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Hephaestus sent forth his brilliant flame from Mount Ida. The beacon was sending forth a beacon to here from his courier flame: Ida to the Hermaean crag of Lemnos: it was taken to the great torch from the island to the third place, the summit of Athos, which is sacred to Zeus, and leaping up, as if skimming the surface of the sea, 

and after that it shot down upon this roof of the Atreidae, this beacon not unfathered by the flame of Ida.

– Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 281-286, 310-311
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Editor’s Note

Parnassus’ mission is to share the passion of Holy Cross students for the ancient world. This journal provides students with a way to share work from courses, research, and other projects with a wide audience. All pieces aim to be generally understandable, allowing the study of the ancient world to be more accessible to non-specialists in the community.

Parnassus is a mountain in central Greece, known as the home of the Muses in some mythological traditions. As such, Parnassus is associated with literature, poetry, and learning. The mythological allusion applies particularly well to Holy Cross, situated on Mt. St. James.

This edition features three pieces about the ancient Greek playwright Aeschylus’s tragedy, *The Agamemnon*, in which King Agamemnon finally returns home to Argos after his victory in the Trojan War. Dark foreshadowing eventually builds up to the king’s murder at the hands of his wife, Clytemnestra, angry at the sacrifice of their daughter Iphigenia, an act that Agamemnon performed in order to stop the gods from hindering the Greek fleet’s voyage to Troy.

Our cover design, created by Christine Roughan ‘14, depicts Hephaestus, the god of fire, lighting the beacon, a detail that Clytemnestra mentions in her famous ‘Beacon Speech.’ He is sending forth his symbol, fire, to announce Agamemnon’s return to Argos.

In the words of the artist, the design on page ii takes the image of the beacons and twists it so that the flame is not only traveling through space, but also through time. In the *Agamemnon*, beacons transmit word of Troy’s fall to Argos; in the context of *Parnassus*, they evoke the transmission through both time and space of antiquity’s works, which have been received and analyzed by the authors in their pieces.
We hope that you enjoy reading this second issue of our journal, and we look forward to continuing to share our work in subsequent years.

– Debbie Sokolowski
About the Authors

REBECCA FINNIGAN ("Waste through Diction") is a junior math and classics double major at Holy Cross. Her paper was written in the Spring of 2013 for Professor John Hamilton's Juvenal course. Outside of the classroom, she is also involved in the Manuscripts, Inscriptions, and Documents Club, the Admissions Outreach Program, and Autism Awareness.

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DAVID PERRETTA ("Eric Auerbach Thinks Yvain is Romance, But He's Lion") is a senior at Holy Cross who has spent his days on the Hill majoring in English with a concentration in Creative Writing. His paper was written for (Visiting) Professor Brandon Tilley's Arthurian Worlds course during the Spring of 2012. When he is not in class, he can be found editing and writing for The
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“Septapus”  

Chris Won ‘14
Annals 15 and the Annalistic Tradition: Structuring History under the Principate

Michael Roberts ‘13

The place of Tacitus within the surviving corpus of Latin literature is certainly uncontested. However, Tacitus’ writings must be placed within a context of Roman historical structure and practice. Although Tacitus works with the traditional annalistic framework of a Roman historian, he is not confined by the form and adapts it to serve the purposes of his own narrative. This is evident, for example, in Book 15 of Tacitus’ Annals, in which the historian comments on the new realities of the Roman Empire under the reign of Nero. An influential study by Judith Ginsburg in 1981, which partly provides inspiration for this paper, previously examined Tacitus’ adaptation of annalistic structure in Books 1-6 of the Annals. Ginsburg’s central argument is that “although he is fully conversant with the conventions of annalistic history, Tacitus is entirely capable of manipulating them to serve his own ends or of rejecting them altogether.”

She also insists that the claims of previous scholars about Tacitus’ confinement within a previously established literary structure are unfounded: “there is little reason to believe, moreover, that Tacitus found his chosen medium restrictive.” Many of Ginsburg’s observations about Annals 1-6 also apply to Book 15. In this paper, I will describe the fundamental elements of Roman annalistic history and explore how Tacitus adapts the traditional form for his own purposes in Book 15 of the Annals. I will also provide one year, which conforms to the ordinary annalistic structure well, from Livy’s Ab Urbe Condita as a point of reference to compare and contrast with the three years accounted for in Annals 15.
Primary Components of Roman Annalistic History

1. Internal (within Rome) events precede external (foreign) events
2. Prominent sections detailing religious omens and prodigies
3. Attention to important domestic events such as the grain supply and fires at Rome
4. Consular dating – each new year is introduced with the names of that year’s consuls, the chief magistrates of the Roman Republic (the movements of the consuls are also the focus of the external sections of a given year)
5. Year by year narratives within individual books

Livy 34.55-35.19 as a Template for Annalistic History

The traditional annalistic form, which Livy often maintains faithfully, is apparent for the year 193 B.C. in Ab Urbe Condita. The narrative of a given year, according to annalistic tradition, is usually presented in alternation between internal and foreign events. Likewise, as demonstrated by John Rich, Livy’s account of 193 B.C. begins with events at Rome (34.55) before moving on to Spain (35.1) and alternating from there. In any annalistic history, each year is introduced by consular dating, which separates years by the different men who held the consulship. Livy begins 193 B.C. in standard form by indicating “the year in which Lucius Cornelius and Quintus Minucius were consuls” (quo L. Cornelius Q. Minucius consules fuerunt, 34.55). The year’s foreign events focus on the movements of the consuls after they are introduced to begin the year. Additionally, the annalistic structure tends to emphasize oddities, such as bad omens or prodigies, which occurred during a given year. Livy includes in his account of 193 B.C. that “earthquakes were announced” (terae motus nuntiabantur, 34.55), “there were great floods in that year” (aquae ingentes eo anno fuerunt, 35.9), and that “the Porta Caelimontana was struck by lightning” (et Porta Caelimontana fulmine icta est, 35.9), among other strange events. A number of other topics are essential to Roman annalistic structure as well, including the grain supply at Rome, elections of magistrates, the disposition of the provinces and armies, and the deaths and replacements of priests. Livy includes references to
many of these standard subjects in 193 B.C., especially the conditions at Rome. For example, he writes that “the citizenry struggled with debt” (civitas faenore laborabat, 35.7) and that campaigning for elections was very spirited (in exitu iam annus erat, et ambition magis quam unquam alias exarserat consularibus comitiis, 35.10). Livy’s basic use of the annalistic structure for 193 B.C. is informative for discussion of Tacitus’ alteration of traditional structure in Book 15 of the Annals.

Organization of Internal and External Events in Tacitus’ Annals 15

Tacitus breaks slightly with annalistic tradition to begin Book 15 with foreign affairs in order to emphasize the importance of Corbulo’s campaign in Parthia. This military episode is actually important enough to begin a new book; Book 15 does not start with the beginning of AD 62, but rather introduces new characters and a different phase of Nero’s reign. Tacitus takes the option of organizing some of his material thematically rather than purely annalistically. On a general level, Tacitus’ inclusion of foreign events at the beginning of a book may have served to discomfort the reader and suggest instability by altering expectation. However, by the end of Book 14, Nero’s mother Agrippina has been killed (multisque vulneribus conlecta est, 14.8), and no limits to the emperor’s power remain (concessitique vita Burrus, incertum valetudine an veneno, 14.51). The self-centered nature of Nero, which is explored throughout Book 15 of the Annals, can be compared nicely with the actions of Paetus and Corbulo in Parthia. Tacitus implies that a greater interest in personal glory than the greatness of the Roman state is a symptom of the principate when he describes Paetus’ and Corbulo’s reluctance to admit his own failings and to put the state before personal gain. Paetus, according to Tacitus, was said to “confess only with difficulty to Corbulo that the enemy was pressing on” (aegre compulsum ferunt ut instantem Corbuloni fateretur, 15.10). Additionally, “there was no hurry by Corbulo, so that the praise of aid would increase as the dangers swelled” (nec a Corbulone prooperatum quo gliscentibus periculis etiam subsidii laus ange retur, 15.10). Neither Paetus nor Corbulo seem capable of leadership beneficial to Rome as Tacitus presents them here.
Likewise, Nero’s reign grows increasingly dangerous for the state as his personal power increases. Tacitus’ placement of the Parthian campaign at the beginning of Book 15 may serve to foreshadow what is to come. Much of Tacitus’ further adaptation of annalistic structure in Book 15 involves the creation of a character portrait for Nero as well.

**Interpretation of Religious Omens and Prodigies in *Annals* 15**

Tacitus’ extensive discussion of omens and prodigies in *Annals* 15.47 both indicates the historian’s commitment to aspects of the traditional annalistic structure and offer an opportunity to provide further characterization of Nero. This passage, which indicates the end of A.D. 64, conforms to the standard annalistic tradition while adding a wrinkle about Nero’s interpretation of prodigies rather than priests’. Tacitus begins with an ordinary formula: “at the end of the year prodigies announcing impending evils were spread” (*fine anni vulgantur prodigia imminentium malorum nuntia*, 15.47). However, the account of these signs is quickly turned into a judgment of Nero: “the force of lightning strikes was never before more frequent and there was a comet, a sign which was always expiated by Nero with noble blood” (*vis fulgurum non alias crebrior et sidus cometes, sanguine inlustri semper Nero ni expiatum*, 15.47). Tacitus cannot let even a simple list of prodigies be noted without a reference to Nero, who is, after all, the main character of this section of his history. The rest of 15.47 includes other oddities that correspond well to the annalistic tradition, including “births of two-headed people and other animals” (*bicipites hominum aliorumve animalium partus*) and “a calf born whose head was on its leg” (*natus vitulus cui caput in crure esset*). The context of Livy’s passages on prodigies does not emphasize the interpretations or actions of one man. Instead, these sections often focus on what the omens might mean for Rome and which priests can accurately assess them. Livy describes some prodigies for 193 B.C. in 35.9: “there were great floods of water in that year and the Tiber overflowed the flat parts of the city; certain buildings around the Porta Flumentana even collapsed and fell and the Porta Caelimontana was struck by lightning” (*Aquae ingentes eo anno fuerunt et Tiberis loca plana urbis inundavit, circa portam Flumentanam etiam collapsa quaedam ruinis sunt et porta Caelimontana was struck by lightning*).
Several other prodigies are also noted in this section, but the most important and traditional aspect of Livy’s account is their resolution. The decemvirs, according to ancient tradition, consulted the Sibylline Books and conducted the recommended sacrifice to cleanse the city (horum prodigiorum causa decemviri libros adire iussi, et novemdiale sacrum fac tum, et supplicatio indicta est atque urbs lustrata, 35.9). Livy’s record of these prodigies and their expiation imply stability of the old religious order of Rome through the Sibylline Books and a positive resolution of crisis. This is in marked contrast to Tacitus, whose prodigies at 15.47 are not resolved but rather emphasized with a certain sense of uneasiness due to the emperor’s negative reactions. Discontinuity with the past seems to be a key theme whenever Tacitus breaks sharply from the annalistic tradition.

Tacitus’ Discussion of Domestic Events in Annals 15

Tacitus includes information about the grain supply at Rome without halting his narrative at Annals 15.18-22 to end his account of A.D. 62. Transitioning seamlessly between various affairs involving Nero, first the victory monuments planned for the end of the war with Parthia and then the emperor’s fear of public unrest, Tacitus incorporates news about the grain supply at Rome. He relates that “Nero, in order to hide his fears of foreign affairs, threw the people’s grain, spoiled by age, into the Tiber, so that he could keep up a sense of security of the supply” (dissimulandis rerum exsternarum curis Nero frumentum plebis vetustate corruptum in Tiberim iecit quo securitatem annonae sustentaret, 15.18). More actions of Nero follow this comment on the grain supply. Rome’s supply of food and other domestic conditions affecting the people are staples of the annalistic structure. Arthur Pomeroy observes this in his discussion of Tacitus’ adaptation of news involving the grain supply in the Histories: “[when Tacitus begins his account of A.D. 70 with news about the grain supply] he is turning a traditional entry into a major cause for concern.”9 However, when Livy writes about domestic conditions such as the grain supply, the events of his previous and following sections usually have no relation to them. In 35.7, Livy goes from a battle description to news about a public debt crisis in Rome and then to events in Spain. The fact that “another care was pressing upon them, that the citizenry

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struggled with debt”

(instabat enim cura alia, quod civitas faenore laborabat, 35.7) is resolved within this single chapter and not related to the narrative of 193 B.C. as a whole. This particular use of the annalistic structure was common; adaptations of it are mostly peculiar to Tacitus. Even though Rich argues that “Livy manipulates this [annalistic] framework with a much freer hand than Ginsburg suggests”10 it still appears that Tacitus breaks from the strict form in Book 15 of the Annals more sharply than Livy does in his account of 193 B.C.

The end of A.D. 63 in Annals 15.32 focuses on miscellaneous actions by the emperor Nero instead of the usual movements of the consuls. Livy’s entire narrative often focuses on the consuls’ actions and “the close of [his] annual report may consist of a variety of items, but its one consistent component is an account of the consular elections.”11 This main attribute of the ending of the annalistic style’s section on domestic affairs is evidenced in 35.10 of Ab Urbe Condita, in which Livy writes that “it was now the end of the year, and the posturing for consular elections had been more eager than ever before” (in exitu iam annus erat, et ambitio magis quam umquam alias exarserat consularibus comitibus). The rest of the chapter proceeds to explain the elections and their results. Tacitus, however, does not have any need to discuss elections for magistracies such as the consulship at the end of any year because power truly lies in the hands of only one man, Nero. Annals 15.32 ends the year A.D. 63 exclusively by describing activities by Nero and these actions’ consequences. Tacitus recounts that “in the same year Caesar [Nero] transferred the nations of the Maritime Alps into the ‘right of the Latins’ and put the places of the Roman knights before the people’s seats at the circus” (Eodem anno Caesar nationes Alpium maritimorum in ius Latii transtulit. e quorum Romanorum locos sedilibus plebis anteposuit apud circum, 15.32).

These various items break sharply with the annalistic tradition, which prefers to end a year’s domestic events with news about elections or important prodigies, but demonstrate well the importance of Nero in Tacitus’ narrative. The fact that Nero has the power to conclude diplomatic relations with other nations and to favor particular classes of Romans over others illustrates the degree of power he truly has over Roman society.
Tacitus’ Use of Consular Dating in *Annals* 15

Tacitus begins A.D. 63 in *Annals* 15.23 with customary consular dating, but by using an ablative absolute construction that allows him to emphasize Nero as the subject of the sentence. In contrast to Livy, who implies a certain stability of the Roman constitutional process by his regular listing of consuls to begin each new year, Tacitus chooses “the least specific of all opening formulae . . . which would allow him great flexibility in the selection of material for the beginning of the annual narrative.”12 This attention to Nero highlights the role of the *princeps* and comments on the changing realities of the empire. The ablative absolute in 15.23 (*Memmio Regulo et Verginio Rufo consulibus*) seems only to be a formality as the rest of the chapter describes the birth of Nero’s daughter and the emperor’s reaction. Judith Ginsburg regards Tacitus’ use of the ablative in this way: “Tacitus employs the ablative construction simply to date the year.”13 However, Livy, at the beginning of 193 B.C. in 34.55, introduces the year with the consuls’ names and news of earthquakes (*principio anni, quo Lucius Cornelius Quintus Minucius consules fuerunt, terrae motus muntabantur*) and then promptly returns to the consuls at the end of the chapter in the context of lot drawing for command of the provinces (*provincias deinde consules prius, tum praetores sortiti. Cornelio Gallia, Minucio Ligures evenerunt*). The consuls are too important in Livy’s account to frequently introduce in an ablative absolute construction. Ginsburg writes that Livy uses the ablative absolute to begin a year 25% of the time (12 out of 48 years) in Books XXI-XLV of *Ab Urbe Condita* while Tacitus uses it 70% of the time (14 out of 20 years) in Annals I-VI.14 For Tacitus, only the actions of the emperor, even if they are just his receiving a daughter “beyond mortal joy” (*natam sibi ex Poppaea filiam Nero ultra mortale gaudium accepit*, 15.23), deserve the attention formerly reserved for consuls.

Tacitus adapts the conventions of consular dating again at the beginning of A.D. 64 by confining the consuls in an ablative absolute construction and stressing the emperor’s activities as the main action of the sentence. Even a mundane event such as how “with Gaius Laecanius and Marcus Licinius as consuls, everyday Nero was driven by a desire to frequent the public stages” (*Gaio Laecanio Marco Licinio consulibus acriore in dies cupidine adigebatur Nero*
promiscas scaenas frequentandi, 15.33) takes a new precedence because it characterizes the emperor. Ginsburg has shown how Tacitus adapted the annalistic structure in the first hexad of the Annals, including the statement that “there is little reason to believe, moreover, that Tacitus found his chosen medium restrictive.”

Ginsburg’s observations allow for the complexity of Tacitus’ use of and aberration from the annalistic structure, but stand in opposition to Ronald Syme’s conclusions about Tacitus’ opinion of the traditional form. Syme writes that “the annalistic framework, it might seem, is a primary obstacle: it breaks and disperses a genuine theme or sequence, it juxtaposes unrelated items in mere enumeration . . . Tacitus himself deplores the restriction.”

However, the importance of Nero in the narrative of Book 15 and Tacitus’ persistent use of the ablative absolute to retain the name of the consuls in this story show that Tacitus was not confined to an old form of writing. Rather, he chose to maintain certain aspects of annalistic structure, such as consular dating and strange portents, in order to comment on how Rome’s political system has changed from one with important elections and magistrates to one that only places emphasis on one individual, the emperor. Nero’s presence in the remaining instances of traditional annalistic form and content demonstrate further how Tacitus uses this form to focus and comment on the princeps.

The consular dating that introduces A.D. 65, particularly important for introducing the Pisonian conspiracy, undercuts the actual consuls by giving way to the true subject of the year in a subordinate clause. Tacitus says that “Silius Nerva and Atticus Vestinus entered into the consulship next, and a conspiracy at the same time began and increased, for which senators, knights, soldiers, and even women had given their names eagerly with a hatred of Nero and favor toward Piso” (Ineunt deinde consulatum Silius Nerva et Atticus Vestinus, coepta simul et aucta coniuratione in quam certatim nomina dederant senatores eques miles, feminae etiam, cum odio Neronis tum favore in C. Pisonem, 15.48). Although the consuls are the subject of the main clause of this sentence, they are not mentioned again in the entire chapter. The conspiracy is clearly the most important event of A.D. 65 that Tacitus plans to write about. Tacitus’ emphasis on information nestled away in subordinate clauses is part of his style as a writer, but this instance of consular dating also shows the historian’s commitment to the
traditional form for establishing years. In addition to this, Tacitus is subverting the importance of the consuls again to emphasize a group of people who may do harm to the emperor. Only the emperor is prominent enough to merit extensive attention in this period.

