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PARNASSUS

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COLLEGE OF THE HOLY CROSS

PARNASSUS

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Editors' Note

Dear Reader,

Classics is often regarded as a niche and inaccessible field in the world of academia. Not many students nowadays are exposed to Latin or Greek before college and, even if they are, it is rare that they will continue studying these languages in depth later on. However, institutions all over the world, including here at Holy Cross, are beginning to address this problem. Our Classics Department, one of the most robust in the country, has put a lot of effort in recent years into making Classics an open field that any student of any major could be a part of. Our courses attract students of all different backgrounds: Alexander the Great in Asia provides a unique opportunity for history buffs to learn more about the greatest military leader in human history; Refugees in Ancient Myth and Today attracts those inspired by current events and refugee crises; Discerning God and Discovering Self enables students to pursue their passion for self-reflection and spirituality. With this very journal, we strive to exemplify the importance of accessibility and inclusion in Classics. Not only do we attempt to feature pieces that would be appealing to students of various disciplines, but we as editors serve as ambassadors of our mission: one of us is a Classics major, and the other is an English major. Yet, our shared interests are what have brought us here— and what has brought you this issue of *Parnassus*.

The ninth issue of *Parnassus* includes a vast array of submissions. We are proud to present a collection that we believe represents the best that Holy Cross has to offer. From pieces that stick to the “classics” such as

Plato and Herodotus to those that venture into the modern day, discussing gender, social media, and even space, the authors of *Parnassus* volume IX have brought their interests to the table in an elevated and compelling fashion. We also have included a Spotify playlist inspired by Classical mythology, specifically the story of Penelope in the *Odyssey*. This is the first time we have had a submission of this kind and we hope to integrate new and creative projects like it in future issues.

We would like to thank Professors Aaron Seider and Timothy Joseph, who were both instrumental in helping us stay on top of our deadlines and provided us with endless encouragement in the development of this issue. Additionally, we are grateful to the Graphic Arts Department, Lisa Villa '90, and all the students who took time out of their busy schedules to submit, edit, and make the ninth edition of *Parnassus* possible. Fruimini!

Happy reading,
Stacey Kaliabakos '23 and Paul Topazio '23
Co-Editors-in-Chief

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Ode to Athene
Carl Quist, '23

Grey-eyed Athene whose flashing gaze
Promises vict'ry as to Theseus from the maze,
Mere shelter I beg thee from my unrest
That though not dead I may be by thee blest.

For while I live tis true that fates may yet
Fickly all comfort, family, wealth beset.
Call no man happy till lays he dead,
For while they spin, disaster must he dread.

Yet she who Telemachus once guided,
She whose shield with Gorgon's head is stud,
Can be trusted among gods to be sure
That he who by her name rules will endure.

Promachos she, whose flinty countenance
The terror of giants, hurling mount'nous
Rock at Cronos-born Enceladus slain,
His earth-shaking rancor to swift contain.

And the boy she led to Pylian house
His father to know and suitors to douse
That no boy may he be, but royal prince;
His island rule and forebear apt evince.

To me the same aid grant, Atrytone,
And deliver me from the fatal fray
I ask the sage goddess for safe return;
Do not my humble appeal meanly spurn.

Happy make me, queenly warrior, and wise,
And wealthy too, give me the golden prize,
Healthful never to need a walking-crutch,
But, if I ask her majesty too much,

Then else within her city to dwell,
And while I live to do so well,
So when I die, the happiest to be,
Who napped shaded 'neath her olive tree.

Lifting Off into Apollo's Universe:
An Exploration into NASA's Reception of Apollo
Audrey McGrail, '24

“I have seen the earth eclipsed by the moon. I have seen the sun's true light, unfiltered by any planet's atmosphere. I have seen the ultimate black of infinity in a stillness undisturbed by any living thing.”¹ Michael Collins, pilot of the Apollo 11 spacecraft, recounted this view of light and dark during his solo orbit around the moon while fellow astronauts Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin made the first human footprints on the lunar surface below. Apollo 11, the sixth of twelve NASA Project Apollo missions that launched from 1961 to 1975, was the first space mission to land Americans on the moon and return them safely to Earth. The mission took humans to heights never before reached outside of the mythical world. As such, the Project was aptly named for the Greek god Apollo, as will be explored in this essay.

In 1961, United States President John F. Kennedy declared that the United States would set out on an ambitious goal to land Americans on the moon - and do so before their Cold War rival, the Soviet Union. The USSR had already begun their own exploration into space in 1957 with the release of Sputnik, an intercontinental ballistic missile that was launched into Earth's orbit, becoming the first man-made invention to do so. In 1959, the USSR landed the first space probe on the moon, known as Luna 2. During the Cold War, relations between the two world superpowers grew increasingly tense, and as a result their outer space

¹ Richard Goldstein, “Michael Collins, ‘Third Man’ of the Moon Landing, Dies at 90,” *The New York Times*, April 28, 2021.

competition became more ambitious. Ultimate victory in this space race would be granted to the first country that successfully completed a lunar landing mission and returned the astronauts to Earth. Timely completion of President Kennedy's goal would effectively express American dominance in science and technology, while also trumpeting the United States' defiance of the USSR's communist agenda.²

An impressive network of NASA scientists and researchers worked behind the scenes on other space-related projects years before man ever landed on the moon. Five other lunar missions were launched in the Project Apollo series before Apollo 11 to ensure, to the best of NASA intelligence, that when man did eventually land on the moon the mission would be successful and safe. In 1961, overwhelming research determined that the safest way to land Americans on the moon would be by using a lunar orbit rendezvous, a highly complex and sophisticated docking system that allowed for two astronauts to land on the moon and a third astronaut to stay in the main spacecraft and orbit around the lunar planet.³ Beyond this research and intelligence at NASA, public officials and partners supported the mission outside of NASA's headquarters and millions around the world watched. Such a significant and historic mission required an equally significant and historic name.

In 1962 the *New York Times* wrote a brief article entitled "Moon Project is Named for Greek God of Light." The article introduced Americans to Apollo, the

² "The Space Race." *History.com*, A&E Television Networks, 22 Feb. 2010.

³ "Project Apollo: Astronauts to Train for Moon Flight in Two-Man Gemini Craft," *The New York Times*, 1 August 1962, pp. 12.

god of light in Greek myth. Apollo thus became a household name in the United States, and in the greater world, because of his attachment to NASA's monumental lunar landing mission.

In Ancient Greek myth Apollo is the son of Zeus and Leto and the twin brother of Artemis, the goddess of the moon. Apollo is, among other things, the god of the sun, light, poetry, and prophecy.⁴ In Hesiod's *Theogony*, Apollo is given the epithet "far-shooting" (1.95) for his expert archery skills and visionary mind.

Abe Silverstein was the brainpower behind the name Apollo for NASA's Project Apollo. After the Project was completed successfully Silverstein reflected that he chose the name Apollo because of its "attractive connotations" and because of the powerful imagery of Apollo "riding his chariot across the sun," reasoning that it "was appropriate to the grand scale" of the NASA lunar missions.⁵ In Abe Silverstein's 2001 obituary the *New York Times* wrote that in choosing the name Apollo for the space mission, Silverstein was like Apollo in that he was "an archer who hits the target."⁶ The same rings true for the mission as a whole. Project Apollo required precision and clear vision, like the archer Apollo, so that the mission was successful and safe in landing Americans on the moon and collecting valuable scientific information of the lunar surface.

The reception of Apollo in NASA's lunar missions shows the great fascination with Greek culture

⁴ Fritz Graf. "Apollo." *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, Oxford University Press, 2012.

⁵ "What's in a Name," NASA Glenn Research Center, accessed May 2, 2021.

⁶ Wolfgang Saxton, "Abe Silverstein, 92, Engineer Who Named Apollo Program," *The New York Times*, June 5, 2001.

in modern times. This famous moment of Classical reception invokes Greek myth and aligns the modern audience with Greek intellectual thought. The moon landing, a once unimaginable and still monumental modern human accomplishment, is placed within this legacy of Ancient Greek achievement.

Not everything aligns so perfectly, however. First, there is an obvious incongruence; Apollo is the god of the sun, and his name endows a lunar mission. Further, Apollo is a complex, and sometimes unethical character in Greek myth. The *Boston Globe* wrote in a brief 1969 article entitled “Ancient Apollo Had a Dark Side” that Apollo once “tied a hapless horseman to a tree and skinned him alive.”⁷ The *Globe*’s article helps to articulate Apollo’s complexity, which pertains to the Project’s dismissal of the unsavory aspects of Apollo’s character. Still, it is important to note that Apollo’s “dark side” correlates with the uncertainty of the Apollo missions and how much there is still unknown and unexplored beyond Earth.

Apollo 11 pilot Collins was dubbed the “loneliest man in history” for his solo orbit around the moon aboard the command capsule, as he was the lone adventurer of the far-side, or “dark-side”, of the moon.⁸ Though the nickname was given to Collins in a somewhat affectionate manner, there is truth in the sentiment that, unlike on Earth, there is an extreme loss of connection and companionship in space. “If you look at the Earth as it is from the moon,” Collins reflected in the years after the successful completion of Apollo 11,

⁷ “Ancient Apollo Had a Dark Side,” *The Boston Globe*, July 20, 1969, pp. 54.

⁸ Goldstein, Richard “Michael Collins, ‘Third Man’ of the Moon Landing, Dies at 90,” *The New York Times*, 28 April 2021.

“you are startled by how tiny it is... it is almost like a small headlight... The overriding impression I got,” Collins continued, “was one, oddly enough, of fragility... you want to really nurture it and protect it.”

With the launch of the Apollo missions, humans took on god-like capabilities and were given a previously unseen view of Earth. Before the twentieth century ascending the skies and visiting other worlds had been reserved only to figures like Apollo in myth. This desire to ‘lift off’ into once mythical, but now attainable worlds beyond Earth still inspires curiosity today. Space has become increasingly accessible to humans since Collins returned to Earth in 1969. Greater research, funding, and enthusiasm has helped to trigger a curiosity for life beyond Earth. But whether this continued exploration will prompt space-goers to develop a deeper gratitude and a sincere desire to protect the Earth, as it did for Collins, is unclear. Collins’ detachment from humanity aboard the Apollo 11 spacecraft begs more philosophical questions: what is the cost of this competition for outer space and the fascination with life beyond Earth? How great is the risk of losing human connection? Are we in jeopardy of losing our home on Earth?

Humans may marvel at the great potential for space exploration, hoping to bask in the same glory as Apollo and be the light that guides humanity into new worlds. But, as Collins reflected, the light for humanity is already known. Earth is the home for humanity where modern and ancient connect to launch civilization into the future, as it did in this moment of the reception of Apollo.

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Tiber, a River God
Rebecca Kaczmarek, '23

Elders, Make Room for Social Media

Alexandra Berardelli, '25

Contemporary reinventions of Classical tragedy have stretched millennia, conserving and reimagining certain aspects of the original work and deepening the audience's understanding of the material. In connecting with contemporary works, it is crucial for an audience's interpretation that reception remains consistent in the original's foundational themes. However, not restricting itself within modern adaptation, whether redefining features or leaving them out, may give the audience a fresh analysis of the ancient material. With the modernization of the Greek chorus through social media, Sophie Deraspe's *Antigone* demonstrates that the chorus can influence the audience's interpretation of the ancient story as a personal, legal, and defiant story.

A common goal of Greek tragedy has been to establish a relationship with the audience to comment on the play. There are relationships between the audience and Sophocles' and Deraspe's *Antigone*. However, the medium by which the chorus is depicted changes the intimacy of a personal connection. In the choral ode toward the end of the film, there are striking images of several people on social media defending Antigone during her trial. The impact of Antigone and her defenses is evident as many articulate their support for her by publicly showing signs that read, "mon coeur me dit" and "free Antigone." (*Antigone*, 01:19:14-01:20:30). Compared to Sophocles' chorus, Deraspe's chorus is more involved in commenting on Antigone's defense. When Sophocles' chorus sees that Antigone was the one who buried Polynices, they are initially shocked. After Antigone defends herself verbally, the chorus states, "Now we see the girl's as wild by birth as

her father. She has no idea how to bow her head to trouble.” (Sophocles, v. 471-472). This claims that Antigone should have stayed out of the situation as a whole. In contrast, the film’s chorus surpasses this argument, visually showing overwhelming support from the public by its social media presence.

Deraspe knows that social media is a common ground for most in our generation, so illustrating critical aspects can effectively be done in this manner. In an interview with Seana Stevenson, Deraspe explains why she values the importance of social media as defined in relationships. She says, “In my previous film, which is called *The Anima Profile*, I experienced an online relationship between two women, one in Syria and one in Montreal. It was not only their love and political relationship but when the Syrian woman was abducted, then activists and journalists all over the world, many people got involved only via social media. It’s part of how we live nowadays, it’s part of our lives.” (Deraspe). She is correct. Social media is an integral part of society today, and it makes sense why she would write the chorus like this. Although it seems like an unusual outlet for social commentary, at first glance, it may be more effective for interpretation than simply reading Sophocles’ chorus. Since it is so contemporary, I can see people like myself commenting about a determined young woman, not reading about elders’ commentary, which supports why I too support Antigone. Considering this choral ode is established through social media, it is easier for some to connect with the material, making a more intimate connection with the audience.

The film chorus’s intimacy that strengthens our relationship with the play may also help our understanding of it as a legal story, precisely aiming for

reform. The film preserves the central struggle about facing authority, like Sophocles, but uses a broader system instead of a single figure, Creon. It digs deeper into the conflicts of legal processes with Antigone and her family's personal experiences in the immigration system. The film's chorus emphasizes the need for reform as it shows people supporting Antigone and willingness to work together through social media. Whereas Sophocles' chorus comments on Antigone's fate, saying, "But once a house is shaken by the gods, then madness stalks the family without fail, disaster for many generations...Now and for time to come, as it was before: Madness stalks mortals who are great, leaves no escape from disaster." (Sophocles, v. 584-5; v. 612-614). Thus, Sophocles' chorus shares an unfortunate fate that authority, especially the gods, has no escape. Similarly, the legal system in the film can serve as an authority that has no escape.

