime skill is like skill of other kinds, not a thing to be cultivated by the way or at chance times’” (‘τὸ δὲ ναυτικὸν τέχνης ἐστίν, ὥσπερ καὶ ἄλλο τι, καὶ οὐκ ἐνδέχεται, ὅταν τύχῃ, ἐκ παρέργου μελετᾶσθαι’ 1.142.9). Pericles here directly contrasts τύχη (“chance”) with τέχνη (“skill”). That is, success cannot and will not come by simply trusting in τύχη. Later in his speech, Pericles goes further, reminding the Athenians how their ancestors came to power: “‘Not by good fortune but by wisdom, and not by power but by courage, they drove the Barbarian away and raised us to our present height of greatness’” (‘γνώμη τε πλέονι ἢ τύχῃ καὶ τόλμῃ μείζονι ἢ δυνάμει τὸν τε βάρβαρον ἀπεώσαντο καὶ ἐς τάδε προῆγαγον αὐτά’ 1.144.4). Although τέχνη has become γνώμη (“wisdom”), the idea that skill and preparation are to be trusted more than τύχη remains the same.
Through the previously discussed naval battle of Naupactus, Thucydides provides further indication that skill can override τύχη. While the Spartan generals attribute their loss here mainly to τύχη, they also note that “they lacked preparation” for any type of sea battle (τῇ τε γὰρ παρασκευὴ ἐνδεής ἐγένετο 2.87.2). This battle, then, is a perfect illustration of what Pericles earlier stated: there will be no opportunity for good fortune without proper preparation and skill. Thucydides pointedly makes no mention of τύχη in his narration of the battle. Rather, he makes sure to note how the Athenian general Phormio makes a careful plan to wait for wind to break up the Spartan naval formation.\(^6\) In crafting a plan rather than relying on chance, Phormio makes use of all three ideas contrary to τύχη by trusting in his knowledge and his navy’s preparation and skill. Phormio does not wait for τύχη to come his way, but rather makes his own “luck.” This maneuver embodies what Thucydides has been striving to portray by contrasting τύχη with these different ideas. He shows that while τύχη itself might be out of human control, the outcome of events its effects are not. Phormio and Pericles both show that while τύχη is not “a force...that we can control,” it nonetheless “can be countered with preparation and experience.”\(^7\)

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\(^6\) Thucydides 2.84.2-3

\(^7\) Heilke (2004), 134
Why must τύχη be countered in the first place? In Thucydides’ interpretation, τύχη is not always a benevolent good. In fact, it is most often a dangerous psychological construct. When something unexpected happens, both those whom it benefits and those whom it harms perceive it as the result of τύχη. Soon after, the idea of τύχη invades the minds of both the victor and the vanquished. Each side begins to buy into the idea that what happened was out of their control; the losers genuinely believe they can never win again while the winners perceive themselves to be invincible. The Athenian general Diodotus, in his speech advocating against sacking the Mytilenians, first articulates such a psychological conception of τύχη. He claims that trusting in ἐλπὶς (“hope”) gives the impression that τύχη is on your side.\(^8\) This is only a problem, however, because τύχη, “induces states as well as individuals to run into peril, however inadequate their means” (ἀδοκήτως γὰρ ἔστιν ὅτε παρισταμένη καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὑποδεεστέρων κινδυνεύειν τινὰ προάγει, 3.45.6). Through Diodotus, Thucydides begins to demonstrate his understanding of τύχη as not simply an imaginary force, but rather as a dangerous mindset. Because “perceptions or descriptions of events as lucky or unlucky motivate deeds in turn,” Thucydides’

\(^8\) “Desire and hope are in all things, the former leading, the latter urging it on, the former devising the plan, the latter suggesting fortune will be kind” (ἡ τε ἐλπὶς καὶ ὁ ἔρως ἐπὶ παντί, ὁ μὲν ἡγούμενος, ἡ δὲ ἐφεπομένη, καὶ ὁ μὲν τὴν ἐπιβουλὴν ἐκφροντίζων, ἡ δὲ τὴν εὐπορίαν τῆς τύχης ὑποτιθεῖσα 3.45.5)
believes that it is one’s belief in τύχη that causes events, not τύχη itself.\(^9\)

The Spartan reaction to the Pylos episode leads to a further clarification on the psychological effects of τύχη. After losing the battle, the Spartans send ambassadors to the Athenians in hopes of reaching a peace settlement. In their talks, the Spartans bring up the ever-changing nature of τύχη. Using themselves as a prime example, they warn the Athenians that “‘You should not suppose that, because your city and your empire are powerful at this moment, you will always have fortune on your side”’ (‘οὐκ εἰκὸς ὑμᾶς διὰ τὴν παροῦσαν νῦν ῥώμην πόλεώς τε καὶ τῶν προσγεγενημένων καὶ τὸ τῆς τύχης οἶεσθαι αἰεὶ μεθ᾽ ὑμῶν ἔσεσθαι’ 4.18.3). τύχη is not a one-and-done experience to the Spartans or Thucydides. It must be constantly acquired and directed, earned through human γνώμη. To become complacent and to trust that one instance of τύχη will lead to others can cause a drop-off in the preparation and forethought necessary to control τύχη in the first place. More dangerously, it can lead to a corresponding increase in confidence, often to the point of arrogance that the Spartans warn against here.