**Annual Narrative Form Adapted in *Annals* 15**

Tacitus does not conclude Book 15 of the *Annals* with the end of A.D. 65 as is conventional in the annalistic tradition, but rather chooses the aftermath of the Pisonian Conspiracy for the book’s end, to emphasize the conspiracy’s importance to that book. The close relationship of the conspiracy to the contents of Book 15 is evidenced by its sheer length in the book; Tacitus devotes the final 27 chapters, or a full 36%, of the book to the Pisonian Conspiracy and its aftermath. It must have seemed sensible for Tacitus to end Book 15 after the narrative of the conspiracy was finished. The historian likely ended this book deliberately because of thematic considerations as well. If Book 15 begins with Nero’s power finally consolidated in his own person (with his mother Agrippina and his childhood advisors, Burrus and Seneca, pushed aside or killed), then the threat of the conspiracy serves as an excellent juxtaposition at its end. The plot on Nero’s life not only presents danger for the emperor at one moment, but also forebodes what will likely come of Nero. Even with the Pisonian Conspiracy checked, danger still exists for Nero at the end of Book 15 because the idea of rebellion was already planted within a significant number of Romans. Tacitus’ final thoughts in the book provide an uneasy sense of things to come after Nero dedicates the conspirator Scaevinus’ dagger to Jupiter Vindex: “after the arms of Julius Vindex it was construed as an auspice and a portent of things to come” (*post arma Iulii Vindici ad auspicium et praesagium futurae ultonis trahebatur*, 15.74). A bleak future for Nero is also implied after a senator proposes to build a temple to Nero as a god: “but he [Nero] refused, so that it would not be turned into a bad omen of his own death by the interpretation of certain people” (*sed ipse prohibuit, ne interpretatione quorundam ad omen malum sui exitus verteretur*, 15.74). However, Tacitus’ choice to end Book 15 within A.D. 65 does not represent a break with the annalistic tradition but instead an adaptation that accounts for the author’s use of his thematic
material. This opposes Syme’s assertion that “the annalistic structure is thus dominant throughout the first hexad . . . the third hexad stands in marked contrast . . . the whole treatment is more free and flowing.” The many examples of consular dating, prodigies, and the alternation between internal and external affairs in Book 15 are undoubtedly influenced by the annalistic tradition and, regardless of how the books in the third hexad end, they are not a break from this tradition. Annalistic history involves much more than the mere chronological enumeration of years, as Ginsburg has stated (“scholars, furthermore, have placed too much emphasis on the single criterion, ‘suum in annum referre’”). The overall style and content of Book 15 reveals its true relationship to the annalistic tradition.

Conclusion

Tacitus’ history writing is complex, simultaneously adhering to the annalistic tradition and breaking from it. A comparison of Annals 15 to Livy’s account of 193 B.C. in Ab Urbe Condita reveals certain similarities that preclude Tacitus from having abandoned annalistic form. The changes in content and structure found in Annals 15 indicate Tacitus’ adaptation of traditional form just as Judith Ginsburg has argued for the first hexad of the Annals. Tacitus’ choices reveal an active historian, who comments on the new conditions at Rome through the structure and themes of his history. In contrast to Livy, who wrote about eras in Roman history that existed with a reliable constitutional system, Tacitus emphasizes the actions of the emperor, Nero, ahead of the movements of the consuls to stress where the power of the Roman state truly lies under the principate. These conscious decisions on the part of Tacitus are what made his work both unique and recognizable to his Roman contemporaries and what sheds light on Tacitus’ own ideas about imperial government.

If one man could have held absolute power and endangered the Roman state during Nero’s reign, that same threat could have been viable in Tacitus’ own time as well. Tacitus, a senator who resented that institution’s weakened role in Roman politics, recognized the danger that absolutism could hold to his aristocratic interests, but his sentiments still hold relevance today. Questions about the role of individual leaders in the governance of
a state were not only crucial to the founders of the United States, but also remain debated in political discourse today. The study of Tacitus and his history, then, becomes a lens for both ancient Roman affairs and our own.
Bibliography


Notes

3 Rich (1997) 2 describes the traditional internal-external-internal format for Livy in order to refute its dominance in Livy’s writing.
4 Beck (2007) 262 describes the use of religious events and domestic occurrences by Ennius as the beginning of annalistic history.
5 Beck (2007) 262.
16 Syme (1958) 305.
17 Martin (1981) 221.
18 Syme (1958) 269.
20 For a more complete discussion of Tacitus’ narrative technique in the Neronian books of the Annals, 13-16, see Bartrea (2011).
Elegy 1.19 is a poem written by the Roman poet Propertius (c. 54-2 BC), as one in a collection of twenty-two poems called the Monobiblos. The Monobiblos, published around 28 BC, is a series of love poems centered on Cynthia, the narrator’s object of desire. In Elegy 1.19, the last one in which Cynthia is mentioned by name, the narrator asks her to love him even after he is dead, and relates her love as a means to conquer the grave. This poem drew me because of its beautiful style, philosophical complexity, and overall dark theme.

Propertius Elegy 1.19

Non ego nunc tristis vereor, mea Cynthia, Manes,
   nec moror extre mo debita fata rogo;
   sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore,
      hic timor est ipsis durior exsequiis.
   non adeo leviter nostris puer haesit ocellis,
      ut meus oblit o pulvis amore vacet.
      illic Phylacides iucundae coniugis heros
      non potuit caecis immemor esse locis,
      sed cupidus falsis attingere gaudia palmis
   Thessalitis antiquam venerat umbra domum.
      illic quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago:
      traicit et f ati litora magnus amor.
      illic formosae veniant chorus heroinae,
      quas dedit Argivis Dardana pra eda viris:
      quarum nulla tua fuerit mihi, Cynthia, forma
      gratior et (Tellus hoc ita iusta sinat)
      quamvis te longae remorentur fata senectae,
      cara tamen lacrimis ossa futura meis.
      quae tu viva mea possis sentire favilla!
      tum mihi non ullo mors sit amara loco.
      quam vereor, ne te contempto, Cynthia, busto
abstrahat a nostro pulvere iniquus Amor,
cogat et invitam lacrimas siccare cadentis!
flectitur assiduis certa puella minis.
quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes:
non satis est ullo tempore longus amor.

In *Elegy* 1.19 of Propertius we find a fascinating address from the Propertian narrator to his beloved Cynthia. Throughout the poem the narrator describes the terrible emptiness of an ignominious death, but then assures himself that the “likeness” (*imago*) of his lover, fostered by a “Great Love” (*Magnus Amor*, 1.19.12) will remove death’s sting. Despite these assurances, the narrator ultimately concludes that his situation is hopeless and that he ought to love for the present, because “no love is long enough in any time” (26). We see in this elegy that there is another force at work: “Discontented Love” (*Iniquus Amor*, 22), who works to remove the hope of immortal glory through poetry. In fact, it is the forces of these two Loves that drive the thought behind the entire elegy. This paper shall argue that there are two distinct Loves at work in *Elegy* 1.19: there is the ideal *Magnus Amor*, who fosters a relationship between the narrator and Cynthia which provides him immortal glory through poetry, and the realistic *Iniquus Amor*, who destroys this potential relationship and instead throws the couple into empty, bodily passion.

I. *Magnus Amor* and *Iniquus Amor*

I shall begin by defining the attributes of the two loves in *Elegy* 1.19.1. In the midst of the elegy, the narrator boldly proclaims that “Great Love crosses even the shores of death” (*traicit et fati litora magnus amor*, 12). This “Great Love”, which has the power to transcend death, becomes the drive behind the narrator’s desire for his relationship with Cynthia. In order to understand *Magnus Amor*’s role in this relationship, we must first understand why exactly he is called *magnus*.

Propertius’s use of *magnus* here suggests magnanimity. The definition of *magnus*, with respect to the mind or spirits, is “[b]old, confident, good, high; also, generous, lofty.”2 In this particular context the adjective *magnus* suggests a sort of love that is grand and lofty, and commands awe and respect. Shackleton Bailey
expands on the use of *magnus* here saying that “*magnus* has a special application to the wonderful or supernatural…Livy (1.16.5) writes of Romulus’s translation [into a god] as *magna res*, Ovid of the elements fire and water, *haec duo magna putant* (Fast. 4.792).”³ Bailey’s comment and examples demonstrate that *magnus* has a lofty, noble quality (perhaps even to the point of divinity, as suggested by the reference to Romulus’s apotheosis). Whether or not *Magnus Amor* is divine or not is not essential to understanding that it commands great respect. It is this grand love which can transcend death, and which the narrator aspires towards in his relationship with Cynthia.

We see that the narrator desires that he and Cynthia share *Magnus Amor*. We also see that *Magnus Amor*, in addition to being magnanimous, has a non-physical purpose. The strongest evidence for these claims is the narrator’s statement that “if you [Cynthia], alive, are able to feel affection⁴ for my ash, then death shall be bitter to me in no place” (*quae tu viva mea possis sentire favilla / tum mihi non ullo mors sit amara loco*, 19-20). This brings to mind line 12, in which *Magnus Amor* crosses over from death’s shores. Notice how the narrator’s stipulation for being saved is that she “feel affection” (*sentire*) for him. Given the context, it is not unreasonable that the affections she must feel are *Magnus Amor*, who conquers the grave. Notice also that there is no physical component to this affection. The stipulation is that she “feel” affection, which is an entirely non-physical exercise. Further, since the narrator is dead in this scenario, the “feeling” Cynthia does must be entirely non-physical. Therefore emotion, not physical sensation, becomes the narrator’s rescue from death. This is the ideal love, the *Magnus Amor*, to be pursued.

The mythological reference to Protesilaus and Laodamia exemplifies the desideratum of emotional *Magnus Amor*. In Propertius’s reference, the ghost of the Greek hero Protesilaus thinks fondly of his wife: “There in the blind places the hero Phylacides is unable to be unmindful of his delightful wife” (*illic Phylacides iucundae coniugis heros / non potuit caecis immemor esse locis*, 7-8). The description of the wife of Protesilaus as *iucundae* indicates an emotional sort of delight, and not a sensuous one. In his interpretation of this line, Theodore Papanghelis interprets *iucundae* to mean “a mot juste for the ripples of delicious sensation but not for the billows of deep emotion[…].”⁵ He cites in support of this the
third entry under *iucundus* in the *Oxford Latin Dictionary*, which gives the definition “[a]greeable to the senses, delicious, etc.” As that definition indicates, the entry refers to things such as smells, flavors, sounds, and the like. This hardly seems appropriate for the scene of a wretched husband coming back from death to visit his beloved wife. More appropriate for this context is the second entry, which defines *iucundus*, with respect to persons, as “[d]elightful to be with, congenial or sim.” The dictionary’s use of the descriptors *delightful* and *congenial* suggest that the word *iucundus* has a far more personal and emotional connotation with respect to people. Since Propertius is applying this adjective to the *coniunx* of Protesilaus, and not a sensation, this definition is far more applicable than the one offered by Papanghelis.

Further, *iucundus* is used in similar poetry to describe emotional pleasure, not physical pleasure. Catullus uses it in his epyllion *Carmen* 64, when Aegeus is saying farewell to his son: “My only son, more dear to me by far than life” (*gnate, mibi longe iucundior unice vita*, 64.215). In this context, Aegeus is clearly not referring to his son in a sensuous manner, but rather with great affection, paralleling nicely with the wife of Protesilaus in the Propertian example. Likewise, in *Carmen* 50, he uses the word in reference to his close friend Licinus, after composing a poem about his pain: “I made this poem for you, my delight, from which you would understand my pain” (*hoc, iucunde, tibi poema feci, / ex quo perspiceres meum dolorem*, 50.16-17). Again, the adjective is used to show a congenial relationship, for the narrator thoroughly enjoys spending time with Licinus. Also notice that the *iucunde* is being called on to “understand” (*perspiceres*, 17) the narrator’s pain, a function of the intellect, not the senses. These two Catullan examples demonstrate well that the adjective *iucundus*, when used with respect to persons, signifies not so much a sensuous joy but rather an emotional, even intellectual delight. Thus, it is not unreasonable that the *iunda coniunx* of Protesilaus provides a deep, loving joy, and not a sensuous one. This is the sort of love, the *Magnus Amor*, which the narrator desires for himself and Cynthia.

I have argued that *Magnus Amor* is a wondrous entity whose love fosters emotion. Now we turn to its counterpart in *Elegy* 1.19, *Iniquus Amor*. This love seems to be the opposite of *Magnus Amor*, in that it is both ignoble and physical. As the narrator describes what will happen to Cynthia’s fidelity over time,
he says that “how I fear lest discontented love, Cynthia, drags you away from my dust, my grave contemned, and forces you, unwilling, to dry your falling tears” (quam vereor, ne te contempto, Cynthia, busto / abstrabat a nostro pulvere iniquus Amor, / cogat et invitam lacrimas siccare cadentis, 1.19.21-23). Resentful Love “drags” (abstrabat, 22) Cynthia away from the narrator’s grave, and “forces” (cogat, 23) her to “dry” (siccare, 23) her tears. This love is incredibly aggressive, and deals with Cynthia in a physical manner. This image contrasts sharply with the qualities of Magnus Amor, whose influence is to elicit emotions, such as making Cynthia feel affection for the narrator (in the narrator’s ideal). Iniquus Amor, rather, is associated with physical action, such as removing Cynthia from the tomb and making her to dry her eyes.

Furthermore, the different names applied to the two loves portray different essential qualities. When applied to the mind or to feelings, the adjective iniquus means “[n]ot equable, discontented, resentful.” Such a definition is contrary to the attributes of Magnus Amor, who is noble and sublime. In light of this contrast, it seems unlikely that Iniquus Amor and Magnus Amor are the same Amor, as Richardson considers. How could a love which is lofty and sublime also be unstable? How can the love which commands respect and is “something wonderful” also be jealous and discontented? The quality of these loves seems too disparate to form a whole. I propose that, instead, there are two loves in Elegy 1.19, one nobler and emotive, the other baser and sensuous.

II. The Poet’s Immortal Desire

I have proposed that there are two separate Amores in Elegy 1.19, each with different attributes and interactions with the characters. In this second portion of the paper, I shall primarily deal with Magnus Amor and how he fosters immortal glory for the narrator. I propose that, in the narrator’s ideal, Magnus Amor fosters a relation between the narrator and Cynthia conducent to the creation of great poetry. The renown of this poetry affords the narrator immortal glory, because he is forever remembered by his works.

Essential to this interpretation of Propertius is that Cynthia is both his lover and a symbol for Propertius’s literary production. Recent scholarship has interpreted Cynthia in such a
manner. For example, Barbara Flaschenriem argues that “Cynthia is so closely identified with Propertius’ project as a writer of elegy, she becomes a focus of literary as well as erotic unease.” As Flaschenriem points out, Cynthia affords two concerns for the Propertian narrator: their actual relationship and the poetry produced as a result of that relationship. Both of these concerns come to light in Elegy 1.19. The narrator says to Cynthia, concerning his legacy “Whatever I shall be there [in the afterlife], forever I shall be spoken of as your likeness” (ilio quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago, 11). The narrator’s concern is how he shall be remembered, or “spoken of” (dicar, 11) after his death. And to the narrator, whatever this recognition shall be, it is dependent upon his “likeness” (imago, 11) of Cynthia. The imago of Cynthia seems to be the poetic work which is inspired by the narrator’s love affair with her.

Next, we must establish the connection between Magnus Amor and the poet’s immortal glory. Note the relationship between lines 11 and 12 in his address to Cynthia: “Whatever I shall be there [in the underworld], forever shall I be spoken of as your likeness: Great Love is able to cross even the shores of death” (ilio quidquid ero, semper tua dicar imago: / traicit et fati litora magnus amor, 11-12). The juxtaposition of these two lines suggests a connection between the power of Magnus Amor and the imago of Cynthia. This proximity suggests that the narrator’s likeness in Cynthia is dependent upon Magnus Amor. I would suggest that it is the love which the narrator desires between himself and Cynthia that produces this “likeness.” The “likeness” is the narrator’s poetic production, what Flaschenriem calls Cynthia’s close identification with Propertius’s elegiac endeavors. The likeness of Cynthia is the poetry of the narrator. Finally, the fruit of this love is eternal: the narrator shall “forever” (semper, 11) be thought of by his production. Thus, when Magnus Amor conquers death through the likeness of Cynthia, he does so forever. The poet’s glory is immortal.

In fact, Propertius frequently writes of how Cynthia is a source of poetic inspiration for him. There is a potent example of this inspiration in Elegy 2.1, in which he boasts of Cynthia’s ability to inspire his works: “or if, naked, she struggles with me when the cloak has been torn off, then truly do we establish long Iliads; whatever she did or whatever she spoke, the greatest history is
born from nothing” (seu nuda erepto mecum luctatur amictu / tum vero longas condimus Iliadas; / seu quidquid fecit sive est quodcumque locuta, / maxima de nihilo nascitur historia, 2.1.13-16). We see here a clear example of my two propositions: an act of love between Cynthia and the Propertian narrator produces glorious poetic offspring. Note also the explicit dependence upon Cynthia for their production: they arise from “whatever she did or whatever she spoke” (seu quidquid fecit sive est quodcumque locuta, 15). The works are “born” (nascitur, 16) because of her. These productive images lend themselves to the idea of a “likeness” (imago, 1.19.11) of Cynthia.

I have thus argued for the attainment of eternal glory through love of Cynthia. Throughout Elegy 1.19, however, it seems that Propertius considers the possibility of failing to attain this glory as much as the possibility of attaining it. He meditates on failure. In keeping with the theme of the poet’s desire for glory, failure constitutes an eternal ignominy. Flaschenriem comments on the opening of the poem, which reflects the narrator’s preoccupation with nothingness: “even as he alludes to a moment of fulfillment and extends it in the narrative time of the poem, he also establishes the perilous nature of its existence. Each of the narrator’s assertions in lines 1-6 is introduced by a negative (non – nec – ne – non) and his vocabulary likewise suggests dispossession and lack (careat, oblito…amore, vacet).”  Note, however, that he explicitly states that love of Cynthia will be his deliverer from this nothingness: “let not my death be lacking your love” (sed ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore, 3). The narrator ardently desires Cynthia’s love, implying that having such love would soften death’s sting. Her love is continually referred to as a means of deliverance from the emptiness of death.