In contrast to the play's choral statements, analyzing the slogan frequently seen in Deraspe's social media scene, "Justice for Antigone," shows the magnitude of people who support this. It displays the need for legal reform of a damaged system or a polluted kingdom, which is necessary to save people's lives. Social media can reach many people with diverse backgrounds and experiences, and if enough people support something, change can happen. In my interpretation of the play, Antigone may have a small window of opportunity to be understood and supported by the kingdom and authority since those pushing for a change are the public realm. Reform needs a support system, and an outlet such as social media, or less contemporary, an informed public can carry out legal reform.

In light of those who strongly support what they believe in, Antigone truly embodies the spirit of a hard worker and a rebellious woman. In the same choral ode, the second repeated slogan, “mon coeur me dit,” (“my heart tells me”), offers insight into how Antigone’s values can help our interpretation of her character’s concept of rebellion in the play. As in Sophocles’ play, no one tells Antigone that she needs to do anything about burying her brother, but she internally feels that she should. So she determinedly makes it her mission to do so. In an interview with Alex Heeney, Deraspe interestingly explains how she tried to balance the Greek play and her contemporary version from a feministic, radical viewpoint. She says, “I think it says something about our shared humanity that such a story with a young female character [who is] so intelligent was written more than 2000 years ago...there are young female characters in our contemporary world fighting when they feel the system is unfair or not doing what it should for the people. Some [young women] have the courage to step aside from their normal life and just fight for what they think is the right thing to do.” (Deraspe). In dialogue with the film’s choral ode, this slogan has an inspiring message and recommends that we interpret Antigone’s actions as defiant against the nature of the state and femininity.

It is quite inspiring for people, especially young women, to see a strong female character believing in her actions and doing what she wants from her heart. It likely was not a broadly acceptable belief at all times, but through the choral ode, it is demonstrated that the public took comfort in this idea and supported Antigone. Therefore, in my reading of the play, I support Antigone and her actions, however rebellious they may seem to the authority because she follows her

heart. Deraspe making Antigone more determined in the film reinforces that she is defiant and thus makes Sophocles' play a defiant story.

Classical reception should not be a separate outlet for looking at a reinvention of a Classical work. Instead, it should be used in union with the original work to maximize the audience's interpretation of it. Deraspe's *Antigone* film certainly enhances my interpretation of Sophocles' *Antigone*, not only because it is a modern adaptation. Its reinvention of the chorus through social media draws me toward a new understanding of the original text. The chorus through a social media medium aids our interpretation because it is more common to us. If we want to understand a world millennia ago, it might be worth examining it through a lens similar to us.

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The Subterranean Function of Death in Milton's
Lycidas
Griffin Gudaitis, '22

Although there are various voices to which Milton gives individual expression in his pastoral elegy, “*Lycidas*”, the subject matter remains consistent throughout: the death of a friend at sea, whose literary ability suggested a promising future career in poetry. The elegized *Lycidas* becomes identifiable with conventional symbols of the pastoral mode, namely the innocence of youth and the beauty of the natural world, a literary world wherein death would seem to have no place. But, in this paper, I argue that the death of *Lycidas* is not a disparate element to the poem’s pastoral artifice but rather an inherent aspect of the beauty of the bereaved, the chief subject of the elegy. The opening line— “Yet once more, O ye laurels, and yet once more”—suggests that the speaker is alluding “once more” (again) to invoke a crown of “laurels” to honor a poet. At the subterranean level, however, this line contains a biblical allusion that foretells apocalypse: “Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.”¹ According to Ryan Netzley, the biblical allusion at the beginning of the poem, “both in form and content, implies deferral, not imminence.”² The fact that the line— “Yet once more, O ye laurels, and yet once more”—internally rhymes with itself reflects specifically at the subterranean level the coming of an event. Nevertheless, this biblical allusion raises the question

¹ *King James Bible*, Heb. 12:26.

² Netzley (2015): 158.

of whether there is any way to avoid God's shaking of the earth and heaven.

This apocalyptic tension, which does not hint at but promises delayed loss, then injects the speaker's pastoral reminiscences of Lycidas with the opposite of idealization: the pain of his loss. The speaker invokes the muses, artistic but pagan sources of inspiration, to initiate his lament: "Begin, then, sisters of the sacred well," and he repeats, "Begin, and somewhat loudly sweep the string" (15, 17). Although the repetition of "Begin" suggests that this elegy is now starting, the two initial caesuras following "Begin" reveal the hesitation of the narrator to start and imply inefficacy on the part of the "sisters of the sacred well." The connotation of "somewhat" also calls attention to what extent, or how well, the muses are able to "sweep the string." The way in which Milton incorporates Orpheus into the poem reflects the inability of the muses to provide reason: "What could the muse herself that Orpheus bore, / The muse herself, for her enchanting son" have done (58-59)? Although "the muse herself" refers to Calliope, the mother of Orpheus, the word order suggests not that Calliope "bore" the poet but that "Orpheus bore" "the muse." The repetition of "[t]he muse herself" in the following line reinforces this idea that it is not the pagan gods who license poetic ability but Orpheus who generates it from himself. Also, the etymology of "enchanting" stems from the Latin word *incantare*, 'to enchant' or put something under a spell. This structure calls into question whether Calliope searches "for her enchanting son" or, inversely, her son enchants (invokes) her.

The scope of paganism in the poem to account is severely limited so as to suggest that the pagan gods are not omnipotent. Perhaps this invention highlights

the fact that Roman-Greco belief, from which the pastoral form emerges, does not promise the same kind of eternal salvation that Christianity offers. From the outset of the poem, Milton demonstrates that the “lucky words” of the Roman muses only decorate the speaker’s “destined urn” (20). Evidently, the muses’ ability to inspire artistic creation culminates only in death. Milton continues to invoke the pastoral through images of nature solely to invert it:

The willows, and the hazel copses green,
Shall now no more be seen
Fanning their joyous leaves to thy soft lays. (42-43)

The fact that Milton does not qualify in what way “[t]he willows, and the hazel copses green, / Shall now no more be seen” until the following line implies not the death of Lycidas but also “willows” and “the hazel copses,” two standard images of the pastoral mode. According to Lauren Shohet, the organization of these lines imply “that the trees will no longer exist, that their very presence depends upon Lycidas.”³ It is not until the end of the final line from the passage that we learn that the speaker is referring to the “soft lays” of Lycidas, whom he addresses in the second person as though face-to-face.

While music and song, especially in the pastoral, often revolve around the seemingly perfect feeling of happiness, their coming into existence suggests their departure from it. The speaker of the poem directs our attention to the presence of song

³ Netzley (2015): 158.

through negation—a negative presence:⁴ “the rural ditties were not mute” (32); “Fauns with clov’n heel / From the glad sound would not be absent long” (34-35). This negative construction, however, reinforces the present condition of loss that colors the poem, for “rural ditties [are now] mute” and “Fauns” producing “glad sound [are now] absent long.” The actual rhyme of these lines reinforces this sense of loss in sound. At first, as the speaker notes, “our song” is rhymed with “long” (36, 25). But “mute” is rhymed with “flute” so as to suggest the instrument is “mute[d]” before the “flute” can even make a sound. John Savoie notes that the patterns of rhyme in “Lycidas” are erratic, occurring too soon or too late, whereas “[a] dozen or so lines never rhyme at all, subtly haunting the poem with the semiconscious aural emblem of absence.”⁵ While the absence of sound is a prevalent aspect of the poem, the presence of sound puts weight on the elegy: “But O the heavy change, now thou art gone, / Now thou art gone and never must return” (37-38). The o-vowels reflect the actual sound that someone would make when mourning, and their length being long o’s slows down the movement of sound through the entire line. Also, the repetition of “thou art gone” not only underscores the gravity of Lycidas’ death but conveys disbelief in its happening while the juxtaposition of “[n]ow” and “never” creates a scale between the present condition of sadness and the eternal weight of loss.

The loss of Lycidas also reflects something much larger than the death of one man: the end of pagan thought and worship, which Christianity

⁴ Shohet (2005): 105.

⁵ Savoie (2019): 128.

supplants through its monotheistic, all-knowing creator, the one true God. It is important to note that Milton's treatment of the pagan gods takes central stage in his poem, "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity", as well as *Paradise Lost*; the pagan gods and old forms of worship must end in order for the birth of Christ and rise of Christianity to restore humankind. In "Lycidas", the classical gods and goddesses, who infuse the elegy with creative inspiration, do not provide the primary speaker, the young shepherd, with self-assuredness, only existential dread: "Where were ye, nymphs, when the remorseless deep / Closed o'er the head of your loved Lycidas" (50-1)? The minor goddesses of nature, "nymphs", are common figures in pastoral poetry, which often depicts rural life as idyllic. However, the juxtaposition of "nymphs" and the harsh reality of the "remorseless deep" implicates the inherent fabrication of "nymphs" as well as the pastoral mode itself, which stems from a literary and mythological pagan tradition. Lawrence W. Hyman notes that "Milton never allows us to forget that Lycidas died by drowning."⁶ Death at sea is the point of no return, and thus ranks among the worst kinds of fate that a mortal drowned at sea could have according to pagan thought. Completing the rites of the burial of the dead was one of the most sacred forms of pagan worship in classical antiquity. Charon's *obolos*—coins placed in or on the mouth—served as a necessary toll for the safe passage of the dead into the underworld. If such rites went unobserved, the souls of the departed would remain forever restless.

Not even the Roman god of the sea, Neptune, is able to understand the reason behind Lycidas' death,

⁶ Hyman (1983): 7.

nor are other pagan entities able to account for it. Neptune himself asks the oceans over which he has dominion: “What hard mishap hath doomed this gentle swain” (92)? The only response that Neptune can find is in nothing: the seas and winds “knew not of his story” (95). The etymology of the English “story” comes from the Greek word *historia* (ἱστορία), which means ‘history’ or ‘knowledge,’ but *historia* derives the noun *histor* (ἵστωρ), which means ‘witness;’ ironically, Lycidas has no ‘witness’ to understand where he is and for what reason he perished: his body is lost at sea. The speaker then refers to “[t]he pilot of the Galilean Lake,” a celebratory title for St. Peter (109). M.J. Edwards notes that Christ saves Peter from drowning: “Far from walking on water, Peter flounders when he presumptuously attempts this feat and is saved by Christ from sinking (Matthew 14:29-30).”⁷ Perhaps Milton invokes St. Peter because of his eagerness to be like Christ and St. Peter hence becomes identifiable with Lycidas, who has died but is also restored by the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of sins. David Sansone suggests that the conclusion of St. Peter’s words in the poem— “But that two-handed engine at the door / Stands ready to smite once, and smite no more”—identifies the “engine” as a winnowing fan.⁸ The separation of wheat from chaff is a common biblical metaphor for the coming judgment of God. However, Sansone argues that “the metaphor helps to prepare, in a very subtle fashion, for the message of hope and salvation with which the poem closes.”⁹ It is only Christ who “[t]hrough the dear might of Him that

⁷ Edwards (2011): 608.

⁸ Sansone (2006): 333.

⁹ Sansone (2006): 341.

walked the waves” has the power to save Lycidas from death, who has been lost to the sea. It is also important to note, as John Savoie argues, “the final stanza settles the meter and rhyme and resolves this peculiar prosody of grief.”¹⁰

The focus of this essay has been on the presence of death not so much as a disruption to but as a specific aspect of the pastoral mode in Milton’s “Lycidas”. The loss of Lycidas often functions at a subterranean level in the work and does not become readily apparent until one gives close attention to the numerous syntactic constructions and theological suggestions hidden throughout. It is especially interesting to consider the juxtaposition between the loss of Lycidas, whom Milton based on the death of his real-life friend, Edward King, and the artifice of the pastoral mode which Milton has inherited. Nevertheless, the pastoralism of “Lycidas” does not lie far from intrusive destruction.

¹⁰ Savoie (2019): 128.

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A View of the Forum
Rebecca Kaczmarek, '23

John Dewey and the Ancients

Stacey Kaliabakos, '23

John Dewey was arguably the most famous and influential philosopher in America between the First and Second World Wars. In his view, philosophy can be considered the most general form of social criticism, rather than a search for eternal, unchanging truths. Dewey believes that there is a major flaw in the way philosophy has historically been practiced and continues to be practiced; therefore, he wrote *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, a series of lectures in which he attempts to dismantle the hierarchical nature of philosophy, replacing it with both scientific and practical applications of truth and knowledge. Although Dewey's argument is undoubtedly appealing for pragmatists, along with social liberals, its critique of the ancient Greek method of philosophy is unnecessarily severe and excessive: the search for the eternal is an unavoidable, innate desire felt by nearly all people since the start of the human race, and there is not sufficient reasoning to warrant the reconstruction of philosophy how Dewey suggests.

Dewey places much value on the progress accomplished by the scientific revolution, which took place mainly between the 16th and 17th centuries. The scientific revolution and its discoveries displaced many of the theories that were developed by the ancient Greeks and continued by early Christians throughout the medieval period. This includes not only theories on how the physical world worked, but the general purpose and function of philosophy as well. Famous ancient philosophers, such as the "Big Three" of Greek philosophy, Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, valued philosophic contemplation over action in order to

achieve an understanding of the world around them. They justified their reasoning and desire to seek out eternal truths for the sake of attaining knowledge itself: as Aristotle's opening line of his *Metaphysics* says, "All men by nature desire to know." Dewey argues that modern science, technology, and social equity changed philosophy as the world knew it-- and for the better. Although at the time in which he was writing there was some pushback against the scientific revolution (it brought about nuclear weapons and missiles, after all), Dewey nonetheless believes that the scientific method should be applied more broadly to a variety of fields, including philosophy.