Of course, the Athenians do not listen to their enemies instead letting τύχη get into their heads. At the close of the Pylos episode, Thucydides notes that even as the Spartans

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9 Schillinger, 16
continued to send ambassadors to release those captured on Sphakteria, “the Athenians only raised their terms” (οἱ δὲ μειζόνων τε ὠρέγοντο 4.41.4). Clearly, they were already beginning to trust in their present τύχῃ. This arrogance comes back to bite the Athenians a few chapters later, when the Sicilians make peace so the Athenians will not attack. Thucydides writes that the Athenians did not expect things to go this way. Indeed, they had fully expected to conquer Sicily, “for in their present prosperity they were indignant at the idea of a reverse; they expected to accomplish everything, possible or impossible, with any force, great or small” (οὕτω τῇ [τε] παρούσῃ εὐτυχίᾳ χρώμενοι ἠξίουν μηδὲν ἐναντιοῦσθαι, ἀλλὰ καὶ τὰ δυνατὰ ἐν ἴσῳ καὶ τὰ ἀπορώτερα μεγάλῃ τε ὁμοίως καὶ ἐνδεεστέρα παρασκευῇ κατεργάζεσθαι 4.65.4). It is clear that the Athenian perception of their own capabilities had already become inflated. This inflated ego comes to a head in the disastrous defeat that results from the Sicilian expedition. As one scholar notes, “Athens’ actions from Pylos through to Sicily” illustrates “the pattern of good fortune leading to υβρις and resulting in downfall.”

Naturally, there are two sides to the psychological construct of fortune—both equally dangerous. In the aftermath of Pylos, the Spartans experience the psychological effect of τύχῃ opposite to their opponents: they “wallow in fear of bad luck.” In its disheartening effect, τύχη is just as
malignant as in its confidence-boosting impact. At Cythera, soon after their defeat at Pylos, Thucydides writes that “Never in their [Spartan] history had they shown so much hesitation in their military movements” (ἐς τε τὰ πολεμικά, εἴπερ ποτὲ, μάλιστα δὴ ὀκνηρότεροι ἐγένοντο 4.55.2). What caused such a change in the Spartan mindset? τύχη, of course: “Fortune too was against them, and they were panic-stricken by the many startling reverses which had befallen them within so short a time” (καὶ ἁμα τὰ τῆς τύχης πολλά καὶ ἐν ὀλίγῳ ξυμβάντα παρὰ λόγον αὐτοῖς ἐκπληξιν μεγίστην παρεῖχε”4.55.13). τύχη puts the Spartans in a negative headspace that they are not able to overcome until their victory at the Battle of Mantinea. Thucydides states that by winning that battle, the Spartans cleared themselves of their previous mindset and now found themselves finally to be out of the grasp of fortune: “they, although reproached because of fortune, seemed to be the same as before in character (τύχῃ μὲν, ὡς ἐδόκουν, κακιζόμενοι, γνώμη δὲ οἱ αὐτοὶ ἔτι ὄντες 5.75.3). For Thucydides, τύχη, “can cause extreme moods of despair and dissent or elation and over-confidence depending on circumstance.” To remedy the vitriolic nature of τύχη, of course, Thucydides would recommend γνωμή.

In his History of the Peloponnesian War, Thucydides aimed to present the most clear and accurate depiction of the events of the various campaigns, a pursuit which undoubtedly
made its many unexpected and inexplicable events frustrating. Fortunately, he had the “catch-all” word τύχη at his disposal. Throughout his own narration and the speeches of his characters (whose words are, in large part, his own), Thucydides uses τύχη in a much more nuanced way than Greek authors and historians before him. τύχη is neither a scapegoat nor some divine being by whose will human actions are determined. Rather, Thucydides’ τύχη is a powerful force, a psychological construct even, that can still be countered—primarily with γνωμη. In The History of the Peloponnesian War, even when τύχη is present, Thucydides consistently attempts to show how “human actions and natural causes [are] the underlying explanations of the outcome.” Ultimately, this work demonstrates that fortune favors those who do not rely on its assistance.
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* Translations adapted from Benjamin Jowett’s translation of “Thucydides, *The History of the Peloponnesian War*” (1900)
Trajan and the Moon

Bronze. Rome, Italy
Submissions for Next Year

Parnassus welcomes submissions from Holy Cross students of any major. For next year’s journal, students from the class of 2021-2024 are welcome to submit, as are alumni and professors. Pieces should relate to the study of the ancient world and should be understandable to a wide audience. Essays, poems, translations, creative pieces, and artworks are all eligible for publication.

Submissions can be emailed to hcclassicsjournal@gmail.com, beginning in the fall of 2020. Pieces will be reviewed in January of 2021, and authors will be notified of acceptance at the beginning of February 2021. Authors of accepted pieces will continue to work on their piece with an editor in the following months before publication in May 2021.