The mythological example of Protesilaus furthers this understanding of hell (so to speak) as nothingness. The fate of Protesilaus, at being denied this joyous love, is one of nonexistence. The issue at hand, then, is not so much the corporeality of Protesilaus, but rather the ontology. In the underworld, Protesilaus is “unable to be unmindful [of his pleasing wife] in those bind places” (non potuit cæcis immemor esse locis, 8).First notice how Propertius makes heavy use of negatives in these lines: non potuit, immemor, cæcis. The use of negative language paints an image of nonexistence; rather than saying Protesilaus was mindful of Laodamia, Propertius chooses instead to describe him as
“unable to be unmindful.” This circumlocution, phrased in a negative manner, weakens the image of Protesilaus. Flaschenriem comments upon this depiction “Propertius…calls attention to the ways in which his mythic prototype cannot be wholly present to his wife…he longs vainly to caress Laodamia ‘with his substanceless hands’ (falsis…palmis, 9).” 16 The translation of falsis as “substanceless” is particularly appropriate, for it indicates nonexistence with respect to the hands. Thus, it seems that the fate of Protesilaus is not so much a lack of sensation or corporeality, but rather a lack of existence.

Further, Propertius describes him as being in caecis…locis. The translation of caecis is somewhat difficult. While the temptation is to use the translation “blind”, most of the definitions offered pertain to qualities other than the sense of sight. 17 Of particular interest is the definition used with respect to places: “Devoid of light, dark, black, gloomy.” 18 It is likely that the description being used here refers not so much to Protesilaus’s lack of sight, but rather of the misery, despair, and darkness that awaits him in the afterlife. This is the sort of afterlife which comes from being denied the joyous love of Laodamia: nonexistent misery.

Another example expanding upon this is the narrator’s sentiment about being Cynthia’s likeness. Recall his opening words were “whatever I shall be there” (illic quidquid ero, 11). This line shows the narrator’s uncertainty about his state of existence in the afterlife. Propertius has thus far spent the elegy focusing mainly on the negative, with the preoccupied opening and the nihilistic death of Protesilaus. Then, out of this gloom and uncertainty (quidquid) about his future existence (ero), he distinctly posits his potential salvation: his likeness in Cynthia. This first reference to the imago, after the preceding dreariness, truly highlights its hopeful aspect.

I have proposed here a theory as to what the desire of the narrator is: to achieve immortal glory through a love of Cynthia. By having a “Great Love” (Magnus Amor, 12) for Cynthia, the narrator is able to produce a poetic progeny with her, because Magnus Amor seeks not the pleasures of the body but pleasure of the soul. This progeny, the “likeness” (imago, 11) of Cynthia, its progenetrix, shall become the narrator’s likeness after his death. If that likeness is a literary production worthy of praise and honor, the poet shall attain immortal glory and be spared from the gloom
of an ignominious death. This is the ideal of the poet, the desideratum, achieved through the workings of *Magnus Amor*.

III. An Unfulfilled Desire

I have argued at length that the Propertian narrator has a great many desires – *Magnus Amor* from Cynthia, immortal poetic glory arising from his literary offspring, and the avoidance of an ignominious, empty death. The Propertian narrator puts forth a great many ideals and desiderata. Nevertheless, does the narrator in fact believe he can attain these ideals? It would seem that the narrator’s answer to this question would be no. The ideals he puts forth are merely ideals, and he seems to have no hope they can be fulfilled.

At the end of the poem, the narrator seems to abandon the hope of immortal glory. After his speech on *Iniquus Amor*, he laments: “Wherefore, while it is permitted, let us lovers rejoice between ourselves” (*quare, dum licet, inter nos laetemur amantes*, 25). The phrase “while it is permitted, let us rejoice” (*dum licet…laetemur*, 25) entirely contradicts the promise of immortal glory. With this sentiment, the narrator asserts that the only happiness to be found is “while it is permitted”, that is, during life. As the example of Laodamia showed, the ideal happiness is one achieved through lovers who can produce a progeny which conquers even death. The narrator takes a far more Epicurean view of the matter, and rejects the ideal.

The narrator seems to find that this ultimate failure is that his love is not able to attain this heavenly ideal. He finishes the elegy with the remarkable assertion that “in no time is love ever long enough” (*non satis est ullo tempore longus amor*, 26). Of particular importance is the adjective *longus*. When applied to things such as hopes and desires, it indicates a durability of that desire. ¹⁹ Horace, a contemporary of Propertius, uses the adjective in a similar context to describe the futility of human hope: “the brief tip of life forbids us to commence a long hope” (*vitae summa brevis spem nos vetat incohare longam*, *Carmen* 1.4.15). ²⁰ This lack of a *longus amor*, which supposedly could have furnished the love necessary for immortality, destroys the narrator’s hopes for immortal glory. Instead, the love is reduced to whatever love can be had in his
living years, and in no way resembles the *Magnus Amor*, which could remove the sting of death.

Perhaps the reason for this is that the narrator finds his love is only that of the lesser love, *Iniquus Amor*. The narrator fears “lest discontented love, Cynthia, drags you away from my dust, my grave contemned” (*quam vero, ne te contempto, Cynthia, busto / abstrabat a nostro pulvere iniquus Amor*, 21-22). The narrator is afraid that *Iniquus Amor* will force her away from his “dust”, a symbol for his death, and that his grave will be defiled. This hearkens back to the beginning of the poem, where he prays that “my death not be lacking your love” (*ne forte tuo careat mihi funus amore*, 3). This, as I have argued, is a plea she have *Magnus Amor* for him, which would provide him immortal glory. However, if *Iniquus Amor* takes her away from his grave, his death will be lacking the nobler love, and he will be condemned to ignominy. It is this unhappy circumstance that the narrator believes to be more likely.

Flaschenriem seems to support such an idea, saying that Cynthia, as a literary construct fails to have stability necessary for an enduring memory: “if 1.19 marks Cynthia’s completion as the trademark of the *Monobiblos*, this completion is only provisional…Far from establishing Cynthia’s closure, *Elegy* 1.19 shows us the permeability of such fictive borders: it denies the possibility of closure.” This permeability seems due to the throws of *Iniquus Amor*, through whose influence “the faithful girl is bent by constant threats” (*flectitur assiduis certa puella minis*, 24). Perhaps, unable to transcend the physical preoccupations of this lower love, which does not foster virtue or an intellectual child, the narrator feels he is doomed to ignominy, and throws himself wholly into passions “between themselves” (*inter nos*, 25). This would be a characteristically Propertian twist: to set up a loft ideal only to throw it away at the end of the elegy. This seems to be what he has done here.

There seems to be a clear presence of two different loves in *Elegy* 1.19, each of which the narrator interacts with differently. I have argued that Propertius treats the *Magnus Amor* as an ideal to be aspired to, a love producing literary fruit with Cynthia which will attain for him everlasting glory, sparing him the trial of an empty death. I have also argued that he treats *Iniquus Amor* as the baser but more realistic outcome of his relationship with Cynthia, a
relationship producing no eternal offspring, but instead is driven by bodily passion. The interwoven themes, clever use of language, and surprising twist at the end are all classic attributes of Propertius’s style, and *Elegy* 1.19 is in no way lacking these characteristics. Nor indeed are we to assume that this is the last thing Propertius has to say on the subject of his own legacy, for he continues with this theme throughout the books of his elegies. Still, *Elegy* 1.19 provides a unique glimpse into the aspirations of Propertius, and we see displayed the ideal of his poetic desires. One wonders if he was truly dismissing that ideal, well-constructed as it was, and in fact retained a hope that his work would win him fame eternal. If this were the case, he would perhaps be pleased to know that his ideal was, to a limited extent, fulfilled.
Bibliography


Notes

1 The rubric which I have used to describe the two loves was inspired by Plato’s *Symposium*. In the speech of Pausanias, there are described two Erotes, a “Heavenly Eros”, which is noble and lofty (180d), and a “Pandemic Eros”, which is baser and more physical (181b). The similarities between the Erotes of Plato and the two *Amores* in 1.19 are significant, and suggest a possible Platonic influence in the composition of this poem.

2 OLD s.v. “magnus” 14.
3 Shackleton Bailey (1956) 55-6.
6 OLD s.v. “iucundus” 3.
7 OLD s.v. “iucundus” 2.
8 OLD s.v. “iniquus” 7.
9 Propertius (1977) 200.
10 Shackleton Bailey (1956) 55.
12 Ibid.
13 Cf. Plato, *Symposium*, 209c-d. Diotima suggests that poets, having produced an intellectual offspring born of virtuous love, will gain them eternal renown and remembrance.
14 Although there is a clear sexual element in this scene, I do not believe it necessarily excludes the love being *Magnus Amor*, which I had proposed as non-physical. We see here that the purpose of the act of love is not pleasure in and of itself, but rather it was a means towards an end of literary production. The act’s purpose was consistent with the non-physical aspect of *Magnus Amor*. For a similar concept of sex as a means towards virtue, see Plato, *Symposium*, 185b.
15 Flaschenriem (1977) 262.
16 Ibid.
17 OLD s.v. “caecus” 2-12.
19 OLD s.v. “longus” 5.
20 For a very similar usage, see also *Carmen* 1.11.7.
21 Flaschenriem (1977) 265.
Eric Auerbach Thinks *Yvain* is Romance, But He’s *Lion*

David Perretta ‘14

Chrétien de Troyes was a 12th century poet best known for his five Arthurian knight tales: *Erec and Enide*, *Cligés*, *The Knight of the Cart* (*Lancelot*), *The Story of the Grail* (*Perceval*), and *The Knight with the Lion* (*Yvain*). Traditionally, these stories are classified as medieval romance literature as they are mostly considered with chivalry, knightly duty, and courtly love. *Yvain* is concerned with its titular character, Yvain, as he defeats Esclados, marries his wife, takes over his kingdom, is exiled, and must ultimately regain his stature.

In 1946, Erich Auerbach’s literary criticism *Mimesis: The Representation of Reality in Western Literature* was published. Auerbach’s work attempts to bridge two representations of reality in western literature: One from the Hellenic world, as seen in Homer’s *Odyssey*, with the worldview presented in the Bible. In chapter six, he uses Chrétien’s *Yvain* in order to define the romance genre.

This essay is concerned with the holes presented in Auerbach’s definition of romance as a genre separate from epic. It points out that, by his definition, *Yvain* should be classified as epic rather than romance. Furthermore, its goal is to point out an underlying commonality between many epics, which have traditionally been a genre slightly too slippery to properly define. The hope is that this new definition of epic could be applied to the works of Homer, Vergil, and other classical authors.

When Chrétien de Troyes began the story of *Erec and Enide* with boasts not only of his storytelling abilities, but the immortality of his works, he could not have foreseen the development of modern printers and the Internet – two innovations that have allowed for the proliferation of his narratives as well as the expansion of the scholarly debates surrounding them. With added discourse comes a need for clear definitions with which to discuss
the works. One hotly debated topic is which characteristics separate the intertwined genres of epic and romance. A quick Google search reveals that, while certain traits exist to distinguish the two categories, there is much grey territory that allows for certain works the claim to both. Fortunately, in chapter six, “The Knight Sets Forth,” of Erich Auerbach’s *Mimesis*, the door is opened for a decisive definition of the term “epic.” Ironically, Auerbach achieves this by misclassifying Chrétien’s *The Knight with the Lion (Yvain)* as romance literature. From this faux pas, a new definition of epic is born; a definition in which the term “epic” is invariably affixed to a narrative pertaining to either the creation, advancement, or destruction of a political landscape.

Auerbach’s insightful misstep occurs when he claims that the world of Yvain is one in which “the colorful and vivid pictures of contemporary reality seem, as it were, to have sprung from the ground: the ground of legend and fairy tale, so that…they are entirely without any basis in political reality.”1 Here, Auerbach asserts that one of the defining features of romance is that it is devoid of politics. In the case of Yvain, however, this is simply not true. Much of Auerbach’s folly may be seen through a brief passage immediately following Yvain’s marriage to Laudine:

“So now my lord Yvain is lord of her land and the dead knight is fully forgotten. The man who killed him is married: he has taken his wife and they sleep together, and the people feel more love and esteem for the living knight than they did for the dead. They served him well at the wedding feast, which lasted until the eve of the king’s arrival at the marvel of the spring and stone.”2

Once unpacked, this short paragraph reveals that Yvain’s story is in point of fact highly politicized.

Initially, Yvain exists as part of King Arthur’s entourage. This group – this “round table” – is comprised of knights all seeking to be “first among equals.” For this reason, Yvain sets out ahead his companions in search of the land with the magical stone, basin, and fierce knight from Calogrenant’s story. By leaving without the others, he hopes to vanquish the villain himself. Yvain’s reason for doing so is simple: prestige. Within his circle, reputation is currency. Knights with more power are granted preferential treatment – as Yvain notes in his desire for the battle, which he believed would go to either Kay or Gawain should he
have travelled with the group. What Chrétien displays here is both a political and economic system. Like in the modern era, those with more capital (stature) are granted greater power within society. In Yvain’s world, where his esteem is his credit statement, the same is true: he will be granted a higher place amongst equals and thus be granted an elite position at the round table with more opportunities. He is playing a political game, trying to climb the proverbial ladder towards a higher office of sorts. However, once Yvain manages to find this new land, he enters into a whole new governmental order.

Yvain eventually finds and kills Esclados. He did this for no reason other than political gain within King Arthur’s court. However, he falls in love with Esclados’ widow, Laudine, and becomes dead set on marrying her. The marriage, while containing mutual affection, also has a blatant political aspect: protection. One of the primary reasons for the existence, formation, and maintenance of governments is to protect its citizens. Thus, Laudine’s seneschal calls for somebody to wed her when it is revealed that the land is at war with a king (presumably Arthur) who is fast approaching. The husband of Laudine would become king, making it his responsibility to guard the locals as their champion in battle. Chrétien’s description of kingship within the story resembles political office and civic duty more than simple nobility. Once Yvain marries Laudine and assumes the role of king, he not only weds the woman he loves, but takes on the responsibility of defending the kingdom.

As the passage above notes, Esclados is forgotten and the people feel greater love for Yvain. In lieu of the democratic process, the murder of Esclados serves as an election of sorts. Yvain has proven to be the superior knight – the superior leader – and that is reflected by the praise bestowed upon him by his subjects (which reads as a medieval version of the modern day concept of “approval ratings”). Though the people do not choose, a new leader has arrived as the result of a recognized procedure, which, theoretically, allows for anybody to achieve the rank of king (by simply killing the old one). The presence of a common practice is a linchpin of all political systems, thus furthering the evidence that Yvain’s tale is indeed one of politics.

Furthermore, Chrétien points out that people love Yvain, who is living, more than Esclados, who is dead. If “living” is taken
to mean “in power” and “dead” is understood as “removed from office,” this statement is not only less cruel, but extremely logical within the context of the story. Of course the people love Yvain, he is their new king as a result of the aforementioned “electoral” process. He has gained greater popularity by proving his power over Esclados, who is no longer loved because he has been shown to be weak. Here, a standard has been established: constituents adore those in power so long as they remain the strongest. As soon as the incumbent is shown to fail, he is willed away – a motif repeated through Yvain’s own actions.

Almost immediately following the wedding, Gawain convinces Yvain that he must uphold his reputation by traveling to tournaments. Yvain concedes, and Laudine grants him permission to disappear for one year. However, if he fails to return after the prescribed amount of time, Laudine promises to hate him. As the story unfolds, Yvain fails to make good on his word and is essentially exiled from his kingdom. To believe that he remains away simply because Laudine no longer loves him is naïve; he has let his wife down, and, likewise, has proven to the people that he is incapable of leading. This blunder has cost Yvain his political position, and, thus, he spends much of the remainder of the story adventuring to restore his reputation and regain not only the love of his wife, but the office that he once occupied.

Finally, the last line of the passage presents readers with a glimpse of Yvain’s political position in action. As previously mentioned, one of the reasons governments exist is to protect its citizens. During the wedding feast, there is great joy to be found within the kingdom. This represents an era of prosperity; the people have a new, more powerful king, and are that much safer because of his presence. However, once King Arthur arrives and summons a storm, the tone shifts. With his people under attack, the ceremonies cease and Yvain militarizes and mobilizes. He fulfills his political duty by racing towards the source of the storm to defend his constituents. Fortunately, Yvain finds that his attackers are actually his friends, but, nonetheless, he has fulfilled the obligation of his office. By demonstrating the execution of a political office, Chrétien has shown that a governmental structure does indeed exist in Yvain’s world – a fact that Auerbach fails to pick up on.
Furthermore, Auerbach does not understand that political pressure and advancement is the impetus of this story, as opposed to the actual romance between Yvain and Laudine. Yvain initially sets off on his journey with nothing but political gain on his mind; Laudine ends up being a pleasant surprise, a serendipitous discovery he makes only after he has defeated Esclados (and thus, has gained prestige and power within King Arthur’s court). Once he meets and weds Laudine, their love serves as a catalyst for future events, but nothing more. In a true romance (a story lacking a political focus), the lovers are constantly together and act in ways that will allow their love to flourish. *The Romance of Tristan* provides a great example: Tristan and Yseut risk their lives multiple times simply to be with one another. *Erec and Enide*, from another Chrétien story, are similar, as Erec proves time and time again that he is willing to put himself in danger to protect Enide (though, admittedly, he does emotionally batter her for a large portion of the story). In these traditional romances, the lovers act in and for the name of love. In Yvain, the knight with the lion acts for himself. It is *his* reputation he is attempting to rebuild. Though he is hoping to win back Laudine’s love, he has no guarantee that she will reverse her decision to hate him for eternity – this is in stark contrast to the other famous lovers, who not only recognize, but also celebrate their love with one another. Thusly, Yvain’s actions are not romantic in nature; they are in fact political. Only once he has regained his honor may he, at the very least, resume his place at the round table. Much like the first time he wins Laudine’s love, the second time is sheer happenstance.