Dewey acknowledges that a conflict exists between tradition and knowledge and spends a decent amount of time in *Reconstruction in Philosophy* discussing this topic. Humanity has, since its inception, been tasked with practically dealing with various harsh environments, both as individuals and as groups. Therefore, it would seem to make sense that there would be a natural inclination to do as Dewey believes and to obtain all understanding of the world through practical means and actions; however, humans are instead inherently and historically symbolic creatures. Their animism, or regard of nature as sacred, has resulted in countless impactful religions, mythologies, and cultures all around the globe. In the evolution of human societies, the inner structure of each group or society also changes (comprising what we view as history), and within these changes lies a conflict between the practical skills and the cultural symbols one may inherit. Practical knowledge is that which is required to live in your respective environment successfully, whereas cultural symbols can constitute religious doctrines or myths. As societies improve and

become more efficient, Dewey argues that tensions rise between the practical and the cultural. Historically, philosophers have been on the side of tradition, favoring the cultural myths of evolving societies in their quests to discover eternal forms. Metaphysics becomes the substitute for custom, and a cycle of innovation in conflict with inherited traditions is perpetuated throughout society.

Systematic experimentation, according to Dewey, should be valued above hereditary customs to understand the world. In stating this, he rejects customary philosophical beliefs, breaking his own limiting cycle of practicality and culture. He argues that empirical evidence and hypotheses based on experience better suit the evolution and progress of societies and of the world. Additionally, as a more radical and progressive social democrat, Dewey had a distaste for the concept of the “heroic past,” in which the modern notion of progress was not viewed as something beneficial or even good. The scientific revolution glorified progress and science, solidifying that that is what humanity should be working towards in order to make the world a better place to live in (after all, it is a relatively recent phenomenon that we will have more knowledge, advances in technology, and large-scale progress tomorrow than we did yesterday). On the other hand, philosophy tries to justify inherited values rather than progress, and philosophers in his day remain entrenched in this outdated mode of thinking:

“Unfortunately men... are still so dominated by the older conception of an aloof and self-sufficing reason and knowledge... But in truth, historic intellectualism, the spectator view of knowledge, is a purely compensatory

doctrine which men of an intellectual turn have built up to console themselves for the actual and social impotency of the calling of thought to which they are devoted.” (Dewey, p. 67)

In his opinion, philosophy’s goal should be to aid in social reconstruction and utilize modern science to liberate us from the traditional conservative approach. It should not be saved only for egotistical, wealthy elites in society to use for their soul-searching and self-centered quest for “truth.” However, is philosophy actually catered to only the upper strata of society? Given the fact that all people are capable of searching for eternal truths in their own ways, it seems that the answer would be no. Dewey is all too hasty to reach this conclusion, sacrificing the merits of ancient Greek traditional philosophy in the process.

Dewey references the ancient Greeks in a multitude of instances throughout *Reconstruction in Philosophy* and his other writings. It is clear that he is extremely critical of ancient Greek thinkers and the philosophical traditions that can be dated back to the era of Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, Dewey discusses the aforementioned “Spectator Theory of Knowledge.” What this does is accuse most of the Western tradition of perpetuating the notion that the person who understands something the best is the person who does not participate in its practice: essentially, to have objective knowledge of something, one should not be involved with it. However, this idea is directly in violation of pragmatism, which says that truth, knowledge, logic, and science are all found within the interactions of an organism and its

environment. Additionally, instead of adhering to the dualistic view of the Greeks, Dewey sees all interactions as processes. Therefore, change within and throughout a society is not only inevitable, but necessary, and subsequently nothing can be labeled as permanent or eternal: “Fixed forms and ends, let us recall, mark fixed limits to change.” (Dewey, p. 41) Since his philosophy seems to be so vehemently opposed to the ancient Greek philosophy, Dewey arguably misses out on some of the deeper subtleties of Greek philosophy, presenting himself as more separate from tradition than he actually may be.

Dewey has striking similarities to Plato, who was also an arguably restless critic of past traditions--both political and philosophical. To begin with, he insisted to his mentor, Socrates, that writing was valuable to the philosopher. Socrates did not agree with this sentiment and only valued discussion and dialogue; however, Plato, the author of the *Republic* and many other dialogues and treatises, chose to write down conversations and discussions to be analyzed and further debated by posterity. Plato also was, like Dewey, an advocate for social reconstruction and the reform of society and was known for his “unflagging spirit of dedication to the problems of men.” (Anton, p. 487) The *Republic* serves a similar purpose to Dewey’s book, but on a different level: Plato discusses the reconstruction of a city, which Socrates calls “Kallipolis,” meant to exemplify the proper definition of justice. Although it is a contentious work filled with extreme ideas such as the “noble lie,” forced breeding, and mass extermination of a polis to make room for the inhabitants of Kallipolis, the *Republic* also remains one of the most influential works of the Western canon, even today. Dewey’s obsession with dualism and

hierarchy may be found as themes running throughout the *Republic*, especially brought forth in Plato's conception of the soul and the analogy of the divided line.

Plato's tripartite soul is an internal hierarchy of reason, desire, and spiritedness (*thumos*). Essentially, he uses this notion of the soul to justify the social structure of Kallipolis. Furthermore, Plato's analogy of the divided line also represents the four separate sections of the psyche, corresponding to increasing levels of reality and truth. Dewey is also quite preoccupied with hierarchy in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*: he believes that social hierarchy should be done away with (which is why he is opposed to religion, since he argues that it is used to support and justify social hierarchy). He favors community, equality, and freedom over tradition and authority. I think that both Plato and Dewey acknowledged the intrinsic significance of various levels in human society, but in different ways: Plato thought they were essential, while Dewey sought to do away with them altogether. However, both are similar in that their ideas are impractical. Just because there seems to be a certain order of the soul does not essentially mean that a functioning city can be modeled after that, and it is impossible for all social stratification to be obliterated. It is intriguing how these philosophers fall on two sides of the same coin, interpreting society in the same way but with different results.

Dewey possessed a fervid dislike for Aristotle, who was known for being a moral philosopher concerned with eternal truths. He writes, "In spite of [the universe's] dramatic rendering (as in Dante), of the dialectical elaborations of Aristotle and St. Thomas, in spite of the fact that it held men's minds

captive until the last three hundred years, and that its overthrow involved a religious upheaval, it is already dim, faded, and remote.” (Dewey, p. 32)

Fundamentally, what Dewey is contending is that Aristotle’s view of the larger aspects of the universe hold no weight in modern society: they are irrelevant and outdated, along with the significance of religion. However, Dewey is completely wrong on this front. Although Aristotle did not have access to modern science like Dewey, he made observations and analyses of the world that are in fact still hugely important and integrated into society today.

In Book Three of the *Nicomachean Ethics*, Aristotle discusses virtue as voluntary or involuntary action. He says that whether a person is forced to do something or not has a significant implication on the action itself: “For example, if a tyrant should order someone to do something shameful while the tyrant has control over his parents and offspring, and if he should do it, they would be saved, but if not, they would be killed-- whether this thing is involuntary or voluntary admits of dispute.” (Aristotle, 1110a5-9) Dewey would most likely think that Aristotle’s argument has no merit, as it does not have any backing by practical scientific experience. However, Aristotle’s question is still extremely salient and relevant, not just in real life, but in works of fiction: in fact, this example has been utilized countless times as a common trope in modern books and films. Additionally, when discussing reciprocity in relation to justice, Aristotle writes, “But it must not escape our notice that what is being sought is also the just unqualifiedly, that is, the just in the political sense... The just exists for those for whom there is also law pertaining to them, and law exists among those for

whom there is injustice.” (1134a25-26) This pertains to the modern debate of whether it is possible or practical to have an international justice system. It seems unlikely that Dewey could argue that Aristotle’s lack of a scientific background nullified his theory apropos to the modern justice system. Furthermore, his explanation of the significance of money still holds today:

“Hence all that is exchanged must somehow be capable of being compared. For this purpose money has arisen and become in a way a middle term... All things, therefore, must be measured by some one thing, as we said earlier. The thing is, in truth, need, which holds all things together.” (1133a19-26)

It is evidently possible to do proper philosophy without the prerequisite of a scientific revolution, for Aristotle cracked the code of supply and demand over 2000 years ago. Are modern-day economics truly necessary for understanding that just prices are determined by demand or “need?” It seems as if Dewey would attempt somehow to say yes, but it seems quite obvious that that is not the case at all.

Throughout human history, there has always been a mismatch between our technology and our wisdom. Even after the scientific revolution, all of mankind’s questions could not possibly be answered... and that has arguably remained unchanged, even with the great innovative leaps that have taken place since Dewey’s death in 1952. Although he desired a reconstruction of the way we practice philosophy and view the world, Dewey fell short in convincing his audience that the traditional

philosophical approach was outdated and worthless. After the Second World War, Analytic and Continental philosophy quickly came onto the global stage, and philosophers such as Martin Heidegger sought to answer questions about what “the human being” truly is and how to differentiate between what is and what is not. Human existential inclinations are impossible to vanquish, and, even if Dewey had the chance to implement his reconstruction, his new mode of scientific philosophy imbued with pragmatism would be destined to fail. It would make more sense to allow for his philosophical beliefs to coexist alongside traditional philosophy, rather than attempting to devalue all past intellectual traditions. Finally, Dewey’s exceedingly selective approach to handling Greek traditions also contributed to his flawed arguments in *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, highlighting that he only sought to make his criticisms from the standpoint of a person in a modern industrial society, which is an unfair process. Although Dewey undoubtedly made historic contributions to the realm of philosophy during his near century-long lifespan, his critique of ancient Greek intellectualism ultimately and woefully failed to succeed.

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Mixing Up Plato
Caitlin Desmond, '25

Throughout the 18th century, ancient classical examples played an essential role in the formation of the United States and its government, both of which were based on antiquated theories, ideals, successes, and failures. The founding fathers of the United States were well-versed in a multitude of ideologies due to an intensive classical education, primarily focused on ancient Greece and Rome. Due to this expansive knowledge of the classics, the founders were drawn to certain philosophers, political theorists, and ancient government leaders when considering how to form their new nation. Through the writings and reports by influential ancient figures, government models were examined and analyzed by the founders, specifically when and why certain governments succeeded and failed. Still, not all classical examples were viewed in a positive light. These “undesirable examples” were weaponized and degraded by the founders when creating the new form of government. Moreover, these adverse examples were chosen selectively by the founding fathers, who, in turn, misconstrued their true message and history. In this paper, I will maintain that although Plato has been regarded as a highly respected philosopher and political theorist, both Thomas Jefferson and John Adams, founding fathers and presidents of the United States, unjustly discredited Plato’s political and ideological theories, neglecting Plato’s role in creating the mixed government theory, an instrumental component of the government of the United States.

Plato, considered the founder of Western philosophy, was an ancient Athenian philosopher who

studied and questioned Greek society. Inspired by his teacher Socrates, Plato wrote many dialogues reflecting his ideas surrounding Athenian life, government, and ideals. His most well-known piece of work is *Republic*, which focuses on the nature and importance of justice in civil society. Plato describes justice in the state as “the condition in which its three functionally defined parts – the rulers, the rulers’ auxiliaries, and the rest of the citizens – work in harmony, guided by the expert understanding of the rulers who grasp what is in the common interest” (Annas 2012). Plato and his dialogues have been respected and well-read because of their profound societal and governmental insights. Plato’s insights have allowed for future generations to adopt these ideas and theories into their societies and governments.

Like many early Americans, Thomas Jefferson valued the ancients and the lessons they bestowed on future generations. Throughout his political life, he drew conclusions from his favorite ancient figures Tacitus and Epicurus. In Jefferson’s own words, “Epicurus gives laws for governing ourselves...containing everything rational in moral philosophy which Greece and Rome have left us” (Richard 1989, 432-433). From these ancient lessons, Jefferson formed his political beliefs, centralizing the free will of the people, rights of states, and republican simplicity (McColley 2021).

John Adams, similar to Jefferson, was a leading lawyer of his time as well as a president of the United States. He believed that ancient figures and attitudes, such as the patriotic nature of Cicero, should be copied when creating the United States. Adams describes the importance of classics, “the classics [are] imperative in

a young democratic society that [is] in desperate need of republican role models” (Manning 1999).

The relationship between Adams and Jefferson is an intriguing aspect of American history. Despite their life-long competition on the political stage, the two corresponded through letters discussing political ideas, classical influences, and the formation of the United States government. In two letters, they discuss Plato and his insights after Jefferson had returned from a “long absence” and had the chance to “leisurely read” Plato’s *Republic* (Jefferson 1814). Jefferson wanted to re-examine Plato’s prestige and reputation as a prominent ancient source of governmental wisdom. His findings resulted in criticism, first calling Plato’s work, “the heaviest task-work” because he needed to “wade thro’ the whimsies, the puerilities, and unintelligible jargon of [the] work” (Jefferson 1814). After criticizing the writing style of Plato, he questions why Plato has been so highly valued across centuries, crediting his “foggy mind” as his largest flaw (Jefferson 1814). This identified “flaw” allowed Jefferson to conclude that Plato’s investigation of Greek society and government was inherently wrong, therefore Plato should not be regarded as a “great mind of the ancient world” (Stein 2011). In response to Jefferson, Adams agreed, “[In reading *Republic*] I could scarcely exclude the Suspicion that he intended [*Republic*] as a bitter Satyre upon all Republican government” (Adams 1814). Adams, who strongly advocated for a strong, central, and representative government, was upset by Plato’s view that a republican government is destined for failure. Adams could not fathom a successful and productive government that did not include the representation of its people. He also believed that Plato’s interpretation of a republican government would

be detrimental to the progress of the American republican system (Adams 1814). Adams determined that Plato's insights should not be regarded as an example for the American government. Jefferson and Adams agreed to discredit Plato as a political theorist, excluding him from their list of exemplary ancient figures.