Another, symbolic way which shows that politics not only exist in Yvain’s tale, but are the focus, is the presence of the lion. It is no mere coincidence that this ferocious cat accompanies Yvain throughout the latter portion of the story; it points to the fact that Yvain holds office. Traditionally, lions represent pride, power, and royalty. His companion is a constant reminder of his (former) political position within the kingdom he is adventuring. While romantic heroes quest with their lovers, epic heroes travel with their political prestige. The kings in Geoffrey of Monmouth’s indisputable epic *The History of the Kings of Britain* do not go to distant lands in the name of love, but in the name of empire. These kings are constantly moving with political gain in mind as they wish to broaden their realm, their power, and their influence. Likewise,
Yvain travels within his domain, constantly increasing his reputation in the hopes of getting back in bed with Laudine, and, by extension, returning to his former political glory.

Erich Auerbach denied the existence of politics in the world of Yvain, but he was wrong: they are the center of the world as represented by Chrétien. However, whether consciously or unconsciously, he also stumbled upon the definitive characteristic that separates epic and romance: politics. Epic, as a term, must be understood as a narrative in which political gain, whether on the provincial or global level, is the key focus of the story. By acquiring prestige, capital, resources, and/or land, the heroes of epic are engaging in and shaping the politics of their time – making for the best way to differentiate epic and romance. Through this new, more precise definition of epic, scholarly debates regarding medieval texts may proceed with greater clarity, thus allowing the text themselves – not their genres – to be examined.
Bibliography


Notes

1 Auerbach (1964) 133.
3 This concept is most clearly (and anachronistically) illustrated in the preamble to the Constitution of the United States, which states that the government has been formed to “provide for the common defense” of its citizens (US Const., Preamble). Anachronistic use of the Constitution for this argument is fair as it is – and has been – applicable to any situation in which a political system is created.
4 Again, the US Constitution – as well as the constitutions of any government – is ample proof of this concept as it codifies political structures and establishes due process. That rules may not have been written down within Yvain’s story is irrelevant, as instances of common practices – a concept paralleled by modern day governmental documents – are rife throughout the narrative.
The Yoke of Liberty:  
St. Augustine and the Freedom of the Person

Chase Padusniak ‘15

Throughout his life, St. Augustine’s beliefs about the human will changed. Although in his Christian years he always held human liberty in the utmost regard, his conflict with Pelagius and his followers led the saint to formulate a doctrine of predestination. While Augustine himself seems to have believed that such disparate views could be reconciled, Christian movements throughout history have continued to contest which aspect of God to emphasize: His generosity in giving man liberty or His power in preordaining events. Despite these disagreements and their incumbent heatedness, Augustine’s belief in God as the giver of all gifts and blessings grounds both positions. Because of this, this debate becomes a fruitful moment in which contemplate the divine nature of all knowledge. And so, in this paper, I will argue that even if Augustine’s different views cannot be brought into complete harmony, their very dissonance presents itself as a cause for meditation on Augustine’s general conceptions of freedom and God’s wisdom.

Although St. Augustine expressed the conflicting notions that the human will is free and that our fate is predestined, his thought can give us an insight into our ultimate reliance on God. Central to the theologian’s understanding is the freedom of the will.1 Adam was free to either sin or not sin in the Garden of Eden: “Adam possessed a grace such as we have to free us from evil. Without any inner struggle, without temptation from within, and without trouble.”2 And so, his decision to turn away from the almighty can only be ascribed to “his free choice, for God had given him everything needed to enable him to avoid it.”3 The human will is free precisely because the first human’s will was free. God himself had created the world freely4 and bestowed such freedom onto his human creation. As Augustine himself said, “I am, and I know, and I will;5 he saw such freedom as being integral
to his person, as much a part of him as his knowledge and being.

Along with this understanding, Augustine saw the will as free in that it is an intermediate good capable of both good and evil. For him, it is, in fact, that which allows evil to enter the world: “the cause of evil is the free decision of our will.” God cannot have made evil because God is goodness itself; he is unchangeable. Evil cannot exist because all that God created is good. If something is subject to corruption it is good, because corruption is the diminishing of goodness. Because evil can be corrupted no further, it can only be conceived of as non-existence. Evil is nothing; it “cannot be a substance” and so arises simply from the will itself. The will is, therefore, so free that it can introduce evil into the world.

Aside from his affirmation that the will is free, Augustine believed that it could be divided against itself. He is clear that “the command does not proceed from an undivided mind.” He explicitly refutes the Manichean view that there are two wills or natures, one good and one bad, at odds with one another in the human person: “some there are who...assert that in us there are two natures, one good, the other evil, each with a mind of its own. Let them perish from your presence, O God.” Although he rejected such a duality, he felt great division in his own personal life. Augustine wanted to stop sinning and follow God, but found his lusts too strong: “there were plenty of actions that I performed where willing was not the same thing as being able.” Such inner turmoil nearly tore him apart in the garden with Alypius. On one hand, he willed to do God’s bidding; on the other, he was unable to carry out the act to its fulfillment. Man cannot successfully carry out the will of God by himself. Augustine experienced the inner struggle caused by such impotence, an impotence rooted in the Fall of the very first man himself.

Through his own tumultuous inner-conflict about carrying out God’s will, Augustine came to view human nature as inherently debased. Adam had sinned as a result of his pride. He was perfectly united to the will of God in the Garden of Eden, enjoying immortality through the Tree of Life and through his constant vigilance with regard to God’s will. By sinning, however, Adam turned away from God out of a “desire to raise himself to a dignity not his own” and as a result his descendants were cursed with original sin forever. Pursuant of this belief, Augustine once read to
his congregation a passage from a letter by Cyprian, a well-respected martyr of the African Church, which he thought demonstrated that Adam’s descendants shared the burden of his sin. Augustine himself speaks of this idea at the beginning of his *Confessions*: “we bore our part in the heavy labor and pain allotted to the sons of Adam.” It is in the disordered and irrational passions of sex that we can see original sin passed on. The consequences of the Fall are as fundamental as death and the need to toil for food in order to support oneself and one’s family. Our wills are not always able to bring a desired act to completion precisely because they are weighed down by this sin as well as its effect of concupiscence, or “a consequence (*reatus*) of that sin,” which calls us to sin more. Through original sin, man is also now ignorant, lacking the knowledge Adam “enjoyed without having to acquire it.” God is not unjust in giving man this punishment because “it was through free choice that he abandoned God.” By refusing to do his will, all men participate in the sin of Adam. And so, this draw to sin is a product of our fallen status and means that we cannot hope to turn back to God completely of our own volition.

Despite humanity’s debased status, Augustine believed that God’s grace allowed human beings to accomplish His divine will. He sees God as goodness itself and as being itself, not derivatives of them: “It was you who made them, Lord…you who are good must have made them, because they are good; you who are, because they are.” He is who is and His goodness and will are Him, not simply functions of His existence. God’s grace then is first and foremost in having created us. Man merits no existence “because to merit he would first have had to exist.” God simply is and his decision to create was entirely his own. His creation did not merit such an honor: “all His gifts are given freely and gratuitously.” So, for Augustine, our entire existence, prior even to the conflict of the will, is predicated on God’s grace. The original state of Adam, even in his freedom from sin, was entirely a product of divine grace. And so, freely-given grace played a major role in the world even before Adam committed the first sin.

Although the Lord displays His grace in our very creation, it is also present in allowing man to perform His will, despite his fallen state. Augustine was a “son of Adam” and yet, after the Fall, grace can be defined in a new way as “the sum-total of God’s free gifts, the purpose of which is to make man’s salvation possible
in the state of fallen nature.” 30 Only by grace, by God’s freely given kindness, can fallen man hope to accomplish God’s will and thus find salvation. In the post-Fall world, “the freedom of the will lies deeper than the power of choice. It is the power to achieve; and this is the gift of grace.” 31 So, for Augustine, man’s freedom of choice consists in the wonder of God’s grace. This idea is entirely consistent with how he opens his Confessions: “grant me to know and understand, Lord.” 32 The goal of man’s life is to find salvation, to find rest, in almighty God by uniting the human will to the divine will, something possible only through grace: “in you is found the rest that is mindful no more of its labors, for there is no one else beside you, nor need our rest concern itself with striving for a host of other things that are not what you are.” 33 For Augustine, grace is necessary for salvation in both its “co-operating…and…prevenient” 34 forms. “The first represents the need for the continual help and guidance of God; the second explains Paul’s conviction that even his will to good is implanted by God.” 35 Our fallen state, in Augustine’s mind, demands God’s freely-given grace everywhere and always.

Along with allowing for the means of salvation, divine grace makes possible a true freedom of the will. As long as the will remains divided it is not truly free. Concupiscence and ignorance make sin a constant possibility and, more often than not, drag man down. The Lord’s grace frees us by making us slaves to his will. Etienne Gilson quotes St. Augustine as saying, “you will be free if you are a slave: free of sin, slave of justice.” 36 Augustinian freedom of the will is not just the free choice, of which we normally conceive. While man has had free choice from the time of Adam, 37 true freedom can come only from slavery to the divine will. Freedom from sin means the easy burden of God’s will: “you crushed my pride by inspiring in me reverential fear, and you made my neck submissive to your yoke. And now I wear it, and find it benign, as you have promised and as you have made it.” 38 It is this understanding of free will that defines Augustinian theology; without divine help, “we cannot love and serve either God or our neighbor.” 39 Because man is fallen, the will is only truly free under God’s yoke, which is available through his freely-given grace. It is from this understanding that the famous Augustinian prayer “give what you command, and then command whatever you will” 40 arises. And it is in this saying that his position is best summarized.
It is exactly this phrase, however, that brought him into conflict with Pelagius, whose views eventually pushed Augustine to preach the idea of predestination. Pelagius was a British monk whose name has become associated with a heresy that he gave rise to, but very possibly would have not fully supported. Supposedly, the controversy surrounding him and Augustine began when he reacted violently to the aforementioned passage from *The Confessions*. He was a moralist, who placed a great deal of emphasis on man’s ability to will good in the world, especially in a late-Antique world in which many people, especially the aristocracy, were recent, and sometimes halfhearted, converts to Christianity. Although we are uncertain of exactly what Pelagius believed, it would seem that many of the positions attributed to him were actually those of his more radical followers such as Caelestius and Julian of Eclanum: “Pelagius himself is less heterodox than the system to which he has given his name.” What is certain, however, is that Augustine’s belief that the Pelagians denied the need for grace pushed him toward a theory of predestination, which complicated his view of free will.

In his arguments with Pelagians such as Julian of Eclanum, Augustine came to uphold the idea of predestination, which is previously absent from his writings. Although Augustine himself claimed the Church had always upheld preordination of events by God, Henry Chadwick claims that “as late as 409, there is no question of divine foreknowledge being causative. The Pelagian controversy pushed him to attribute to God an active preparatory part in bringing man to faith.” Pelagians such as Julian of Eclanum began to deny the absolute need even for infant baptism as they denied the reality of physical original sin. Augustine was displeased with what he perceived as a de-emphasis of, or perhaps even disbelief in, grace.

Seeing such a radical denial of the need for God’s grace and reading such tendencies into Pelagius’ emphasis on the need to do good voluntarily, Augustine used predestination as a means of affirming the necessity of God’s grace. He begins with the Pauline notion from the First Letter to the Corinthians that all that human beings have is received. From here, Augustine notes how some people do not persevere in the faith, despite their loving and respecting God for many years prior to lapsing. He even writes of a man who he heard was 84 and had piously lived with his wife for
25 years, but then “bought a music-girl for his pleasure” after living righteously for so long. For him, then, there must always be a fear that human volition will falter. So, not only is God’s grace necessary but also God selects who is to be saved ahead of time. “God has inscrutably chosen a determinate number, indeed a substantial minority, for salvation.” Even when St. Paul speaks of God willing all people to be saved, Augustine dismisses this as meaning “representatives of every race.” This explains why some people falter in the faith while others persevere. Predestination becomes an answer to Pelagians like Julian of Eclanum as well as a means of explaining why some people fall out of the faith suddenly while others hold it to their last breath.

The theologian, however, took little issue with joining his idea of predestination with his view of the will. As the will is free and because God has foreknowledge as a perfect being, “His foreknowledge has to be compatible with that liberty.” For Augustine, “if will equals liberty, then the divine foreknowledge of voluntary acts is by definition a foreknowledge of free acts.” As a result, “it would be contradictory for divine foreknowledge to render our voluntary acts necessary; for voluntary acts are essentially free acts.” So, for Augustine, free will and divine preordination complement one another. He still sees ultimate freedom as identical to the light yoke of Christ, but now he can add to his understanding of the will its place within a world of people who are elected to be saved and people who are chosen to be damned.

Although Augustine may have thought his position to be consistent, future Christians have found his ideas somewhat less tenable. It is true that some later authors such as “Gottschalk, Calvin, and Cornelius Jansen” would draw upon his idea of preordination, but as Chadwick puts it, “this side of Augustine has not been comfortably digested.” “At the heart of the opposition lies the conviction that Augustine never does sufficient justice to freedom.” He claims to have reconciled true freedom by slavery to God with God’s electing some people, but this was not a view many thought correct even in his own lifetime, when monks from Southern France took issue with predestination. Each one was an ascetic trying to “establish his identity as an ‘imitator of Christ.’” The idea of election debased the monks’ abilities to control whether they were truly capable of such a feat or not. And
although Augustine maintained that “the divine choice is essentially antecedent to human (or angelic) merit in will, faith, and good works,” these monks, among others, would find such an idea repugnant. They would ask how man can be free and God just if man has no true say in his salvation, if the will is free only insofar as it responds to the situations God creates for it, with God having knowledge of how it will react. They would not deny that human beings derive all goodness from God, as Augustine maintained. They would, however, argue for a greater place for volition in turning toward or away from God. Such issues remain salient as such controversies drove later Lutheran and Jansenist movements, among others, and the reconcilability of Augustine’s predestination with the freedom of the will continues to be a difficult, and as yet not fully answered, question. In our own historical period and in Augustine’s own lifetime, the preordination of events has long been something difficult for “the mainstream of traditional western Christianity” to accept fully.

Although Augustine’s thought was a product of his own life and circumstances, his ideas regarding free will cannot be disregarded as entirely historically motivated. Some would say that Augustine was interested in predestination precisely because his *Confessions* unfolds like a narrative in which his own journey is leading to a conversion orchestrated by God. Others, such as Julian of Eclanum, contend that his suspicious view of human liberty arose from his difficulty in struggling with his own sins in his youth, even after he had sought conversion. Julian even saw “the cloven hoof of Manichaeism” rearing its ugly head in Augustine’s later thought. Still others such as Peter Brown have seen the coming of the barbarians and the subsequent feelings of uncertainty this entailed as motivating Augustine’s ideas on predestination. “The elect received this gift so they, also, could tread the hard way of Christ” in the gift of perseverance, which Augustine called the greatest of God’s individual gifts. In short, “such views made the world readily intelligible” as there were those to be damned and those to be saved and that was that. Here, again, some have seen “the cloven hoof of Manichaeism.”

Although there may be some truth to these claims, Augustine was a man who found the universal in the details of his own life and time, giving his ideas continued salience. Chadwick says that “Augustine saw in the limited circumstances of his life
and times an element of the universal, a clue to the very nature and
destiny of man, a glimpse of what God intends for all of a fallen
race.” This rings true in his *Confessions*, in which he hints at the
universality of his theological mission: “grant me to know and
understand, Lord.” He seeks to learn about the way God has
made things, not just how God has made things now. All things
may be passing away into the non-existent past, but Augustine’s
interest in what exists is for all times. He even devotes the last four
books of his *Confessions* to investigating universal problems and
themes. And so although his historical context cannot be entirely
ignored, Augustine’s ideas cannot be entirely temporally
contextualized either.

Even if the tension in his universally salient questioning
about the freedom of the human person cannot be totally resolved,
it can be taken as an occasion to contemplate the mystery of God,
who is goodness itself. For even if we cannot discover the exact
nature of God’s preordination of events or how this idea relates to
the freedom of our will, we can contemplate how all knowledge
comes from God himself: “so too is it rightly said to those who
know anything in the Spirit of God, ‘It is not you who are knowing
this.’” And so, it is only through God that one can hope to attain
the answer to the question of predestination. In trying to find that
answer, through the contemplation of God, it is possible for one to
bask in his goodness and simply to appreciate him. In other words,
even if the tension cannot be resolved, the result can be cause to
contemplate God in his grandeur, something Augustine’s *Confessions*
attempts on a grand scale.

And so, Augustine’s view of the freedom of the will
evolved over the course of his life, finding its final form in his
post-Pelagian-controversy idea of predestination. For him, evil was
nothing and the will was capable of both good and evil. The will is
good because it is created, while evil is not created, but simply the
absence of being. Augustine saw true freedom in slavery to Christ
and eventually came to believe that that slavery entailed God’s
preordination of who would be saved and who would be damned.
And although this theory has met with vehement opposition as
well as great support, even causing later schisms and controversies,
the study of Augustine’s view of the will is an opportunity to knock
on God’s door and to invite his understanding into us. As he tells
us in the end of his *Confessions*, “only so will we receive, only so find, and only so will the door be opened to us.”\textsuperscript{82}
Bibliography


Notes

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2 Ibid., 150.
3 Ibid.
4 Ibid., 148.
8 Ibid., 161, VII, 3, 4.
9 Ibid., 173-174, VII, 11, 17.
10 Gilson (1961) 144.
12 Ibid., 201, VIII, 9, 21.
13 Ibid., 201, VIII, 10, 22.
14 Ibid., 200, VIII, 8, 20.
15 Ibid., 199-200, VIII, 8, 19.
17 Ibid., 150.
18 Ferguson (1956) 58.
21 Ibid.
23 Ibid., 151.
24 Ibid.
27 Ibid.
28 Bonner (1963) 359.
30 Gilson (1961) 152.
33 Ibid., 217, IX, 4, 11.
34 Ferguson (1956) 55.
35 Ibid.
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Editor’s Note

The following three pieces were inspired by Professor John Hamilton’s Aeschylus course offered in the Fall of 2013, which focused on translating and interpreting one of his most famous works, *Agamemnon*.

Our three authors have each analyzed different aspects of Aeschylus’ drama. Two pieces, “Corrupt Bloodshed and Faithful Weeping” by Angela Yu ’14 and “Blood and Watchdogs: Two Images in 607-612” by Anne Salloom ’14 take different, but equally revealing, approaches in examining the wicked character of Clytemnestra. Yu considers her role as an adulteress as the antithesis of the virtuous Penelope, who remains faithful to her husband, Odysseus, until he returns home after the Trojan War. Salloom analyzes Clytemnestra’s repetition of two images which reveal her sinister motives. Finally, Michael Russo’s ’15 “The Representation of Entrapment” explores how Aeschylus’ use of net imagery portrays both Agamemnon and the defeated Trojan army as helpless captives, while the imagery also serves to present Agamemnon as a wild, ruthless beast.