The major mistake that Jefferson and Adams made when considering the credibility of Plato was critically examining just one of Plato's works. The two fixated on the radical ideas presented in *Republic*, ignoring the influential and sound ideas described in Plato's other works, such as *Laws*. *Laws* include one of Plato's most significant ideas: the mixed government theory. Mixed government theory is the foundation upon which the United States government was built; however, Jefferson and Adams overlooked the theory. In Plato's words, a successful government is "best made out of a tyranny; and secondly, out of a monarchy; and thirdly, out of some sort of democracy; fourth, [incorporate] the capacity for improvement" (Plato IV). Plato argues that "mixing" beneficial elements of tyranny, monarchy, and democracy will lead to a successful, long-lasting government system. Plato clearly states the beginning of what would become an outline for many major government systems in the modern-day era, yet Jefferson and Adams still discredited him as an influential political theorist.

Although Jefferson and Adams did not acknowledge the mixed government theory in their analysis of Plato, both understood its success in previous governments and even incorporated a form of mixed government into their political views. Instead of recognizing Plato's theory, Jefferson and Adams focused on Polybius's description of the historic

success of the mixed government. Polybius was an ancient Greek historian whose *Histories* went into detail about the mixed government of Rome which ultimately contributed to the overwhelming success of the civilization (Derow 2016). Although it was important to note that mixed governments were extremely successful, Jefferson and Adams completely disregarded where and why this form of government was created. Plato believed that civil war is one of the greatest dangers to society, therefore, to avoid such disaster, he decided that the people, along with an overarching government, could work together to prevent such a disaster. Mixed government allows for justice, order, success, and peace in a society, hence its overwhelming usage and success across centuries. While examining Plato's theory, Jefferson and Adams would have noticed that Plato created this theory for future governments to follow by example. If they understood this reasoning, Jefferson and Adams could properly analyze Plato as a political theorist. Had they closely examined *Laws*, with a focus on Plato's contemplative, nuanced theories, Jefferson and Adams would have seen the overwhelming impact that Plato had on successful ancient governments, as well as his immense effect on the developing government of the United States.

The reception of Plato and his works by Thomas Jefferson and John Adams speaks to a larger issue in the modern world of selectively analyzing the classics. Although Jefferson and Adams had access to all of Plato's surviving works, the two decided to analyze Plato as an individual, philosopher, and political theorist, based on just one of his works. By choosing to focus on a singular work, Jefferson and Adams misjudged Plato and his competence, completely

overlooking Plato's contribution to their political beliefs and new government systems. This mistake is not isolated to the founders. Misjudging and misrepresenting the classics is a prevalent issue in the modern world. Had Jefferson and Adams' opinion of Plato prevailed, the modern world would be unaware of Plato's vast effect on philosophy and government, essentially discrediting all his contributions to the modern world. This act of reception by Jefferson and Adams emphasizes the importance of examining all works by a classical figure before forming ideas and attitudes towards the individual, their ideas, and their contributions to society.

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Preface
Stephen Dierkes, '22

This translation comes from the end of Book 8 of the *Odyssey*. In the original Greek, King Alcinous of Phaeacia poses a series of questions to Odysseus. I have translated the second half of these questions into a meter that follows an ABAB rhyme scheme. It seemed appropriate to make an attempt at maintaining the poetic nature of the *Odyssey*. Alcinous is practically relentless in his questioning of Odysseus. I believe this translation's rhythm and the close proximity of the questions within the poem allow for Alcinous' insistent nature to be revealed.

Although this translation comes from a portion of Alcinous' direct address to Odysseus, I have added an anonymous narrator who both introduces and concludes Alcinous' quotation. This method of delivery not only draws the reader into the scene, but also reflects the narrator of the original Greek text, who calls for the Muses' help in the beginning of Book 1.

I hope the reader will enjoy the epithets that come from the original Greek. I thought it was important that these were included. Throughout this poem, Odysseus' name is never revealed. Rather, he is referred to by his epithets because Alcinous does not yet know his name (and 'Odysseus' is a difficult word to fit into a poem!).

The original Greek passage is powerful. The answers to Alcinous' questions spell out much of Odysseus' troublesome journey home. My hope is that this poem will allow anyone, whether they know this story by heart or read it just as a homecoming story, to more effectively and more enjoyably ponder these questions and once again experience Odysseus' tale.

Questions the *Odyssey* Answers
Stephen Dierkes, '22

Behold, the god-like king does speak
And makes his presence known.
He bids the stranger - face so bleak, "Reveal
your land, your own!"

Alcinous, the blameless king,
Persuades the Greek with lures of home: "Tell us of
this tale we sing
Which makes you weep and groan.

Reveal to us your birth and name,
That common thread that ties us all,
Your kin and town from which you came -
Bring them κλέος from this hall!

We'll send to them our manless masts,
Our ships, which sail yet heed our will. They travel
through the sea which casts
A mist, a shield from other's ill.

Many have come in search of aid
To cross the mighty sea;
And all who come for sport or trade,
A ride we guarantee!

Poseidon loves our ships for this, For all the
good we do.
But soon a day will end this bliss
And all we know that's true.

This tale my father used to tell,
A day - we don't know when,
A hill will fall on where we dwell; Poseidon shakes
our earth again!

But come, sad soul, do tell me now (Don't
hold back - I wish to know!) About the
lands you've seen and how you roamed
them long ago.

Tell me of those well-built cities,
Of men, so wild with crime.
Who among them shared your pities
And helped you in your trying time?

Who among them feared our great gods,
Those who rule o'er our seas?
For they alone decide the odds
Of all our fates, as they please.

So once again, I shall repeat:
Why aren't you filled with joy?
Our hero bard sings loud the feat
Of valiant Greeks at Troy

It was the gods, you surely know,
Who aptly sealed their fate
The gods composed their end of woe
So men compose a song so great

Perhaps a kin of yours did die
While on the field in war
An inlaw - one you can't deny,
You hide your grief no more.

Perhaps you lost a friend so dear,
Instead of one through marriage?
Lost on the blood-filled mud in fear,
Trodden down by Trojan carriage

If that is so, now please do tell,
For I can wait no longer:
Did you know this lost soul well,
A kin that made you stronger?

Friends like these, who know your heart
And feel your pain as if their own,
When senseless war tears you apart
That pain is thrust on you alone!”

In this way, the good king did speak
And pressed in great detail,
Till finally he moved the Greek
To tell them all his tale.

The tale this cunning hero told
Was rife with pain and grief.
Right from his θυμός - oh so bold,
He hoped for some relief.



Unnamed Statue
Rebecca Kaczmarek, '23

Circe and the Necessity of the Female Voice
Mairead O'Hara, '25

In this paper, I will argue for the necessity of female perspectives in reception of the Classics through comparing the depiction of Circe in a Classical ancient text, Homer's *The Odyssey*, and a modern reception of it, Madeline Miller's *Circe*. *Circe* serves as a collaboration with Homer's *The Odyssey* through adding the female perspective crucial to Circe's characterization. *The Odyssey*, an epic poem composed from male poets, presents Circe from Odysseus' point of view, casting her as an entrapping seductress driven by her own wickedness. Due to a lack of understanding of the distinctive female experience, Odysseus can only view Circe's actions through the limited male perspective. Contrastingly, *Circe*, written by a female author, explores Circe's story from her own point of view, which provides deeper insight into the central role of Circe's femininity in her motivations. These motivations shed light on Circe as a paragon of the unique dichotomy of women: they feel compelled to express empathy, yet society demands they also protect themselves from consequences of systemic misogyny, such as normalized gender-based violence. The female perspective illuminates this dichotomy, which proves vital to a comprehensive understanding of Circe, and therefore shows the importance of female perspectives in reception of ancient texts. They provide the opportunity for a study of the complexity of women's experiences in the ancient world.

The Odyssey serves as perhaps the most notable of the primary ancient sources of Circe. The poem centers around Odysseus' journey home to Ithaca in the aftermath of the Trojan War, with Books

9-12 presented from Odysseus' perspective. Circe first appears in Book 10, when Odysseus and his men land on Circe's island of Aeaea, an obstacle to their voyage (Homer, 10.149-150). Homer introduces Circe as a demi-goddess, a "daughter of Helios and the Oceanid Perse" (Hunter 2012). Circe's lineage plays a substantial role in her experience as she hails from Titan blood yet must grapple with the hyper-sexualization of nymphs. From a female perspective, one could view her parents' identities as representative of the gender norms women inherit from each parent. While fathers pass down status, daughters may inherit the sexualization and gender-based violence their mothers experienced. However, from Odysseus' perspective, Circe's inheritance of power and beauty from her parents makes her all the more temptingly treacherous.

Odysseus' introduction of Circe presents her from a distinctly male point of view through focusing on the threat of her autonomy, expressed through her sexuality and power. Odysseus first describes her as "the nymph with lovely braids, an awesome power too / [...] the true sister of murderous-minded Aeetes" (10.149, 151). Odysseus places Circe's great power as secondary to her enticing beauty, emphasizing ancient texts' primary focus on women's appearances. He then compares Circe to her brother Aeetes, known for the cruelty of his sorcery, such as "stealing away their [enslaved peoples'] minds" (Miller, 169). This reference to Aeetes points to the male suspicion of powerful women comfortable in their sexuality as capable of manipulating men at their peril. He expands on the risk Circe poses to the men by saying, she "lift[s] / her spellbinding voice / [...] at her great immortal loom, her enchanting web / a shimmering

glory” (10.243-245). The description of Circe’s singing as “spellbinding” suggests Circe’s song serves to disarm listeners and subject them to her will through witchcraft. Odysseus continues to portray Circe’s hobbies as a means to entrap men; he claims her work at the loom crafts her “enchanted web,” meant to beguile and ensnare unsuspecting visitors. While these hobbies may be for Circe’s own pleasure, Odysseus can only see their purpose as to threaten him and his crew. However, Miller expands on Circe’s motivations for entrapping these intruders on her island through exploring the crucial role of her femininity in her reasoning.

While *The Odyssey* portrays Circe as motivated solely by cruelty, *Circe* emphasizes her motivations stem from critical issues posed to women, namely the risk of sexual violence. In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus sympathetically describes his men as entering “all innocence” when they intruded upon Circe’s home (10.254). This seeks to demonize Circe’s response of transforming these trespassers into pigs. Simultaneously, it creates a false portrayal of soldiers, known for enslaving and raping women, as innocent upon entering the home of a woman living alone. The male perspective of *The Odyssey* allows this perpetuation of feigned ignorance of the most likely depraved intentions of these men. However, *Circe*, told from the female perspective, cannot shy away from the likelihood of Odysseus’ men committing sexual violence against her due to her past experiences as a woman. When recounting her rape by a captain and his crew who she offered shelter, Circe says, “With his right hand, he tore my clothes, a practiced gesture. [...] I had said there was no one on the island, but he had learned not to take chances” (188). The description of

him tearing her clothes as a “practiced gesture” and him “learn[ing] not to take chances” as to her silence emphasizes sexual assault as a common act committed by men in the ancient world. Furthermore, his distrust of Circe’s word about the presence of other people on the island, even while he exerts power over her through rape, emphasizes the degree of misogynistic suspicion of women. Even as men commit heinous violence against women, the male perspective views women as the deceitful figures. While the male perspective can at times erase the harm or likelihood of rape from the story, women cannot be afforded this luxury of pretense.

Female perspectives illuminate how women must struggle between an innate leaning towards empathy and the burdening knowledge of the commonality of gender-based sexual violence. *Circe* grants Circe the opportunity to establish her own personal experiences that explain her inability to assume innocence of male visitors due to the need to protect herself. Circe recounts her experience of sexual assault at the hands of male guests she welcomed into her home, who she believed innocent and worthy of her generosity. Upon their inquiring after her name, she recalls, “I almost said it then, the spellword that would send them to sleep. But [...] there was a piece of me that still only spoke what I was bid” (187). Here, the dichotomy of femininity becomes clear. Circe possesses the feminine intuition of anticipating gender-based sexual violence yet enforced gender norms also compel her to obey the inquiries of these men, to please them. Her longing to believe in the good of people and empathize with these men wins out against her intuitive need to protect herself.

Compounding this issue is the uniquely feminine pressure to not appear as hysterical or irrational, an issue born directly from the disbelief of women. As the men threateningly approach, Circe describes her thought process: “I thought—what? That I was being foolish [...] I did not want to be a fool, to make a fuss for nothing [...] *She always was a hysteric*” (187). Despite the commonality of gender-based violence, women are not afforded the same right of suspicion as men. Rather, women accusing men of sexual violence must first worry about appearing overdramatic or alarmist to the voice of authority: men. The use of “hysteric” not only expresses Circe’s concern of others’ dismissal of her fear, but also emphasizes this fear as a specifically feminine concern. The word “hysteria” originally meant a disease resulting from a woman’s uterus (now proven false) and stems from the Greek word for womb, *hystera* (OED Online 2021). Therefore, the reader gathers that Circe’s femininity plays a significant role in not only the violence committed against her, but also her decision to betray her intuition. This trauma determines Circe’s future receptions of intruders on her island. Yet, Odysseus and his crew cast Circe as a villain driven solely by her own wickedness and in need of moral direction.

The male perspective of *The Odyssey* emphasizes Circe as an example of the necessity to suppress women’s autonomy in order for them to accept men as their behavioral exemplars. Odysseus describes Circe’s reaction after he robs her of her witchcraft’s power, saying, “[she] hugged my knees [...] ‘let’s go to bed together, / mount my bed and mix in the magic work of love— / we’ll breed deep trust between us’” (10.359, 370-373). This description of

Circe on her knees emphasizes her position of inferiority to Odysseus and her being subject to his will. Furthermore, her suggestion for her and Odysseus to have sex, after their power dynamic has flipped, further cements her role as a desperate seductress in Odysseus' story. Rather than their sexual relationship being one of equal partnership, Odysseus simultaneously boosts his ego and humbles Circe through depicting himself as the reluctant hero simply giving into a woman's pleas. Following this humbling of Circe, Odysseus acts as a kind of moral guide to her, as she returns the men from pigs to humans at Odysseus' request.