Each of these three pieces offers interesting insights into understanding Aeschylus’ characters. Touching on a range of topics in the drama, these pieces show that there are always new, fresh ways to interpret an ancient work of literature.

– Ed.
The Representation of Entrapment

Michael Russo ‘15

The net is a fascinating motif, integral to the Agamemnon. One can identify throughout the work a complex network of this symbol, where every recurrence snowballs its cumulative meaning. The focus of this essay is to investigate the string of net imagery as it is interwoven throughout the work. Overall, I seek to demonstrate that the net, a technically devised and powerful weapon of the hunt, signifies the entrapment, victimization, and annihilation of a helpless captive and provokes the audience’s critical evaluation of the advantageousness of human intelligence.

In the hymn, the Chorus attributes the capture of Troy to the actions of Zeus and Night, “Oh Lord Zeus and Pleasant Night possessor of great glories when you casted upon the citadels of Troy a constricting snare, so that no one of the old or of the young would surpass the great net of slavery and all-conquering destruction (ὦ Ζεῦ βασιλεῦ καὶ νυξ φιλία / μεγάλων κόσμων κτεάτειφα, / ἔπειτα Τροίας πύργος ἔβαλες / στεγανὸν δίκτυον, ὃς μήτε μέγαν / μήτ᾽ οὖν νεμόν τιν᾽ ὑπερτελέσαι / μέγα δουλείας / γάγγαμον, ἀτης παναλώτου, 355-361).” The enjambment of both words δίκτυον and γάγγαμον at the beginning of their respective verses emphasize that Troy has been trapped. Moreover, the descriptive adjectives which modify both δίκτυον and γάγγαμον stress that Troy is gravely imperiled; for the δίκτυον, a casting-net, whether for hunting or for fishing, is described as στεγανὸν, literally ‘water-tight’, and the γάγγαμον, typically a small round net especially designed for oyster catching, brings enslavement and inescapable ruin to those over whom it has been thrown. The diction of these verses conjures the stifling oppression upon the conquered Trojan kingdom. Furthermore, the image of Troy ensnared recurs in Agamemnon’s speech, in which he describes how Troy had been enclosed by exceedingly cruel traps (ἐπείπερ καὶ πάγας ὑπερκότους / ἐφφραζάμεθα, 822). Agamemnon, now, is introduced to the audience as the human
agent who has brought the fulfillment of the suffocation of Troy, which had been attributed to Zeus and Night earlier by the Chorus. Agamemnon is a hunter, tenacious in harassing, trapping, and killing a victimized prey, the kingdom of Troy (χρόνῳ μὲν ὄγει Ἑρμήν πόλιν ἀπὸ κέλευθος, πάντα δὲ πῦργων, κτήμα πρώτη βασίλεια / Μοῖρα λαταξία πρὸς τοῦ βιῶν, 126-130).

Hunting after a targeted prey and the repressive constriction of the victim in nets, principle thematic concepts, which were encountered in the passages about Troy, are recurrent in the treatment of the murder both of Agamemnon and Cassandra. First, Clytemnestra manages to stab Agamemnon to death by casting around him an expensive robe (πλοῦτον εἴματος Καρύ, 1383), which she likens to ἀμφίβληστρον (1382), an inescapable (ἄπειρον, 1382) casting-net which one would be used to catch fish (ἀνίστερον ἱσθανόν, 1382), much like the δίκτυον and the γάγγαμον as described by the Chorus previously. Cassandra similarly is described as caught in fatal hunting nets since Clytemnestra has locked in on her as a target to be annihilated (ἐντός δὲ ἀλοίπα μορφώματος ἀγαμεμνόμον / πείθοι ἂν, εἰ πείθοι ἀπείθοντας ἂν Ἰως, 1048).

Hence, there arises a plausible analogy between Agamemnon as hunting down Troy and Clytemnestra as hunting down Agamemnon and Cassandra.

As a brief aside regarding Clytemnestra’s hunt, one should note the variety of effective applications of the net image. An example of the versatility of this motif is proven by use of the word, δίκτυον. For example, the δίκτυον not only serves as an instrument for facilitating predation but also as an impressive metaphor for a corpse perforated by stab wounds. Clytemnestra, hinting with dark humor and dramatic irony to her future butchery of Agamemnon, says, “And if this man kept receiving so many wounds as the rumor was brought to the house, he would have more holes to speak of than a net, (καὶ τραυμάτων μὲν εἰ τόσων ἄτραχνεν / ἀνήρ δὖ, ὡς πρός ὁπον ὁχετευτο / φάτης, τέτρηται δικτυόν πλέον λέγειν, 866 – 868).” Agamemnon, who will be stabbed three times by Clytemnestra, is likened to the net, the very device, which will ensnare him and expose him to his doom. At the same time, the δίκτυον also constitutes a personification of Clytemnestra herself, who is called by the prophetess, Cassandra, the net of Hades and the snare which shares the marriage bed and is jointly
guilty of carnage (ἦ δίκτυόν τι γ’ Ἀιδοὺ; / ἀλλ’ ἄρκυς ἦ ξύνευνος, ἦ ξυνατία / φόνον, 1114-1118). Clytemnestra is the embodiment of the net itself, thus drawing attention to her convoluted plan of assassination and inescapable deadliness.

The correspondence of Agamemnon’s entrapment with that of Troy is corroborated further by comparable diction of confinement. For example, Aegisthus says, “It is fine for me to die, now that I have seen this man in the nets of justice, (οὕτω καλὸν δὴ καὶ τὸ κατθανεῖν ἔρκος, / ἱόντα τοῦτον τῆς δίκης ἐν ἔρκεσιν, 160-1).” The word ἔρκος, which could connote not only a net but also a fenced enclosure, revokes the verb, ἐφραξάμεσθα, signifying ‘to fence in’, used by Agamemnon to describe the capture of Troy at line 822. Furthermore, ἔρκος here reminds the audience of Clytemnestra’s epithetical description as the nearest sole-guardian enclosure of the Apian land (τὸδ’ ἄγχιστον Α- /πίς γαῖς μονόφρουρον ἔρκος, 256-7). Just as Cassandra depicts Clytemnestra as a lethal net, the reader also could imagine her as a personified enclosure or network of fences, which beguilingly opens its door1 to Agamemnon and then shuts him in so that he is inevitably vulnerable to his impending doom.

Just as clothing (πλοῦτον εἴματος κακόν, 1383) is compared to a casting-net (ἄμφιβληστρον, 1382) hurled over the victim, Clytemnestra’s misleading speech, a means for alluring Agamemnon to let his guard down in her presence, is likened to a device of entrapment. After Clytemnestra has performed the killing, she proclaims, “I have said much before at the opportune moment and I am not ashamed to contradict it now. For how could one devising hate against a hated foe, resembling a friend, fence the snares of ruin at height too high to be overleaped? (πολλῶν πάροιθεν καρφίως εἰρημένων/ τὰναντὶ εἰπεῖν οὐκ ἐπισερενθῆσοραμε. / πῶς γάρ τις ἔχθρας ἐχθρὰ πορφύνων, φίλοις/ δοκοῦσιν εἶναι, πημοῦς ἀρχόντατ’ ἄν / φράξειν, δῆσος κρεῖσσον ἐκπηδῆματος; 1372-6).” Speech is the most effective instrument facilitating the murder of Agamemnon. Importantly, Clytemnestra employs imagery related both to “nets (ἀρχόντατ’)” and “fences (φράξειν)” in order signify the utility of her lies. The word, ἀρχόντατ’, meaning ‘places beset with hunting nets’, is a powerfully evocative word since it exerts the cumulative force of the net-imagery used during the play and also reinforces the idea of Clytemnestra as a net-
wielding huntress, since it summons to the mind Cassandra’s earlier metaphorical depiction of Clytemnestra as an ἅρις.

Moreover, ἗φαξεῖν (‘to fence in’) is a repetition of ἰπραξάμεσθα, thus conjuring up the imagery of enclosure. The representation of the enclosure as ‘at a height too high to leap over’ (ὕψος κρείσσον ἐκπηδήματος) strengthens the image of an encirclement of insurmountable, over-towering walls. This bold image reminds the audience of similarly structured earlier verses that deal with the capture and ravage of Troy. For instance, the impregnable enclosure of words by which Clytemnestra surrounds the powerless Agamemnon reflects the description of Zeus’ entrapment of Troy with the δίκτυον, which nobody is able to ‘overleap (ὑπερτελέσαι)’. Thus the net repeatedly is portrayed as a baleful, insuperable weapon of the hunt, which traps, confines, and exposes the prey to the thirsty predator. The strength of the net is reinforced by a change in the therianthropic descriptions of Agamemnon. For, at first, Agamemnon proudly is recounting how the Argive beast and the shield-bearing host launched their leap (Ἀργεῖον δάκος, / ἴππου νεοσσός, ἀκμιδήφρος λέως, / πήδημ’ ὀρούσας ἁμφὶ Πλειάδων δύσιν, 824-6). Agamemnon also likens himself and the Greeks to a flesh-eating lion that springs over the citadel (ὑπερθορὼν δὲ πάγων ὀμηστῆς λέων, 827). However, such large, majestic, land-leaping beasts stand no chance against an effective net. The figurative net which Clytemnestra devises with her words and illusive appearances is so capable and efficient at trapping Agamemnon, once stamped in the audience’s mind in the form of a lion, that he is minified into a fish swept up in a net (ὥσπερ ἱχθυών, 1382). The laughable reduction of Agamemnon’s bestial representation from a lion to a fish illustrates the gracefulness and awesome force of the net.

The ultimate entrapment of Agamemnon is foreshadowed early in the play, when the Chorus says, “My anxiety remains to hear something shrouded in darkness. For the gods are not heedless of mass murderers. And in time the black spirits of vengeance bring to obscurity the one who has prospered in unrighteousness and wear down his life by a reversal of his fortune and when he has come among the invisible there is no strength, (μὲνει δ’ ἄκοσια τί μου / μέριμνα νυκτηρεφές. τῶν πολυκτών γὰρ οὐν / ἄκουσαν θεοί. κελαι/καὶ δ’ Ἐρινύες χρόνῳ / τυχρήν ὄντ’ ἄνευ δίκας / παλιντυχεῖ τρίβα βίον / τιθεῖο’ ὀμαυρών, ἐν δ’ ἀκ/στοις τελέθοντος ὀστὶς
ἀλ/κά, 459-468).” The net, represented by the cloaks, plays a significant role in the actualization of the choral foreboding and thematically links the murder of Agamemnon with the fall of Troy and the sacrifice of Iphigenia.

The word, νυκτηρεφές, ‘covered by night’, straightaway recalls when Night is said to have enveloped the citadels of Troy in a net in the choral hymn to Zeus. The cosmic enshrouding of Troy in a net of darkness can be construed as a figurative description of the literal annihilation of Troy, which is described by Agamemnon in the following way, “The altars and shrines of the gods have been wiped into oblivion, and the seed of the whole land has been utterly extirpated, βωμοὶ δ' ἄιστοι καὶ θεόν ἱδώρατα, / καὶ σπέρμα πάσης ἐξαπόλλυται χθονός, 527-8).” In relation to this, Clytemnestra throws cloaks upon Agamemnon, veiling him in darkness, which event figuratively marks the realization of his falling among the unseen, which had been portended by the anxious Chorus. Just like Troy’s altars and shrines have been extinguished from sight (ἄιστοι), in the same way Agamemnon becomes ἄιστος and ἀμαυρός in fulfillment of the Chorus’ foreboding words when Clytemnestra ensnares him in the cloak and murders him. Agamemnon and Troy, the victims of the net, share the common fate of being made to vanish into the darkness.

Furthermore the Chorus mentions that the Erinyes dim the prosperous, yet unrighteous man. Similarly, the Erinyes are said by Aegisthus to have played a part in the murder of Agamemnon, who is seen by Aegisthus lying in the robes spun by the avenging goddesses (Ἰδὼν θραυστὸς ἐν πέπλοις, 1580-1). Thus, the obscurification of the unrighteous yet prosperous man, once a source of proleptic solicitude for the Chorus, is realized when Agamemnon, the living man and exalted conqueror, becomes just an inanimate corpse and literally is erased from sight since he is wrapped up in the cloaks.

The cloaks cast over Agamemnon are called πέπλοι, which is important especially since this word appears only three times in the whole work, one of which occurs in the sacrifice of Iphigenia and two of which reappear in the assassination of Agamemnon. The πέπλος, both the symbolic net (ἀμφίβληστρον, 1382) in the murder of Agamemnon and one of the many enumerated objects which confines and represses Iphigenia during her sacrifice, thus becomes a crucial thematic link, which widens the reader’s
understanding about the brutal and oppressive nature of both of these ritualistic slaughters. First, Iphigenia is said by the Chorus to have been wrapped in the πέπλοι when she was being held above the altar, “After a prayer the father ordered the attendants to seize and lift her up with all their courage like a goat over the altar wrapped in cloaks, and to restrain from her beautiful mouth the sound of a curse upon the home by a gag, by the strength of the bit and the stifling might (φράσεν δ’ ἀόξιος πατήρ μετ’ εὐχάν / δίκαιον χρισάφως ὑπερθε βομαθ / πέπλοισι περιπετῇ παντὶ θυμῷ / προνοσὶ λαβεῖν αὐξῆν, / στόματος τε καλλιπρόφου / φοβακά κατασχέν φθόγγον ἄφατον ὀξεῖοι / βίᾳ χαλικὼν τ’ ἀνακόψο μὲνεί, 231-8).” Iphigenia, likened to goat about to be slaughtered, is wrapped in her cloaks, gagged, and overwhelmed by the overbearing force of her sacrificers; thus she, a young and delicate maiden, is a victim very cruelly subjuga
ted and oppressed. In Casandra’s prophesy, Agamemnon similarly is represented as an animal, the bull, which is ensnared by the cloaks and struck dead by the crafty device of a black horn (ἄ ἄ, ἰδοὺ ἰδοὺ: ἄπεσεν τὴς βοὸς / τὸν τάφον ἐν πέπλοισι / μελαγέρῃ λαβοῦσα μηχανήσα / τόπτει, 1125-8). Both Agamemnon and Iphigenia are depicted as sacrificial animals, which have been bound up in some way and unpityingly butchered. In both instances, the πέπλος, serving as a sort of covering, becomes an overarching symbol which evokes the image of a tied up, entangled, defenseless creature helplessly exposed to a looming gory execution.

However one difference separates these two examples, for Agamemnon, being a big tough bull, must be brought down by a treacherous slaying (δολοφόνου λέβητος τύχαν σοι λέγω) whereas Iphigenia, described as a mere goat, need only be thoroughly crushed and constrained by the might of her sacrificers. Therefore, in the case of Iphigenia, the πέπλος represents just her state of grave repression, but in the case of Agamemmon, symbolizes not only defenseless entrapment but also the cunning, which must be employed by the cow, the theriomorphic Clytemnestra, in order to bring down a bull, a beast of rather large size (δολοφόνου λέβητος τύχαν σοι λέγω, 1129). The πέπλος then, or the net in general, is not only a symbol of oppression but also of shrewd premeditation and advanced technical engineering, which can make subduing the largest beasts of burden seem as effortless as catching fish in a stream (εὕσπερ ἰχθύων, 1382).
The role of the net in the play then makes a statement about human nature in general, that the innate capacity of the mind to conceive and design things far outstrips the physical might and stamina of beasts. The *Agamemnon* may suggest that the mind, however much it may advance human beings, also enables them to descend to wild, amoral, and animalistic behavior. The lesson conveyed in a rather Aesopian way is that human beings, by nature, are not far from actually embodying the beasts to which they are likened through metaphor and simile. Human beings can act just as viciously as wild beasts, if not worse than them. The net, the product of imagination and creativity, the ostensibly good and special endowments of human beings, is shown as a deleterious instrument of capture, victimization, and slaughter, compelling the audience to reflect upon the potential effects of the employment of the intellect and continually examine and reassess their nature in comparison with the characters of this drama.
Notes

1 See “τί γὰρ / γυναὶ τοῦτο φέγγος ἢδιον δρακεῖν, / ἀπὸ στρατείας ἀνδρὶ σώσαντος θεοῦ / πύλας ἀνοίξω, 601-604.” Clytemnestra, in the manner of her epithet, the “fence (ἕρκος),” opens the gates in order to lure and enclose the king.

2 “Here is Agamemnon, my husband, now a corpse, the work of this right hand, a just workman (οὗτος ἐστιν Ἀγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς / πόσις, νεκρὸς δὲ, ηῆσο δεξιᾶς χερῶς / ἔργον, δικαίας τέκτονος), 1405.”
Blood and Watchdogs: 
Two Images in *Agamemnon* 607- 612

Anne Salloom ‘14

One of the most important and distinctive features of the *Agamemnon* is the large number of complex and interlocking images that Aeschylus uses throughout the work.¹ These metaphors are particularly notable for their bold nature, as Aeschylus coins many new metaphors, which would have been striking to his audience.² Additionally, the interrelatedness of reoccurring images throughout the work means that these duplications have a significant impact on the work as a whole, connecting together ideas and events from throughout the play. Such interconnectedness means that these repeated images take on different layers of meaning and can relate to the work as a whole in multiple ways; they do not simply add ornamentation to the play, but rather are essential to its understanding. In looking at the importance of images in the *Agamemnon*, this paper will focus on two images from the end of Clytemnestra’s response to the herald, who brings the news of the capture of Troy. Clytemnestra is the most powerful speaker in the play; she exemplifies the art of persuasion, and she has no qualms about lying or using crafty language to make her point.³ These two images occur in the context of Clytemnestra’s highly persuasive and ironic speech, and this background lends additional meaning to the images. In this paper, I will use the two dominant images at the end of Clytemnestra’s speech to the messenger, the image of the dipping of bronze (612) and of the watchdog (607), to show how repetitions of these images are related to each other and add multiple layers of meaning to the speech. I will also use these examples to demonstrate the interconnectedness of images and specific words throughout the *Agamemnon*.

At the end of her response to the herald, Clytemnestra uses the image of the dipping of bronze to reinforce the idea of her supposed innocence. This image and the specific words used in her metaphor occur elsewhere in the play, where they relate back to the image in Clytemnestra’s speech and serve to further illuminate her
meaning and connect the ideas of the play as a whole. Speaking ironically, she says, “I do not know more of pleasure from another man, or of censorious rumor, than I do of the dipping of bronze” (σῶδ’ οἶδα τέρψιν σωδ’ ἐπίφοινον φάτων/ ἄλλου πρὰς ἀνθρεπός μᾶλλον ἢ χάλκ ὦ βαφάς, 611-612). Her language is characteristically ironic here; she of course knows “of pleasure form another man,” and her murder of Agamemnon will be a dipping of bronze in blood, just a dipping different from the phrase’s literal meaning of forging metal. The only other appearance of the word for “bronze” (χάλκος) in the Agamemnon reinforces the falsity of Clytemnestra’s speech. The Chorus, at the beginning of the first stasimon (355-487), compares Paris with bad bronze, although Paris’s name is actually withheld until after the comparison (399), leaving its subject unknown until the end. The Chorus says that this person, “in the manner of bad bronze, with wearing and knockings, turns out to be black, when he is condemned” (κακὸς ὄ χαλκὸν τρόπον/ τε καὶ προσβολαῖς/ μελαμπαγής πέλει/ δικαιωθεῖς, 390-393). This metaphor could easily refer to Clytemnestra, because, like the low-quality bronze, she gives a false impression to the beholder through her lies and clever speech, but the truth of Clytemnestra’s behavior becomes apparent over time, just as the true quality of the bronze becomes apparent after it has been worn down. The fact that the subject of the comparison is left ambiguous until its end further suggests that Aeschylus intended for the metaphor to have multiple identifications. Further, the word for “black” (μελαμπαγής) in this simile actually has the more specific meaning of “black-clotted,” conjuring the image of clotted, dried blood, and its other use in the Aeschylean corpus is in reference to blood. This use of a word associated with gore further increases the suggestion of this comparison with Clytemnestra, the murderer, and links this simile back to the image of murder in 612. Thus, this earlier image of bronze, with its reference to a deceptive person and language suggesting murder, reinforces and strengthens the meaning of Clytemnestra’s speech, while it also demonstrates the interconnectedness of images in the play through the relatedness of the ideas expressed by the two images.

In addition to the significance of the image of bronze, the other uses of the word for “dipping” (βαφή) in the play likewise connect this image at the end of Clytemnestra’s speech with two
other places in the play, enhancing the meaning of both the speech and the image. While the word in 612 means to produce a weapon through the tempering of metal, it can also indicate dye,\(^5\) and while the actual image shifts with the meaning of the word, the repetition of the word links the three vivid images together. The first use of the word occurs as the Chorus tells of Iphigenia’s sacrifice, describing her “saffron-dyed robes” (κρόκου βαφάς, 239), which fall around her as the men in Agamemnon’s company prepare to murder her (228-247). The use of the same word, βαφή, in Clytemnestra’s speech and in the description of Iphigenia’s sacrifice links linguistically two events in the play that are already linked thematically. Clytemnestra plots against Agamemnon because of her daughter’s murder; this sacrifice causes her to seek the retribution that she alludes to, so the repetition in the use of the word βαφή links the cause with its effect. Additionally, the imagery Aeschylus uses while describing the murder creates a vivid scene for the audience, and the Chorus even describes the scene as being “like a painting” (ὡς ἐν γραφαῖς, 242), referencing the strength of the image. Because of the striking imagery and the centrality of the events described to the play, it is likely that the audience would have linked this scene with later allusions to Agamemnon’s murder. Thus, the repetition of the word βαφή enhances the meaning of Clytemnestra’s speech by linking cause and effect.

Likewise, the third use of the word in the play thematically links to the downfall of Agamemnon and thus further adds meaning to the speech. After she has convinced Agamemnon to walk on the purple garments upon his return home, Clytemnestra speaks of the “dye of the clothing” (εἱμάτων βαφάς, 960), which Agamemnon walks on. These garments would normally have been consecrated to the gods, and by walking on them Agamemnon’s hubris is exemplified, a characteristic that traditionally would lead to a man’s downfall, as the Chorus expresses earlier (367-378). The imagery of the richly dyed garments here is linked to the image of Iphigenia’s sacrifice through the use of the word βαφή; the similar imagery of colorfully dyed cloth links two causes of Agamemnon’s downfall. Additionally, Clytemnestra refers to this dye as a “gushing of purple” (πορφύρας…κηκίδα, 959-960), and this image may hint at or conjure the appearance of blood,\(^6\) further relating the imagery of Agamemnon trampling on the garments with the implied bloody sword of 612, in addition to the repetition of the
word in both places. Thus, the three uses of βαφή in the play all link thematically to each other, as the causes for Agamemnon’s death are linked with Clytemnestra’s oblique reference to his murder.

A second dominant image at the end of Clytemnestra’s response to the herald is the image of a dog. She refers to herself as a “watchdog of the house” (δωράτων κόινα, 607), and although the surface meaning of this image suggests her “faithfulness” (ἐσθλήν, 608) to her husband, to an understanding audience she speaks with clear irony. The Greek associations with dogs would have added to this double meaning as well, because female dogs were associated with shamelessness, an obvious characteristic of Clytemnestra’s behavior. While the image of the dog is used extensively throughout the Agamemnon, creating several complex layers of meaning, this paper will just focus on a few of the appearances of the word “dog” (κύων) that are most pertinent to Clytemnestra’s speech and demonstrate the relationship between repeated images. Most directly, Cassandra says while prophesizing that Clytemnestra has “the tongue of a hateful bitch” (γλῶσσα μοισήτης κυνός, 1228).

Cassandra uses this phrase in reference to Clytemnestra as a murderer, which provokes the female dog’s association with bad behavior. Additionally, the numerous references to the Thyestean feast throughout Cassandra’s prophesy (1069-1330) call Aegisthus to mind, and these hints at her adultery further relate to the association of shamelessness with female dogs. Cassandra’s prophecy therefore ties into the ironic description that Clytemnestra gives of herself, and this earlier reference adds meaning to and confirms Cassandra’s prediction.

Clytemnestra repeats this same watchdog imagery when she refers to Agamemnon ironically as “a watchdog of a herder’s homestead” (τῶν σταθμῶν κόινα, 896), while she praises him upon his return home. Just as when she uses the image in reference to herself, its identification with Agamemnon is clearly ironic as well. The joy that she expresses in this speech for his return (855-913) is either entirely false, or present only because she is excited to carry out her plot; the mention of a dog in the middle of Clytemnestra’s lying once again brings up its associations with shamelessness. Additionally, this entire scene emphasizes Clytemnestra’s shocking, unwomanly behavior: she should be indoors, not outdoors making a speech that outdoes her husband’s in scope. In this way, the mood of the entire scene ties back into the imagery and negative
associations of Clytemnestra as a watchdog, and Cassandra’s characterization of her as having “the tongue of a hateful bitch” seems particularly appropriate as she makes this insincere speech. Finally, the use of this image to describe Agamemnon emphasizes his negative qualities as well. Her speech comes after Agamemnon’s boast about the havoc he worked upon Troy (810-854), and although Cassandra has not been referenced yet, she is present on the stage, his concubine brought back as the spoils of war, clearly displayed to his wife. These reminders of his negative actions make her praise of him seem particularly ironic and serve to emphasize his behavior that the Greek audience might have seen as shameful or unacceptable. Additionally, although Clytemnestra uses the masculine form of the word to describe him, it occurs in the accusative case, and because of its inflection it looks just like the feminine form of the word (κυνα), further inviting this comparison with a bitch. Thus, this reference to Agamemnon as a faithful watchdog builds off the imagery and associations already established in Clytemnestra’s speech to further characterize the two protagonists and connects to Cassandra’s later characterization of Clytemnestra.

In conclusion, these images of the dipping of bronze and of the watchdog serve as only two examples of how Aeschylus uses repeated imagery to add multiple layers of meaning to the play and to illustrate the complexity and irony of Clytemnestra’s persuasive speaking. Repeated usage of the same word brings together different ideas and themes, which complement and add to each other in meaning. Furthermore, the irony and double meaning in Clytemnestra’s speech further enhance the effect that these reoccurring images produce. These images thus do not simply add ornamentation to the play, but rather add significantly to its interpretation by bringing together themes from throughout the work. Given the importance of images in Aeschylus that can be gleaned from the examination of these two images, it is clear that the observations made in this paper do not apply only to these few lines, but can be extrapolated to the play as a whole. The interconnectedness of images and specific words throughout the Agamemnon add significantly to the play and enhance the importance of themes throughout. By looking carefully for such reoccurring images, readers can better understand the play and the relatedness of its themes and ideas.
Bibliography


Notes

1 Earp (1948) 97.
2 Earp (1948) 93-98.
3 Goward (2005) 63-68.
7 Raeburn and Thomas (2011) lxvi.
The character of Clytemnestra in Aeschylus’ *Agamemnon* is an antithesis to Penelope in Homer’s *Odyssey*. The polarization of these two characters is evident in the radically different ways in which the women receive their husbands. On one hand, when Penelope recognizes the man standing before her as beloved Odysseus, she greets him with tears and kisses (δακρύσασα δ’ ἔπειτ’ ἵθες δράμεν, ἀμφὶ δὲ χείρας δειρὴ βάλλ’ Ὀδυσσῆ; κάρη δ’ ἔκοσ’ ἣδε προσφύγ’α, 23.208-209). However, Aeschylus’ portrayal of Clytemnestra is an inversion of model Penelope. Although Clytemnestra is said to have a wishful heart, “for she exercises power, a woman with a male-counseling heart, a heart that is expectant” (ὧδε γὰρ κρατεῖ γυναικὸς ἀνδρόβουλον ἐλπίζον κέαρ, 10-11), Clytemnestra longs for the homecoming of Agamemnon, not so that she can lovingly embrace him again in the manner of Penelope, but so that she can destroy him.

Aeschylus not only presents a clear distinction between the two women, but he also makes clear that Clytemnestra exists as the epitome of an unmanageable and villainous Penelope. Clytemnestra not only acquires a lover, Aegisthus, while Agamemnon leads the war against the city of Priam, but she plots to murder her husband upon his return home. In contrast, although many suitors unrelentingly insist that Penelope be married off, Penelope forestalls marrying any one of the suitors, thereby displaying unrelenting devotion to her husband.

After Clytemnestra presents her first speech in the *Agamemnon*, the Chorus notes that a man cannot escape predestined fate. A man who has committed a sin will turn “black like bad bronze” (κακὸν ὃ ἰχνὸς τρόπον/τρίβῳ τε καὶ προσβολαῖς/μελαμπαγῆς πέλει, 390-393). The Chorus alludes to the curse upon the house of Atreus; the house must pay the price for its savagery. Tantalus, the first man to feast on the flesh of his offspring, establishes such a house. Because of his foolishness, Tantalus was condemned to starvation in the Underworld, with food and water situated forever
just out of his reach. However, following much deliberation from the gods, his son Pelops was restored to a new life and became the father to two sons, Atreus and Thyestes. These two brothers argue for rights to the throne, and eventually an angered Atreus serves to his brother the flesh of Thyestes’ own children. Therefore, the inhabitants of the house become sole indicators of a house based on cyclical revenge. In this house, sacrifice and murder provide a resolution to betrayal and grief.

Likewise, Odysseus is not able to escape his fate. The attempts of Odysseus to return home are thwarted by Poseidon’s storm. Fate had long ago dictated that Odysseus would wander the earth with trial and tribulation until his homecoming (καὶ δὴ Φανῆνων γαῖς σχεδὸν, ἐνθὰ οἱ ἄφα σὲφρογέεν μέγα πείγαρ φιξίας, ἢ μὲν ἰδάνει. ἀλλ᾽ ἔτι μὲν μὴν φημι ἄδηλη ἠλαν κακότητος, 5.288-290). The reader should note that however different the fate of the house of Atreus and the fate of Odysseus may be, it falls upon both Clytemnestra and Penelope to accept the consequences of the fates of their husbands. Essentially, Clytemnestra and Penelope present two ends of a spectrum: one reunites in a loving marriage whereas the other seeks companionship elsewhere and brings her marriage to a violent end.

Not only do the differences between the Clytemnestra and Penelope remain stark, but Clytemnestra’s bloodthirsty nature becomes clearer and perhaps even more conspicuous than that of Agamemnon. In the king’s absence, Clytemnestra becomes the master of the palace of the Atreidae. The Chorus describes the queen as powerful even when the king leaves his throne (ἥκω σεβίζων σὸν, Κλυταιμήστρα, κράτος: δίκη γάρ ἐστι φωτὸς ἀρχηγοῦ τίνων γυναῖ’ ἐρημωθέντος ἀρσενος θρόνου, 258-260). Although it was customary that a male lead the household, Clytemnestra dominates even her lover Aegisthus in authority. Aeschylus conveys her power through the military language situated in Clytemnestra’s speeches. The death of a king is significant, but it is even more significant in the Agamemnon because the king’s long expected homecoming is the prelude to his sudden and swift demise.

In contrast, the Odyssey portrays Penelope as a wife faithful to her husband, a woman who still remains hopeful that her husband will return even though she has no evidence to this claim. Additionally, Penelope must resist the horde of suitors who attempt in vain to court and marry her. In Odysseus’ absence, the
suitors take control of the household, slaughtering Odysseus’ cattle and despoiling his precious possessions (οἴ τε οἱ αἰεὶ μὴν ἀδῶνα σφάζουσι καὶ εἴλιστος ἐλίκας βοῦς, 1.91-92). Even in this case, Penelope does not assume the vindictive demeanor of Clytemnestra. Instead, Penelope undetectably employs her cleverness by unraveling at night the day’s weaving in order to forestall marrying one of the suitors. All the while, Penelope politely maintains a convincing façade before her suitors that she exerts herself laboriously to complete her work. Thus, while Penelope spends her days weaving and unwrapping her shroud to keep the suitors at bay (τῷ οὔτε ξείνων ἐμπάξομαι οὔθ’ ἱεράν ὀψε τι κηρύκων, οἷ δημοσεργοὶ ἔσαιν: ἀλλʼ Ὅδυσῆ ποθέοσα φίλον κατασκοιμαὶ ἦτορ, 19.134-136), Clytemnestra weaves a web of bloodshed and deception within the house of Atreus.

Penelope is immortalized because of her unwavering devotion to Odysseus, as symbolized through her daily weaving and nightly unraveling of the Laertes’ shroud. Penelope’s strength is noted through her ability to deceive the suitors. Thus, Penelope does what Clytemnestra does not: in the process of remaining faithful to her husband Penelope exhibits her strength, whereas Clytemnestra, an adulteress, exhibits her power through horrendous acts of violence. This disparity between the two characters is symbolized by Aeschylus’ description of the woven tapestry. In the Odyssey, the color and design of Penelope’s shroud is never mentioned. In the Agamemnon, the color of the tapestry may be interpreted as a crimson color, reminiscent to the flush of blood. Aeschylus subtle description of the color of the tapestry is indicative of the bloodshed that occurs within the house of Atreus.

Furthermore, episodes of elation during the final scenes of both the Agamemnon and the Odyssey demonstrate that Clytemnestra is a perverse adaptation of Penelope. The death of Agamemnon brings Clytemnestra ecstasy. Clytemnestra likens her pleasure in being sprinkled with the gushing dark blood of her husband to the joy that the sown earth must feel when it is refreshed with the rain in the birth of flower buds (1388-1392). The erotic imagery suggests that Clytemnestra is fertilized by the blood of her husband. She rejoices in climax as her husband’s blood spatters on her.

Penelope’s tears (δακρύσασα δ’ ἔξενει’ ἱθὼς δράμεν, ἄμρη δὲ χεῖρας δειηθ’ βάλλ’ Ὅδυσῆ, καὶ ὅ δ’ ἐκω’ ἣδὲ προσηύδα, 23.208-9)
reflect the shower of Agamemnon’s blood upon Clytemnestra. Blood and tears adorn Clytemnestra and Penelope respectively. These liquids exhibit the different ways in which the two women display emotion. The shedding of tears symbolically represents the loyalty and commitment to the household, ὀἰκός, in the case of Penelope. For Clytemnestra, spilling Agamemnon’s blood ushers her exultation and triumph. Clytemnestra speaks, “You attack me as if I were a woman without common sense. I speak with a fearless heart. Whether you praise me or blame me, it is the same to me. This here is Agamemnon. My husband, dead, thus this is the work of this right hand, a master of the task. And that is the end of the matter” (πειράσθη μοι γυναικὸς ὡς ὀφράσμονος: ἐγὼ δ’ ἀντέστη καρδίᾳ πρὸς εἰδότας λέγω: σῶ δ’ αὐλενὲ ἐπὶ μὲ φεγειν θέλεις ὄμοιον. οὕτός εἰσιν Ἁγαμέμνων, ἐμὸς τόσος, νεκρὸς δὲ, τῆς δε δεξιᾶς χερὸς ἔργον, ὀἰκίας τέκτονος. τάδ’ ὀδοὶ ἔχει, 1401-1406). Furthermore, the maternal persona of Penelope is never fleeting, but Clytemnestra’s image varies greatly. Beginning at line 855, Clytemnestra strives to imitate the loving nature of Penelope, expressing her affection for her husband when he returns safely home (οὐχ ἀλογονόμαι τοὺς φιλάνορας τρόπους λέξαι πρὸς ἠμᾶς, 856-857). This is identical to the desolation Penelope faces in her palace while Odysseus roams the earth. Clytemnestra continues, “It is dreadful for a woman to stay in the home alone without her husband.” (τὸ μὲν γυναίκα πρῶτον ἄρσενος δίχα ἤσθαι δόμοις ἔρημον ἔσπαγλον κακῶν, 861-862). The outward praise does not come to a standstill yet: “I have said all I have suffered and now my heart is free from its weight. For this reason I would like to pronounce this man here, the guardian dog of the palace, the anchor of the ship, the lofty pillar, the father’s only son, running water for the wandering traveler, the hope that appears to sailors, and the bright day that appears after the winter frost!” (νῦν ταῦτα πάντα τλαὸς ἀπενθήτῳ γρεῦνι λέγοιμ’ ἀν ἄνθρο τόνδε τῶν σταθμῶν κόνα, σωτῆρα ναὸς πρῶτον, ὑψηλῆς στέγης στόλον ποδής, μονογενεὺς τέκνων πατρί, ὠρυκόρο οἰκῆντει πηγάδων ρέους: καὶ γῆς φιλεῖσαν ναυτίλοις παρ’ ἐλπίδα, κάλλιστον ἠμῶν εἰσεδεῖν ἐκ χείματος, 895-901). Unlike the bloodthirsty and sexual Clytemnestra that Aeschylus previously describes, the Clytemnestra in lines 855-913 seemingly commends her husband on his authority. Clytemnestra rejects the notion that a woman is a submissive character and uses her guile as her strength. At times,
she fluctuates between a persona that reminds the reader of Penelope welcoming her husband’s νόστος and a persona that is well-laced with revenge.