The Odyssey portrays Circe's empathy as granted to her by Odysseus, leading her to transform from a seductress to a feminine ideal in Odysseus' eyes. Odysseus describes the effect of the reunion between the crew on Circe, saying, "a terrible sobbing echoed through the house... / The goddess herself was moved / [...] a lustrous goddess now" (10.440-442). Odysseus narrates it so that the men's emotions inspire Circe's empathy rather than her possessing the capability for empathy on her own. From the male perspective, women must possess men as behavioral guides that lead them to fulfill their duties as women, including their role as sources of emotional support. As a result of seemingly gaining this feminine quality of empathy, Circe becomes a more "lustrous" goddess in the eyes of Odysseus. The audience gathers that women become more shining and attractive in the male eye upon surrendering their autonomy and taking on their proper supportive role. Yet, *Circe* subverts this narrative by arguing that Circe innately possesses this empathy, especially towards mortals.

The foundation afforded to Circe's character in *Circe* establishes empathy as a unique and crucial facet of Circe's character, rather than a quality instilled in her by men. *Circe* examines a formative moment in Circe's childhood that establishes her tendency towards empathy and catalyzes her fascination with mortals. After witnessing her uncle Prometheus brutally whipped for aiding mortals, Circe brings Prometheus nectar, despite imagining "manacles rattling on [her] wrists and the whip striking the air" (20). Circe's strong empathy drives her to help Prometheus regardless of the risk of severe punishment. This also conveys women's deep commitment to expressing empathy to the extent that they may risk their own safety, as shown in the instance earlier with Circe's sexual assault. Circe's status as a uniquely empathetic goddess further sets her empathy apart as not gained by interactions with Odysseus, but an inherent quality belonging to her. The audience witnesses the development of this empathy over time as Circe remarks, "This is something torn that I can mend," upon entering into her relationship with Odysseus (208). Instead of Circe needing Odysseus' guidance, Circe joins the relationship as an equal capable of providing her partner with understanding. It is her very ability to empathize that allows Circe to repair or aid Odysseus through offering him compassion. While *The Odyssey* attempts to credit Circe's generosity to Odysseus' charm and sway, *Circe* establishes that women do not need men to guide them. Rather, women possess the ability to individually develop their character. Considering Circe's character beyond the context of a man's story allows for this development of her characterization.

Madeline Miller's *Circe* speaks to the necessity of women's voices in reception of the Classics through supplementing Circe's characterization in ancient classical texts. While ancient texts examine women through an unfailingly misogynistic lens, the inclusion of a female perspective allows for a more comprehensive understanding of female characters. The female perspective illuminates complex issues that arise specifically from femininity, such as the dichotomy of women as innately empathetic, yet confronted with the consequences of systemic misogyny. The legacies of the Classics continue to permeate through our society in the present, so inclusion of the female voice is crucial to discern how the Classics continue to affect us. Through the narration of ancient stories from female perspectives, audiences can begin to better understand the complex lives of ancient women and reflect on how their experiences continue to resonate through our society today.

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Great Men Can Exist Even under Bad Emperors: On
Tacitus' New Virtue based on Obedience (*Obsequium*)
and Moderation (*Moderatio*) in the *Agricola*¹

By Yuyao Sun

I. Introduction

As a historian recording events of imperial Rome, Tacitus, instead of splendid deeds by glorious heroes, sets himself the task of “linking together savage orders, constant accusations, deceitful friendships, the ruin of innocents, and the same reasons of death.”² The style of his works is therefore determined to be dark and grave (*gravis*), and not without despair and tragedies. That this tone is established in the historian's first work, the *Agricola*, a biography to his father-in-law, Gnaeus Iulius Agricola, is also certain. In the preface of the *Agricola* (3.3), Tacitus dedicates this biography to Agricola, hoping that it would bring him honor that was belated due to the jealousy of Domitian. Indeed, its publication was only made possible by the accessions of two good emperors, Nerva and Trajan, after Domitian, whose cruelty (*saevitia*) had brought countless deaths for the active senators and enforced silence for the rest (3.2). As a survivor of this cruelty, Tacitus would certainly not forget the extreme experience he had while living under Domitian's reign (45.1-2): the senate was besieged by arms, senators were murdered, and numerous noble women were exiled. To see Domitian and to be seen by him (*videre*

¹ I am grateful to Professor Timothy Joseph for introducing the writings of Tacitus to me and giving me suggestions for revision.

² Ann.4.33: ‘*nos saeva iussa, continuas accusationes, fallaces amicitias, perniciem innocentium et easdem exitii causas coniungimus.*’

et aspici) were equally dangerous, and not even shame (*pudor*) could stop his fierce face (*saevus ille vultus*) from marking down new victims. This surely made him more sensitive to the change of the relationship between emperors and the senate.³ Later in the preface, Tacitus recalls this experience of slavery (*servitus*) and compares it with that of the old age (*vetus aetas*) as two extremes between slavery and freedom (2.3). What went away with the fall of the Republic is the age of great men and splendid deeds; living under emperors, one is forced to change their understanding of greatness and virtue. “To succeed, or even to survive, *modesty* was requisite, and *discretion*; while ‘quies’ [...] became honorable in senator [,] ‘[l]ibertas’ itself, the dearest virtue of the noble, had to recede and surrender to ‘*obsequium*’”⁴ (my own emphasis).⁵

As a senator constantly promoted during the reign of Domitian,⁶ Tacitus was certainly conscious of this shift of power when he was writing Agricola’s biography. In fact, beyond the surface of a belated encomium, the *Agricola* is also an apologia for those who still needed to serve Rome, its emperors, or tyrants, such as Agricola and Tacitus himself.⁷ And,

³ Oakley (2009) 186

⁴ Although Tacitus calls Nerva as the emperor who combined principate and freedom (*miscuerit principatum ac libertatem*, 3.1), he immediately mentions the weakness of this remedy. I think Tacitus is aware of the structural incompatibility between them, which cannot be eliminated simply by a good emperor. Therefore, the tension between them still exists, which is part of the reasons for Tacitus to discuss them throughout the *Agricola*. Also see Syme (1958a) 27.

⁵ Syme (1958a) 27

⁶ Hist. 1.1: ‘*dignitatem nostram [...] a Domitiano longius provectam non abnuerim.*’

⁷ Birley (2009) 49

through his narrative of Agricola's life and career, Tacitus further "expounds the moral and political ideals of the new aristocracy"⁸ based on *obsequium* and *modestia*.

In this essay, I aim to begin examining these two qualities through Tacitus' use of the corresponding Latin words⁹ in past scholarship and contexts of the *Agricola* respectively so as to better understand the intention of Tacitus when describing Agricola as a man who has *obsequium* and *modestia* and as an ideal for the new aristocratic virtue.

II. *Obsequium* and *Modestia* in Scholarship and Contexts

A. *Obsequium*

Obsequium is a compound word coming from the prefix "*ob-*" and the verb "*sequor*" (*OLD obsequor*). The prefix "*ob-*" usually conveys a sense of opposition or confrontation (*OLD ob-*), as it does here. This word has five meanings in general: 1) the action or attitude of compliance (with desires, inclinations, etc.); 2) compliance with or consideration for the wishes of others, assiduous service or attention, deference, solicitude; 3) (of soldiers, subjects, etc.) compliance with orders, obedience, allegiance, discipline; 4) *feralia obsequia*, funeral rites or offerings; 5) the action of following a movement (*OLD obsequium*). Of these definitions the second and the third are particularly relevant to our reading of the *Agricola*. Out of four appearances of the word *obsequium* in the *Agricola*, at

⁸ Syme (1958) 26

⁹ Because of the affinity between the derivative and root in Latin, all related forms of these two words (e.g. *obsequor* for *obsequium* and *modus*, *modicus*, *modestus*, *moderatio* for *modestia*) will also be examined in the following discussion.

least three are related to the second definition (8.1,¹⁰ 30.3, 42.5) and the last one is, in my opinion, more likely to follow the third definition (*virtute in obsequendo*, 8.3).

Although the frequency of this word is not high, its use usually gives direct delineation of Agricola's character, especially when coupled with another important word that we will discuss, *modestia* (c.f. 8.1, 8.3, 42.4); Tacitus has employed *obsequium* nowhere else except in Calgacus' speech (30.3). To be more specific, in 8.1, where Agricola was in service under the mild (*placidus*) governor Vettius Bolanus, he "controlled his energy and restrained his ardor in order that it would not grow too strong" (*temperavit Agricola vim suam ardoremque compescuit, ne incresceret*, 8.1), since [he was] a man who was practiced in obedience (*peritus obsequi*, 8.1) and was well-trained to combine the advantageous things with honorable (*eruditusque utilia honestis miscere*, 8.1). Here the meaning of *obsequium* is quite clear, which denotes Agricola's *prudentia* and sense of proportion, that he was able to comply with the need of the *status quo* and could control his desire of demonstrating his valor, even though he was a soldier craving military glory (*intravitque animum militaris gloriae cupido*, 5.3). This *obsequium* made him modest in appearance and protected him from the potential jealousy from the governor or other people, while preparing the right moment for him where he could achieve things he wanted.

Immediately after this line, we find Vettius Bolanus was replaced by Petilius Cerialis (8.1), who

¹⁰ For the different reading of the *peritus obsequi* as the gen. of *obsequium* or as inf., see Woodman (2014) 118.

gave Agricola space for achieving exemplary deeds (*habuerunt virtutes spatium exemplorum*, 8.2). Here, Agricola demonstrated a different *obsequium* that is rather military (*OLD* 3): serving the new governor in battlefields, by valor in the midst of complying¹¹ and modesty in reporting (*virtute in obsequendo*, *verecundia in praedicando*, 8.3), Agricola had won his glory while escaping jealousy (*extra invidiam nec extra gloriam*, 8.3). This idea of winning glory through following the order and escaping jealousy through modesty of speech is expressed neatly by the chiasmus,¹² which connects his valor and glory to his innate quality of being able to comply with orders. In this case, *obsequium* shows him as a well-trained and disciplined soldier as well as his *industria* and *vigor* that allowed him to serve diligently and energetically.

Syme has also provided a very convincing definition of *obsequium*, which may help us connect the two possible meanings of this word discussed above: “the word denotes rational deference to authority—the obedience which an officer owes to his commander, a senator to the Senate, an emperor to the gods of the Roman State.”¹³

B. *Modestia*

Modestia is etymologically related to *modus*, which generally means measure (*OLD* *modus*). Tacitus has used it three times throughout the work (20.2, 30.3, 42.4), words related to it seven times, such as *modus*, *moderatio*, *modicus*, *moderatus* (4.5, 5.1, 7.6, 18.2, 24.3, 40.4, 42.4). The first appearance of *modestia* is in

¹¹ For this sense of *obsequium*, see Woodman (2014) 119

¹² Woodman (2014) 119 “*virtute in obsequendo — nec extra gloriam; verecundia in praedicando — extra invidiam.*”

¹³ Syme (1958a) 28

chapter 20, when Agricola finally becomes the governor of Britain and adopts a rather aggressive tactic in the military campaign: “But as the season came, with army mustered, he was everywhere on the march, praising discipline, rounding up stragglers” (*sed ubi aestas advenit, contracto exercitu multus in agmine, laudare modestiam, disiectos coercere*, 20.2). In this case, the word *modestia* has the meaning of “discipline” or “respect for order” (*OLD* 2), which is something that Agricola wanted to cultivate in his army. But, unlike in other places where Tacitus simply uses *disciplina* (16.5, 28.1), here, this particular choice of word denotes Agricola’s quintessential preference for moderation and restraint (*modus*).¹⁴

In the other two instances where Tacitus used this word (30.3, 42.4), its meaning is closer to “self-effacement” or “modesty” (*OLD* 3*b*), arguably the most essential quality Agricola was said to possess. Through various usages of words related to *modus*, the emphasis is given throughout this biography: Agricola’s youthful zeal for philosophy was mediated through his mother’s *prudentia*, and by his reason and age (*ratio et aetas*) “he retained a sense of proportion, the most difficult thing, from philosophy” (*retinuitque, quod est difficillimum, ex sapientia modum*, 4.3). Later, when he became a military tribune, he served and learned¹⁵ from Suetonius Paulinus, an example for moderation and restraint (*diligenti ac moderato duci*, 5.1). As a praetor, he set up festivals and other trivial events along a middle course consisting of reason and lavishness (*ludos et inania honoris medio rationis atque abundantiae duxit*, 6.4). After he quelled the mutiny in

¹⁴ Woodman (2014) 197

¹⁵ Woodman (2014) 103

his legion, he refused to take credit for what he had achieved with “unusual modesty” (*rarissima moderatione*, 7.1). Then, when he was recalled from Britain as a great governor, he entered Rome at night, avoiding visitation with friends, being “modest in demeanor and affable in conversation” (*cultu modicus, sermone facilis*, 40.3) so as to balance his reputation among others.

Indeed, since any action that calls forth fame with stubbornness and useless display of freedom would bring death, this unusual modesty is surely an indispensable quality with which Agricola was able to, at least temporarily, avoid the envy and enmity of the cruel emperor Domitian. (*moderatione tamen prudentiaque Agricolae leniebatur, quia non contumacia neque inani iactatione libertatis famam fatumque provocabat*, 42.3) As Oakley pointed out, Tacitus describes Agricola as a classic exemplar of *modestia*,¹⁶ a quality that he tries to advocate in front of his fellow aristocratic audience. However, there are instances where Tacitus does not use *modus*-related words in the meanings discussed above. This different usage of the word, usually as *modicus*, has the sense of “moderate in size, number, amount, etc” (*OLD* 2a).¹⁷

To conclude, except for a few different usages, Tacitus frequently employs words related to *modus* when he is narrating Agricola, his activities, and his demeanor, either when he was a public figure in Britain or when he was interacting with men of higher status, such as Domitian. And by doing so, Tacitus has

¹⁶ Oakley (2009) 192

¹⁷ “a small band of auxiliaries” (*modica auxiliorum manu*, 18.2); “a small number of auxiliaries” (*saepe ex eo audivi legione una et modicis auxiliis debellari obtinerique Hiberniam posse*, 24.3).

presented Agricola to his readers as a man who has a sense of proportion and modesty (*modestia*).