The unpredictable nature in which Clytemnestra outwardly displays her character qualities shows already that she is everything that Penelope is not: unstable, retribution-seeking, and ruthless. Along with her exceptional attributes as a maternal figure, Penelope is a competent and faithful wife, even though she lives in a palace where the patriarchal order is disturbed. On the other hand, the reader is led to question Clytemnestra’s image as a woman in antiquity. She portrays herself as ἀνδρόβουλον (“man-minded”), but in doing so, distances herself from Penelope’s immortalized image. The women are destined to be as different as the dynamic between Agamemnon and Odysseus. Aeschylus illustrates the gruesome curse of the house of Atreus by portraying a fickle Clytemnestra against an unwavering Penelope. Clytemnestra recognizes the integrity of Penelope and therefore applies this knowledge to deceive Agamemnon. Unfortunately, the life of Clytemnestra is polluted with bitter contamination, no matter her attempts to reverse her fate.
Bibliography


Notes

1 Pantelia (1993) 496.
3 Goheen (1955) 116-117.
Waste through Diction:  
A Look into the Fourth Satire of Juvenal  

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Luxury, waste, and ridicule. An emperor, a fish, and a fisherman. These themes and characters are what make up the majority of the fourth satire of Juvenal, a Roman satirist who wrote around the turn of the first century AD. His satires, divided into five books, discuss the problems he sees with society and with certain people in particular. The fourth satire, which serves as Juvenal’s critic on the emperor Domitian, is of particular interest. It is a satire which depicts the emperor by telling a story that actually goes inside the Roman court and is the only one of Juvenal’s sixteen satires to take such a leap. It is a satire which uses diction, an oversized fish, and contrast between characters to tell its story and to ridicule Domitian at the same time. It is a satire which tells its story predominantly through its style, leaning very little on its plot to get its message across. It is a satire which depicts themes of *luxuria* and waste through a court assemblage about a giant fish, which in fact has no actual conclusion. The fourth satire of Juvenal uses diction and a kaleidoscope of literary devices to describe the fish, fisherman, and members of the court as a means to depict his issue with the *luxuria* and waste of Domitian as well as the plague of violence that is the scene in Rome during Domitian’s reign as Juvenal perceives it for his audience.

Juvenal’s fourth satire is different from the satires preceding it in both subject and structure. While the other satires explore multiple topics, the fourth satire examines the court of the Roman emperor and does little jumping around as far as subject manner goes. For example, the first satire discusses all the reasons why Juvenal is writing satire in the first place. The second satire jumps into a detailed analysis on hypocrites and the immorality of effeminate Roman males. Both include a plethora of examples. Most of the subsequent satires follow in their predecessors’ footsteps and examine many different topics. However, the fourth satire perseveres with the tale of the fish and is divided into just
two parts, an introduction and a main story. The introduction describes Crispinus as “the Egyptian colonel of the Emperor Domitian’s bodyguard.” Juvenal depicts him as a “monster with no redeeming qualities” (monstrum nulla virtute redemptum, IV.2) and a “man with a strong lust for unmarried women alone” (solaque libidine fortes…viduas tantum aspernatus, IV.3-4). In order to prove his point about the unredeemable qualities of Crispinus, Juvenal tells the story of how Crispinus used to be a poor man, but then, when he came into a state of luxuria, “he bought a six pound fish for 6000 sesterces” (mullum sex milibus emit, aequantem sane paribus sesteria libris, IV.15-6). To further his point, Juvenal claims that Crispinus bought the mullet to “eat all by himself” (emit sibi, IV.22). A six pound fish would have been enough to feed many people and yet Crispinus chooses neither to share with friends nor to give to the less fortunate. The mention of Crispinus at the start of the satire can seem to be a random choice made by Juvenal. He has little to do with the main body which is used to ridicule the emperor, Domitian. However, Crispinus is used here by Juvenal to foreshadow the degrading of Domitian which is to come in the main story.

After the introduction involving the story of Crispinus is complete, Juvenal shifts to the main story which portrays Domitian and revolves around a giant fish. The turbot is brought in by a fisherman who claims that the fish itself “wished to be captured” (ipse capi voluit, IV.69). Upon receiving the fish, the emperor Domitian is unsure of what to do with it since “it would have been a barbarism to chop it up and stew it.” Domitian, “therefore, calls together the members of his court” (vocantur ergo in consilium procures, IV.72-3) to figure out the best way to both cook and consume the turbot. After suggesting that a large vessel with a spacious circumference is needed, the court is dismissed without anything having actually been accomplished (IV.131-2). It is assumed that Domitian ate the turbot by himself just as Crispinus did with his six pound mullet in the introduction.

While the stories of Crispinus and Domitian are quite different, parallels cannot help but to be drawn between the two. Both men spend the early years of their lives in poverty. It is likely because of this that they each gained a “desire for material possessions.” This desire is shown blatantly by Juvenal when he depicts each man and the fish with which he comes into contact.
Crispinus, on the one hand, buys a fish for much more than it is worth and subsequently devours it on his own. On the other hand, Domitian is given a giant fish and, although he seeks advice from his council members about what should be done about it, he just ends up dismissing them and eating the turbot all by himself. Both interactions show the themes of luxuria and waste because both men think only of themselves. The two men are also quite similar when it comes to the catalogue of their immoralities. Both Crispinus and Domitian have a lust for other woman, specifically other men’s wives, and are both overly conscious of their appearances. Such iniquities by both men easily lend themselves to the themes of luxuria and waste that Juvenal is portraying in his fourth satire.

Diction plays an important role in the creation of contrast between Crispinus and Domitian throughout the satire. Staying true to his character, Juvenal wrote his fourth satire in “mock-epic style” with a “deliberate and effective use of diction.” Mock-epic style, also known as mock-heroic, employs the use of language usually used in epic and applies it to an everyday subject. One of the first instances of such mock-epic diction appears in the introduction when Crispinus “buys a mullet for 6000 sesterces” (mullum sex milibus emit, IV.15) all for himself. This is a distinct example of “deliberate bathos,” a sudden shift in style from the grand to the everyday. Such use of bathos provides both a humorous effect and a sense of mock-heroism. Crispinus is described using the same diction as an epic author would use to portray a hero. However, all Crispinus did was buy a fish. He did nothing that would normally be deemed as heroic and so through the mock-epic language is made out to be a fool for buying the six pound fish for so much.

This mock-epic style can also be seen poignantly in lines 34–36 when Juvenal feigns the invocation of a muse to assist him as he tells his story: incipe, Calliope, licet et considere, non est cantandum, res vera agitur, narrate, puellae Pierides; The muses are called upon throughout Greek mythology to help the teller of the tale explain his story, whether it was written or in the oral tradition. Juvenal asks Calliope, the Muse of Epic, to assist him and then subsequently asks everyone “to be seated” (considere, IV.34). However, poetry is usually recited standing up unless the subject matter is trivial. Juvenal continues on to explain that the tale is
not just some story, but rather the truth, *(res vera agitur, IV.35)*. In calling his subject matter *vera*, Juvenal clarifies the reason he asked his audience and Muse to be seated—not because the subject at hand is trivial, but because he does not need a Muse to assist him because he is expressing his own account of the truth of the situation.

Such mock-epic language continues to appear as Juvenal depicts Domitian and the enormous turbot. For example, lines 72-122 contain a detailed catalogue of the members of Domitian’s court. Such an extended enumeration is typical of any epic, such as the catalogue of ships in the second book of Homer’s *Iliad*.

Another illustration of Juvenal’s mock-epic style appears in lines 37-38. These two lines demonstrate clearly the author’s use of epic structure as well as epic vocabulary. *Cum iam semianimum laceraret Flavius orbem ultimus et calvo serviret Roma Neroni*. The last four words of each line are of the same pattern – adjective describing object/verb/subject/object. The four-syllable word *semianimum* (IV.37) also lends itself to the mock-epic style because of its length. The sound of the word itself is unpleasant and, therefore, helps to create the contrast between the epic style being used to describe the non-epic subject matter of Domitian destroying the world. The mock-epic style is used to describe Domitian more than Crispinus, showing a contrast between the two men. It proves Crispinus to be merely a device of foreshadowing and as a “miniature Domitian,” unworthy of any lengthy epic sounding description.¹⁰

The use of Crispinus as a foreshadowing device can also be seen in Juvenal’s use of language of the stage in the fourth satire. Such language is particularly evident in the opening two lines of the satire in *Ecce iterum Crispinus* (IV.1) and *vocandus ad partes* (IV.2). *Ecce* is often used in plays to show the introduction of a new character onto the stage. Here, Juvenal uses it to introduce his audience to Crispinus. *Vocandus ad partes* continues the metaphor of the stage and is used to mean that Crispinus has entered “to play his role.”¹¹ In particular, he has entered to play his role as Domitian, giving the audience an idea of who Domitian is before the emperor is presented to them.¹² Thus, *ecce* is used by Juvenal to introduce both Crispinus and Domitian and, as such, is appropriately the first word of the satire. *Ecce iterum Crispinus* also represents Crispinus’ unavoidable appearance in satire.¹³ His presence is particularly inevitable in the fourth satire as he is the perfect character to
foreshadow and seamlessly transition to the upcoming character
depiction of the emperor, Domitian.

Throughout the satire, Juvenal fails to attack Domitian
directly. He instead mocks him because “ridicule is as powerful a
weapon as injective.” Juvenal uses ridicule successfully to degrade
Domitian in his fourth satire. Before his name is even mentioned,
Domitian is labeled as a bald Nero (calvo serviret Roma Neroni, IV.38).
This is not an attack on Domitian, but rather a ridicule of him since
baldness was an attribute often associated with clowns by the
Romans. Juvenal uses ridicule as such a useful tool for satirists because
although many great criminals will be indifferent when they are
named as villains or ruthless scoundrels, they will assuredly grimace
if they are derided and fashioned to be purported as fools. Domitian
believed himself to be of divine status while he was still
alive, a designation which was only offered to deceased monarchs
and those who could perform miracles. Juvenal uses this fact to
his advantage and states that Domitian “possesses power equal to
that of the gods” (cum laudatur dis aequa potentia, IV.71). On the
surface, it may seem as though Juvenal is merely flattering
Domitian. However, reading between the lines yields an
understanding that Juvenal is using flattery as a means of
controlling the emperor and, “simultaneously, to mock before
those who know better, his divine pretensions.”

Conversely, Juvenal does not use ridicule as a means to
paint the verbal portraits of the eleven men whom Domitian
assembled. Several of the council members, such as Pegasus and
the son of Acilius, are “treated not unkindly by Juvenal.” Juvenal
tells his audience that Pegasus is the “best and most sacred
interpreter of the law” (optimus atque interpres legum sanctissimus,
IV.78-9). The son of Acilius is likewise portrayed as a “youth who
did not deserve the harsh death that would soon be brought upon
him by his master’s sword” (iuvene indigno quem mors tam saeva maneret
et domini gladiis tam festinate, IV.95-6). Others are not treated quite so
kindly by Juvenal. For example, Rubrius, another member of
Domitian’s court, is said to be “guilty of an old crime that cannot
be mentioned and to be more shameless than a pervert writing
satire” (offensae veteris reus atque tacendae, et tamen inprobior saturam
scribente cinaedo, IV.105-6). Although some court members are
described as villains while others “at least had a degree of decency”,
the eleven members of the court are “considered collectively.”
This collective is seen most manifestly in line 113 in which Juvenal uses the literary device of chiasmus to depict sensible (*prudens*) Veiento and deadly (*mortifero*) Catullus, (*Et cum mortifero prudens Veiento Catullo*, IV.113). Chiasmus is the reversal of the order of words which places them in ABBA form. The use of such a literary device helps Juvenal convey his point that his main issue is with Domitian. He must mention the men of the court in order to accurately describe what goes on in it since “it would be a pointless satire were it not formally correct.”

Juvenal also uses the fear the court has for Domitian to demonstrate his issue with the emperor. Crispus, one of the eleven members of the court, is described as “a pleasant old man” (*iucunda senectus*, IV.81) whose gentle soul matches his eloquence meaning that he does not speak freely the thoughts that are in his head. He is terrified of what will happen to him if he says what he truly thinks – that he “condemns the plague of violence” (*saevitiam damnare*, IV.85), brought upon Rome by Domitian. Crispus is just one example of the terror felt towards Domitian by the court members. Pegasus “sped up” (*properabat*, IV.76), when Domitian ordered him “to run” (*currite*, IV.76) because he was afraid of what would happen to him if he did not comply with Domitian’s orders. Collectively, the members of the court bore pale demeanors as a result of their great and miserable relationship with the emperor (IV.75-76). Another blatant example of their fear comes with the fact that they do not laugh in Domitian’s face when he calls them to give council about a fish. This meeting has little to do with running the Roman Empire, but is rather a ludicrous assemblage to discuss a how best to cook a fish and is somewhat nonsensical in nature. However, the members of the court rush straight to Domitian’s side when he calls them, no matter how trivial the reason, for fear of what would happen to them otherwise.

In his fourth satire, Juvenal describes two fish in particular -a mullet and a turbot. *Mullum* (IV.15) is used to describe the mullet bought and consumed by Crispinus at the start of the satire. *Rhombi* (IV.39) is the name given for the giant turbot caught in the Adriatic Sea and brought to Domitian. Both the mullet and the turbot are fish of enormous magnitude. The former is bought for thousands while the latter is too large for any to dare to sell or buy at a fish market as there are “investigators of seaweed everywhere” (*dispersi protinus algae inquisitors*, IV.48-49). Both are extraordinary fish and
therefore highly valued in Roman society along with the murena, a type of sea eel. However, the mullet bought by Crispinus was 2.4 kg while the greatest mullets had the potential to be around 9.5 kg in modern measurements. Even though Crispinus paid so much for his mullet, it was a fourth the size of the most extraordinary mullets available. Similarly, the turbot was found off the shore of Ancona while the greatest turbots of the time were found off the shore of Ravenna, a little further north. Even though the turbot was not the greatest of its kind, Domitian made a big deal of the fish, calling his council together to figure out how best to deal with it. Both fish show the *luxuria* of the two main characters of the fourth satire, Crispinus and Domitian, and their link to one another as prime examples of the waste apparent in Roman society during Domitian’s reign. Crispinus wastes his money while Domitian wastes the time of the members of his court and neither perceives that he has done anything remotely profligate.

Juvenal also uses the similarity between the turbot and the fisherman who brought it to Domitian to demonstrate his themes of *luxuria* and waste. The fisherman is shown to be a nude (*remige nudo*, IV.49) since he physically has a lack of money and metaphorically has a lack of any means for defense against “tyrannical bureaucracy.” However, he bears no lengthy description to praise or ridicule him unlike Domitian, Crispinus, and the members of the court. Through such a lack of illustration, Juvenal proves the fisherman to be of little value to Domitian. He is seen as a commodity, as something that can be “bought for less than the fish” (*potuit fortasse minoris piscator quam piscis emi*, IV.25-26). The turbot is also seen as a commodity, as it well should since it is a fish. However, in juxtaposition to the way Juvenal makes the fisherman out to be less than a person, he shows the fish to have the ability to think for itself. The fisherman claims that the fish “wished itself to be caught” for the Imperial Court (*ipse capi voluit*, IV.69). The fish is also described as “a runaway” (*fugitum*, IV.50) who, “having escaped, must be returned to its former master” (*elapsum veterem ad dominum debere reverti*, IV.52). The master (*dominum*) in this case is Domitian because, according to Palfurius and Armillatus, everything in the whole sea that is beautiful and conspicuous belongs to the Imperial Treasury. Both the fish and the fisherman are seen thinking for themselves, but both have the ability to be sold as slaves if need be. This similarity shows the
presence of *luxuria* in Domitian’s time. Anything and anyone, no matter how big or small, had a price. Everyone who possessed any assets deemed valuable by Domitian could be stepped on and drained of them for the expenditure of the emperor.

The role reversal apparent in the fish and the fisherman is also used by Juvenal to show his issue with Domitian and the themes of waste and *luxuria* caused by the emperor’s actions. While both are seen as commodities by both Domitian and the court, the turbot is personified as a person while the fisherman is made out to be as easy to sell as a fish. The turbot is described as “a foreign beast with upright spikes on its back” (*peregrina est belua, cernis erectas in terga sudes*, IV.127-128). These spikes are a direct comparison to the spikes on a warrior’s helmet. Earlier in the satire, Domitian was described in a similar way – “the spikes of his helmet stand erect when he is praised for having power equaling that of the gods” (*et tamen illi surgebant cristae; nihil est quod credere de se non possit cum laudatur dis aequa potestas*, IV.69-71). Such a comparison gives Juvenal’s audience the sagacity that the turbot may be viewed as not just a fish, but as a warrior caught in battle. On the other hand, the fisherman becomes the fish, a commodity able to be used and sold. He does not appear to Domitian as a person, but rather has something he has every right to control. It is in this comparison that Juvenal shows the *luxuria* of Domitian. He does not care about his people as people; as long as he has the ability to control them, he is happy.

Likewise, the *luxuria* and waste of Domitian can be seen when comparing the members of the court with the poor fisherman. Both are under the control of Domitian and both fear Domitian, but they serve different purposes for the emperor. The fisherman is merely a pawn in his empire that can be bought, sold, and moved to any place that is the most suitable for Domitian. The members of the court see the fisherman in the same way. While they are also used by Domitian as a means to his selfish ends, the eleven court members are called upon for actual advice when the emperor is unsure of what to do, even if the question at hand is illogical and absurd. Domitian does not care that his question is irrational; he just wants an answer even though it is wasting the time of his council who should be spending their time debating more important topics. Juvenal chose to tell the story of the turbot for just this reason, to show “the ridiculous disproportion between the
trivial subject and the portentous importance of the emperor’s deliberations.”