Now we have examined Tacitus' uses of *obsequium* and *modestia*, and found that he mainly employs them to portray Agricola's character: compliance and modesty that allowed him to avoid jealousy from others and to continually serve Rome. However, these two words were not only used for Agricola; we find them in the speech of another important figure in this biography, Calgacus.

III. *Obsequium* and *Modestia* in Calgacus' Episode

The leader of the Caledonians, Calgacus' significance in the battle of Mons Graupius cannot be underestimated. It is through this battle, as Martin pointed out, that Agricola reached the climax of his career and was rightfully regarded as a *vir magnus*.¹⁸ To this end, considerable space for this battle (ten chapters) is given by Tacitus, along with an extraordinary amount of details compared with those of his previous six years. Moreover, the battle is separated from the general account by the insertion of the Usipi episode (28), which provides a structural break-off before the culminating events of Agricola's governorship.¹⁹ Lastly, the "ring structure" of this work puts further emphasis on the battle, as it structurally ends the account of Agricola's military career.²⁰

Back to Calgacus himself. Being the leader of this battle, he seemed to be the exemplar of the old, republican virtue. He was a man of outstanding courage and birth (*virtute et genere praestans*, 29.4) and was attributing the same characteristics to other Britons

¹⁸ Martin (1981) 43

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Woodman (2014) 2

(*virtus porro ac ferocia subiectorum ingrata imperantibus*, 31.3). Besides, he employed familial piety to encourage his soldiers (31), another feature for traditional Roman virtue.²¹ This impression is further developed in his speech. Compared with that of Agricola, Calgacus' speech is significantly longer and more passionate, often with direct reference to the language of Roman declamation.²² More importantly, this speech deals with the relationship between freedom and slavery, an underlying motif of the *Agricola*, and in it Calgacus exhorts his fellow soldiers to give up hope for pardon (*sublata spe veniae*) and only pursue freedom. It is noteworthy that in his speech alone there are eight occurrences of words related to slavery and four of *libertas*, which are almost equal to those of *obsequium* and *modestia* throughout the work; and, in Agricola's speech, there is no reference to terms like these.

In this case, we could argue for a parallel between Romans and Britons.²³ Agricola is the example for a new aristocratic virtue founded on modesty and compliance, while Calgacus is the symbol for ancient, republican virtue that emphasizes freedom and ostentatious valor, the ones Agricola tried to avoid.²⁴ There is no middle path acceptable for Calgacus, since

²¹ Clarke (2001) 105

²² Martin (1981) 44

²³ Liebeschuetz (1966) 139

²⁴ Therefore, I disagree with Clarke's view on Agricola, where she claims that Agricola, if he had not been living at the time of Domitian, would have been someone like Calgacus. Agricola's nature, as we already see above, lies precisely in his extraordinary sense of proportion and modesty, which is something Calgacus didn't have, nor would like to appreciate; they are rather two different types of person. c.f. Clarke (2001) 106.

he believed “one could only escape [Romans’] arrogance through compliance and modesty *in vain* (*superbiam frustra per obsequium ac modestiam effugias*, 30.3).” By using these two words that Agricola exemplified here, Tacitus indicates that Calgacus not only rejected the possibility of a milder alternative to the battle based on compliance and modesty, but also indirectly rebutted the new political ideal symbolized by Agricola. Eventually, his belief that Romans’ *saevitia* could only be avoided by fighting and military confrontation brought utter annihilation to his people as well as himself. In other words, Calgacus only offered two choices for his people: death or fight, without the potential third option founded on *obsequium* and *modestia*.²⁵ In this case, the destruction of Calgacus could be an implicit critique of Tacitus towards the old virtue based on ostentation useless to the common good.²⁶

IV. Concluding Agricola’s Life

If Tacitus only implicitly criticizes the old, republican virtue in the battle of Mons Graupius, in 42.4 he openly confronts the believers of that kind of

²⁵ This may be the kind of servitude described in chapter 21, which is still better than destruction.

²⁶ Woodman (2014) 23. Interestingly, after the eloquent speech, Calgacus disappeared from the rest of the battle; what was left was the ruin of Calgacus’ armies, loss of Britain, and endless suffering of his people. On the contrary, Agricola’s activities were constantly emphasized, and ultimately it was through his judgement and discretion that Rome won the battle, c.f. 35.4, 37.1, 37.4. This sharp contrast between reality and appearance (Agricola’s lack of eloquence and effectiveness of judgment v.s. Calgacus’ eloquence and lack of real commands) is a constant theme of Tacitus’ work, and here it further illustrates the harm and uselessness of ostentation common to both Calgacus and Romans of old virtue.

virtue: “Let them know, who are accustomed to admire unlawful conduct, that even under bad emperors can great men exist, that compliance and modesty, if hard work and energy be present, could reach the level of praise where many through precipitous paths [have reached], but [they, i.e. *plerique*] became famous with ostentatious death for no use of common good.”²⁷ (*sciant, quibus moris est illicita mirari, posse etiam sub malis principibus magnos viros esse, obsequiumque ac modestiam, si industria ac vigor adsint, eo laudis excedere, quo plerique per abrupta, sed in nullum rei publicae usum ambitiosa morte inclaruerunt*, 42.4)

The power of the sentence comes from its use of a jussive subjunctive (*sciant*), which almost enables Tacitus to directly address those senators who “are accustomed to admire unlawful conduct²⁸ (i.e. not permitted by the emperor²⁹)” or those who believe that their ideals can only be defended through a death useless to the common good. His message is, as we have already seen, that even under principes like Domitian, whose *invidia* does not allow any ostentation and display of old virtue, men could still be glorious in a different way based on *obsequium* and *modestia*. By this address, Tacitus deliberately puts forward qualities for praise which would otherwise have been thought unworthy of the dignity of a senator.³⁰

However, while attacking that different view of *vir magnus*, Tacitus also further elucidates his new

²⁷ I followed suggestions from Ogilvie and Richmond in translating the latter half of the sentence. For difficulties in interpretation, see Woodman (2014) 302.

²⁸ c.f. *quibus magnos viros per ambitionem aestimare mos est*, 40.4

²⁹ Woodman (2014) 302

³⁰ Liebeschuetz (1966) 130

aristocratic ideal with his use of these two words: *obsequium* and *modestia* are only the qualities that make a great man if there are *industria* and *vigor*. In other words, greatness of man for Tacitus is not merely inactivity and measureless compliance; *obsequium* and *modestia* are rather qualities that allow industrious men like Agricola to avoid the jealousy (*invidia*) and cruelty (*saevitia*) of bad emperors and to serve the common good (*res publica*) with *industria* and *vigor*. Thus, what Tacitus is advocating through the example of Agricola has nothing to do with becoming a servant or a mere conformist; what lies behind his new aristocratic ideal is a kind of political realism that focuses on the reality and effectiveness, that knows how to combine “the advantageous things with honorable” (*utilia honestis miscere*, 8.1).

That Agricola is no less courageous than those believers of old virtue is also shown in the last chapter before the epilogue. In chapter 43, immediately after Tacitus indirectly condemns the ostentatious death (*ambitiosa mors*, 42.4), Agricola’s own death is narrated (*Finis vitae eius*, 43.1). This juxtaposition of deaths is surely not arbitrary. As Liebeschuetz commented: “Agricola is to be compared with the opposition groups not only in the manner of his life but in his deaths. It seems as if Tacitus could not mention the deaths of the members of the opposition group and thus recall what men felt most admirable about them, namely their willingness to die for their ideals, without feeling challenged to show that Agricola, despite his cautious demeanor, had been not less brave than they”³¹ and was the one who is to be remembered by posterity (43.1).

³¹ Liebeschuetz (1966) 131

We could even say that it was precisely his *industria* and *vigor* under *obsequium* and *modestia* that incurred Domitian's envy and caused the poisoning. Because, although Agricola tried to be compliant and modest, his *deeds* inevitably brought him fame, and his denial of fame itself made him even more famous (*dissimulatione famae famam auxit*, 18.7). Under his modest appearance and self-effacement, Agricola kept serving Rome in a different, realistic, and timely way.

In conclusion, in this paper I examined "obedience" and "moderation" through Tacitus' uses of related Latin words in the *Agricola*: they are primarily used to describe Agricola's character as a man who has these two qualities, which allow him to avoid the jealousy of others; then, in the Calgacus episode, Tacitus attributes the destruction of Calgacus and his armies to the fact that Calgacus did not have these qualities, and thus indirectly criticizes those who reject them; lastly, Tacitus addresses these two qualities as the new aristocratic virtues (42.4) and, by coupling them with *industria* and *vigor*, further explains this new aristocratic ideal.

V. Epilogue

Tacitus, when commenting on the meaning of history, once said: "so, with the situation conversed and there being no other salvation for affairs than if one man is in command, it will prove of advantage that these matters are researched and recorded, because few men with discretion distinguish the honorable from the baser, the useful from the harmful, many are taught by others' outcomes."³² If Agricola could be one of the

³² Ann.4.33.2: '*sic converso statu neque alia rerum salute quam si unus imperitet, haec conquiri tradique in rem fuerit, quia pauci*

few people that Tacitus deems capable of “distinguishing the honorable from the baser and the useful from the harmful,” we as readers of Tacitus might be the majority taught by his *Agricola*, as by other examples in his works. Indeed, the *Agricola* is particularly meaningful to the author, as he saw so many places of the world in which the cruelty of age was no less dangerous than that of Domitian, the enforced silence no less dreadful than that which Tacitus and his father-in-law experienced themselves, and the despair so thoroughly permeated that one was either corrupted or destroyed; others, at the same time, seemed to be already on the way to principate, since mutual understanding was becoming less possible, freedom in acting and speaking rather closer to some form of license (*licentia*) or an ostentation (*ambitio*) of will or an enhancement of stubbornness (*contumacia*). The author was thus compelled to ponder over whether this is the destiny of our age, and, if so, besides praying for a good emperor, what is left to us, especially as the good fortune of the age only rarely befalls us and power itself could also be morally depraved. It was at this point that the author encountered the *Agricola*, and reading this short piece was a mixture of happiness and tears: the reign of Domitian is doubtlessly a period of despair and darkness, yet out of this darkness there is still hope and light, for who would deny that Tacitus has provided us a memorable example of heroism with his *Agricola*? This heroism is indeed different from what is commonly praised even up to this day, since it neither promotes display of one’s determination for undertakings nor marvels at the steepness and

prudencia honesta ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt, plures aliorum eventis docentur.’

extraordinariness of one's action. However, as different ages require different kinds of heroes and greatness, it nevertheless remains illuminating — particularly for those whose age is becoming more and more similar to that of Domitian: at least we understand that we could avoid falling into a state of servitude, that greatness might not be achieved through a rather self-centered ostentation and stubbornness, that men can still be great in a bad time — which is both a consolation and an encouragement. It is for this reason that the author realizes an increasing urgency and importance of reading and re-reading Tacitus, for his history could also be our history, and, in some other places of the world, is surely already part of it. This essay is written for a better understanding of the rather different greatness, centered on “obedience” (*obsequium*) and “moderation” (*moderatio*), depicted by Tacitus in the *Agricola*, an issue in which the author is greatly interested and finds connection to his age; for this reason, he hopes it would reach to the next person also pondering over questions of this kind as well as the general audience.

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The Daily Life of Penelope
Zachary Tympanick, '23

For this collection of songs, I wanted to share my love for atmospheric music and tell the story of Penelope while she waits for Odysseus to return from The Trojan War. I selected the first three songs to talk about her life during the daytime: waking up in the morning, dealing with the suitors who won't leave, and the weaving of the funeral cloth. The latter three songs go into Penelope's life at night: the unweaving of the shroud, her longing for Odysseus, and the quiet morning right before the sun rises just to begin the cycle all over again. For the best experience, listen to the songs in order. In order to access this playlist, download the Spotify app and use the built-in code scanner next to the search bar.



Laughing at Aristophanes? An Evaluation of His
Parabases

Alexandra Berardelli, '25

Throughout millennia, audiences have indulged in laughing at timeless skits and stories that take them out of their daily lives and immerse themselves in a different world. Comedy is a lasting feature of entertainment, which is, meant to be funny. In its evolution, comedy has taken on several forms to fit a narrative an author or artist wishes to present to an audience: amusement, dark humor, romantic comedy, etc. But, perhaps, comedy is more than simply a form of humorous entertainment.

Analyzing the roots of comedy in Ancient Greece suggests that an audience can understand comedy as more than an amusing spectacle and instead as valuable guidance. The Ancient Greek comedic playwright Aristophanes presents his own pieces of advice. Not found in the contents of one of his play's stories, but rather through an external device: the parabasis. In several of his plays, Aristophanes uses the ancient comedic technique of choral parabases to address the audience while dealing with serious matters in a comedy.

The chorus plays a crucial role in establishing a relationship with the audience in both Greek comedy and tragedy. The parabasis, only seen in comedy, is central in establishing this relationship. It is defined as “(literally a ‘step aside’) often presented direct audience address separate from the main plot of the play,” it is often meant to offer advice from the author's point of view to the audience (Marshall, 132). Therefore, Aristophanes allows himself to speak to the audience

through this artistic medium, both as the author and a fellow Athenian.

The *Clouds* and the *Frogs* are arguably two of Aristophanes' more famous works. They both contain parabases; however, they appear to be superficially different in content for the audience to reflect upon. Although they may seem ostensibly different, upon deeper interpretation, a reader or audience member may understand both parabases to address serious matters for the audience. So, if Aristophanes had intended it or not, the audience could interpret them through a similar lens.

Before the parabases could be worked out to be more similar than they seem, it is necessary to observe why they appear so different. In the *Frogs*, just when Dionysus and Xanthias center Hades' palace in the underworld, the chorus enters and performs the parabasis (*Frogs* v. 674-737). Here, Aristophanes is relatively straightforward in outlining what he believes is essential for the audience to understand and takeaway, explicitly focusing on contemporary social and political issues. In contrast, Aristophanes uses the *Clouds*' parabasis first as an outlet for spouting off his anger for not winning at the play's first performance (*Clouds* v. 510-626). It is known to many scholars to be "expressed in passing the belief that the parabasis is more humorous than revealingly expository." (Major 132). Thus, there is a lot of debate about a deeper meaning of this parabasis. While it is true that Aristophanes angrily confronts the audience about their reaction to the play, he also offers valuable advice, just as in the *Frogs*' parabasis. Aristophanes' parabases in both of these plays address similar themes with different contents, which is why they might seem too different beyond comparability.

By the nature of the chorus and parabasis, there is a significant social element to this part of the play. Both parabases contain social commentary, making compelling arguments that should spark reflection for the audience to think about their role in society. Aristophanes likely tailored his parabases in the *Clouds* and *Frogs* around the citizen because they share a similar historical context. These plays were performed during the Peloponnesian war: a war fought between Athens and Sparta from 431 to 405 BCE. *Clouds* was the first to be performed in 423 BCE during a pivotal time when peace between the two powerful city-states was promising. The Athenians did not know this yet, but they were in for a rude awakening that would change their city forever. *Frogs* would be performed later at the end of the war, where Athenians see their powerful city-state endure a fatal loss of power. And so, both plays are a suitable outlet for Aristophanes to urge the audience to act for their Athenian society.

In the latter part of the *Frogs*’ parabasis, Aristophanes outlines what a good citizen is, using a metaphor of old versus new gold. He shows that the new gold, or the finest of Athenian citizens, are typical examples of “well-born, well-behaved, just, fine, and outstanding men” (*Frogs* v. 727). Aristophanes is just describing his audience. But instead of acknowledging how well they use their exemplary citizenship for their advantage during the war, he recognizes that the city does not use its citizens to their advantage and must accept good citizenship for the betterment of society, especially during these times of warfare.

Still addressing the audience, Aristophanes concludes this parabasis, “But even at this late hour, you fools, do change your ways and once again choose the good people. You’ll be congratulated for it if you’re

successful, and if you take a fall, at least the intelligent will say if something does happen to you, you're hanged from a worthy tree." (*Frogs* v. 733-738). As previously mentioned, the *Frogs* was performed at the end of the Peloponnesian war; thus, Aristophanes addresses the audience, to act even at this "late hour," because the war is ending. More importantly, in an earlier part of the parabasis, Aristophanes urges people in the audience, whom he may call "fools," to use the best citizens to their advantage during the war. However, even if they choose the best people for the war effort, Aristophanes acknowledges that they will be honored regardless of whether they come out on top or not. By crafting this parabasis around the ideal citizen, Aristophanes argues to the audience what type of citizens Athens desperately needs to, at least, try to save the city. Given the historical context, this sentiment would have been quite notable for the audience, thus helping tailor their reflection regarding themselves as ideal citizens.

Rather than outlining the ideal Athenian citizen or any other formal social matter, Aristophanes focuses on his own emotions about his play's first failed performance in the *Clouds*. In this parabasis, Aristophanes is upset with his audience because the first time the *Clouds* was performed, it was a failure. So, in this fury, he uses the parabasis to challenge the audience while giving them advice. But the latter may not be so prevalent amid humorous spouting. Because he is angry at the audience for not choosing his play the first time, Aristophanes seems to undermine their collective intelligence. He hopes the second time, "to win for an audience of great intelligence and considered this play to be my most sophisticated, deeming you

most worthy to taste it first, a play worked on extra hard.” (*Clouds* v. 520-524).

So, if Aristophanes uses this spout to question the audience’s intelligence in choosing a winning play, he too can evaluate their intelligence and judgment as members of society. By further evaluating the addressed audience in its historical context, there is more depth to his rageful fit. He is speaking to some of the most powerful political figures in the world, in 423 BCE: where a feeling of peace was promising during the Peloponnesian war. Upon personal interpretation, by calling out their lack of intelligence in judging his play, Aristophanes may also be calling out their actions during the war and urging them to do better, similar to in the *Frogs*.

If the audience looks beyond all of Aristophanes’ foolish remarks, he may suggest political thoughts through alluding to political figures the audience would be familiar with. For instance, in his spouting, Aristophanes says, “I’m the one who hit almighty Cleon with an uppercut, but I wasn’t so brazen as to hit him again when he was down.” (*Clouds* v. 549-550). While Aristophanes does not directly comment on the political career of the politician, Cleon, this could have sparked serious political contemplation in the audience.

Wilfred E. Major offers a helpful insight into why Aristophanes might have used politicians in an otherwise humorous parabasis. He writes about the lines above, “An elaborate, extended brag on Aristophanes’ heroism against Cleon follows (1018-1043) and then the punch line: the Athenians betrayed their hero by failing to appreciate his play of the previous year.” (Major 142). This supports that what Aristophanes was saying here was not all nonsense.

Aristophanes elaborately thought of what he would say to the audience, and he, being an articulate author, likely did not do things unintentionally. Cleon was an Athenian leader during the Peloponnesian War, and at this point of the war, Athens was very close to peace. But they failed. So, making fun of him here could spark the audience to question their political authorities. This political allusion can be greater than another outlet through which Aristophanes spouts. Instead, it may motivate the audience to internalize their Athenian society and its good leadership, or lack thereof.

Aristophanes uses the parabasis in the *Frogs* to explicitly outline principal pieces of political advice: the improvement of leadership, equality, and voting (*Frogs* v. 686-705). Scholars have already established that this parabasis made this play so popular. W. Geoffrey Arnott writes about the political influence of the political purpose of this parabasis, “should ‘change their ways and use their good men again’ as leaders (734f.), were meant to be taken seriously as a call to political action. And they did have serious consequences, although most commentators have either ignored them or stopped their historical exegeses shortly before reaching the crucial events.” (Arnott 19). This supports the fact that it has been established that Aristophanes is offering practical, serious advice in the middle of his comedy. Since Aristophanes is so direct with providing political advice to the audience in the *Frogs*, the ideas from this parabasis manifest themselves in the future.

There is no doubt that Aristophanes uses the *Clouds*’ parabasis as an outlet for his artistic rage. Still, it can also be interpreted as a similar political parabasis as the one in the *Frogs*. He accomplishes serious political commentary in both parabases by evaluating

the political leadership in the context of the Peloponnesian war. Through personal interpretation, there is political value in each. But, the mode by which they are presented skews the superficial purpose. These two parabases are not the same, but the audience can view them as inherently similar with further interpretation.

The examples in Aristophanes' plays show that the parabasis is a unique method for expressing genuine, serious advice. However, excluding this device does not necessarily mean a comedy would lack profound depth. In another one of his plays, *Lysistrata*, Aristophanes stages a sex strike by Athenian women as a solution to end the Peloponnesian war. In the end, the main takeaway is that war is not necessarily wrong, but what is truly bad is not being able to unite against common enemies and work together to fight them. This is a strong statement to make amid the Peloponnesian war because its final statements would reveal to the audience that Athens and Sparta should unite against the Persians. Many scholars would argue that Aristophanes did not write a parabasis for this play, so he just weaved his serious ideas throughout the comedy. Even though there may not be a parabasis, it still holds significant political opinions merely throughout the comedy rather than taking a step outside of the play.

After evaluating the parabases or lack thereof in Aristophanes' plays, I pose the question: should we be laughing at Aristophanes' comedies? While there are plenty of times where comedy is the central tone of the play, there are still many instances of serious and thoughtful consideration for the audience. So, maybe we should be doing less laughing and more reflection.

But do not give up laughter and humor. It is indeed necessary!

Perhaps, it was part of Aristophanes' artistic plan that the audience might look at the parabases similarly. But, for the sake of comparing the parabases in the *Frogs* and *Clouds*, further interpretation can present that they are similar in their social-political commentary and encouragement for Athenians to take action for their society. After all, Aristophanes wrote comedies articulately well, so there is much room for humor and valuable sentiments. However, one thing is sure that Aristophanes openly shares his advice with his audience, hoping that they will listen and use it wisely.

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Plato's Irony
Stacey Kaliabakos, '23

Plato's *Republic* remains one of the most influential texts of the Western canon, surviving millenia of various translations and interpretations. Traditional interpretations of the *Republic* contend that there is not a distinction between philosophy and politics and that Plato's presentation of Socrates' dialogue with Glaucon and Adeimantus reflects the author's own ideas. Socrates' Kallipolis, the "just city," serves as an early example of totalitarian governance that parallels modern regimes in countries like Cuba or North Korea. Although Plato was in fact a student of Socrates, he did not necessarily have to agree with everything his teacher argued; additionally, contemporary scholars such as Allan Bloom beg the question as to whether the Kallipolis was actually an ironic and satirical construction thought up by Socrates that he ultimately knew was absurd and impossible. Looking closely at the *Republic*, it seems doubtful that Plato truly was as illiberal and antidemocratic as he may seem at first glance: Kallipolis was almost certainly not Plato's own ideal political constitution.

From a modern scholar's point of view, it is irrefutable that Kallipolis as a polis is unrealistic and unattainable, as it is an ideal very far removed from human nature. Plato's *Republic* underscores the limitations of politics by emphasizing this aforementioned disparity between human nature and the just city: Kallipolis abstracts from the body and philosopher-kings cannot possibly make good rulers. Plato allows his audience to see the conflict between striving for the good of the individual and the good of a whole community: since an individual finds his

“*eudaimonia*” in studying philosophy, it is against the philosopher’s nature to truly rule for the common good. This notion is antithetical to Socrates’ supposed claim that the only people fit to rule the just city are philosophers and that the highest well-being for humans is only achievable by reconciling philosophy and politics.

It is possible that Socrates’ argument is ironic, meaning that he suggests one thing to Glaucon, Adeimantus, and others in the dialogue, but actually means something entirely different (i.e., he presents Kallipolis as natural but inwardly understands that it is not). If one were to pursue this path of reasoning, they would come to the conclusion that Plato, too, was being an ironist in writing the *Republic*. Plato catalogs his teacher’s experiment, relaying its ups-and-downs until the very end, no matter how increasingly outlandish and unnatural Socrates’ rules for the just city become. He must be aware of the lunacy of Socrates’ claims: after all, the process of recording the dialogue for posterity required some mode of thought and would provoke inquiry into anything he may have found disagreeable or preposterous. As Aristotle writes in his *Nicomachean Ethics*, “Ironists, who tend to say less than they are, appear more refined in their characters.” (1127b23-24) Socrates as an ironist seems to be a common theme in much of literature written on the famous philosopher, and Aristotle himself (a student of Plato) agreed with contemporary analysts in this regard. It is a logical assumption, therefore, that Kallipolis was not an entirely serious “just city,” but rather Socrates’ satirical take on limits of politics and philosophy in the *Republic*.

Some aspects of Socrates' (and Plato's) argument seem almost comical, furthering the possibility of ironic intentions with the development of Kallipolis. For example, Book V of the *Republic*, which focuses on womens' lives in the just city, contains striking similarities to Aristophanes' *Assemblywomen*, or Ἐκκλησιάζουσαι. In this play written to criticize the Athenian government, a group of women take control of the city, instituting reforms that ban private wealth and enforce equity between the sexes (particularly beneficial measures for old and unattractive women). Socrates seems to have been inspired by this play in Book V, where he acknowledges that women have the same individual ranking of their spirits as men and that they too have a place in the just city. However, when reading the text, it is difficult to believe that Socrates or Plato valued our contemporary notion of "women's rights" at all, or any form of equality, for that matter: there is an understanding that women, albeit members of Kallipolis, would always be inferior to men in every category. It is, therefore, not too ridiculous to suggest that Plato may have been trying to outdo Aristophanes in his own version of comic satire. Kallipolis is also simply contrary to human nature. It is most saliently abnormal in limiting man's innate desires, primarily sexual *eros*, in addition to abolishing privacy and the structure of the family in favor of a communal lifestyle (reminiscent of People's Communes in Maoist China, for example). However, Socrates is clear to emphasize that the city *is* natural, as it is based on both man's most basic needs and a division of labor and leadership that parallels the internal hierarchy of the soul: reason, desire, and spiritedness (*thumos*).

Essentially, Socrates uses the tripartite soul to justify the social network of Kallipolis. He may have had more ground to stand on if his argument was based in reality; however, Plato is clear to emphasize that the organization of Kallipolis is based on the “noble lie.” (414c [p. 93]) Essentially, in order to ensure the success of the city, the guardian class would have to lie to the citizens about nearly every aspect of their lives. The Myth of the Metals and the belief that all citizens were born of the ground of Kallipolis would be utilized to dull the minds of the populace into believing that the hierarchy they found themselves in was the natural order of things. However, Socrates acknowledges that Kallipolis would be destined to fail, even if the guardians attempted to keep up the noble lie, falling into tyranny. Plato displays Socrates’ reasoning in a way that conveys these lies as ultimately unconvincing for a successful city, thereby demonstrating his own beliefs: that Kallipolis as an illiberal authoritarian government is not only impossible, but worthless to even try.

The unnaturalness of Kallipolis is subsequently extended to its ruling class: the philosopher-kings. In order to argue that a ruling class of philosophers is unnatural, the question of justice developed in the *Republic* must be addressed (although a definite conclusion as to what justice is is never reached in the dialogue itself). As stated before, individual justice may be understood as the internal harmony of reason, desire, and spiritedness. Only the philosopher can achieve this harmony of the soul, and consequently justice itself. In addition to the harmony of the soul, Socrates also advocated for the harmony of philosophy and politics for the success of Kallipolis. However, the previous notion

of justice in conjunction with the harmony of philosophy and politics would be impossible with philosophers in charge of the city. The philosopher can only be just on the individual level because he has an understanding of eternal forms, which others in the city do not. On the other hand, all people can be “just” in the civic sense, or in service to the polis as a whole. Although both of these types of justice are discussed in the *Republic*, Plato does not successfully connect them in a way that argues that men naturally should wish to serve the polis. Bloom writes, “The question is whether... devotion to the common good leads to the health of the soul or whether the man with a healthy soul is devoted to the common good.” (Bloom, 337) Therefore, humans do not have a natural imperative to be good citizens, and Kallipolis requires that the philosophers be *unnaturally* good by serving the interest of the people rather than their own self-interest. This leads to the conclusion that the entire structure of the polis is unnatural, and, in relaying the duties of the philosopher-kings the way he does, Plato stresses how Kallipolis is destined to be dysfunctional, revealing his own misgivings towards Socrates’ plan of the ideal just city.