The themes of *luxuria* and waste are directly tied to the mullet and the turbot. Both are huge fish and, as such, are huge luxuries in the Roman world and should be shared in a great *cena*. Yet, in both circumstances, neither is shared and so no such *cena* occurs. The mullet is eaten by Crispinus alone and the turbot is supposedly eaten by Domitian alone although the actual consumption of the second fish is never explicitly stated in the fourth satire. It is a commonplace saying to declare “you are what you eat.” In this case, Domitian and Crispinus become large people when they eat such large meals singlehandedly. This picture adds to the portrait of the absurd amount of waste apparent in Domitian’s time.

Throughout his fourth satire, Juvenal employs an expert use of language and literary devices and styles to take a careful look inside the Roman court run by Domitian. Juvenal operates his fourth satire with ridicule and vibrant comparisons between his characters. However, the story of the turbot is not as important as the message it yields: the message that Domitian is a force to be stopped, the message that waste and *luxuria* have taken over Rome, and the message that Rome is in need of someone to speak out against Domitian’s plague of violence.
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Philosophy and Democracy in Fifth Century B.C.

Athens

Christine Roughan ‘14

Athens of the fifth century B.C. was the site of both the development of democracy and a flowering of philosophical inquiry. Democracy has its start in Athens, but philosophy does not. Regardless, the path of history brought the two together during very interesting times: the Persian Wars, the creation of the Delian League and the Athenian Empire, and the Peloponnesian War shape the backdrop of this century. This paper will first examine who the new intellectuals known to Athens were and what brought several of them to the city-state; it will then consider what influence, if any, they had on the government and how the Athenian democracy responded to them. Several factors contributed to making the democracy and empire of Athens particularly suitable for encouraging this initial intermixing of ideas, even if the famous trial of Socrates suggests that not all Athenians were always tolerant of philosophers.

When Thales of Miletus departed from reliance on mythology in an attempt to understand the world, his action was something new. Aristotle regarded him as the first philosopher, and many still agree with him today.¹ Thales worked during the early sixth century B.C. in Asia Minor; countless individuals followed him in the pursuit of natural philosophy. The Presocratics, as they are sometimes called, inquired into the nature of the cosmos, investigating the world without relying on the supernatural for an explanation. Although they were not scientists in the modern sense, Thales and the other natural philosophers investigated similar issues, ranging from physics to psychology. In addition to natural philosophy, these intellectuals delved into matters such as metaphysics and ethics.²

Thales, however, never came to Athens. Scholars today recognize Anaxagoras as the first philosopher to visit the Athenians, bringing natural philosophy along with him. This fifth century B.C. philosopher was born in Clazomenae, an ancient
Greek city which, like Miletus, was located in Asia Minor. Anaxagoras worked primarily to understand the nature of the cosmos and declared the sun to be flaming metal and the moon to be made of earth. In Athens he was well-known for his friendship with the great Athenian statesman Pericles; the third century A.D. biographer Diogenes Laertius recounts Pericles’ assertion that he was a student of Anaxagoras. The philosopher’s dates are uncertain. Some scholars argue that he arrived in Athens as early as 480 B.C. with the Persian invasion, while others prefer dates as late as 456 B.C. Ancient sources say that Anaxagoras lived in Athens for at least twenty years. He apparently did not enjoy a quiet life in the city-state and eventually he was brought to trial: Diogenes Laertius preserves several varying traditions that claim the philosopher either was accused by Cleon of impiety or by Thucydides – the son of Melesias, not the historian – of both impiety and Persian sympathies.

Heraclitus of Ephesus, like Anaxagoras, came from Asia Minor. Diogenes Laertius records that he was most active between 504 and 500 B.C. Referred to as the Obscure by ancient authors, Heraclitus was known for his intentionally cryptic quotes. He may have been from a noble family: an ancient story claims he gave up kingship of Ephesus to his brother. (As the city was under control of the Persian Empire at this point, the king probably had little power.) He apparently had no interest in the political sphere at Ephesus, refusing a request to help write the city’s laws. Diogenes Laertius records that Heraclitus hated the Ephesians and the Athenians, though they thought highly of him, and that he supposedly kept aloof even from the court of King Darius. Although Heraclitus and his ideas were certainly known by the Athenians, it is uncertain if he ever actually visited the city-state; ancient authors do not write of him in Athens.

The fifth century B.C. Parmenides from Elea in southern Italy was the founder of the Eleatic school of philosophy and author of a work called On Nature. He did come to Athens: Plato’s Parmenides presents a meeting and a discussion on the nature of Forms between the young Socrates, Parmenides, and Parmenides’ student, Zeno of Elea. Other elements of Parmenides’ work focused on questions about knowledge and what can be understood. The fourth century B.C. philosopher, Speusippus, also records that Parmenides served Elea as a lawmaker.
Philosophy, clearly, did not have its roots in Athens but rather came there from abroad. Yet something caused early natural philosophers to start visiting Athens in the fifth century B.C. In the specific case of Anaxagoras, some scholars suggest that he first came to Athens in 480 B.C. as a conscript with the Persians, who controlled Clazomenae at the time. Whether or not this is true, the overarching Persian Wars during the start of the fifth century were likely a factor in philosophers’ sudden interest in Athens: after the critical victories at Salamis and Plataea, Athens catapulted to prominence. The Delian League, where Athens took the leading role, was founded in 478 B.C. Admittedly, it is difficult to determine whether Athens attracted considerably more visiting philosophers than other city-states because today’s surviving sources are mainly Athenian and do not show the whole picture of intellectuals throughout the Greek world. But as a naval power that was engaged all across the Aegean, Athens must have encountered countless new peoples and new ideas. At the same time, she attracted considerable attention, especially as more city-states were constantly interacting with Athens as members of the Delian League – Miletus, Clazomenae, and Ephesus, for example, numbered among the member cities.

In 431 B.C., Pericles delivered his Funeral Oration and within it discussed Athens’ rise to greatness. He praised the democracy for how it allows men freedom in their private lives, and commented on how the prominence of Athens attracts all and allows her to enjoy the fruits of other lands as if they were her own. (Pericles was most likely speaking about literal commercial goods, but it is not much of a stretch to see how this could apply to philosophical knowledge as well.) Stressing how different Athens is from Sparta, Pericles declared that Athens is open to the entire world; she does not refuse foreigners coming to see and to learn. This speech was, of course, given later than when the early natural philosophers first came to Athens, but Pericles was not discussing a new phenomenon in his city. The year 480 B.C. set in motion Athens’ growth, and over the years she developed into the center of trade, culture, and learning which Pericles and his audience knew so well.

Considering Athens’ rapid rise in power and influence, it makes sense that philosophers were drawn to her. These intellectuals did not thrive in a vacuum. Scholars know that
Anaxagoras wrote at least one book; he would not do so if he thought the book would lack an audience. Parmenides also wrote philosophical works and founded the Eleatic school of philosophy, which had students such as Zeno of Elea and Melissus of Samos. Heraclitus of Ephesus was specifically known as the Obscure and the Weeping Philosopher, and his hatred of his fellow Ephesians and Athenians was well-known enough for Diogenes Laertius to write about it hundreds of years later. The fact that these were defining characteristics of his suggests that he was the exception rather than the rule: most philosophers did not distance themselves so far from their fellows.

Once in Athens, how did philosophers interact with the radical democracy that led the city-state? These men were not all withdrawn from political life like Heraclitus was: Parmenides, for instance, was a lawmaker in Elea. Perhaps it was not uncommon for these early intellectuals to provide practical benefit to their cities through actions such as lawmaking; their wisdom would certainly recommend them for the task. However, they could not take this role in Athens where they did not have access to the assembly – such rights were open only to Athenian citizens.

As a resident foreigner, Anaxagoras could not participate in the political life of Athens, but the ancient authors stress that he still left a mark on it through his student Pericles. Plutarch discusses their relationship in his Life of Pericles: Anaxagoras, he says, was responsible for cultivating Pericles’ dignified bearing and speaking ability. Nor was Anaxagoras the only early philosopher with whom the great statesman supposedly spent time: Plutarch goes on to name Damon as his music teacher and then claims that this profession was a screen and Damon was actually a sophist. Additionally, Plutarch asserts that Pericles studied under Zeno, the student of Parmenides.12

The example of Anaxagoras also shows that while Athens was often intrigued and impressed by these early philosophers, the democracy would also come to lash out against some of them. Anaxagoras, the first to come to Athens, was also the first to be tried there. The charges were impiety and perhaps also Medism. Scholars today often understand Anaxagoras’ trial to have been an indirect attack against his student Pericles by political opponents.13 Even so, the charges would have to at least be plausible, which means that the Athenian populace was to some degree distrusting
of natural philosophy. Plutarch offers the suggestion that “public opinion was instinctively hostile towards natural philosophers and visionaries, as they were called, since it was generally believed that they belittled the power of the gods by explaining it away as nothing more than the operation of irrational causes and blind forces acting by necessity.” Anaxagoras was not the only associate of Pericles to fall foul of the democracy’s suspicions: Damon was ostracized supposedly as a “great intriguer and a supporter of tyranny.”

Plutarch calls Damon a sophist, a particular category of intellectual considered distinct from the earlier philosophers by the ancient authors. These were traveling learned men who lectured and taught for pay, often on rhetoric. This understanding of sophist derives from Plato, who had much to say about them, the majority of it criticism. Use of the term by ancient authors after Plato was usually negative: sophists were especially decried as ‘making the weaker argument appear the stronger.’ Recent scholarship has stressed that the label is problematic because it is an invented one, a way for Plato to group together and scorn the intellectuals of his day with whom he disagreed. Below are several notable fifth century individuals who have been termed sophists: while they share some similarities such as lecturing for pay, they are much more varied in the subjects they investigated and debated.

According to Plato, Protagoras was the first self-avowed sophist. Scholars today believe that he lived from about 490-420 B.C. He was born in Abdera and seems to have settled for a while in Athens around 464 B.C. before spending time in Italy, where he drafted laws for the recently established pan-Hellenic colony Thurii. He was apparently a prolific writer, since Diogenes Laertius records the titles of eleven works. What evidence remains of his writing suggests that Protagoras might have been agnostic; he is said to have written that he had no way of determining whether or not the gods existed, and in fact he did not think it was possible to know. Diogenes Laertius writes that the Athenians expelled him for this and even burnt his works, although it is strange that no surviving contemporary sources such as Plato mention this incident. Protagoras is another philosopher whom scholars have noted as interacting with important political figures: Plutarch records that he and Pericles shared at least one
philosophical conversation. From Plato’s Protagoras it is apparent that Protagoras held rather democratic views; furthermore, a fragment of the sophist’s suggests that he held Pericles in very high esteem. Like many of the traveling intellectuals of the time, Protagoras usually charged for his lectures.

Other important sophists active in the fifth century include Gorgias of Leontini, Prodicus of Ceos, and Hippias of Elis. All are known to have lectured for pay and were notable speakers; Plato records Hippias in particular boasting about his ability to go to Olympia and lecture on any topic asked of him. At least Gorgias and Hippias also served their cities as diplomats. Gorgias, for instance, came to Athens in 427 B.C. on a political mission from Leontini to ask for aid with war in Sicily. His rhetorical skills were apparently effective: the Athenians assented and sent out the First Sicilian Expedition under General Laches.

Athens most likely attracted these traveling teachers for the same reasons she was visited by the natural philosophers: the city-state had become a center of the Greek world. Athens was even quite literally located at a convenient geographic center: from the west she was visited by intellectuals from colonies in Sicily and Italy, from the east by those from the Ionian city-states in Asia Minor. Ancient sources record that the sophists delivered lectures at Pan-Hellenic sites such as Olympia and Delphi: places visited by many Greeks where they could be sure to command an audience. Though not a Pan-Hellenic site, during much of the fifth century Athens was the head of a widespread Greek alliance and, in later years, empire. The sophists certainly could find a large audience there.

Many of these individuals did teach rhetoric, among other subjects. Due to the structure of the Athenian democracy, teachers of rhetoric were very desirable and, consequently, well-paid. An important feature of the democracy in the fifth century was the assembly, which was open to all adult male citizens. Anyone could speak before the assembly, but this did not mean that everyone was capable of speaking well and persuasively. If a young man had hopes of a political career, however, he could pay to study the art of rhetoric. The same held true in the judicial sphere, another very democratic feature of the Athenian government. A man who wished to make his case convincingly to the jury could benefit from paying one of these travelling teachers for lessons. After all, no less
a statesman than Pericles was connected with several philosophers credited with polishing his speaking ability. In later years, when intellectuals arrived in Athens offering to teach these skills for a fee, they found numerous willing clients.

Athens’ reaction to the sophists, however, was mixed. Some of the criticisms that were directed against them are the same as the accusations later turned also against Socrates: that they made the weaker argument appear the stronger, and that their teaching corrupted the young. Some criticism stemmed from the idea that these individuals taught anyone who could pay, rather than only students of a certain moral caliber. A similar idea appears in Plato’s Gorgias, where he stresses the idea that rhetoric, when used by the philosopher, is guided by morality; the sophist’s rhetoric lacks this dimension and is wielded only for personal gain. Yet while heavily criticized by some and mocked by comedy, sophists did not get in much trouble for teaching the art of rhetoric. Of the examples considered above, only Protagoras was allegedly brought to trial. Furthermore this was for impiety, not due to his being a sophist.

The trial of Socrates was a dramatic departure from the relative peace most philosophers enjoyed. Born in 469 B.C. and executed in 399 B.C., Socrates was active in Athens at the same time as the intellectuals mentioned above. He gained many followers, including philosophers Plato and Xenophon and future politicians such as Alcibiades, the oligarch Critias, and the democrat Chaerephon. Exactly what Socrates taught is difficult to determine because he never wrote anything; he instead appeared as a character in the Socratic Dialogues of Plato and Xenophon. Socrates is known for the idea ‘I know only that I know nothing,’ and many Socratic Dialogues reflect this: it is not uncommon for the piece to end in aporia, a philosophical puzzlement. Though Plato writes that Socrates was intrigued by natural philosophy in his youth, in later years he focused more on the pursuit of knowledge and virtue. It is notable that Socrates did not participate much in the Athenian government despite his being a citizen.

Socrates had already gained a reputation by 423 B.C. That year Aristophanes staged The Clouds, a comedy which thoroughly mocked the philosopher. In the play Aristophanes has Socrates make an entrance floating in a basket attached to the crane which usually introduced gods in tragedy. The comedy’s philosopher
contemplates natural philosophy and rejects the Olympian gods; furthermore, he promises to teach the protagonist Strepsiades how to make his false argument appear stronger and get out of paying his debts. Strikingly, these are some of the very charges Socrates faced twenty-four years later. Before 400 B.C., the Athenians tolerated the gadfly who insistently irritated them into thought and action. With the end of the fifth century, something changed to cease their tolerance.

In 404 B.C. the Peloponnesian War ended, and Athens lost. Sparta overthrew the Athenian democracy and installed an oligarchy, the short-lived and bloody Thirty Tyrants. By 403 B.C. the tyrants were overthrown and the democracy restored, but Athens never returned to her former confidence and glory. Within a few years, three men bring suddenly brought charges against Socrates, with accusations that sounded like they belonged in Aristophanes’ play from over twenty years earlier: “Socrates is a criminal and a busybody, investigating the things beneath the earth and in the heavens and making the weaker argument stronger and teaching others these same things.” The second set of accusations he faced were charges of corrupting the youth, impiety, and introducing new gods.

The impiety charges are reminiscent of what Anaxagoras and perhaps Protagoras faced, but it is likely that what turned the Athenians most against Socrates were the charges that he corrupted the youth. Alcibiades and Critias once numbered among Socrates’ associates; in the years following the end of the Peloponnesian War, neither was popular in Athens. Alcibiades defected to Sparta and Persia and was known for his uncontrolled ways, while Critias became a particularly violent member of the Thirty Tyrants. Some Athenians might have interpreted Socrates’ choice to stay in Athens under the oligarchy rather than go into exile with the democrats as support for the Thirty Tyrants’ reign. He certainly had never fully approved of the democracy, but rather had always been very critical of the people’s ability to justly rule.

Socrates’ defense was unsuccessful; the Athenians were determined to view him as a sophist with dangerous ideas and therefore as responsible for the actions of his students, despite Socrates’ attempts to disprove these claims. A later defense speech given by Aeschines in 346 B.C. reinforces this idea: he recalls Socrates’ trial, asking the jury, “Surely you put to death Socrates the
sophist, fellow citizens, because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias, one of the Thirty who put down the democracy?38 Despite the fact that he was not paid for his discussions, the Athenians viewed Socrates as one of the teachers who had flooded Athens in the fifth century and left their mark on the city by training young, aspiring politicians. He was to be held responsible for the havoc caused by Alcibiades and Critias.

Thus an unusual set of circumstances prompted the Athenians to take action against Socrates, not his philosophy: this they bore for at least thirty years. In fact, during the fifth century it was not the democracy that sought to curtail the philosophers, but rather the brief oligarchy: Critias and the other oligarchs attempted to outlaw teaching the ‘art of words.’39 The democracy of Athens was instead very welcoming of these wise individuals: sources record only a few who met with opposition, and this was in many cases due to politics rather than their philosophizing. This spreading rationality likely positively impacted Athenian democracy: no longer, for instance, was speaking ability limited to old noble families who passed the knowledge down through the generations. Teachers for hire were willing to teach anyone the art of rhetoric if he could pay. The philosophers also benefited from Athens, where they could meet with other intellectuals, circulate ideas, and earn money for their teaching. Difficult times after 404 B.C. struck down Socrates, but this was not the end of philosophy in Athens. The city-state recovered after the Peloponnesian War and new philosophers came to prominence, notably Plato and Aristotle. These philosophers owe a great deal to the development of philosophy in the late sixth and fifth centuries, and therefore also to fifth century Athens.
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Submissions for Next Year

Parnassus welcomes submissions from Holy Cross students of any major. For next year’s journal, students from the classes of 2014 - 2018 are eligible to submit. Pieces should relate to the study of the ancient world and should be understandable to a wide audience. Essays, poems, translations, creative pieces, and artwork are all eligible for publication.

Submissions can be e-mailed to HCclassicsjournal@gmail.com, beginning in October 2014. Pieces will be reviewed during the winter break, and authors will be notified of acceptance at the beginning of February 2015. Authors of accepted articles will continue to work on their piece with an editor in the following month.

Any questions about Parnassus and the submissions process prior to October 2014 can be directed to Steven Merola at samero16@g.holycross.edu.