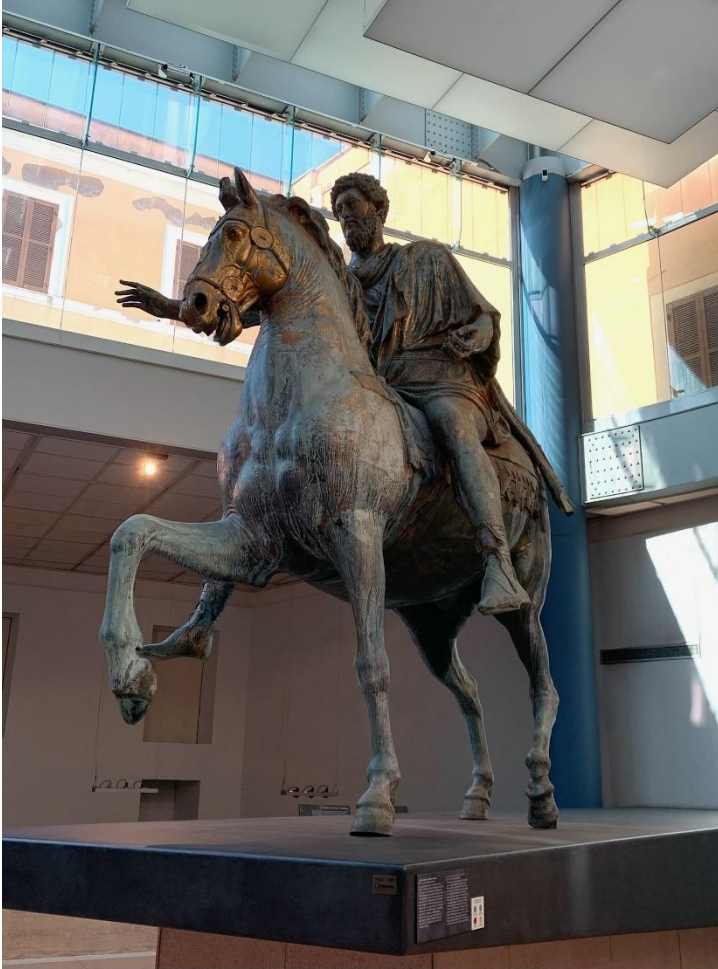
Much evidence exists to support the argument that Plato did not truly believe all he espoused in the *Republic*. That Plato was not as “antiliberal and antidemocratic” as he may seem is a relatively recent opinion that is dismissive of traditional interpretations, but it is nonetheless very probable, given the amount of aforementioned evidence in this paper. However, it is important to acknowledge that contemporary Platonic scholars will never be fully sure of Plato’s

true opinions. As it is impossible to ask Plato about his true convictions and to see whether Socrates himself even believed what he said in the *Republic*, all interpretations of the text, if properly supported, cannot be invalidated. Ultimately, the Socratic paradox, which says that wisdom is found in acknowledging ignorance, is a valuable lesson to take into account when analyzing and interpreting Plato's *Republic*.

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Mounted Marcus Aurelius
Rebecca Kaczmarek, '23

The Beginning of Love
Augusta Holyfield, '22

I

She felt a pain in her soul
She had no control of her eyes,
She babbled "Daphnis" over and over
She neglected food
 lay awake all night
 forgot about her herd

Now she laughs
Now she cries
Then she sleeps
Then she springs up
Pale face, burning with blush again

Alone, she said to herself:
"Now I am sick, what is this disease?
I suffer, but I see no wound.
I grieve, but I haven't lost any sheep.
I burn, but I'm sitting in the shade.

How many times have thorns scratched me
 And I don't weep?
How many times have bees stung me
 And I don't cry out?
But now this that pierces my heart is sharper than all
that!

Daphnis is beautiful (but so are flowers)
His pipes play beautiful music (but so do nightingales)
But those are just words to me
If only I could be his pipe, so that he would blow on
me.

If only I could be his goat, so that he would lead me to pasture.

Oh wicked spring!
You make only Daphnis beautiful.
I bathe in vain!

I am lost, beloved Nymphs.
But you don't save a girl raised beside you.
Who will offer you garlands after me?
Who will bring up the poor lambs?
Who will look after the chirping grasshopper
which I worked so hard to catch
so that chattering in the grotto
I would be lulled to sleep.

Now, because of Daphnis,
I lie awake.
The grasshopper sings in vain."

II

And for the first time, he was in awe that her hair was golden,
And her eyes were big, just like a cow's,
And her face is whiter than goat's milk, truly,
As if before he had been blind,
but then, for the first time, he acquired eyes.

So he didn't eat, except for a single bit.
And he doesn't drink, except to wet his lips.
He was silent, when before he had chattered like a grasshopper.
He didn't work, although he was more energetic than the goats.
He ignored the herd, threw down his pipes.

His face was paler than summer grass.

For Chloe alone, he was talkative.
And if he was ever away from her,
He babbled this to himself,

“What has Chloe’s kiss done to me?
Her lips are softer than roses and her mouth is sweeter
than honeycomb.
Her kiss stings sharper than a bee.
Often I have kissed baby goats,
Often I have kissed just-born puppies and calves,
But this kiss is new.
My breath catches
 my heart skips
 My soul melts
But nevertheless I wish to kiss again.

Oh wretched victory!
Oh new sickness!
I don’t know how to say your name!
Did Chloe drink poison before she kissed me?
Then how did she not die?
How the nightingales sing, while my pipes are silent.
How the young goats leap, while I sit still.
How the flowers bloom, while I weave no garlands.
The violets and the hyacinths blossom, but Daphnis
withers.”

Divinity in Book I of the *Histories*

Stephen Pittman, '23

Herodotus' endeavor, as he expresses in the proem of his *Histories*, to record the great deeds of men, though focused on mankind and the actions of its members and how they were the instruments of fate in the flow of history, is still completely and inseparably full of theological concepts and the use of divinity in the explanation of the patterns of history. Often perceived as taking a distinctly secular approach to the recounting of past events and the stories of kingdoms and wars, Herodotus does not at all achieve something close to the modern scholarly habit of complete avoidance of divine explanations for events or even the mention thereof, save for when referring, for example, to the real religious practices of particular people.¹ This kind of perception seems to mostly stem from Herodotus' juxtaposition with previous, mostly poetic works of recounting historical events among the Greeks, especially Homer's epics.² Indeed, Herodotus' dealing with the divine in his *Histories* starkly contrasts with that of the Homeric epics in which gods are granted distinct personalities and relations and the events of the stories are often explained as being the direct results of some kind of divine affair. Although Herodotus clearly does not discuss history in terms of the divine in such a way, he does often make mention of gods and the divine particularly in ethnographic contexts, i.e., where he discusses the gods and religious practices of a people and their origin and in cases of oracular prophecy. But, most significantly Herodotus

¹ Harrison (2000) 32.

² Momigliano (1978) 2.

tends to use the concept of divinity in explaining what appear to be universal truths observable through historical patterns, in particular the movement of fortune from one bearer to another, over which men have no actual control.³

Herodotus speaks frequently of the divine in terms of how foreign nations and the Greeks themselves worship their gods and, especially in the case of foreign deities, he explores the origin of their worship and their names.⁴ When discussing these, Herodotus seems to be attempting to be merely ethnographically reporting what he can tell about foreign and Greek gods and their worship, such that these mentions of the divine are not being used as some necessary part of the greater historical narrative. However, these offer some insight in how the author perceives divinity. The instances where divinity actually affects the main narrative of the first book are expressed rather subtly and, extremely importantly, in a sort of characteristically vague manner in which usually no specific deity is being referred to.

The word Herodotus commonly uses to express this kind of unspecific divinity is simply *ὁ θεός*, however the word appears in several different ways, sometimes accompanied by the definite article, sometimes without it, and sometimes in the neuter, such as in 1.32.1 (*τὸ θεῖον*). These all slightly change the possible interpretation of the word, whether it might refer to an indefinite god or the general concept of “the divine.” But, as it will be shown, very often *θεός* is lacking a clear antecedent of a named deity and no specific deity can be presumed through context to be what the noun refers to. Therefore, it seems that Herodotus is

³ Scullion (2006) 195.

⁴ Mikalson (2002) 196-198.

describing a broader concept of divinity distinct from conventional anthropomorphized conceptions of deities.

Herodotus refers to this unspecific kind of divinity twice when he writes of Solon explaining to Croesus his choice for the second happiest man he has ever seen being the Argives, Cleobis and Biton. In the first instance *ὁ θεός* is preceded by the definite article and is masculine in gender: “...διέδεξέ τε ἐν τούτοισι *ὁ θεός* ὥς ἄμεινον εἶη ἀνθρώπῳ τεθνάναι μᾶλλον ἢ ζῶειν” (1.31.3). Now in the previous section to this quotation a festival to the goddess Hera is mentioned (*ὀρτῆς τῇ Ἥρῃ*), making her the last deity to be named, but due to the gender disagreement between *ὁ θεός* and *τῇ Ἥρῃ*, she is certainly not the same god as is mentioned here in the quotation. The word is likely not referring to a monotheistic god either, or even a single god, but rather a collective or general concept of “the divine,” a meaning one would normally expect to be represented by a neuter plural substantive adjective.⁵ In the second instance, more similar to the expected way of expressing the concept, that is through the use of the substantive adjective in the neuter singular, the sense of “the divine,” or rather “the divine thing,” is achieved: “ὦ Κροῖσε, ἐπιστάμενόν με *τὸ θεῖον* πᾶν ἐὸν φθονερόν τε καὶ παραχῶδες ἐπειρωτᾶς ἀνθρωπῶν πρηγμάτων πέρι,” (1.32.1). This passage also tells a particularly interesting feature of Herodotus’ general concept of “the divine,” and that is that it possesses and acts upon a capacity to be jealous (*φθονερόν*) and a tendency to wreak trouble (*παραχῶδες*).⁶ This characteristic of the divinity that Herodotus describes

⁵ Asheri (2007) 102.

⁶ Harrison (2000) 32-33.

gives it a reason, albeit personified, for its taking and giving of fortune, with which it seems to be intrinsically intertwined.

It is perhaps this giving and taking of fortune, from person to person, from nation to nation, that is the strongest theme throughout the first book of the *Histories*. It seemed to Herodotus and has been made apparent to us that this is a significant observable pattern within history, consequent not to something within the power of mankind; although, it seems the actions of men may accelerate the taking action of the divine, such as those that express arrogance. In the case of Croesus, Herodotus presents that Croesus had become the target of the vengeful snatching of luck because he presumed so confidently that he was the happiest man of all whilst inquiring of Solon (1.34.1). In addition to this, in *Histories* 1.91.1, Herodotus mentions that Croesus' fall would be the final, prophesied fulfillment of the divine vengeance for the improper and treacherous deed of his ancestor, Gyges in his ascension to the Lydian throne.

Now in chapter 34, the jealous, taking action of the divinity is described as *νέμεσις*, being the personification of divine retribution, being sent to Croesus "from god" (*ἐκ θεοῦ*) (1.34.1). This is the only usage of the word *νέμεσις* in Herodotus' *Histories*, and, since the goddess by that name, among the many other common, anthropomorphized gods, appears throughout the Homeric epics and other myths as a personified direct agent in the goings on of the world of men, this particular use of the word is especially significant.⁷ This, more than other instances, connects the

⁷ Harrison (2000) 40.

interaction of the divine with the realm of men with the conventional stories most closely.

Herodotus' "divinity" is undeniably linked with the concept of luck and fortune, perhaps as personification or merely the determiner of it. And furthermore, it is possibly above the domain of conventional gods in that a god is generally an agent within the world that is subject to fate itself, as the priestess of Apollo said: "τὴν πεπρωμένην μοῖραν ἀδύνατα ἐστὶ ἀποφυγεῖν καὶ θεῶ," that is: "it is impossible for a god to escape his given lot," (1.91.1).⁸ Through this statement Herodotus seems to concur with the idea that gods are subordinate to a larger power that dictates their lot, which has long been a theme observable across the myths with conventional, anthropomorphic depictions of gods.⁹ Now could the unspecified divinity talked about throughout the text be meant by Herodotus to be the setter of such destiny? It would make sense given it is what gives and takes fortune and luck. But surely that divinity could not be subject to the things it itself sets forth, as it is the originator of destiny. And if it were to act upon its jealousy and anger at the arrogance and overly fortunate lives of certain men or states as is described by Herodotus, then would it not be acting according to something set forth by men? And these men would also be the ones whom it allowed to gain the fortune to achieve their proud positions to begin with. Therefore, for it to be motivated by something is for it to be subject to its own power to some degree if it is the setter of destiny. Thus, it was probably useful for Herodotus to use personifying terminology in explaining the ways of the divine, as in divine jealousy,

⁸ Translation is the author's own

⁹ Fowler (2010) 322.

simply because that is a more natural and easily understandable way of describing such a cosmological idea, for it would be hard to try to conceive such a divinity acting based upon no motivations. Therefore, it is possible Herodotus meant not for this divinity exactly to be seen as a definite distributor of the almighty destiny that even gods are subject to, but perhaps as fortune or destiny itself.

It is evident throughout the first book of the *Histories* that Herodotus positions this particular concept of the divine which is associated with fortune and luck as absolutely fundamental to the operations of history and that it plays a highly significant role in his worldview, or at least his symbolic description of the world. His narrative, clearly not lacking with intentional craftsmanship, focuses on the patterns by which luck and glory moves throughout history and that he seems to have firmly supposed that something distinctly divine is part of the moving pieces in those patterns, along with, of course, the actions of men. Thus, however relatively indirect Herodotus' approach towards describing the influence of the divine on history is compared to his predecessors, the concept of the divine is still irremovable from the main messages and ideas he expresses concerning patterns in history and nature of human events.

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